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Reviewed Work(s):

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States and Sovereignty in the Global Economy by David A. Smith; Dorothy J. Solinger; Steven C. Topik

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Review Essay

Sovereignty: Reckoning What is Real

John Hoffman. *Sovereignty*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Stephen Krasner. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999

Daniel Philpott. *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

David A. Smith, Dorothy J. Solinger, and Steven C. Topik, eds. *States and Sovereignty in the Global Economy*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

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Sovereigns die and Sovereignties; how all dies and is for a Time only; is a Time-phansm, yet reckons itself real!

—Thomas Carlyle¹

In the opening pages of Carlyle's incomparable study of the French Revolution, the death of Louis XV foreshadows the imminent collapse of the monarchy and the entire *ancien regime*. The sovereignty of the Bourbon kings, which had for generations seemed natural, unalterable—in a word, *real*—would soon meet a violent and unexpected (if ultimately only temporary) end.

Today it is not the demise of sovereigns or sovereignties but of sovereignty itself that concerns students of politics. Whether sovereignty really is dying, eroding, withering, atrophying, or being otherwise weakened or transformed is energetically debated by social scientists of all stripes. Frequently, as in Stephen Krasner's *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, in *States and Sovereignty in the Global Economy*, a collection of essays edited by David Smith, Dorothy Solinger, and Steven Topik, and in Daniel Philpott's *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*, the debate over sovereignty is driven by questions about the effects and significance of globalization. It is mainly due to the wave of interest in globalization, then, that sovereignty is once again a hot topic.²

In these three works, the authors wrestle with big questions about the status, the origin, and the future of sovereignty, on the whole with much success. Ultimately, however, none of them quite manages to pin down why exactly we ought to care

1. Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, ed. K. J. Fielding and David Sorensen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9.

2. In the European context, questions about integration into the European Union (EU) are another, perhaps central stimulus of the sovereignty debates.

about sovereignty, as opposed to globalization more generally. Put differently, there is little sense in these books of why sovereignty matters—other than as a shorthand (and a rather bad one, in Krasner’s view) for the degree of control, authority, and recognition enjoyed by states in the global economy. This is perhaps not surprising: to generations of scholars, sovereignty has appeared every bit as real as the monarchy must have seemed to Louis and his contemporaries. Indeed, for a long time, sovereignty has simply been taken for granted (and usually ignored or forgotten) by just about everyone.³ Now it seems possible that sovereignty itself might prove merely a time-phantom, its reality no more permanent or enduring than that of the ill-fated Bourbon dynasty.

Carlyle saw the death of Louis XV as the end of not just one reign but of an entire regime; similarly, the passing of sovereignty would mark a profound transformation of the modern political regime. Sovereignty is deeply implicated, for better or worse, in the central narratives of modern politics: the sovereign state—explicitly or as a background assumption—figures into nearly every extant account of political legitimacy. Sovereignty is in many ways the foundation of modern thinking about politics, a solution to a particular set of problems about the nature, location, and limits of political authority and politics. Its demise would trigger the collapse of much of the architecture of modern politics. Despite their other merits, these recent works fail adequately to grasp the meaning and significance of sovereignty and thus to convey a sense of why we should be concerned with its decline.

Indeed, Krasner seems flatly to reject such grandiose intimations about the importance of sovereignty. He is deeply skeptical about the reality of sovereignty, arguing that it is and always has been, “organized hypocrisy.” Organized hypocrisy “occurs when the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences are in conflict” (66)—that is, when instrumental action in the pursuit of rulers’ preferences to remain in power and advance their constituents’ interests conflict with the behavior required by norms. Hypocrisy simply means, for Krasner, a gap between the professed norms and principles of political action (the logic of appropriateness) and the strategic calculations on which such action is based (the logic of consequences). The hypocrisy is “organized” apparently because it characterizes states. In Krasner’s view, “hypocrisy is an inherent problem for political organizations” (65), but it is especially acute in the international domain, where “norms . . . will be less constraining than would be the case in other political settings because of conflicting logics of appropriateness, the absence of mechanisms for deciding among competing rules, and power asymmetries among states” (6).

Krasner thinks that much of the present confusion surrounding sovereignty results from the use of the term to refer to four phenomena that do not necessarily

3. Theorists of international relations are the exception to this rule, though even many realists have only recently begun to question sovereignty instead of treating it as an analytic assumption and ontological fact.

covary and are logically distinct (4, 14). “International legal sovereignty refers to the practices associated with mutual recognition, usually between territorial entities that have formal juridical independence. Westphalian sovereignty refers to political organization based on the exclusion of external actors from authority structures within a given territory” (3-4). These two uses of sovereignty “exclusively refer to issues of authority” (10). Krasner is less interested in his third and fourth types, “domestic sovereignty” and “interdependence sovereignty.” Domestic sovereignty denotes the formal organization of political authority inside states and the ability of the authorities to effectively exercise control within the state; interdependence sovereignty refers to the ability of state authorities “to regulate the flow of information, ideas, goods, people, pollutants, or capital across the borders of their state” (4). It refers exclusively to control, while domestic authority combines elements of control and authority (10). These disparate elements of sovereignty are distinguished to help us “understand what sovereign statehood has meant in actual practice with regard to international legal and Westphalian sovereignty” (5).

