

## REFLECTION, EVALUATION, INTEGRATION

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# The New Sovereignty in International Relations<sup>1</sup>

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The academic study of sovereignty is undergoing a mini-renaissance. Stimulated by criticisms of classical conceptions of sovereignty in systemic theories of politics, scholars returned to sovereignty as a topic of inquiry in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Their studies are finally bearing fruit. This essay focuses on the new conceptions of sovereignty that are emerging and (1) discusses the fundamental nature of sovereignty, (2) reviews the classical perspective on sovereignty, (3) surveys new constructivist alternatives to this classical view, (4) examines important new work on the problematic nature of sovereignty, (5) identifies continua of hierarchic relationships that make sense of the various forms of mixed or restricted sovereignty that we observe in world politics, and (6) argues why it is important to study alternative, hierarchic relationships in international relations. The principal themes throughout are that sovereignty is far more problematic than recognized in the classical model, that important elements of hierarchy exist in the global system, and that both our theories and practice of international politics would be improved by explicitly incorporating variations in hierarchy.

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Social workers learn a common metaphor for family therapy. In troubled homes, one nearly always finds a “dead horse” in the middle of the dining room table. The family may refuse to recognize or speak about the dead horse. They may try to pretend it is not there. But the lifeless animal’s presence nonetheless weighs heavily on the family and disrupts its daily interactions. Recognizing the dead horse and acknowledging its existence is the first step toward dealing with the family’s problems.

Hierarchy is one of the “dead horses” plaguing the study and practice of international politics. It is a fact of international life, but we refuse to recognize it. Indeed, for much of the last fifty years, we have refused to talk about it, and now, after decades of trying to forget, we have even lost the language to describe it. The norm of juridical or international legal sovereignty has taken such deep roots that it is unseemly or impolite to point out and talk about hierarchies in contemporary international relations. Yet, hierarchy is still there, lying in the middle of the table.

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Like a troubled family, we can improve our theories of international relations and potentially help resolve perplexing problems of current policy by acknowledging hierarchy's presence and role in world politics.

Hierarchy is, and always has been, part of international relations. From the empires that dominated the ancient world to the colonial ones that ruled the nineteenth century, this much is obvious. But with the triumph of the nation-state as the dominant form of political organization in the world, many have concluded that hierarchy is now obsolete. New work on the meaning and practice of sovereignty, however, demonstrates that hierarchy is alive and well and found throughout the globe. Nonetheless, this mini-renaissance in the study of sovereignty does not itself recognize the hierarchy in world politics that it reveals and lacks a metric by which to conceptualize systematic variations in hierarchy.

This essay provides a framework for classifying and identifying different forms of hierarchy and discusses how scholarly inquiry and policy are impoverished by failing to incorporate hierarchy into our analyses. What follows will include (1) a discussion of the fundamental nature of sovereignty, (2) a review of the classical perspective on sovereignty and its challengers, (3) a survey of new constructivist alternatives to this classical view, (4) an examination of important new work on the problematic nature of sovereignty, (5) the identification of continua of hierarchic relationships that make sense of the various forms of mixed or restricted sovereignty that we observe in world politics, and (6) arguments regarding why, for analytic and policy reasons, it is important to study alternative, hierarchic relationships in international relations. The conclusion takes up the normative issues involved in publicly discussing and recognizing hierarchies in the study of international politics. The themes throughout the piece are that sovereignty is far more problematic than recognized in the classical model, that important elements of hierarchy exist in the global system, and that our theories of international relations would be improved by explicitly incorporating variations in hierarchy. In focusing attention on hierarchy, we as academics can also provide new conceptual categories that will inform debates about the status of different polities in the contemporary world.

### **Two Faces of Sovereignty**

Sovereignty is a type of authority relationship. And despite the volumes written about it, authority is one of those terms—like power—that political scientists, and especially those in international relations, define only with difficulty. In the paradigmatic definition, authority is a social relationship in which “A (a person or occupant of an office) wills B to follow A and B voluntarily complies” (Scheppelle and Soltan 1987:194). In other words, authority is characterized by commands issued by one actor that are expected to be obeyed by a second (see also Friedrich 1958; Pennock and Chapman 1987; Hurd 1999).

At least three characteristics of authority are worthy of note. First, power may be a foundation of authority, but authority does not itself rely upon the exercise of coercion (Peters 1967:92–94). Authority can rest on pure voluntarism (B complies because of the legitimacy of A) or partial voluntarism in which the coercive power of A lurks in the background, often prominently, but is not directly used. Purely coercive commands—of the form “do this, or die”—are not authoritative. Authority relations must contain some measure of legitimacy (another ill-defined term) and an obligation, understood by both parties, for B to comply with the wishes of A. Even in instances in which B chooses to violate the commands of A, the larger community governed by A and possibly even B itself accepts the legitimacy of the punishment A may impose.

Second, authority involves a unique type of noncoercive command. Although the claim to authority may be justified by appeals to divine right, tradition, popular

support, and so on, A's authoritative commands do not themselves need to be justified. Authoritative commands, thus, differ from moral or scientific commands (Peters 1967:94–95). This characteristic highlights the important role of justifications—and their absence—in identifying sources and patterns of authority in world politics (Hurd 1999:391).

And, third, as an important qualification, authority is never absolute. The strength of authority is measured by the maximum divergence between A's command and the preferences of B that will lead B to comply voluntarily. A is weak when it is limited to willing only that which B would do anyway. At the same time, authority is never without limit. There is always some command that A could issue that B would defy.

As a type of authority relationship, sovereignty possesses both an internal and an external face. Internally, sovereignty defines the ultimate or highest authority within a state. In centuries past, the highest authority was the monarch or sovereign; today it can be the head of government or, in popular sovereignty, the people. In turn, sovereignty implies a hierarchic relationship between the sovereign and subordinates, whoever they may be. Internal sovereignty requires effective control over the territory claimed by the state. Stephen Krasner (1999) refers to this as domestic sovereignty. In the absence of such control, there can be no ultimate authority and, thus, no sovereign. Before 1945, internal sovereignty was typically a prerequisite for recognition by the international community. Since that time, it has become increasingly separated from the second face of sovereignty (see Jackson 1990).

