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**Sovereignty and The Politics of Identity
In International Relations**

Adrian Kuah

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the linkages between the norms and practices of sovereignty and the discourses on the formation of political identity and communities amidst twenty-first century socio-political and economic transformations. By undertaking a postmodern deconstruction of sovereignty, this paper recognizes sovereignty as a subjective, and hence fallible, social construct. It further contends that sovereignty as an Enlightenment project has become untenable with its promise of a universal solution to spatiotemporal problems. Against the backdrop of globalization, this paper problematizes sovereignty and argues that it is inextricably tied to the politics of identity. It also raises the idea of sovereignty as an analogue of the Enlightenment model of the rational sovereign Man. Enshrined most pre-eminently in the nation-state, sovereignty represents simultaneously the locus and limit of what is regarded as political identity. Furthermore, the norms and practices of sovereignty reflect changes in notions and the foci of identity. This paper attempts to locate explanations for the evolution of sovereignty at the level of identity formation, and points out that the politics of identity and the politics of sovereignty are a mutually constitutive, intersubjective discourse. Finally, this paper states that by persistently defining sovereignty in terms of indivisibility and exclusivity, sovereignty itself is becoming an obstacle to human emancipation.

Adrian Kuah is an Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore. His research interests include international relations theory and defence economics. He holds a BA (Honours) degree in Economics and Politics from the University of York, UK, and a MA degree in International Studies from Warwick University. Prior to joining IDSS, he worked as an economist at the Monetary Authority of Singapore and as an analyst at a private sector business risk consultancy.

SOVEREIGNTY AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Introduction

This paper interrogates the linkages between the norms and practices of sovereignty on one hand, and the discourses on the politics of identity and political communities on the other. In addition, it examines the interplay between the politics of identity and political communities against a backdrop of globalization and other socio-political dislocations that have come to characterize the twenty-first century. Rather than defining globalization (itself a fungible and nebulous process) in terms of socio-economic, cultural and technological developments, it is viewed in this paper in ideational terms. Globalisation here is envisaged as a complex historical process in which a global world order replaces, or at the very least supplements the international system of states that has long dominated the political landscape and language. In light of these dramatic changes, the categorical separations between subject and object, public and private, domestic and international are breaking down in the face of what Peterson refers to as ‘postmodern challenges, sub-national and transnational political identifications, and local-national-global linkages.’ She further argues that ‘boundaries – and the ground(s) they mark – are shifting, forcing us to remap what recently was familiar terrain’ (1996: 11). Indeed, for some time now it has become fashionable to speak of the decline of sovereignty (Lombardi 1996; Osiander 2001; Zacher 2001).

Taking constructivism (in the form articulated by Wendt) as its starting point, this paper recognises sovereignty as a subjective, and hence fallible, human construct. As such, this paper denies any notion of an ‘eternal essence’ as attributed to sovereignty in more traditional studies of the subject. Instead, it attempts a critical inquiry of the various norms and practices that have contributed to its illusory and deceptive status as a social ‘truth’. In fact, sovereignty has become so embedded in the collective consciousness of its universal practitioners that many of its basic tenets are taken for granted as natural reality. Such uncritical privileging of ‘sovereignty’ in the political canon has led to a neglect of its

spatiotemporal limits as well as its historicity. As Lombardi maintains, '[it] is a concept accepted as "truth" by many scholars, statespersons and laypersons in much of the political discourse around the globe' (1996: 153).

However, this paper extends beyond constructivism and engages in a postmodern deconstruction of sovereignty by warning against attempts to formulate a 'grand narrative' in which sovereignty and political identity are rendered explicable. Indeed, postmodernism questions the confidence of positivist theories in building upon firm, unshakeable foundations. This paper contends that the Enlightenment project of modernity, with its promises of singular and universal solutions to spatiotemporal problems has become untenable. This is because postmodernism eschews such 'heroic promises'. As Ashley argues, postmodernism does not see modernity as:

[A]n arching, homogenous order susceptible to analysis in terms of some totalising narrative: some attempt to uncover some deep and total structure that, as a source, generates the surface experience of 'the modern' in all the far reaches of its influence (1989: 260).

In other words, this paper points out that social and political reality is made, and more importantly in the process of constantly being re-made.

Finally, this paper problematizes the established understanding and practices of sovereignty in the light of our shared modern experience. It also argues that sovereignty is inextricably tied into the politics of identity, and that the idea of sovereignty is an analogue of the Enlightenment model of the rational, reasoning sovereign Man. Hence, as Ashley states, '*modern statecraft is modern mancraft*' (1989: 303, original emphasis). Enshrined most pre-eminently in the nation-state, sovereignty is typically taken to represent the locus of that which is considered 'political'. However, inasmuch as it is a locus, it is also a limit to the possibilities of alternative modes of identity-formation and political organization. As notions and foci of identity change, so too will the norms and practices of sovereignty. Therefore, instead of locating the agents of change externally and speaking of the erosion of sovereignty by 'outside' forces, this paper attempts to locate explanations for the evolution of sovereignty at the level of identity formation.