Employing these analytic distinctions, Krasner tries to refute the notion that globalization is undermining sovereignty by showing that, as a historical matter, there never really has been anything like Westphalian sovereignty.⁴ Against the recent trend of using the Westphalian model as a benchmark in asserting that the character of the international system is changing, Krasner argues that “the principles associated with both Westphalian and international legal sovereignty have always been violated” (24). Those principles, non-intervention and recognition, respectively, have been highly durable but only very weakly institutionalized; this is the hallmark of organized hypocrisy (58ff.). While Krasner allows that globalization affects control (domestic or interdependence sovereignty) in ways that can prompt rulers to compromise authority (Westphalian sovereignty), he maintains that for analytic purposes issues of control and authority are best kept separate (13).

The first two chapters of the book are devoted to supplying definitions, fleshing out the analytic framework, and locating organized hypocrisy with respect to other prominent theories of international relations. (Krasner sees his theory as similar to constructivist approaches drawing on the notion of cognitive scripts; 63ff.) The five central chapters provide numerous historical examples of compromises of Westphalian and international legal sovereignty, grouped together under the headings of minority rights, human rights, sovereign lending, and constitutional structures in new states in the nineteenth century and after 1945. In each case, Krasner documents the motivations of powerful states in violating or ignoring the norms of sov-

4. Krasner argues that international legal sovereignty is also characterized by organized hypocrisy, but less so than Westphalian sovereignty. Indeed, it is one of his central claims that international legal sovereignty makes it possible to give up Westphalian sovereignty—by signing international agreements that limit autonomy, etc. (Krasner, 19).

ereignty. He identifies two kinds of violation, each of which can take two forms: *invitation*, where violations of authority occur through conventions or contracts, and *intervention*, which occurs through coercion or imposition (25-26). Westphalian sovereignty can be violated in each of these four ways; by documenting the historical variety and frequency of these violations, Krasner hopes to establish his argument for organized hypocrisy.

The historical arguments that Krasner introduces are rich and informative, yet they do as much to highlight flaws in his analytic framework as to convince us of its utility. Take Krasner's definition of Westphalian sovereignty. He defines its key norm or "logic of appropriateness" as

an institutional arrangement for organizing political life that is based on two principles: territoriality and the exclusion of external actors from domestic authority structures. Rulers may be constrained, sometimes severely, by the external environment, but they are still free to choose the institutions and policies they regard as optimal. Westphalian sovereignty is violated when external actors influence or determine domestic authority structures (20).

As Krasner documents, there *are* numerous historical examples of violations of territoriality and exclusivity: direct interference in the affairs of other states, especially in matters of constitutional design and financial and economic control, are his two best examples.

The difficulty is that Krasner does not stick to his model and the definitions it comprises. For example, he argues that human rights conventions, voluntary agreements or statements of principles that are neither contingent on the behavior of other actors nor constitutive of new international authority structures, can violate Westphalian sovereignty if they alter domestic views about legitimate governmental behavior (106). "When a government . . . invites external legitimation of its own practices and institutions by signing a human rights convention, it might indirectly compromise its autonomy by altering conceptions of appropriate political authority held by actors in civil society, who may then press for the reorganization of domestic structures" (119).⁵ It is not clear, however, how acknowledging a set of principles violates either territoriality or the exclusion of external actors from domestic authority structures, his definition of a violation of Westphalian sovereignty.⁶ In fact, it is not evident that any *external* actor is involved at all in this instance.

A slippage is apparent here that becomes more pronounced throughout the later chapters of the book: a shift from territoriality and exclusivity to autonomy as

5. Krasner's example of this phenomenon is the effect of the Helsinki Final Act on domestic constituencies in the Soviet bloc.

6. Krasner states explicitly that private groups like Amnesty International cannot be construed as violating Westphalian sovereignty since they "make no claim to authoritative decision-making" (Krasner 119).

the constitutive norm or principle of Westphalian sovereignty. In the example just cited, Krasner warns that a government might “compromise its autonomy.” Later, in discussing conditions attached to international loans, Krasner notes a potential compromise of “domestic autonomy” (128-29, 151). Autonomy is not equivalent with territoriality and exclusion of external actors; indeed, as Krasner notes early on, governments will always be constrained in their policy choices, but they remain free to choose what to them is the optimal policy.⁷ A loan with conditions, for example, can be accepted or rejected by states enjoying international legal sovereignty; that there might be costs, even huge costs, associated with either course of action is not itself a violation of sovereignty or even of autonomy. And in the case of human rights agreements, the notion that a change in domestic conceptions about legitimate authority violates sovereignty when the agreement is voluntary simply defies the logic of Krasner’s claims about what the norms of Westphalian sovereignty are and about the logical distinctiveness of the various facets of sovereignty.