Externally, sovereignty entails the recognition by other similarly recognized states that this entity is “one of them” and, thus, is an inherently social concept (Bull 1977). Sovereignty implies a relationship of formal equality. As Kenneth Waltz (1979:88) describes it, between sovereign states “none is entitled to command; none is required to obey.” Robert Jackson (1990) refers to this as juridical sovereignty, and Krasner (1999) as international legal sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> This second face of sovereignty constitutes the anarchy characteristic of relations between states. Although technically correct, it is not especially helpful to refer to anarchy as the absence of authority. Rather, as will become clear in the course of this essay, anarchy is a relationship comprised of authoritative actors who do not themselves possess authority over one another.

The two faces of sovereignty are, thus, inherently joined. Domestic hierarchy and international anarchy are flip sides of the same coin. As defined, one cannot exist without the other. Sovereignty is, therefore, an *attribute* of units which, depending on the referent, entails *relationships* of both hierarchy and anarchy. This point is not new and should be obvious, but it is often overlooked.

### The Now Classical Perspective

The classical perspective, embodied in realist and neorealist writings on international politics, assumes that sovereignty is a fixed and exogenous attribute of states—a subject of later criticism. More important for the purposes of this essay, sovereignty is also assumed to be an absolute principle. As Hugo Grotius, the Dutch legal theorist and father of the modern conception of sovereignty, wrote, “sovereignty is a unity, in itself indivisible” (quoted in Keene 2002:44). In this view, a state is either sovereign—or it is not a state.

For classical realists, sovereignty is understood as a practical matter to have arisen in and around the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which ended the Thirty Year's War,

<sup>2</sup>A corollary to juridical sovereignty is that states are free from all external authority, except for those constraints they voluntarily accept. Krasner (1999) refers to this as Westphalian sovereignty and shows that it is frequently violated in practice—a point we will return to later at length.

and to denote the existence of a supreme authority over a certain territory. As we have seen, the key idea is that sovereignty requires a single political hierarchy reaching its apex in the “sovereign.” Externally, sovereignty implies that each state is independent, with no authority above the state, and that each state is formally the equal of all other sovereign states. Given this perspective, sovereignty is clearly an absolute. A polity either is or is not sovereign. There either is or is not a single internal hierarchy; and the polity either is or is not independent and the equal of others. In this classical view, drawn from the experience of the European states system, a polity cannot be a little bit sovereign.

This absolute view of sovereignty was retained in the move from unit- to system-level theory that occurred in international relations during the late 1970s. Classical realists paid some attention to sovereignty but did not emphasize anarchy. Hans Morgenthau (1978), for example, devoted a chapter to sovereignty in his section on international law, but the term anarchy does not appear in the index, nor has this writer been able to find it anywhere in the text. Neorealists, as would be expected given their focus on relational rather than unit-level traits, shifted analysis to anarchy and away from sovereignty. In his *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz (1979:95–96) highlighted anarchy but mentioned sovereignty in only three paragraphs under the heading of the “character of the units.” Despite this shift from attribute to relationship, however, neorealists retain the classical conception of sovereignty.

As is now well known, Waltz distinguishes international systems in terms of their ordering principles, and he differentiates between the hierarchic realm of domestic politics and the anarchic realm of international politics. Drawing a strict line between the two, he argues:

Structural questions are questions about the arrangement of the parts of a system. The parts of domestic political systems stand in relations of super- and subordination . . . Domestic systems are centralized and hierarchic. The parts of international political-systems stand in relations of coordination. Formally, each is the equal of all the others . . . International systems are decentralized and anarchic. (Waltz 1979:88)

Stepping back from this strict demarcation, however, Waltz (1979:114–115) later acknowledged that “all societies are organized segmentally or hierarchically in greater or lesser degree . . . One might conceive of some societies approaching the purely anarchic, of others approaching the purely hierarchic, and of still others reflecting specified mixes of the two organizational types.” This important concession implies that variations in sovereignty and anarchy can, and possibly do, exist within the international system. Nonetheless, Waltz (1979:115) returned to an absolutist view and concluded that “although . . . pure orders do not exist, to distinguish realms by their organizing principles is nevertheless proper and important.”

Waltz justifies this strict line between domestic hierarchy and international anarchy, despite the intermediate cases he acknowledges, by defining the latter as holding only for the great powers. Recognizing that other types of units or actors might exist, he (Waltz 1979:91, 93) notes that “international structures are defined in terms of the primary political units of an era, be they city states, empires, or nations,” and that “states are not and never have been the only international actors. But then structures are defined not by all of the actors that flourish within them but by the major ones.” Waltz (1979:94) concludes “so long as the major states are the major actors, the structure of international politics is defined in terms of them.” Following this same logic, therefore, even if some actors are not sovereign and some non-anarchic relations exist, they are largely inconsequential and safely ignored. Throughout Waltz’s analysis, international politics is defined by the great powers that remain clearly sovereign and embedded in anarchic relations with one another.

This position differs in important ways from the newer approaches to sovereignty that will be discussed later. The key question, and one that we will address in the concluding section of this essay, concerns what we learn by acknowledging that not all interesting actors within the international system are fully sovereign.

At about the same time that the classical perspective was being explicated by Waltz, two major intellectual alternatives were battling for prominence. First, in the early 1970s, economic interdependence (Cooper 1968) and transnational relations (Keohane and Nye 1972) were seen as tightly constraining and perhaps fundamentally altering the nature of state sovereignty. Sovereignty was believed to be “at bay” (Vernon 1971). Charles Kindleberger (1969:207) even suggested that “the nation-state is just about through as an economic unit.” One line of response neorealists (see Waltz 1979:138–146) took was to challenge the degree of interdependence between states. A second, and ultimately more important rejoinder, was to acknowledge the growth of interdependence but to argue that it was ultimately a product of state choice—one that could be and, in fact, might well be, unchosen (Gilpin 1975). As a policy choice, interdependence became not a constraint on sovereignty but, instead, an expression of that very sovereignty. Extended into the later literature on institutions, the observation that states might choose policies or adopt institutions that would tie their hands became, not an infringement on sovereignty, but rather its manifestation. Leading interdependence theorists accepted this formulation and thereafter incorporated the now classical view of sovereignty and anarchy as the basis for an important new wave of theorizing (Keohane 1984, 1986).

The second intellectual alternative, dependency theory (Galtung 1971; Wallerstein 1979), posited a structural condition of inequality among states as a more fundamental critique of the classical view of sovereignty. In this approach, states were understood as locked into the periphery (or semiperiphery) by the functioning of the capitalist world economy. Dependence was a condition, not a choice. This view of structure was based more on differences in power and unequal market processes than in authority, but capitalism and the inequality that necessarily followed were so pervasive that power and authority became virtually synonymous. Differences between the two were not a subject of explicit theorizing. As is well known, however, dependency theory was, if not falsified, at least severely crippled by the success of the East Asian newly industrializing countries as they escaped from the periphery and prospered through export-led growth-events that were clearly inconsistent with most variants of the theory (among others, see Haggard 1990). As a result, dependency was also reconceptualized as a state choice, epitomized today in the so-called Washington consensus that if developing countries could only get good institutions they, too, could thrive within an open capitalist world economy. Thus, with the success of the newly industrializing countries, this promising alternative to the classical view of sovereignty withered.