Questioning Sovereignty

Conventional (that is to say, state-centric) theories of international relations have uncritically assumed the concept of sovereignty as the ontological bottom-line in its analyses of world politics. Indeed, '[the] international relations literature regularly embraces sovereignty as the primary rule of international organization' (Barkin and Cronin 1994: 107). 'Constitutive rules' here are taken to mean concepts that create and define patterns of behaviour. In this respect, sovereignty is usually regarded as something prior or antecedent to the political practices that are derived from it, and which it is supposed to govern. In uncovering the provenance of sovereignty, this paper situates it at the heart of an ongoing wider political discourse. It argues that sovereignty is neither fixed in its meaning nor is it a permanent feature of political life and knowledge. Indeed, this paper attempts to avoid the essentialist/foundationalist fallacy by seeking instead to uncover the processes through which sovereignty has come to be articulated, known and practised.

Sovereignty can be seen as a specific resolution to the problems of organizing political communities and the challenges of concentrating and exercising political power in the name of such communities. In other words, it is a unique general solution to the pressing and myriad problems of modernity. The notion of sovereignty has permitted people as citizens of a sovereign nation-state to define and attain what they consider to be 'the good life'. As Aristotle's *Politics* shows:

[Every] polis (or state) is a species of association...[and] all associations are instituted for the purpose of attaining some good...We may therefore hold that all associations aim at some good; and we may also hold that the particular association which is the most sovereign of all, and includes all the rest, will pursue this aim most, and will thus be directed to the most sovereign of all goods. This most sovereign and inclusive association is the polis, as it is called, or the political association (Aristotle 1962: 1).

The modern nation-state in the Aristotelian tradition, is seen as the pre-eminent vessel in which social justice (defined as the opportunity and means by which 'the good life' is determined and achieved) is best served. Furthermore, the sovereignty of the nation-state has shaped and circumscribed the ways in which we engage in politics and identify ourselves and our-'self'. The politics of identity and the politics of sovereignty implicate each other in complex chains of causality.

The first step in deconstructing sovereignty is to acknowledge it as an idea that is both shaped by and a shaper of history. Sovereignty is also shaped by and a shaper of our

definition of the good life, as argued above (Williams 1996; Camilleri and Falk 1992). Moreover, as Williams points out, since ideas do not exist outside of human history, nor do they emerge fully formed, sovereignty must be viewed as ‘both a norm and a practice’ (1996: 110). In any case, references of sovereignty in international relations literature usually refer to ‘state sovereignty’ exclusively. However, as Barkin and Cronin assert, it is possible, indeed imperative, to distinguish between ‘state sovereignty’ and ‘national sovereignty’:

[We examine] the concept of sovereignty as a variable by exploring the circumstances under which the political legitimation of the nation-state changes over time. In doing so we will argue that the rules of sovereignty are neither fixed nor constant, but rather are subject to changing interpretations. Specifically we hold that there has been a historical tension between state sovereignty, which stresses *a link between sovereign authority and a defined territory*, and national sovereignty, which emphasises *a link between sovereign authority and a defined population* (1994: 108, emphasis mine).

It is clearly important to differentiate between these two competing claims of sovereignty which are often subsumed into the modern nation-state, albeit imperfectly. Such as differentiation reveals the underlying fissures that permeate throughout the structure and viability of the nation-state. The fusion of nation and state is a tenuous and fragile one, and one that exhibits a high propensity towards disintegration. More tellingly, it reveals that the construction and practice of sovereignty (that is, of the nation-state) is contingent upon the direction that the modern political discourse has taken, and that the fusion of nation with state is not only a tenuous one, but a reversible one as well.

The conventional international relations literature typically trains its analytical lens on key concepts such as ‘legitimate authority’ and ‘territoriality’, and rarely, if ever, examines how definitions of populations and territories change throughout history and how such changes affect the very notion of a sovereign authority. Indeed, scholars such as Doty focus on distinguishing the state from the nation, and argue that the nation, and the attendant idea of national identity, constitutes the very foundation of the state. Furthermore, he maintains that state sovereignty and the element of territoriality more crucially, consists in its ability to ‘impose fixed and stable meanings about who belongs and who does not belong to the nation, and thereby to distinguish a specific political community – the inside – from all others – the outside’ (1996: 122). In other words, state sovereignty is predicated on the ability of the state to write the nation (or ‘we the people’), and is contingent upon the stable reproduction of this

narrative of shared identity and destiny. It is certainly true that national identity is too complex to be rooted in a single dimension. However, the formation of a modern political identity in the Aristotelian vein is possible because of the largely consistent manner in which the confluence of its constituent elements (for example, common aspirations for ‘the good life’, the joint pursuit of material wealth, the attainment of social justice etc.) can be realised. The turbulences wrought about by globalization bring stable arrangements into question. This aspect will be examined in the following section.