Moreover, the slide from nonintervention (territoriality plus exclusivity) to autonomy lands us right back in the conceptual morass that Krasner had hoped to sidestep. He sometimes refers to compromises of “domestic autonomy,” by which he seems to mean the notions of legitimacy and authority within the state. As in the case of the human rights conventions, it seems that changes in these conceptions of domestic authority constitute violations of Westphalian sovereignty if the new ideas originate or are recognized “externally” (whatever that might mean).⁸ If this is right, however, then the link between domestic sovereignty and Westphalian sovereignty is not just a “behavioral” one. Westphalian sovereignty would seem to be contingent upon a particular notion and recognition of the state as the sole legitimate political authority. Krasner asserts that politics can be organized in many different ways domestically without raising any issues for Westphalian or international legal sovereignty (11), yet his own arguments make clear that this isn’t true, at least without some important qualifications. It might be that Westphalian sovereignty is unaffected by regime-type (liberal-democratic, authoritarian, etc.), but it seems fairly obvious that the domestic state must itself be conceived as sovereign, as the final and legitimate source of political authority within a particular territory. Otherwise, one could imagine a state that invited or allowed external authorities and sources of legitimacy. At this point, domestic and Westphalian sovereignty bleed together and we find ourselves back with something like Hinsley’s classic definition

7. The distinction between “constraints,” which Krasner says are inevitable but leave states free to choose, and “influence,” which constitutes a violation of sovereignty, is tenuous.

8. It could mean that any principles recognizing some obligation higher than or external to the state are invalid; or, it could simply mean that any outside influence violates Westphalian sovereignty. This latter notion seems ludicrous on Krasner’s own terms, and I suspect that he is struggling with something like the former.

of sovereignty: final and absolute political authority in the political community where no such authority exists elsewhere.⁹

And, despite the problems it poses for Krasner's argument, this is a very useful place to end up, because it gives us some insight into a problem that Krasner himself does not adequately address. He maintains consistently that the norms of Westphalian and international legal sovereignty are highly durable yet poorly institutionalized—and therefore easily and frequently violated. This is the essential feature of organized hypocrisy. Yet it is never explained why, given their frequent violation, the principles *are* durable. Why do these principles endure? Why—and to whom—do they matter in the first place? Why call them norms or principles at all when they are generally ignored?

Krasner draws on the notion of cognitive scripts, which provide logics of appropriateness for actors to follow, but on his own explanation of these scripts, they become prevalent and persuasive upon becoming institutionalized. "Once institutionalized, cognitive beliefs become social facts, they anchor reality for individuals and become part of the objective social environment" (64). This explanation creates a dilemma: perhaps the principles are more highly institutionalized than Krasner recognizes. If so, we could comprehend how the scripts come to have lasting normative force (durability, in Krasner's terminology). But the notion of an institutionalized norm, one visible and entrenched enough to become a cognitive script, suggests a norm that is obeyed more often than not (how else could we consider it institutionalized?). This would suggest that the logic of appropriateness (norms and principles) dominates the logic of consequences (strategic calculation of interests), contradicting the idea of sovereignty as organized hypocrisy. We might infer that rulers, Krasner's key actors, find the norm of sovereignty useful; this would explain why the norms are repeatedly invoked even if they are routinely ignored. Still, the question of why these particular norms are useful, and in what way, raises questions about the legitimacy of rule that Krasner treats only obliquely in his analysis.

Another possibility is that an international norm might be institutionalized at the domestic level. In other words, if Westphalian sovereignty is a necessary aspect of or complement to domestic sovereignty, the cognitive script might be institutionalized at home. Rulers would invoke the norms of sovereignty because the domestic audience cares about them. Strictly speaking, such an explanation is unavailable to Krasner because of his insistence on the separation between the different facets of sovereignty—though at times he seems to come close to it in his discussion of the interconnections among external influences, domestic legitimacy, and viable political authority. An analysis of sovereignty that began from the empirical and normative interdependence of internal and external sovereignty might go a long way toward resolving these issues, but it would undercut the notion of the

9. F. H. Hinsley, *Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1, 26.

logical distinctiveness of domestic and Westphalian sovereignty upon which Krasner's analysis rests.

On balance, Krasner sees sovereignty not as an empirical reality but as a regularity in the cognitive script of modernity. He leaves us with a clear sense of its problematic history and a poor sense of its enduring significance. This balance is reset somewhat in *States and Sovereignty in the Global Economy* (SSGE), a volume edited by David A. Smith, Dorothy J. Solinger, and Steven C. Topik. It is, unfortunately, impossible to consider each of the essays in the space available here.¹⁰ Instead, I shall focus on just a few of them, those that most help to illuminate our conceptual understanding of sovereignty, and leave aside the worthy and thought-provoking empirical studies of globalization's effects on actual states.