In effect, the first alternative, interdependence, was eventually subsumed by the now classical approach; indeed, it was through this victory that the model became “classical.” The second, dependency theory, was defeated by real-world developments. By the early 1980s, there was a broad consensus in the field that international relations were characterized by anarchy defined as an absolute condition. Debate centered around the consequences of anarchy, and especially whether it impeded cooperation (Jervis 1978; Oye 1986; Grieco 1990). But there was widespread agreement that anarchy itself was a useful description of relations between states.

### **Constructing Sovereignty**

More recently, constructivists have usefully “problematized” several key concepts—including sovereignty—that have been taken for granted in international relations.

As a result of constructivist criticisms and new scholarship, our understanding of sovereignty has been profoundly transformed.<sup>3</sup>

The criticisms of the classical view of sovereignty and anarchy focus primarily on the lack of a generative principle. As John Ruggie (1986) ably points out, Waltz's conception of structure is static and cannot account for change in the ordering principle and, secondarily, in the level of functional differentiation from the feudal system to the modern states system. Richard Ashley (1986:272) similarly criticizes the neorealist formulation as "statist before it is structuralist." Although Waltz acknowledges this problem and defends his ambition to create a "problem-solving" theory (Waltz 1986:337–341), the criticism remains important. Over the last decade, research—not all of it constructivist—has finally emerged that attempts to provide this generative principle, including work by Charles Tilly (1990), Hendrick Spruyt (1994), Daniel Philpot (2001), and others (reviewed in Kahler 2002).

Constructivists have emphasized that sovereignty, in both its internal and external faces, is a socially constructed trait. Although sovereignty and especially anarchy were once taken as enduring givens of international relations, they are now more usefully understood as what John Searle (1995) calls "social facts" and what Alexander Wendt (1999), following Roy Bhaskar (1979), calls "social kinds" (that is, social constructs that are produced and reproduced through the practices of states). Thus, sovereignty is not exogenous to the system but produced through practice. Nor is it necessarily fixed or inviolable, although its status as a social fact does not imply that it is fluid and malleable either. Social facts are facts precisely because they are basic premises upon which actors condition other behaviors; they are, therefore, enduring and hard to change. Nonetheless, recognizing that sovereignty and its relational forms—domestic hierarchy and international anarchy—are socially constructed potentially opens up new avenues for understanding international politics.

Central to constructivist interpretations of sovereignty is the view that sovereignty itself comes from "someplace" and, in any age, is heavily influenced by other social norms and practices. It is this quality that Wendt (1992) highlights in his description of anarchy as "what states make of it." In his view, anarchy does not necessarily imply a Hobbesian state-of-nature, which is dependent upon self-help with its resulting security dilemma as in the neorealist formulation, because it also contains alternative Lockean and Kantian possibilities (Wendt 1999:Ch. 6). Christian Reus-Smit (1999) conceptualizes sovereignty as one of three elements of international societies' "constitutional structure," which itself is related to the varying "moral purposes" of the state, embodying norms of legitimacy and rightful action. Constructivist contributions have richly informed our understanding of the evolution and substantive meaning of sovereignty over time. As Wendt theorizes most elegantly and Reus-Smit demonstrates historically, the meaning and practice of sovereignty have varied even within relationships in which the parties are clearly not subordinate to a common authority.

Nonetheless, this new understanding of sovereignty as a dynamic, socially constructed force continues to treat it as an absolute condition. This new perspective helps explain how this principle came about, but it neither recognizes deviations from sovereignty nor explains these anomalies.<sup>4</sup> Although sovereignty may be a social construct that changes over time, it is still perceived as a systemwide attribute inhering in all state members identically. In this respect, Wendt (1999) is equal to Waltz in his statism. Reus-Smit (1999), in turn, limits the effective system to

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<sup>3</sup>Among the more useful works that have problematized sovereignty but are not cited in this section, see, Dessler (1989), Kratochwil (1989), Onuf (1989), and Ruggie (1993a, 1993b).

<sup>4</sup>Constructivists would view these anomalies as "decoupled" from the normative structure and, thus, as aberrations that do not need to be explained. Such a procedure is appropriate as long as anomalies are rare, but it becomes problematic if they are frequent.

only sovereign states. Most telling, Reus-Smit fails to explain how the modern international order that he identifies coexisted with overseas imperialism, a parallel structure that contravened the moral purpose of the modern state. Imperialism failed to augment individual potentialities; it violated the norm of procedural justice based on lawmaking by the governed; and it flourished outside the practice of contractual law and multilateralism. Reus-Smit's description of the modern international system may be correct for the handful of states that have been continuously sovereign since the early nineteenth century, but for much of the period he examines, over two-thirds of humanity are ignored. Even Philpott (2001), who recognizes past imperialism, is concerned in the modern period only with the spread of sovereignty to the colonial world, not with how this world came to be in the first instance nor how imperialism was reconciled with the principled ideas behind sovereignty in centuries past. Edward Keene (2002) has developed an extended critique of the so-called English school on this same point, arguing that the world order constructed by the society of states was confined to Europe and contained a parallel, civilizing order imposed on the peripheral areas.

Although more clearly dynamic and "generative," constructivist analyses still exhibit a strong tendency to reify the state and, more important, to treat sovereignty as a dichotomous, absolute variable. Although these scholars demonstrate that what it means to be sovereign has evolved over time, the fact of sovereignty is still assumed to be an absolute condition.

### **Problematic Sovereignty**

Although identified with the view that sovereignty is indivisible, Grotius also noted the large number of exceptions to this principle (Keene 2002:44). Even in his own era, Grotius recognized that in practice sovereignty was eminently divisible. In a series of important works, Stephen Krasner (1993, 1999, 2001) has highlighted and probed deviations from what he calls Westphalian sovereignty. In doing so, he has revealed a wide range of authority relationships in international relations. Whereas constructivists have emphasized change over time in systemwide principles, Krasner's aim, instead, was to show how sovereignty varies substantively across units within the modern international system.