Neorealism is the chief culprit in the uncritical ontological privileging of the state as an *a priori* concept in state-centric theories of international relations. It obscures the historical context from which the idea of sovereignty emerged and was articulated; not to mention how the sovereign state was crystallized as the key building block of international relations (Waltz 1979). This has led to a dehistoricised abstraction of sovereignty as an eternal attribute of international relations, and has hardened a fluid idea and a political discourse into an essentialist reification. By assigning ontological primacy to the state, and arguing that ‘[from] the coaction of like units emerges a structure that affects and constrains all of them (Waltz 1979: 90)’, neorealism strips sovereignty of its historical origin and reinstates it ahistorically as an organizing principle.

The structure of the international system depends on prior states, which are ‘functionally similar’ or, in other words sovereign. In Waltzian vernacular, it then follows that the feature of that international structure is defined by the absence of sovereignty, or its equivalent, anarchy (Waltz 1979: 88). Although Waltz claims to offer a ‘systemic’ theory of international relations in its epistemic priorities with its focus on the international structure, Bartelson argues that neorealism turns out to be ontologically ‘reductionist’, which means that international anarchy is ultimately dependent on sovereignty (1995: 23). Similarly, Devetak argues that ‘[anarchy] takes on meaning only as the antithesis of sovereignty...[and are both] taken to be mutually exclusive and completely exhaustive’ (1996a: 191). Since the state is regarded as ontologically prior to the system of states in the discourse of international relations, the essence of statehood therefore seems a necessary condition for the international system as well. The state-centricity of neorealism ties anarchy and sovereignty into a binary opposition, with the latter term privileged as the foundation of international relations. The ontological primacy accorded to the state implies a dogmatic acceptance of sovereignty as a

given. Thus, the consequent conceptualisation of the state as an unitary actor is defined by its totalised 'inside' as well as by its differentiation from an anarchic, hostile 'outside'.

As Devetak points out, the state-centrism of traditional and scientific theories of international relations blinds itself to the very thing it attempts to engage and explore: the state (Devetak 1996a: 193). The irony is that whilst being state-centric, such theories make no attempt to engage in an understanding of its most basic building block. This brand of state-centrism, which assumes sovereignty, constitutes limits to the political imagination. It insists on the persistence of an unchanging notion of sovereignty, despite confrontations with historical and structural transformations. Hence, as Walker claims, theories of international relations must be 'read as a characteristic discourse of the modern state and as a constitutive practice [of sovereignty] whose effects can be traced in the remotest interstices of everyday life' (1993: 6). In other words, sovereignty is seen not as a necessary aspect of political life, but as a historically contingent understanding and articulation of political life predicated on a 'discursive framing of spatiotemporal options...between theories of political possibility within theories of mere relations beyond the confines of the modern territorial state' (Walker 1993: 6).

In similar fashion, Bartelson warns against falling into the essentialist trap by asserting that the salient question should be how sovereignty has been spoken of and known throughout history (1995: 4). Defining sovereignty becomes a methodological fallacy built on shifting epistemological ground insofar as the idea and practice of sovereignty, ever changing political realities and knowledge are implicated. If no concept is fixed in an ahistorical manner as Williams suggests (1996: 109), sovereignty should be understood as a social construction and a political discourse, insofar as it is contingent on the texts in which it is articulated and expressed. In other words, a detached analysis of sovereignty in the positivist vein is impossible simply because the political language we employ is interlaced with sovereignty itself. As Devetak puts it, '[political knowledge] is inextricably tied up with power to the extent that it produces the discourse of sovereignty as the primary means of arranging political relations in modernity' (1996a: 183). Sovereignty is therefore both *explanans* and *explanandum* of the modern political discourse.