In their introduction, the editors note the importance of legitimation to sovereignty: "Legitimation occurs when citizens (or subjects) accept state authority over them because they see their rulers as providers of physical security, dispensers of justice, overseers of economic growth, and providers and distributors of collective goods" (SSGE, 8). Yet this Weberian notion of legitimacy, as Immanuel Wallerstein notes in his contribution to the volume, is only half the story; the very imprecise notion of "popular sovereignty" must also be considered (SSGE, 29). Wallerstein conceives this connection in terms of liberalism, which he sees as a three-pronged ideology based in suffrage, the welfare state, and nationalism, that "tamed" popular sovereignty and made it compatible with capitalism. (The self-determination of states takes the place of suffrage in the international system). Both the inward and the outward sovereignty of states are fundamental pillars of world capitalism, in his view, because they make a regulated global marketplace possible (SSGE, 33). This system of legitimacy is breaking down, Wallerstein argues, because of its inability to deliver on the promise of wealth for everyone implicit in the tamed liberal version of popular sovereignty; faith in the state as well as in anti-systemic movements as vehicles for collective betterment has declined, as manifest in a descent into lawlessness, ethnic separatism, violence, demands for private security, and the rise of "mafia states" (SSGE, 32). Globalization, in his view, is a distraction orchestrated by capitalists while they desperately seek a new mode of legitimacy to supersede the old (SSGE, 33).

Although much of this argument will be familiar to readers of Wallerstein—capitalists and their machinations behind a corrupt world-system soon to be mired in crisis—by introducing popular sovereignty into the discussion he touches on an important aspect of the interdependence of internal and external legitimacy. Krasner might be correct, empirically, in asserting that globalization is not transforming sovereignty; many observers do exaggerate the significance of contemporary

10. Contributors to the volume include Immanuel Wallerstein, Krasner, Giovanni Arrighi, Kenneth Pomeranz, Colin M. Lewis, William G. Clarence-Smith, Eric Helleiner, Saskia Sassen, Vivien A. Schmidt, József Böröcz, Manuel Pastor, Jr., Richard Stubbs, Edward Friedman, and Julius E. Nyang'Oro.

changes through their creation of an imaginary past (SSGE, 36). As Giovanni Arrighi notes, however, while “[t]hese violations and metamorphoses make eminently plausible Krasner’s contention that, empirically, Westphalian sovereignty is a myth,” it is important to note “that it has been no more a myth than the ideas of the rule of law, the social contract, democracy, whether liberal, social or whatever, and that like all these other myths, it has been a key ingredient in the formation and eventual globalization of the modern system of rule” (SSGE, 60-1).

Unlike Krasner, for whom reality is reducible to empirical regularity, Arrighi recognizes the role that myths can play in shaping empirical reality;¹¹ like Wallerstein, he hints at some connection between sovereignty and democracy. Unfortunately, neither author fleshes out these connections, but they at least signal in what direction an account of the empirical and normative interdependence of internal and external sovereignty might lead. Such an account, both suggest, would have to include an appraisal of “the modern system of rule,” that is, of the constellation of norms, myths, behaviors, principles, and institutions that constitute the configuration of rule.

Central among these, Eric Helleiner and Saskia Sassen maintain in their contributions to the volume, is the notion of territoriality. Helleiner considers and dismisses three arguments about the significance of globalization for sovereignty: that states have a declining capacity to regulate finance because of technological changes, that the heightened mobility of financial capital unleashes powerful competitive deregulatory pressures that prevent states from considering economic regulation in the financial sector, and that states have lost their ability to conduct independent macroeconomic policy due to the increased mobility of capital (SSGE, 139-45). These commonplace arguments about the effects of globalization seem off the mark to Helleiner.

A central weakness of the previous arguments is that they measure the status of the sovereign state according to the state’s ability to *control* activities within and across its borders. . . . Not only is it unclear whether financial globalization has eroded this control significantly, but indicators such as regulatory power and macroeconomic autonomy are ahistorical. They refer to state functions that were either never fully performed by sovereign states or only assumed very recently by such states (SSGE, 149).

He prefers to focus on the changing authority of states; in particular, on the erosion of state authority based on the principle of territoriality. Offshore financial

11. “The really interesting question,” Arrighi concludes, “is not whether the Westphalian principle of national sovereignty has been violated. Rather, it is whether and how the principle has guided and constrained state action and, over time, the outcome of this action has transformed the substantive meaning of national sovereignty” (SSGE, 61).

activity, extraterritorial regulatory practices, and the decline of single-currency zones all suggest that the link between territory and state authority is unraveling (SSGE, 149-51).¹²

As Sassen argues, a focus on territoriality reveals that, contra Krasner, Westphalian and international legal sovereignty might be undergoing substantial transformations even if, *de jure* or formally, they seem unchanged and unchallenged by globalization. This is because globalization has to do not just with cross-border flows and control but also with the “relocation of national public governance functions to transnational private arenas and with the development inside national states . . . of the mechanisms necessary to accommodate the rights of global capital in what are still national territories under the exclusive control of their states” (SSGE, 159-60). Sassen and Helleiner agree, then, that globalization has initiated a deep transformation in the configuration of territory and authority in the modern states system (as both also agree that this transformation does not in itself spell the end of sovereignty). In their view, the shift in the location and configuration of authority vis-à-vis established territorial boundaries in itself raises important issues about the roles and legitimacy of various actors, old and new (Sassen, SSGE, 167).

Collectively these essays highlight the connection between territoriality and legitimate political authority. Sovereignty is a conceptual expression of this connection, a statement of the empirical requirements of political legitimacy. This is easy to overlook today, when questions of legitimacy are frequently reduced (as by SSGE’s editors) to technical assessments of the state’s delivery of services. Yet the differentiation of modern states and the struggle for sovereignty itself were efforts to redefine the spatial parameters of legitimate authority, to delimit the proper realm of the political. The resulting configuration of final or supreme political authority within a territorially exclusive state, the Westphalian model, was always more a normative claim about legitimate political authority than it was an empirical claim about the powers and prerogatives of princes.

