



CHAPTER 14

Sovereignty, the State, and International Order

This chapter begins the third and final section of the text, on International Relations (IR). A definition of the subject area is offered, noting the increasing use of the term “world politics” over “international relations,” thus widening the field beyond the interactions of sovereign states. For students of IR, the internal political, social, and economic arrangements of individual states are strongly relevant, and, apart from states, non-governmental actors are increasingly important. The phenomenon is difficult to understand without bringing in this important perspective.

The chapter rehearses theories and institutions addressed previously, such as the definition of a state and nationalist ideas. It goes on to discuss the historical development of states and empires, emphasizing the importance of non-European examples such as the Chinese Empire. However, the modern state is intimately connected with Western Europe, and the chapter discusses such significant events as the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) and the French Revolution in the creation of the idea of sovereign nationhood.

The chapter provides a brief analysis of the legacy of colonialism, which can be said to mark the beginning of “the globalization of the sovereign state system.” In some cases, the arbitrary division of colonial territory has resulted in “weak” states, “quasi” states, and “failing” states. The chapter concludes with an observation that the rise of both globalization and regionalization are calling the persistence of the sovereign-state model into question.

Chapter Outline

- **Discipline, Definitions, and Subject Matter**
- **States and International Systems in World History**
- **The Rise of Modernity and the State System in Europe**
- **The Emergence of Sovereignty**

- **The Globalization of the Sovereign State System**
- **Conclusion**

Key Terms

Anarchy	Interdependence	Political culture
Authoritarian	Intervention	Realism
Concert of Europe	Modernity	Self-determination
Cosmopolitanism	Nation	Sovereignty
Empire	Nationalism	State
Globalization	Nation-building	State of nature
Humanitarian intervention	Non-governmental organization	Statecraft
Imperialism	(NGO)	

Discussion Questions

1. An overview of human history shows that large-scale systems of organization do not last forever, but rather are replaced from time to time. What do you think might replace the sovereign-state system?
2. In your opinion, does the term “international relations” effectively convey the scope of the discipline of international relations? Why or why not?
3. What was the original intent of sovereignty as it was formulated in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe? How well has it accomplished that goal?
4. Does the United States have an empire? Why or why not?
5. Are multinational corporations the new imperialists? Why or why not?
6. Does globalization cause the erasure of national culture to a more homogenous, global political culture?
7. Does the responsibility to protect infringe upon state sovereignty?

Further Resources

- <http://www.roman-empire.net/>
Information on Roman rulers and other historical data on the Roman Empire
- http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/china_timeline.htm
A timeline of the Chinese Empire

- <http://www.thecaveonline.com/APEH/thirtyyearswar.html>
Historical information related to the Thirty Years War
- <http://britishempire.co.uk/>
A collection of information on the British Empire
- <http://www.globalization101.org/>
A resource intended to challenge the reader to consider the controversies and policy challenges arising from globalization
- <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/key/global.htm>
International Monetary Fund, Globalization
- <http://vandanashiva.com/>
Dr. Vandana Shiva, Information about seed sovereignty and more