Sovereignty is a discourse of political power and knowledge. It represents a particular resolution of spatiotemporal relations into a singular and neat logic of territorial demarcations

of 'inside' and 'outside', as well as the creation of the conditions under which political texts are written. In Walker's words, 'the conditions under which we are now able – or unable – to conceive of what is might mean to speak of world politics...are largely defined in terms of assumptions enshrined in the principle of state sovereignty' (1993: 21). Sovereignty itself is implicated in the writing of our contemporary political language, creating both the space for discourses of political power and inscribing the horizons of political imagination. In addition, sovereignty has splintered the syntax of political language into two, one speaking the dialect of 'domestic' political theory, the other speaking the dialect of international relations. The discourse on sovereignty forms part of the larger political discourse, in which notions, differentiations and the exercise of power are delineated along spatial lines. Bartelson illustrates the connection between sovereignty and political knowledge succinctly:

Without a proper mode of knowledge to render it intelligible, sovereignty cannot exist, and loses its capacity to organize political reality through a demarcation of inside from outside, of Same from Other. Without a proper form of sovereignty, knowledge loses its power to organize reality, and to constitute objects and fields of inquiry as well as validity and truth (1995: 83).

Simply put, sovereignty is a historical contingent answer to the problem of rendering order in political space, as well as an inscription of the boundaries of both political communities and imagination. As an idea and as an institution, sovereignty lies at the heart of the modern territorial state and is 'linked to key political concepts such as power, order, legitimacy and authority' (Williams 1996:12). Sovereignty informs the wider political understanding and which is in turn reinforced by established political practices. It does this by rendering a sharp distinction between 'internal' order and 'external' anarchy. 'Internal' order is articulated through the compression of community within a territorial container, while diversity is supplanted with a universalist logic. Such a universalism is then presented as a particularity in a system of sovereign states.

To say that sovereignty is historically contingent is not the same as saying that it is necessary or essential, but rather that its central role in the wider modern political discourse must be seen as the outcome of what Bartelson has termed 'prior accidents' (1995: 239). There is no teleological logic driving the emergence of sovereignty as a pre-eminent organizing political principle, nor as an antecedent script underlying the ongoing political discourse. When Camilleri and Falk state that 'sovereignty is central to the language of

politics but also the politics of language' (1992: 11), they mean that sovereignty is an 'idea in progress', shaping a particular political understanding and practice. Sovereignty, therefore, does not mean different things at different times because of crises in interpretation. Notions of sovereignty are transformed along with the system of political knowledge in which it is embedded.

The articulation of sovereignty as a response to the ongoing discourse of political identity or inclusion and exclusion is neither natural nor necessary, and is inherently unstable. Devetak articulates that humanity need not be divided along the lines of a territorial logic of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. He believes that in resetting sovereignty in its historical context of 'prior accidents' it becomes possible to explore alternative political possibilities and redraw and push back the limits of political imagination (Devetak 1995, 1996a). The durability of the principle of sovereignty must not be ascribed to appeals to 'eternal verities' that lie at its 'core', simply because there is no 'core' or essence, and since it is the historical product of an ongoing discourse, the possibility of change must be permitted.

It has been earlier argued that the nation, the state and sovereignty should be treated as conceptually distinct. This, however, should not be taken to mean that any one is ontologically prior to the other. Any attempt to claim one as being prior to the other must necessarily fail because we are dealing with different categories: insofar as sovereignty is a norm and practice of the modern state, the two should be considered differently but in simultaneity. In deconstructing the conventional reified understanding of sovereignty, it becomes clear that sovereignty expresses neither a timeless nor universal truth. What distinguishes this specific modern understanding and practice of sovereignty from earlier times is the exclusivist logic that is unique to the sovereign state. Bartelson rightly points out that different principles of political organization existed during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, what he refers to as 'mytho-sovereignty' and 'proto-sovereignty' (1995: 88-136). Ruggie likewise recognises the crystallization of the modern states system at the Peace of Westphalia as a fundamental break from the past:

[The] chief characteristic of the modern [state] is its totalisation, the integration into one public realm of parcelised and private authority...In contrast to its medieval counterpart, the modern [state which] consists [in] the institutionalisation of public authority within mutually exclusive jurisdictional domains (1996: 143).

The emergence of what is known as the Westphalian system of states – territorially-bounded sovereign states with centralized administrative structures and the monopoly on the exercise of legitimate violence – is regarded as a critical historical juncture, that is the modern concept of sovereignty manifested in the modern state. It is crucial because the Westphalian system entailed new rules of engagement between political entities, defined for the first time in terms of ‘a political space monopolised by a *single* legitimate authority’ (Devetak 1995: 25, emphasis mine). Moreover, the consecration of sovereignty in the Westphalian system engendered a political discourse that was grounded on the indivisibility and the particularity of the state, and one that was imbued with amnesia of its genealogy.