How and why this particular configuration of rule came into being are the questions that interest Daniel Philpott in *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped International Relations*. The book is ambitious in scope: Philpott wants to explain the origins and development of Westphalia as well as provide a general explanation of the influence of ideas in international relations. He develops a “framework of ideas” and an account of the “constitution of international society” to illuminate two “revolutions in sovereignty”: the advent of the system of sovereign states in

12. Helleiner cautions that these trends do not necessarily prove the “post-Westphalian hypothesis” of a new world order after sovereignty, in large part because the development of sovereignty in many economic and political domains was a product of the rise of nation-states in the nineteenth century rather than of the advent of territorial exclusivity in the seventeenth century.

early modern Europe, and specifically at Westphalia in 1648, and the post-war colonial independence movement.¹³

These “revolutions in sovereignty” are actually modifications and adjustments to the constitution of international society, “a set of norms, mutually agreed upon by polities who are members of the society, that define the holders of authority and their prerogatives” (12). These norms are rules that “are viewed as obligatory by the broad majority of people living under them, and that are usually, customarily practiced” (21-22). They are “constitutive, foundational” in that “they define polities and their basic powers with respect to one another” (12). “Constitutions of international society are both legitimate—that is, sanctioned by authoritative agreements—and practiced, generally respected by all polities that are powerful enough regularly to violate them” (12).

According to Philpott, the modern state, with its clearly defined internal realm, is a product of an international constitution whose “vital work is to found the scheme of authority that creates internal and external realms in the first place” (12). This scheme of authority has three facets or “faces”; these define what are the legitimate polities (sovereign states), who can be a legitimate polity (a Christian state, after Westphalia; any state, after colonial independence), and what are the prerogatives of legitimate polities (absolute authority; the privilege of non-intervention; 16-25). Together these norms literally constitute legitimate authority.

Philpott’s main aim is to show that ideas shape these international constitutions and to demonstrate how they do so. He develops a “framework of ideas” to help explain this process. The “framework of ideas” is essentially a constructivist account of how ideas exert influence, though Philpott seeks to push the constructivist agenda further by explaining international constitutive normative structures as the result of actions of state agents (50-51). The central difference between this account and its structuralist competitors is “the view of the ends of those who wield power. In the ideas account, it is the end prescribed by ideas; in the structural account, it is material power” (59). He recognizes that the “proximate cause of revolutions in sovereignty is the policies and pursuits of polities—states, empires, nations, or colonies acting as collectivities, spoken for by their heads” (47). The framework of ideas helps us grasp how polities come to have an interest—“a general long-term goal that the polity actively pursues through diplomacy, war, and other means of statecraft”—in an international system of states (47).

While Philpott sees recent literature on ideas in international relations as strong on the social power of ideas, he finds it weak in accounting for the uptake of ideas (257-58). To remedy this failure, he provides us with a description of the mechanism

13. Philpott actually identifies five revolutions, though he focuses on only these two. The others—the short-lived minority rights regime of the nineteenth century, European integration, and UN-sanctioned intervention—all work against sovereignty.

through which ideas operate; if ideas shape international relations, we need to know how. In Philpott's view, ideas play two important roles: they convert people to new identities and wield social power. Conversion takes place through "reasoned reflection"; people form their identities "through reflection upon the very propositions of ideas." This choice of identities is possible because "we are autonomous . . . we are agents, rational and free" (52). The uptake of ideas is facilitated by "circumstances of reflection"—any "event, institution, discourse, or practice that helps ideas to develop, lends appeal to ideas' intrinsic propositions, assists the transmission of ideas, and encourages the perpetuation of ideas, all without imposing ideas on the individual's identity, but leaving the ideas for the individual to adopt into one's own identity reflectively" (53). Ideas then wield social power through the activities of "couriers of ideas." Because "ideas do not perform their labors in the abstract," these labors must be "enacted by particular people in particular places" (67).¹⁴ Once conversions have occurred, ideas wield social power through their converts, by shaping the interests of their rulers.

Though Philpott attempts to remedy the neglect of the uptake of ideas, the cure is only partly effective. He is primarily concerned with the mechanisms through which ideas are adopted rather than with the substance of ideas themselves. Put differently, the uptake of ideas is explained independently of their content, which has no explanatory force in his view. Given Philpott's extremely rationalistic and atomistic view of identity, in which human beings are simply rational choosers of propositions, it would be impossible to go much further anyway.