Westphalian sovereignty is defined 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" (Krasner 1999:20). Krasner (1993) disputes received understandings of what did or did not occur at Westphalia, where the treaties of Osnabrück and Münster were negotiated and signed. Although these documents are often taken as the constitution of modern international relations, he argues that the principle of nonintervention central to Westphalian sovereignty is really more a product of the nineteenth than the seventeenth century (see also Osiander 2001). After noting that constructivists have been motivated to inquire into the meaning and practices of sovereignty by their criticisms of the classical view, Krasner (1999) also challenges their explanations and argues that the deviations he observes are more typically motivated by pragmatic self-interest than normative principles. Krasner clearly delights in contesting and debunking received wisdoms.

Despite the prominence of the larger intellectual battles Krasner is fighting, his catalog of deviations from Westphalian sovereignty is probably his more important contribution. In *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, Krasner (1999) documents a history of external restrictions on how states treat their minorities (minority rights) and their citizens (human rights), manage their economies (sovereign lending), and design their constitutional structures. In some cases, these restrictions are contracted, or accepted voluntarily in ways that may be consistent with other conceptions of sovereignty. For example, neither domestic nor international legal

sovereignty is abridged in principle by a country agreeing to reform its economy in exchange for new capital. But in nearly all instances, the restrictions were imposed from outside as a precondition for international acceptance of the state or for loans to stave off national bankruptcy, implying that in fact international legal sovereignty and domestic sovereignty were being constricted. These deviations, therefore, reveal a wide range of authority relations between actors with at least some measure of domestic or international legal sovereignty.

In another work, *Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities*, Krasner (2001), as editor, and his collaborators similarly probe several anomalies in contemporary sovereignty, including the problem of “one China, two systems” in Hong Kong; the status and future of Taiwan; Bosnia’s fate as a ward of the international community; and the future of the Palestinian Authority. Each of these cases involves political entities with some but not all of the trappings of sovereignty and helps us see just how typical unusual authority relationships are in the international domain.

Although provocative, Krasner’s catalog of deviations suffers from two perplexing limitations. Solving the first is a precondition for solving the second, but making some progress on the second is probably necessary to justify the substantial time and effort that would be involved in solving the first—creating a classic catch-22 situation. Moreover, there is no guarantee of success in overcoming either limitation.

First, Krasner emphasizes deviance but provides no metric for aggregating deviance into patterns. Highlighting anomalies is necessary, of course, to challenge the view of sovereignty as a homogenous, if nonetheless dynamic, systemwide principle. Identifying deviance is an essential initial step in awakening scholars to even the potential for patterns. Krasner has succeeded admirably in this task. But the next step is equally important. To move from anomalous anecdote to data requires developing an analytic scheme that classifies individual instances of deviance into groups of similar or like cases. Ideally, we want a continuum along which deviations can be understood to vary. The next section of this essay will show how these deviant cases fall along a continuum of increasing hierarchy in international relations.

Second, Krasner does not take up the question of whether the deviations he identifies matter for international relations. He shows that they are interesting analytically, and he forces us to think differently about the basic concept of sovereignty. But Krasner does not show that the deviations matter substantively. A neorealist could easily respond that the deviations are found only in relations between major and minor (even micro) powers; that the restrictions on sovereignty are all one-sided, that is, limited to the minor power; and that the international system, defined as it is by only the major powers, remains anarchic. In such a rejoinder, a neorealist could argue that the anomalies—even if multiplied in additional research by a factor of ten—would still not indicate that the basic structure and character of international relations was different from that described by Waltz (1979). Identifying classes or continua of relationships, theorizing their causes and consequences, and testing hypotheses against more systematically collected data will eventually be necessary to answer this possible critique. But before investing substantial time in developing theory and data, there must be some strong promise of additional insight into international relations and the substantive problems that motivate inquiry. Let us consider how to deal with this challenge in more detail.

### **From Deviance to Data**

External restrictions on states of the sort deemed by Krasner to be violations of Westphalian sovereignty have long been recognized in international discourse and

diplomacy. In preparation for the Versailles Peace Conference, President Woodrow Wilson commissioned multiple studies, known as *The Inquiry*, on issues likely to come up in the negotiations, including the status of former German colonies, the areas of eastern Europe recently freed from direct or indirect Ottoman rule, and various other non-self-governing areas. One of these studies, by W. W. Willoughby and C. G. Fenwick (1974), identified ten types of polities with restricted sovereignty or colonial autonomy, including neutralized states, vassal states, and autonomous dependencies. Only with the delegitimization of colonialism after World War II and the triumph of juridical sovereignty did it become politically incorrect to use such classifications. Or, to put it more colorfully, it was at this time that the “horse” referred to in the opening paragraph died or, perhaps, was murdered. But as Krasner’s deviant cases remind us, the impropriety of acknowledging restricted sovereignty does not change the reality. No longer called vassals, protectorates, or mandates, states with restricted sovereignty continue to exist. Indeed, pure Westphalian sovereignty of the type assumed by the classical perspective may be a status that is enjoyed only by the greatest powers, just as Waltz implied. Nearly all others face greater or lesser restrictions on their sovereignty.

External restrictions on states constitute hierarchical authority relationships—a form of hierarchy within systemic anarchy. Referring back to our earlier definition of authority, external restrictions are authoritative when A wills B to do X, and B voluntarily complies. External restrictions that rest entirely on coercion are not authoritative, just as “one-shot” commands do not form a relationship. Not all external restrictions imply hierarchy, but many of the ongoing restrictions identified by Krasner clearly fall into this category. And many possible hierarchies, such as the minority rights protections instituted in eastern Europe, fail either because the dominant powers do not enforce compliance or because subordinate states in practice deny the legitimacy of the restrictions. Those restrictions that do take root and endure, like all authority relationships, are dependent upon self-enforcement, but this makes them no less real to those in the relationship.

We can extend the range of deviations from Westphalian sovereignty to include nonstate political units—or polities—in relations of informal or formal empire (Doyle 1986) and to states themselves, composed of subordinate polities of formerly or potentially sovereign units and most easily seen in cases of voluntary confederations (Rector 2003). In these cases, the relationship between a dominant and a subordinate polity is even more hierarchical than those examined by Krasner, as the latter unit loses its international personality or international legal sovereignty. In this way, states themselves become problematic—as desired by critics of the classical perspective—and can be understood as an extreme case of hierarchy.