By reading the emergence of the Westphalian system as the culminating moment of the discourse on sovereignty, it becomes clear that trying to posit an ontological ordering of the state and the system of states becomes a ‘chicken-and-egg’ problem of infinite regress, namely the principle of state sovereignty expressing a specific articulation of the demarcation between particularity and universality. As Giddens points out, the discourse on sovereignty ‘simultaneously provides an ordering principle for what is ‘internal’ to states and what is ‘external’ to states’ (1985: 281). Since sovereignty and states are inter-subjectively constituted, my paper argues that the Westphalian ‘moment’ can therefore be read as one in which the ‘unit’ and ‘structure’ crystallised simultaneously (Devetak 1995: 26), although this ‘moment’ is an unending one.

The modern concept of sovereignty is also a specific resolution to the political choices that claim lofty exclusivist logic, and an attempt to negate alternative forms of the political discourse. The modern state therefore constitutes the principle of sovereignty in a particular spatial form. The relationship between sovereignty and the state is not one of ‘essence’ and ‘phenomenon’. Instead, the territorial state is the *text* in which the ongoing discourse on sovereignty is articulated. In going beyond constructivists such as Wendt, I would venture that states are social constructions, and that ‘states are what states make of it’ (1992). The ‘sponginess’ and fluidity of the sovereignty concept means that any understanding, expression or practice of it is grounded in an ongoing discourse, rather than enshrined in an ahistorical moment (Bartelson 1995; Weber 1995). The exclusivist logic of dividing the world into territorial states and the consolidation of communities within those boundaries has led to a conventional reading of the state as an already finished story. As Walker maintains:

[The] state appears in the conventional story as a formal and almost lifeless category, when in fact states are constantly maintained, defended, attacked, reproduced, undermined, and relegitimised on a daily basis (1993: 168).

Claims about sovereignty suggest a sense of persistence, if not permanence, about an unchanging territorial political space underpinned by the unchanging and reproductive logic of sovereignty. Given that reading of sovereignty, it follows that the nation-state is seen as a reified, static edifice, instead of as a particular expression of sovereignty. It is also touted as a process of narration which consists in ‘a process of continuing interaction between agent and structure, in which structures...can also change and be changed in certain conditions (Cerny 1990: xi). The state is therefore conceptualised as a dynamic structure that is located and constituted at the nexus of domestic, external and cross-cutting exigencies. Thus, far from being a completely constituted political entity, the state must be seen as being in a condition of constant flux. Cerny contends that like all social categories, ‘states...are never finished products, but are always in the process of formation, change and potential decay’ (1990: 4). In proposing that ‘*there is statecraft, but there is no completed state* (1995: 19), Devetak similarly highlights the constant need to articulate and inscribe sovereign boundaries that the ongoing discourse on sovereignty entails.

The notion of statecraft illustrates the idea that the state is ‘work in progress’, rather than a ‘once-and-for-all’ constituted political category. Underlying this is the unstable discourse on the sovereignty and the writing of the state as the text of that discourse. The contingent nature (‘nature’ used here not in the essentialist sense) of the state and political knowledge rests upon the inscription of boundaries that render the spatial categories of ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ meaningful. The political discourse within the inscription of boundaries renders political space possible and continually maintains that political space through the ensemble of practices referred to as statecraft (Walker 1993; Devetak 1995, 1996a). Hence, the state is imbued with the appearance of an essence and completeness through practices, which create and maintain boundaries. Besides, statecraft continually reproduces the state as well as our mode of political knowledge through reassurances of the integrity of sovereign boundaries. While Devetak may assert that ‘boundary inscription is a defining moment of the sovereign state’ (1996a: 197), I would add that it is an unending moment in which the discourse is articulated but never completed. The state is therefore

sovereignty put into practice, with the writing of the state being the ongoing expression of that practice.

Although this paper has argued that the modern nation-state is a particular expression of sovereignty, it does not follow that sovereignty is the essence of the nation-state. Indeed, as Walker notes, sovereignty as a practice of states is easily mistaken for its essence (1993: 176). It must be borne in mind that the nation-state and sovereignty are social constructs. Although they are categorically distinct, they implicate each other in an inter-subjective relationship. The modern conception of sovereignty as expressed in the Westphalian system is not only a complex political practice, but also an unstable one that is as likely to decay as it is to reproduce itself. Cerny points out that the process of statecraft is self-reinforcing only to the extent that ‘the international system [does] not present a...challenge to the state [insofar as it is] *based* on states as the basic units’ (1996: 123, emphasis mine).