This hints at a deeper problem: what is needed is less a mechanistic description of the "uptake of ideas" than an account of why particular ideas resonate at a given time and place. In the end Philpott simply posits that ideas, rather than material power, provide agents with ends.¹⁵ He has addressed the "how" of idea uptake, but he has not constructively broached the "why." His substantive account of the origins of the sovereign states system in Reformation theology suffers as a result: we are never quite sure whether sovereignty is logically entailed by the Protestant Reformation or whether it is simply consistent with Reformation theology. Philpott holds that "what [the leading Reformers'] political theology prescribed was the substance of sovereignty" (108). He points to Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms and other central Protestant tenets such as justification by faith, salvation through grace, and

14. "Publics," including peasants, merchants, voters, or anyone who is not in a government or activist organization, networks of committed believers, intellectual communities, activists, government institutions, legislators, heads of state, members of "transnational society" such as business leaders, and "the international context" are examples of potential couriers (Philpott, 67-70).

15. Perhaps this conception of ideas as suppliers of ends explains Philpott's curious tendency to attribute agency, rather than simply causal efficacy, to ideas themselves: "Ideas . . . are not choosy about who sponsors them into politics. In bringing about any political result, they might employ any or all of these couriers" of ideas (Philpott, 70).

the complete and unique authority of scripture in arguing for the connection between Reformation principles and sovereignty. There are also passing references to the theology and epistemology of Grotius. Unfortunately, Philpott devotes only a few pages to these discussions (104-10; 148).¹⁶

Elsewhere, he offers a somewhat different view: that the Reformation led to religious pluralism, which in turn generated a crisis, the solution to which was sovereignty (144-45). The conversions of large numbers of believers led to internal strife, which until Westphalia frequently bled into warfare on a continental scale. Even in countries such as France, which remained staunchly Catholic, the lessons of civil war promoted a *politique* view of religious matters.

In all instances, interests in sovereign statehood arose from social crises. But not just any sort of social crises. They were ones whose causes, character, and results were linked to the intrinsic propositions of Protestantism. The solution to these crises was not lower taxes, a weakening of the nobility, democratic politics, a people's republic, an end to monarchy, or a cessation of land, but a new separation between temporal and ecclesial realms, resulting from the effect of the spiritually subversive ideas (101).

Sovereignty provided the solution to the crisis of pluralism because it ensured that religion would no longer be a cause of war; it guaranteed religious pluralism (88-89).

Despite Philpott's assertions to the contrary, the substance of Reformation ideals drops out of this version of the story altogether. Rulers came to have an interest in sovereignty because without it, warfare would be a constant threat to stability and drain on resources. The strife caused by the Reformation almost certainly hastened the consolidation of the sovereign states system; as Philpott exhaustively details, it triggered thirty years of war that ultimately led to the settlement at Westphalia. But is there an intrinsic link between Reformation theology and sovereignty? There is certainly, as he argues, an "affinity" between these ideas. The difficulty is that Philpott has not adequately established that rulers' interest is the result of the substance of Protestant ideas rather than simply a practical solution to the strife generated by the Reformation.¹⁷ For instance, while the theory of the two kingdoms is clearly consonant with sovereignty, it is presumably also consistent with other notions. Conversely, it is hardly clear that sovereignty is the only solution to the problem of disorder. (That it became the favored—the universal—solution is a rather more significant puzzle, but Philpott's treatment of idea uptake, as I have suggested, can tell us little about

16. This is equally true of his discussion of the second revolution, colonial independence. He frequently mentions the ideas of nationalism and racial equality, but these ideas are simply proxies for a desire for colonial independence, the end they prescribe.

17. Consider the doctrine of the two kingdoms: despite Philpott's emphasis on this point, what emerged after Westphalia (and in many cases before, as in England and France) were national churches that exhibited perhaps less separation between the realms than had the old arrangements in Christendom.

such questions.) Indeed, Philpott's account differs little from many of its structuralist rivals in its rationalistic assumptions. It is, after all, the "ability of believers in ideas to alter the costs and benefits facing those who are in a position to promote or hinder the policies that the ideas demand" (58). It is not clear that the substance of ideas matters much at all to rulers facing choices about policy.

In fact, at a very basic level, this book is not about sovereignty at all. It is about how the interests of rulers in a sovereign states system have changed and about how ideas might play a role in effecting that change. Sovereignty, in the form of the international constitution, is merely the object upon which ideas act through their couriers, an end pursued by rulers whose cost-benefit analyses are affected by the actions and demands of Protestants. Philpott is not interested in understanding the substance of sovereignty, in evaluating its normative claims, or in fleshing out the links between territory, authority, and legitimacy that his international constitution establishes; he is interested in how the constitution develops and changes. Despite his professed concern with the norms of legitimate authority established by the constitution of sovereignty, the substance of this constitution remains opaque in light of Philpott's analysis.¹⁸

It is unfair to criticize any book for failing to be the book the reviewer would have written, and that is not my intention here. Each of these books wrestles admirably with important problems in the development and practice of sovereignty. Yet one can't help wondering what all the fuss is about: if sovereignty is just hypocrisy, or just the product of rulers' interests, simply a set of norms for international behavior that somehow exist independently of behavior, it is hard to see why we should care if sovereignty is changed, eroded, or transformed. Focusing on the empirical aspects of sovereignty—the chronicle of states' activities, the mechanics of change in the international constitution—is important, but it fails to capture *why* sovereignty matters. Each of these books, its strengths notwithstanding, pays inadequate attention to the normative dimension of sovereignty, to the substance of authority and legitimacy and territory that infuse the empirical reality of the sovereign state with political meaning. Let me stress that the problem is not the empirical focus of these studies: the empirical framework of sovereignty is an intrinsic part of its normative significance. The problem is rather that the full meaning of sovereignty cannot be grasped by looking at either its empirical or its normative element in isolation.