Formally, relationships between polities vary along a continuum defined by the degree of hierarchy between two or more polities. The degree of hierarchy, in turn, is defined by the locus of rights of residual control or, less formally, by the decision-making authority possessed by each polity (see Lake 1999:24–31).<sup>5</sup> Accepting the divisibility of the concept, another way to think about this notion of a continuum is as variations in the degree of domestic sovereignty possessed by the subordinate member. In what policy areas is the subordinate polity the ultimate authority? The greater the number of areas of domestic sovereignty, the less hierarchic its relationship with the dominant state is; the fewer the number of areas of domestic

<sup>5</sup>Agreements between polities, like all contracts, can be completely or incompletely specified (Williamson 1985). Complete agreements detail numerous contingencies and set forth appropriate responses by the parties. Incomplete agreements contain holes that are filled in by the parties as necessary. No agreement can address all contingencies in all possible states of the world. In practice, all agreements are imperfectly specified and, thus, possess a varying residual of unspecified rights, obligations, and expected actions. Which party has the ability *de jure* or *de facto* to make decisions in this residual—to cause the parties to act in desired ways under conditions and contingencies that are not clearly specified in the agreement—defines the rights of control.



hierarchic end of the continuum, one party cedes nearly complete decision-making authority directly to the other. Between these extremes lie a range of security relationships, of which three are historically prominent. In a sphere of influence, the dominant polity constrains the authority possessed by the subordinate in the area of foreign policy, most often limiting the latter's right to cooperate in security affairs with third parties (for example, the United States and Latin America under the Monroe Doctrine). In a protectorate, one polity cedes control to another over its foreign affairs, abridging in large part its decision-making authority in this area of policy (for example, the United States and the Federated States of Micronesia after 1986). Informal empire exists when one polity controls substantial decision-making authority in the other, including rights over otherwise domestic or internal affairs that impinge upon security policy, but the subordinate nonetheless interacts with other states as an international entity (for example, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the Cold War).

A similar continuum of economic relationships can be posited that ranges from market exchange, at the anarchic end, to economic union, at the hierarchic end (see Figure 1b). Kathleen Hancock (2001) explicitly discusses such a continuum in the case of economic relations between Russia and the successor states of the Soviet Union. Benjamin Cohen (1998) identifies various monetary relationships and suggests how they relate to sovereignty. Although he does not depict them as such, they can be arrayed along a similar continuum. Under market exchange, in a manner similar to an alliance, parties choose to trade, invest, or otherwise engage in economic interactions while at the same time retaining all the rights and responsibilities of sovereign states, including the ability to interpret the terms of any agreements they enter into and to terminate the exchange. Each also retains its own currency, perhaps fixed to a nominal anchor such as gold or the dollar. At the opposite end of the continuum, in an economic union, at least one member cedes control over its internal and external economic policies, including its currency, to another polity, whether to an imperial metropole or supranational entity. The European Union approximates such a hierarchy in its movement toward a single market and the adoption of a common currency.

More gradations in economic relations may exist (we simply lack salient identifying labels similar to those for security relationships), nevertheless we can distinguish several intermediate forms, recognizing the considerable variance around each ideal type. In economic zones, which are roughly equivalent to and perhaps slightly more hierarchic than spheres of influence in the security arena, the subordinate state remains legally sovereign but gives market privileges to the dominant polity or its nationals that it does not give to third parties; these privileges are not reciprocated in the dominant country's market. Economic zones may also involve pegging the subordinate's exchange rate to the dominant country's currency or the use of a currency board (Cohen 1998:52–59). In dependencies, which are slightly more hierarchic than protectorates, the subordinate polity cedes control over its external economic relations to the dominant state or entity. This process may take the form of a customs union with a common external tariff or, in the monetary area, "dollarization," which is a slightly misleading term indicating that the subordinate uses the dominant country's currency for all or nearly all transactions (although the local currency may remain nominally in circulation). By transferring control over government finances to the dominant states, many of the sovereign debt restrictions in which states engage, which were examined by Krasner (1999), fall in between a dependency and an economic union.

Building on Krasner's (1999) discussions of minority and human rights, one might pose a similar continuum of increasing hierarchy defined by restrictions on domestic political practices. Such a continuum would vary from universal covenants to imperium (see Figure 1c). In the former, at the anarchic end of the continuum, states may accept infringements on their domestic political rules and on the rights

of their citizens, but such infringements apply equally to all states and generally occur as a result of universal agreements. The United Nations (UN) Covenants on Political and Economic Rights are exemplars. Importantly, the signatories retain full residual rights of control, including the authority to determine whether they have violated the covenant. Under imperium, the hierarchic end of this political relationships continuum, dominant state exercise full control over the terms of political participation and the political rights of citizens in subordinate polities, as in the classic European empires. Again, we lack contemporary labels for intermediate cases, but two ideal types can be identified. In mandates, the subordinate polity accepts unilateral infringements on its rules governing political participation and other political and civil rights. The minority rights restrictions discussed by Krasner fall into this category. In dominion, the subordinate can set many of its practical rules on political participation and political rights, but the constitution itself remains under the control of the dominant state. The self-governing dominions of the British Empire, most famously Canada and Australia, remained in this category for well over a century. The states of Australia, for instance, achieved self-governing status mostly between 1853 and 1860<sup>7</sup> and formed the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. However, the federal state only formally repatriated its constitution in 1986. Even today, the Queen of England continues to reign as Queen of Australia and appoints state governors who, in theory, retain enormous power.

Finally, these continua are similar to that posed in the study of federations, the latter varying not by issue area but by type of unit. In one example, Daniel Elazar (1998) poses a continuum that ranges from interjurisdictional functional authorities, at one end, through leagues, confederations, federations, to unions at the other end.<sup>8</sup> As “joint or common entities organized by the constituting units to undertake special tasks,” interjurisdictional functional authorities exist in relations of anarchy whereas unions, which as “clearly bounded territorial constituent units retain ‘municipal’ powers only while sharing power concentrated in common overarching government,” constitute full hierarchies (Elazar 1998:8). This continuum is similar to that posed by William Riker (1987) and Chad Rector (2003); it is illustrated in Figure 1d.

Although each of these continua are structured dyadically, between a dominant and subordinate polity, the dominant polity can also be understood to vary from a single state to a collective, including creditors’ cartels (common in dependencies), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (in political and civil rights), and the United Nations. Collectives may also be formed cooperatively by the member polities—as in federations or the new African Union, which has been given increasing powers over internal political affairs in member countries—or imposed from the outside, as in NATO’s imperium over Bosnia.