Sovereignty is implicated in our political understanding insofar as it offers an answer to questions of political identity and the problems of inclusion and exclusion. As Walker puts it, ‘that principle was merely an historically specific response (1993: 21)’ to the pressing problems of modernity, chiefly ‘who is “we”?’ and ‘where is “here”?’’. This ‘historically specific response’ – taking the form of the modern sovereign state – is not without internal contradiction. Statecraft, read here as the ongoing but never completed expression of the sovereign state consists in the resolution of all particularisms within territorial boundaries into a singularity. The political discourse on sovereignty is splintered into problems of ‘domestic’ politics in which a tension exists between the suppression of the pluralistic claims of the ‘people’ by the universalistic claim of the state, and the problems of international relations in which the totalised state is presented as a singularity in an anarchic environment. As this paper has shown so far, as long as the practice of sovereignty is bound up with an ongoing discourse of what constitutes political knowledge, the possibility of changes in the contemporary understanding of sovereignty cannot be ruled out. It therefore becomes both possible and desirable to ask how political communities may be re-articulated in predications regarding the exclusion of the ‘Other’ and the negation of heterogeneity.

Since we live in an age of globalization, and that globalization engenders challenges to the *status quo*, states are then processes of narration-without-conclusion. Sovereignty is thus an ongoing discourse fraught with instabilities, because globalization does not create a ‘crisis’

of the sovereign state but merely magnifies its inherent fragilities and tensions. As Walker reasons:

If it is true that contemporary world politics is characterised by profound challenges to the principle of state sovereignty [by]...processes of temporal acceleration, then the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that are themselves constitutive of all claims to sovereign identity are not likely to provide much critical perspective on what these challenges might bring (1993: 161).

In other words, globalization will not only bring about an interpretive crisis of sovereignty, as Camilleri and Falk have asserted (1992: 44-66); but will lead to a whole new articulation of sovereignty and create new forms of statecraft. Globalization sparks a response in the form of the re-writing of the state.

The Challenge of Globalization and the Changing Norms of Sovereignty

This paper has so far argued for sovereignty to be located within a broader political discourse in which our notions of identity, political communities, and social justice are mutually constituted. More importantly, it has attempted to expose the metanarrative of sovereignty as the illusion of ‘an imaginary resolution of real contradictions (Levi-Strauss, quoted in Lyotard 1979: *ixi*). If postmodernism as conceived by Lyotard adopts an attitude of wariness towards ‘syntheses and reconciliations’ (1979: *passim*), then globalization can be posited as an episode in which the limits to the narrative of sovereignty are tested. This section examines sovereignty in the context of globalization. It questions the erstwhile unassailable position of nation-state and sovereignty in political discourse, particularly in the light of new socio-political movements and economic transformations that compel and accelerate a re-writing of sovereignty. As an ongoing political practice inseparable from the politics of globalization itself, sovereignty is typified most dramatically in the popular press and media in the form of ‘the death of the nation-state’, or similar vein. As Lombardi articulates:

It is a misnomer to see sovereignty as part of some linear evolution of history, destined for rise, pre-eminence and eventual fall...Sovereignty is a human construct and as such does not possess any status beyond any other transient phenomenon (1996: 153-4).

Globalization is a term that has pervaded the social consciousness in recent times, and has been used by the popular literature to describe everything from the Internet and CNN to the universal appeal of Coca-Cola and Big Macs. Beneath such superficialities lies the message that we are living in a world in which events everywhere are linked to events everywhere else (Giddens 1990). Consequently, there is a greater social awareness in contemporary world politics of the linkages and interconnectedness of issues, problems, places and peoples all over the globe. There have been many attempts to articulate what globalization entails. According to Robertson:

Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole...both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole in the twentieth century (1992: 8).

While Giddens believes that:

Globalization can...be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (1990: 64).

Inherent within the definition of globalization is a *process* that sees the world becoming a single place. More importantly, it is a process that people are both aware of and engaged in. People are increasingly aware that territorial constraints on social, political, economic and cultural arrangements are giving way. As Brown states, 'globalization is a process rather than an end state' (1995: 55). Furthermore, I will argue below that there is no necessity for globalization to culminate in a terminal, 'globalized' condition. Instead, I will articulate how globalization may be read as 'unending moments' of spatial transformations and temporal accelerations that are not without their ambiguities and resistances.

It is important to ask how globalization is different from internationalisation as purported by Keohane and Nye of the 'interdependence school' (1977). Another question is whether there was a 'pre-globalization', and if we are aware of the fundamental break from the past that globalization entails? Clearly, interdependence is an integral part of both internationalization and globalization. Globalization, however, must be seen to consist in much more than interdependence. Globalization differs in the sense that as the density of interactions increases and intensifies, and as the number of actors involve proliferates and diversifies, the nature of these interactions is transformed through 'the reordering of time and

space' (Williams 1996: 117). In this sense, globalization as a critical disjuncture of what went on before is more about increasing the scale or pace of the game: it is about changing the very rules and nature of the game. Globalization thus constitutes both qualitative and quantitative transformations.