This point is neatly emphasized by John Hoffman's *Sovereignty*, which suffers from its exclusive attention to the normative and theoretical aspects of the concept

18. Unlike Krasner, whose analysis of the historical behavior of states leads him to conclude that sovereignty is merely organized hypocrisy, Philpott simply treats constitutions as distinct from "their exceptions, aberrations, and violations. Indeed," he argues, "constitutions can be violated, and can experience aberrations and exceptions, without losing their status as constitutions. When compromised, they nevertheless continue to constitute authority of polities, the very authority that is compromised" (25). This statement seems to conflict with Philpott's insistence that norms should be evidenced in practice.

and its inattention to empirical concerns. Hoffman begins with an admission: in the past, he had argued that state sovereignty was a problematic concept that should be abandoned. Now, he realizes, his critics were right, at least in a way. "Sovereignty is an insoluble problem . . . but it is insoluble only as long as we associate it with the state. I have become convinced that this linkage takes us to the heart of the problem" (2). He now holds that "*the link between the two can and must be severed*, and that, when this is done, the concept of sovereignty can be reformulated and 'reclaimed'" (2). Sovereignty cannot be abandoned, he says, because "it exists in the real world" of modern nation-states. "To try and ignore it is as futile as trying to ignore the existence of the state. . ." (14). While some critics argue "that we should abandon the notion of sovereignty while still retaining the idea of the state," this position is untenable in Hoffman's view; no one denies that states exist, and if they exist, they will at least claim the right to sovereignty (15). Here Hoffman seems to be making a clear nod to the empirical reality of sovereignty. It is more than a little odd, then, when a few pages later he argues that the state is the source of much confusion and contention associated with sovereignty and concludes that we "can only move beyond the paralysing contentiousness of the state as a concept if we move beyond the state as a troubled institutional reality" (19). He adds a few pages later that if "sovereignty is to be explored as a coherent and meaningful concept, it has to be detached from the state" (21).

This detachment of state and sovereignty is necessary because, in Hoffman's view, state sovereignty is a normatively impoverished concept:

the sovereignty of the state has nothing to do with political independence, autonomy, impermeability, or lack of external constraint. Sovereignty implies neither legitimacy nor human rights. The sovereign state has no necessary link with morality, democracy, civil or political rights. Indeed, sovereignty is not even tied to order and security. . . (30).

Historically, it is true that there is no connection between sovereignty and such principles as democracy, morality, or rights. Sovereign states have violated or denied these principles at least as often as they have respected them. Hoffman's desire to detach sovereignty from the state follows from his observation of this weak and wavering commitment.

This is because, as he puts it, "[d]emocracy is frequently pitted against sovereignty" (70), he develops a "relational view" of sovereignty intended to be more amenable to democracy and individual autonomy.¹⁹ Unfortunately, this view is hastily and confusingly presented. Relational sovereignty attaches to the individual rather than to the state, as in the "modernist" conception. It is based in the idea that

19. Indeed, it sometimes seems that relational sovereignty and democracy are identical in Hoffman's view.

individual identities are constituted at the nexus of relationships that define them. This (somehow) implies freedom, autonomy, and self-determination, which are produced through relationships (hence, a “relational view”; 96-97). When relationships are permeated by force or embedded in hierarchy, they become disrupted, and freedom and autonomy are hampered (101). Because force and hierarchy are both inextricably linked with the modernist conception of the state in Hoffman’s view, only moving beyond the state allows us to resolve the apparent conflict between democracy and sovereignty.

For a “realistic” account of sovereignty, Hoffman’s relational view is Pollyanna-like in its assumption that sovereignty can simply be unproblematically detached from the state. As Hoffman’s argument demonstrates, this is certainly possible conceptually: we can describe a relational account of individual choice, freedom, and self-determination and call it sovereignty. The question is whether this detachment is in fact a real solution to a real problem. Forget for now Hoffman’s own claim that we cannot abandon sovereignty because it is grounded in the reality of sovereign states; his assessment of the shortcomings of state sovereignty is on target. Sovereignty is no guarantee of order, rights, justice, morality, or democracy. Hoffman errs, however, in placing legitimacy on this list. Crucially, in the Westphalian order legitimacy and sovereignty are identical; sovereignty is, by definition, legitimate authority. This follows from the recognition of states as independent and autonomous entities possessing final (absolute) political authority.

This axiomatic ascription of legitimacy to sovereigns is no doubt problematic, as Hoffman suggests, especially if one is concerned with such things as democracy and rights, and it has been widely criticized (especially by feminists and by advocates of human rights). Yet this axiomatic legitimacy is central to the narrative of modern politics. Philpott seems to recognize this when he notes that “[i]f the sovereign state provides a people with one sort of liberty, it also provides a carapace under which regimes may, and have, suppressed [sic] liberal and democratic rights. . .” (Philpott, 10).²⁰ The sovereign state might have no *necessary* connection with order, rights, justice, morality, and democracy, but in the modern era they have only been *possible* within the sovereign state.²¹ This is one empirical finding that any realistic account of sovereignty must weigh carefully. Normative principles, if they are to have real existence, are always instantiated in a particular political context. For several centuries, this context has been the sovereign state.