Characterizing these various relationships along several continua highlights the variations in hierarchy in international relations. Anomalies may be more commonplace than we often realize. Some analytic scheme such as the present one is necessary to develop more systematic depictions of the range of relationships in the real world. An intriguing question, but one that cannot be answered without more systematic data, is whether relationships across these dimensions are independent or correlated. In formal empires, they do clearly move together, almost by definition: colonies are subordinate to the metropole in security,

<sup>7</sup>Western Australia became self-governing only in 1890. Between 1853 and 1890, the several states that eventually became Australia and New Zealand were virtually sovereign, with each conducting its own diplomatic relations, issuing money and stamps, imposing tariffs on trade between the states, and so on (see Rector 2003).

<sup>8</sup>Elazar (1998) muddles several dimensions, including condominium, rule by two units over some common territory; federacy, an asymmetrical relationship; and consociation, a nonterritorial relationship. His continuum is limited here to the single dimension of centralizing authority over a collection of subordinate, but nonetheless distinct and previously existing, units.

economy, and political relations. But this parallelism need not be the case overall. Hancock's (2001) study of relations between Russia and its near abroad suggests that economic relations in the region may be considerably more hierarchic than security relations. Security relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia have been relatively hierarchic since the First Gulf War (Lake 2001), but little economic hierarchy between the two has emerged as a result. Determining whether there are patterns across the dimensions and, if so, of what kind remains a question ripe for research.

Operationalizing the degree of hierarchy within relationships is not easy (see Lake 1999:31–34). There are no simple indicators and rarely do written contracts define the rights of each polity in different issue areas. Equally important, authority relationships are often difficult to discern. In equilibrium, commands issued by authoritative actors are obeyed. Indeed, commands may not even need to be articulated; subordinate polities may anticipate the dominant polity's wishes and act accordingly. Even more problematic, if authority is deeply embedded and legitimate, the subordinate may identify with the dominant polity and absorb its preferences, thereby coming to want what the latter wants. In this case, preferences become aligned and no commands are necessary. As a result, it is often possible to observe authority only in "out-of-equilibrium" situations when a subordinate challenges the dominant polity. But, paradoxically, it is precisely in these situations that authority has already started to break down. International relations scholars, regional experts, and historians could profitably work together to develop coding rules and operational indicators of gradations of hierarchy.

### **Why Bother?**

To justify the substantial investment of time and energy necessary to develop theories and data on hierarchies in international relations requires some strong promise of improved explanation about substantively important topics. Neorealists as well as other advocates of the classical conception might acknowledge that elements of hierarchy exist in international politics—indeed, might even recognize that they are quite common—but still respond that the great powers largely determine what happens in the international arena and, therefore, the assumption of wholly sovereign states interacting in relations of anarchy is good enough. Even constructivists, despite their more principled views of sovereignty, might make similar arguments. Introducing hierarchy into the study of international relations might make it more descriptively accurate, but the real question remains: Does it help explain things we care about more fully or efficiently? This challenge is a difficult one to meet, as noted above, without having already invested the time and energy to create new theories and data. Nonetheless, there are several reasons to expect that theories of hierarchy and richer empirical data sets would enhance our understanding of world politics.

### *Research Design*

Nearly all studies of international cooperation, international institutions, and the state itself suffer from selection bias. Theories of alliance formation, for instance, treat institutions in a dichotomous fashion: either states act unilaterally, or they enter into an alliance (Walt 1987). Once we recognize that a variety of institutional forms exist, the question becomes not unilateralism versus alliances, but why states form alliances rather than some other, more hierarchical institution such as a protectorate or empire. Similarly, if external threat is a primary motivation for federations (Riker 1987), the real question must be why do states pool sovereignty

under such conditions rather than create alliances or other less hierarchic relationships?

In limiting our analyses to alliances and federations, we truncate the dependent variable and underestimate the causal importance of our independent variables (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). By implication, those factors that produce international institutions may be more significant than past studies have revealed. Transactions costs, information asymmetries, the need for credibility, and other variables that have been used to explain why international institutions are formed may be more important than we now recognize.

In turn, limiting variation in institutions as an independent variable makes estimates of their effects more uncertain. Selecting only one type of institution for analysis renders any such estimate highly problematic. One typical question asked of international organizations, for instance, is whether they mitigate war or conflict. The implicit comparison is, thus, between a relatively anarchic institution and no institution at all. By recognizing that international organizations are but one type of relationship in the global arena and that many other, more hierarchical relationships also exist, we become aware of the fact that scholars are testing the efficacy of that type of institution likely to have the least effect on war or conflict. Asking the same question of federations would likely yield a quite different response. In addition, such a research design is prone to high uncertainty. Imagine a continuum of institutions of increasing hierarchy along the horizontal axis and a continuum of institutional effectiveness in, say, reducing war on the vertical axis. The traditional research design, focusing exclusively on relatively anarchic institutions, would create a stack of points near the origin with some dispersal as a function of natural variation. Any line drawn through this stack of points would be equally valid. We simply lack the ability to draw accurate estimates of institutional effectiveness in this kind of research design. Only by including other, more hierarchical institutions in our analysis can we increase the accuracy of our studies. These observations help explain why so many institutionalists are now drawn to the study of the European Union: because it is far more hierarchical than most other international organizations and, as a consequence, it provides crucial analytic leverage on the question of institutional effectiveness. But as we have seen above, the range of variation in the real world is actually broader still, up to and including states themselves.

Whether institutions are a dependent or an independent variable, expanding our research designs to include more hierarchical institutions will only improve our explanatory ability. Even if we are interested only in relations among the great powers and the relatively anarchic relationships they form with one another, explaining and understanding these relations will be improved with a broader and more efficient research design. Thus, the argument here is that even the most committed neorealists ought to grasp at any element of hierarchy that they can find so as to provide a more accurate test of their theories. Fortunately, as we have seen, there are lots of examples of hierarchy from which to choose, and some promising analytic schemes to help make sense of the variation we observe. Therefore, on methodological grounds alone the explanatory promise of theories that incorporate variations in hierarchy appears to be sufficiently great to warrant the considerable effort necessary to develop models and data sets of varying authority relations in international politics.

#### *Substantive Benefits*

Recognizing hierarchy and building it into our theories of international relations, moreover, also helps explain important substantive phenomena and sheds light on pressing policy problems. In some cases, the authority relations between states have been recognized intuitively by scholars but not explicitly acknowledged in the

international relations literature. In other cases, the authority relationships have been simply ignored—with considerable cost to our ability to understand world politics.