Internationalization encompasses the increasing interconnectedness of still distinct territorially coherent units based on the assumption that 'social order is a state bounded order' (Saurin 1995: 257), whereas globalization stresses the emergence of a global society – an alternative to the states system – in which there is a transcendence of boundaries inscribed through the discourse on sovereignty. Hence, the increase in the dynamic density of the interactions between states must cross a critical threshold in order to mark globalization as a fundamental break from the past. In suggesting that globalization is a critical juncture in world politics, it is crucial, however, not to posit globalization as the climax of historical forces, but rather as a process unleashed by the politics of a plethora of different actors, not least of which is the state.

There is nothing automatic, uniform, inevitable or linear about globalization. It is a multi-layered, uneven and heterogeneous process *tending* towards global universality, which is not the same as saying that it will be attained. By highlighting the asymmetries involved in globalization, as well as those uncovered and magnified by globalization, one is bound to admit the great potential for counter-movements and resistances rooted in local grass-roots concentrations. Examples are disaffected labour that is increasingly exploited and marginalized by the imperatives of transnational capital, or counter-movements which are rooted in traditional conservatism, or radical ethno-nationalism which view globalization suspiciously as Westernization in a benign liberal disguise. Indeed, Brown argues that the blurring of boundaries and spatial compressions can have the effect of engendering threats to established practices and the consequent need to reinforce particular identities (1995: 62). Consequently, there is a need to recognise the frictions and costs to globalization that underlie the liberal promise of interdependence, openness and harmonization, if not homogenisation. By bearing in mind the contingent nature of globalization, I suggest that it is not simply an autonomous force that is happening 'out there', but is an ongoing process that implicates all of us in complex chains of causality. Globalization is an ongoing social construction that is borne out of, implicated in, and a shaper of the practices of states and other actors, and is tied

into the discourse on how our political knowledge itself is constructed and wielded. More importantly, globalization represents a particular way in which the direction of this wider political discourse has taken, and how this unfolding but unplanned script has destabilised and redrawn the boundaries of political organization and the articulation of sovereignty, or statecraft.

Theorizing globalization is problematic if globalization is interpreted as an impersonal process divorced from the social, political and economic actors. States lie at the heart of the globalization process, but it is vital not to see them as hapless victims. States themselves have been instrumental in igniting and fuelling the different dynamics of globalization, through decisions taken (or, as is often the case, not taken) such as deregulation, re-regulation, and even benign neglect. Globalization is not something that just happens to states. In examining the dynamics of financial globalization and capital mobility, Susan Strange highlights the Polanyian point that markets and states are intimately linked:

[People] are often tempted to write about economic trends...as if they were blind economic forces. It is very easily forgotten that markets exist under the authority and by the permission of the state, and are conducted on whatever terms the state may choose to dictate, or allow (1986: 29).

Analyses that attempt to uncover the impact of globalization on the state, or the realists' attempt to recover the ontological high ground for the state by arguing for its central role in globalization are therefore *non sequitur*, because they posit a uni-directional causal link that runs either from the state to globalization or vice versa. I argue instead that globalization and the state implicate each other in intricate webs of linkages and the attempt to assign causal primacy constitutes a methodological fallacy.

Theories of globalization of the sort contend that 'the retreat of the state' or 'the end of the state' also mistake state autonomy for state sovereignty. Kennedy stressed that 'globalization threatens to undermine the assumed integrity of the nation-state as the central organising unit of domestic and external affairs' (1993: 53). According to him, the capacity of the state to formulate and implement policies autonomously has been breached by the discipline of global markets. It is state autonomy that is being eroded, not sovereignty. As Williams points out, '[sovereignty] is absolute and not relative. An entity cannot be more or less sovereign (1996: 112)'. In a similar fashion, Thomson also contends: 'State control [and autonomy] has waxed and waned enormously over time, regions and issue-areas while the

states' claim to ultimate political authority has persisted for more than three centuries' (1995: 214).

The salient point here is that sovereignty is a claim. Hence, whilst the claim by the state to overarching sovereign political power over a territory may at best be a convenient fiction or ideology, it is the process of the claim-making that makes statecraft possible at all. Globalization does not erode sovereignty. The spatiotemporal transformations that lie at its heart endanger the territorial logic underpinning state sovereignty. It calls into question the adequacy of our established political knowledge and sets the context for a different discourse on sovereignty. In other words, globalization engenders new and different practices of statecraft, which in turn leads to a re-writing of the state in terms other than that of exclusivity and territoriality.