Hoffman provides a clear, and negative, account of why sovereignty matters: it is deeply tied up with autonomy, self-determination, democracy, liberty, and other fundamental principles of modern politics. Yet he fails to recognize the paradoxical

20. Except for another passing remark in the conclusion, Philpott does not pursue this insight.

21. Cf. Robert O. Keohane, “Sovereignty, Interdependence, and International Institutions,” in *Center for Social Theory and Comparative History Colloquium Series* (Los Angeles: 1991).

nature of sovereignty's interdependence with these principles; democracy can't abide sovereignty and the amoral character of the modern state, but neither can it do without them. The reality of sovereignty must be reckoned in respect of this paradox. This is why our analysis of sovereignty must be at once normative and empirical. We must understand how sovereignty and principles like democracy are deeply imbricated in the modern/Westphalian configuration of rule. We must try to comprehend how the interdependence between legitimate political authority and the structure of political space is configured and how, in turn, this configuration of rule bears on the realization of particular principles.

The key features of this configuration can be sketched briefly with respect to democracy (to give one example). Sovereignty defines political spaces and posits that there is only one legitimate political authority within any such space (the notions of territoriality and exclusivity). In other words, sovereignty defines political community.²² This definition is crucial to democracy; as scholars have long realized, the democratic principle does not itself contain any criteria for determining where it should apply.²³ Democracy is also, as Hoffman argues, frequently associated with self-determination; in the Westphalian order, this is *national* self-determination (cf. Wallerstein, above). A polity can only be self-determining (democratic) internally when its right to be self-determining is recognized and respected externally; we would not call a state democratic if that state were controlled or governed by another state, regardless of its formal constitution. *Pace* Krasner, Westphalian sovereignty and domestic sovereignty are tightly bound up together—at least in the case of democracies. Democracy is dependent on both the sovereignty of the polity and on an international system in which the norms of sovereignty are recognized.

Moreover, since there can be only one legitimate or rightful political authority within a sovereign state, that authority must be absolute or supreme; there can be no autonomous power centers or governance functions within or across the polity. Democracy depends upon this aspect of sovereignty as well. The consolidation of governance authority in the state, which evolved in late medieval and early modern Europe and which is a defining feature of sovereignty, is essential to democracy; democracy in a particular territory is possible because all the relevant political authority is concentrated in the state, which is in turn subject to democratic con-

22. Cf. David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

23. Pierre Manent, "Democracy without Nations?" *Journal of Democracy* 8 (1997): 92-102; Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). I am leaving aside for now the monumental difficulty in specifying what the democratic principle (or principles) might be.

24. Hence the socialist/Marxist critique of liberal democracy with its "private" sphere of economic activity and wealth accumulation.

trol.²⁴ The ability and capacity to be genuinely self-determining, to make and enact decisions that reflect the will of the people (“popular sovereignty”) is also premised upon the supremacy of political authority within the state.

Now, critics like Hoffman might object that these are features of the statist conception of democracy and reflect modernist assumptions about state supremacy, legitimate force, and hierarchy. Such objections are to the point, but that point is precisely that modern democracy is conceptually dependent upon and operationalizes these statist premises. The limits sovereignty imposes on democracy, as I have suggested here, make democracy possible, and it is presently unclear how democracy might work apart from these limits. Hoffman asserts that the “logic” of democracy points beyond the state (55). This is true and false: democracy is deeply enmeshed in and dependent upon the sovereign state, yet its egalitarianism and its guarantee of fundamental human rights do conflict with the limits entailed by sovereignty. But we cannot simply redefine sovereignty in isolation, for to do so is necessarily to redefine democracy as well. A realistic approach to redefining *democracy* would analyze its core principles in their normative and empirical dimensions. What are these principles? How are they limited, and how might they be realized apart from the state? Answers to these questions, not a conceptual argument culminating with the dismissal of the sovereign state because of its troubled reality, are indispensable in theorizing about democracy in the context of globalization.

Such an analysis would also help us to avoid facile conclusions drawn from empirical evidence concerning globalization. It is not just global flows, measures of control, and patterns of behavior that are of interest; we must focus on how changes in these phenomena bear on the structure, character, and location of authority in the international system. New forms of authority, especially transnational and international governance authorities, threaten modern or “sovereign” democracy. Sovereignty defines legitimate political authority, and changes in structures of authority can be every bit as significant as changes in the empirical flows that concern Krasner and many other critics.

Sovereignty may or may not prove to be a “time-phantasm”; it is too soon to say whether globalization is the revolution that will sweep it away as the French revolution transformed the world of Louis XV. Whatever the case, the current debates afford us the opportunity to examine sovereignty anew, to grasp its tremendous formative influence on modern politics, and to ponder its enduring significance. Sovereignty matters because it is central to modern democracy and to political authority more generally. Its reality, however troubled and hypocritical, must be reckoned in terms of this centrality.