Relations between the United States and Latin America over the last two centuries have hinged precisely on the extent of the hierarchy that the ever-growing regional hegemon imposed on its lesser neighbors. To protect the site-specific investments of its citizens, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the United States insisted on an informal empire in the region and, as outlined in the Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, the right to intervene whenever necessary to correct “chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society” (LaFeber 1994:247; see also Frieden 1994). A source of friction with the Latin Americans, this doctrine was repealed by the Good Neighbor policy of the 1930s. Relations deteriorated once again with the Reagan Doctrine of the 1980s, under which the United States pledged its support for anticommunist insurgents and justified its backing of opposition movements throughout Central America (LaFeber 1983). As historians of US-Latin American relations have long understood but international relations scholars have not, it would simply be impossible to understand the US-Latin American relationship over the last two centuries without paying primary attention to the struggle for authority between these ostensibly sovereign states. It is not just the ability of the United States to intervene in the internal affairs of its neighbors that is at issue here, but rather the periodic assertion by the regional hegemon that it possesses the right to intervene that so troubles others. Small regional states can do little about the disproportionate power of the United States, but they can seek to deny any obligation to follow its will.

Similarly, a key catalyst in the Cold War was the consolidation of the Soviet Union’s informal empire over Eastern Europe (Lake 2001). Clearly, tensions would have existed between the two superpowers regardless of the authority relations each imposed on their partners after World War II. But the Soviet Union created a much more hierarchical set of relationships in Eastern Europe than the United States did in the West, and the United States reacted much more strongly to this informal empire than did the Soviet Union to the Western alliance. Indeed, the Czech coup in early 1947 was decisive in convincing the United States that the Soviet Union was an imperialist, revisionist power. Had the Soviet Union ruled the region with a lighter hand, the United States might not have reacted so aggressively, and the misperception, suspicion, and overreaction that characterized the Cold War might not have cycled out of control. Although a number of analysts (Triska 1986; Wendt and Friedman 1995; Gaddis 1997) have treated Soviet-East European relations as a hierarchy, it is hard to evaluate this counterfactual claim. But one can plausibly argue that the Cold War would have been less intense had the Soviet Union constructed a less hierarchical institution in Eastern Europe, suggesting just how important hierarchy may be.

Likewise, the multinational coalition formed during the first Persian Gulf War in 1991 was a direct outgrowth of the hierarchical relationship created when the United States was invited into Saudi Arabia (Lake 1999, 2001). Contributing many times more troops than the Gulf states taken together, the United States was the dominant partner in Operation Desert Shield and, later, Desert Storm. George H. W. Bush, the US President, decided whether or not negotiations would occur, how the war would be fought, and when hostilities would begin. These decisions were then announced to the Saudis and other partners. The Saudis were willing to open themselves to this subordinate position, however, only in the context of a multinational coalition that would help restrain the globe’s only superpower. The coalition was formed not only to share burdens, which was important, but also to tie the hands of the United States so that it could not exploit its now vulnerable Gulf partners. The hierarchy between the United States and its regional partners, as well

as the important role of multilateralism as a constraint on the power of the potential hegemon, has gone largely unnoticed in the international relations literatures on the First Gulf War and multilateralism—at great cost to our ability to understand either phenomenon.

More briefly, creating new hierarchies is the central political issue between Russia and its neighbors in the near abroad (Hancock 2001). Similarly, establishing institutional safeguards against exploitation was critical to the formation of the Australian federation (Rector 2003). Variations in the degree of hierarchy exercised by Germany over its allies and possessions during World War II was key to the varying rates of Jewish victimization in the Holocaust (Hollander Forthcoming). As these examples attest, hierarchy recurs throughout the international system and appears connected to important phenomenon that we ought to try to understand better.

Finally, hierarchy is intimately involved in the pressing policy issues facing the international community today. Maintaining the conceptual fiction of sovereignty as an absolute and indivisible condition inhibits the solution of thorny issues of authority. For example, when sovereignty is conceived only in absolutist terms, there appears to be no effective solution to the status of Kosovo. Given their fears of future exploitation, the Kosovars themselves are unlikely to accept Serbian sovereignty. When the promised plebiscite occurs, the Kosovars will most likely choose independence rather than renewed subjugation. Independence for Kosovo, however, remains unacceptable to Serbia, which regards the renegade province (despite its majority Albanian population) as its ethnic homeland. If full sovereignty is the only conceptual category on the negotiating table, neither side is likely to settle. Once the NATO troops leave, renewed war is likely to be the unhappy result.

The only effective solution to the status of Kosovo lies in the intermediate ranges of hierarchy, with the province subordinated to NATO, the United States, or some motivated trustee for the foreseeable future. Limited external rule over Kosovo is necessary both to deter Serbia from attempting to reclaim its ancestral lands and to constrain the Kosovars from seeking complete independence or amalgamation with Albania. This statement, in fact, describes the current *de facto* status quo. Yet, by failing to discuss publicly the authority relationships at work here, the Western powers now protecting Kosovo blithely perpetuate the illusion that their role is temporary and self-terminating. In turn, by not having a principled status for Kosovo that is legitimated by the international community—and to obtain legitimacy, the subordinate status of Kosovo must be publicly recognized and acknowledged—both sides in the dispute continue to hold out for their extreme positions, reinforcing the need for external guarantees and rule. Thus, even though failing to discuss the authority relationships at the heart of this bitter territorial conflict and simply maintaining the unspoken status quo might seem like a viable strategy, the absence of a *de jure* hierarchy that can become legitimate over time threatens to prolong and potentially exacerbate the conflict.

Similarly, there are important issues of hierarchy and authority in the recent war with Iraq (the second Persian Gulf War) that have not received sufficient attention by analysts. It is instructive to examine the words policymakers use to reveal conceptions of authority. In reports on US policy in 2002, one began to see increasing references to Iraq—and even to Germany in its failure to support President Bush on the Iraqi issue—as “defying” the United States. Later, the Bush administration linked the defiance by Iraq to a series of UN Security Council resolutions, but the notion of defiance was already at the center of American hostility to Saddam Hussein. Defy is an interesting word to use within the context of international relations. It implies an inequality in status between actors and that the subordinate is renouncing the authority of the dominant party. Children can defy their parents; workers can defy their employers; citizens can defy their state; but equals cannot defy one another. When other states are described in common

language as defying the United States, the speaker is attributing authority to the United States that goes beyond mere capabilities and, in fact, beyond anarchy as it is usually conceived in international relations.

There were unrecognized authority relationships everywhere in the debate over Iraq in the run-up to the second Persian Gulf War. On the one hand, in developing weapons of mass destruction and refusing to allow international inspection teams open access to potential weapons sites, Iraq was defying the United States—the victor of the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the author of the terms of ceasefire that were later codified into UN resolutions—as well as the United Nations. On the other hand, the United States was claiming a right of unilateral intervention against Iraq to protect itself from potential threats—at the same time that it was resisting similar assertions of authority by Russia against Georgia, India and Pakistan against one another, and so on. In essence, the United States was demanding an authority over Iraq and, potentially, the rest of world that it was denying others in their relations with each other and certainly in their relations with the “hyperpower.” It was precisely this assertion of authority that so worried other countries around the globe—as well as opponents of the war within the United States—and that accounted for the considerable efforts to bring possible US action under the UN umbrella. And it was the claim of a right to change the regime in Iraq that ultimately led to the breakdown of relations between the United States, “old” Europe, and the rest of the world. Even though an international consensus could have been formed around coercive inspections in Iraq, it was the United States’ insistence on its authority to change the regime in Baghdad that ultimately prevented agreement in the Security Council. States did not so much disagree that Iraq was in violation of numerous UN resolutions as they agreed that the claim to new authority by the United States to forcibly change the regime of a potentially threatening state was a dangerous precedent—and one that they could not countenance.

Hierarchy and the question of who has authority are the key issues in today’s unipolar world. What authority will the United States succeed in claiming for itself? How will other countries react to these authority claims? How can international institutions be developed to credibly commit the dominant state not to exercise its power—or to turn power into legitimate international authority? To conceive of unipolarity as only a particular distribution of capabilities or to ignore the real questions of authority at the heart of the recent conflict with Iraq is to miss perhaps the most important aspect of contemporary international politics.

Thus, hierarchy in international relations is not only a historical curiosity, a trait of sub-great-power politics that can be safely ignored in theories of international politics, or, as argued above, a source of greater efficiency in research design. Rather, it is a phenomenon and topic at the substantive heart of world politics and, especially, contemporary policy. Hierarchy has always been an important part of international relations, but we have been blinded by conceptions of juridical sovereignty for the past fifty years so that we could not see that authority was, in fact, playing an important role in international affairs. In a clear case of denying the dead horse of hierarchy, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld acerbically responded to a question by an Al Jazeera reporter asking if the Bush administration was bent on empire-building by asserting: “We don’t seek empires. We’re not imperialistic. We never have been. I can’t imagine why you’d even ask the question.” Ironically, at nearly the same moment in a speech before the Council on Foreign Relations, the British historian Niall Ferguson was encouraging his audience to acknowledge the dead beast before them. “The great thing about the American empire is that so many Americans disbelieve in its existence,” Ferguson commented. People in the United States “think they’re so different that when *they* have bases in foreign territories, it’s not an empire. When *they* invade sovereign territory, it’s not an empire.” Incorporating hierarchy into our theories of

international relations will entail a very different research agenda than the present one, with yet unknown contributions to theory, data, explanation, and, perhaps most important, policy. But to ignore hierarchy in international relations is to overlook one of the more critical dimensions in both historical and contemporary international systems.

### Conclusion

Hierarchy is analytically and substantively important but not often acknowledged in international relations. Indeed, the primordial assumption that the international system is anarchic—common to nearly all theories of world politics—rules out hierarchy as a conceptual possibility. The new literature on sovereignty emphasizes deviance from the principle of Westphalian sovereignty and, thus, the practice of anarchy. This focus represents a significant step forward. But, at the same time, this literature does not yet contain the analytic categories and dimensions of variation necessary to move beyond telling anecdotes to reveal just how systematic and important patterns of deviance may be in international politics.

The deviations from Westphalian sovereignty highlighted in this new literature are forms of hierarchy and map onto dimensions of variation by issue area and unit. Anarchy is but one type of relationship between polities, even between states. Many forms of hierarchy have existed and continue to exist within the international system. Explicit theorizing and data-gathering on hierarchy are likely to be accompanied by significant payoffs for the study of international relations as well as policy. Recasting existing research programs always has uncertain benefits. But the potential for gains appears sufficiently large to warrant the intellectual effort necessary to move beyond the assumption that the international system is anarchic and to rebuild international relations theory on the more realistic premise that the system is actually characterized by myriad relationships of varying and sometimes hierarchical authority.

Yet, politically and diplomatically, is it appropriate to speak of hierarchy in world politics? If analysts find it useful for theorizing and of some explanatory value, are we not then legitimizing hierarchy and possible neoimperialism? To return to the opening metaphor, might it not be better to let dead horses lie?

Acknowledging the harsh realities now masked by the norm of juridical sovereignty is undoubtedly painful, especially for the subordinate parties whose patina of equality is thereby stripped away and their subaltern status revealed. Obviously, given the salience of juridical sovereignty in world politics, declaring that Saudi Arabia ceded control over its foreign policy and became a protectorate of the United States during the Persian Gulf War of 1991, for example, would have been politically difficult, which probably accounts for the symbolic but no less important efforts to conceal this fact. Calling the relationship what it was, at the time, might have made it even more difficult to accomplish the goals for which the protectorate was formed. Recognizing and dealing with hierarchy is not problem-free. But the academy should not fail to take up analytically useful concepts or raise important issues simply because they are politically charged and contentious.

Similarly, naming inequalities and highlighting their prevalence in international politics may legitimate practices that some states wish to repress, especially intervention into their internal affairs. To the extent that states find the norm of juridical sovereignty attractive, showing that practice differs systematically and frequently from this norm undermines its salience and its utility as a justification for other practices.

Thus, uncovering hierarchy in international politics is a double-edged sword. Yes, it may be politically difficult for the subordinate party to publicly acknowledge its subordination. But many states have used the principle of juridical sovereignty to hide abhorrent behavior from international scrutiny. As states and analysts have

increasingly realized in the post-Cold War period, the norm of Westphalian sovereignty and other norms of human, political, and civil rights are sometimes in conflict. Juridical sovereignty is but one of several competing principles in world politics. By lifting this mask, the pursuit of other norms might well be enhanced.

In addition, revealing hierarchy may not only be difficult for subordinate states, it may also constrain and inhibit imperial projects by powerful states. Revealing now hidden authority exposes it to debate and analysis both within the powerful states and abroad. In today's unipolar world, under the imperial strategy laid out by the Bush administration in its 2002 National Security Strategy statement and in the aftermath of the second Persian Gulf War, there may be no more important service that scholars of international relations can provide than to subject the existence, causes, and consequences of hierarchy to intense scrutiny.

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