By seeing sovereignty as a fluid, historically contingent and contestable concept, and recognising its embeddedness in the articulation and practice of political knowledge, sovereignty is read as a text that is constantly being written and rewritten. The challenge of globalization to sovereignty resides in a dramatic deviation from the script of statecraft in which sovereignty is being rearticulated. As Walker argues:

What is at stake in the interpretation of contemporary transformations is not the eternal presence or imminent absence of states. It is the degree to which the modernist resolution of space-time relations expressed by the principle of state sovereignty offers a plausible account of contemporary political practices, including the practices of states (1993: 14).

The challenge of globalization does not consist in the breaking down of established boundaries enshrined by the principle of state sovereignty; instead, globalization destabilises our political knowledge by undermining the spatial categories demarcated by sovereignty and statecraft. It is not the case that globalization brings into question the analytical primacy of the state 'both endogenously and exogenously' as Cerny contends (1994), but rather alters the conditions under which 'endogenous' and 'exogenous' spheres have been articulated in the first place. Whilst recognising that 'transnational interpenetration has always been in the international system [and that its] accelerating expansion today has the potential to recast that system (1994: 3)', I believe Cerny mistakenly consigns both globalization and sovereignty to *a priori* categories. I argue that both are contingent in the continual political discourse of world politics.

The fragmentations, compressions and integrations occurring in contemporary world politics renders the maintenance of 'inside/outside' problematic and untenable, thus forcing a reformulation of sovereignty and a rewriting of the state. Indeed, these changes have engendered challenges to the modern nation-state, and have thrown up alternatives such as theocratic states in the Middle East, and supra-states like the European Union. Globalization has redrawn the proverbial map of both the geographical and knowledge landscape. It forces us to view the world not merely in a territorial logic, but in terms of other nodes of identity such as race, gender, even civilizations. More crucially, it has redefined the scope of political possibilities. The importance of location has been superseded by the importance of speed and time, thereby de-territorializing the modern concept of sovereignty and splintering its exclusivist claim within.

The practice of statecraft – the inscription of boundaries in order to subdue particularisms in the names of universalism – is rendered problematic because states no longer have an exclusive or unchallenged claim on the loyalty of and legitimation by its citizens. The rewriting of the state is read as an attempt by the practitioners of statecraft to renovate, reinforce and repair the boundaries and foundations that are breaking down in this era of globalization. It represents attempts by governments, through the various policies of financial, trade and migration law reforms, to stay relevant, which results in what some writers have referred to as the 'virtual state' and the 'residual state' (Rosecrance 1996; Cerny 1996). It is the particular discourse of sovereignty with its exclusivist territorial logic, which has endured for so long, that is being called into question, and that demands re-articulation and relocation in to less exclusivist forms. Globalization is therefore an episode in which the discourse on the state takes the form of renovation instead of reaffirmation, and in which this (excitingly) different discourse will throw up a different kind of state with a different reading of sovereignty.

Positivist epistemologies, the subject/object and inside/outside divides, and the territorial logic underpinning the discourse on sovereignty are derailing the Enlightenment project of modernity, with its Hegelian promise of historical and rational synthesis. The Enlightenment project is gradually being replaced by uncertainty, relativism and perhaps nihilism. Conversely, it is also a moment for cautious optimism in an articulation of political communities and organization. Sovereignty as the stock remedy to humanity's problems (in

the Aristotelian sense) is no longer adequate. Problems have burst the confines of our current political imagination delimited by spatial demarcations engendered by sovereignty. Since the inadequacy of and instabilities within sovereignty have never been completely purged but only suppressed, globalization uncovers the weaknesses in our contemporary political discourse and opens up new avenues for this discourse. Far from being a straightforward retreat of the state, globalization is a fractured and ongoing narrative with twists, turns and reversals, that is accompanied by the complementary text of sovereignty, and written by a motley crew of authors with no plot in mind, to say nothing of an ending.

Nation-States, or the Nation versus the State?

The previous section has argued that globalization can be read as a postmodern moment in which the grand narrative of sovereignty is being unravelled and repackaged. This section extends that analysis by examining the impact of the changing articulations of sovereignty on the nation-state, thereby laying the groundwork for questions regarding linkages between sovereignty and identity formation. Thus far, the foregoing argument has highlighted the ways in which the discourse on sovereignty is linked at many levels to our understanding of politics, both in the 'domestic' sense as well as in international relations. The positivist separation of 'subject' from 'object' fails and disintegrates in the face of postmodern deconstruction and re-historicisation.

The 'crisis of the nation-state', in the light of such postmodern challenges takes the form of more than debating the 'eternal presence or imminent absence of states' (Walker 1993: 14). The postmodern challenge is served up to highlight the various imperfections and instabilities inherent in the coupling of the 'nation' and the 'state'. Sovereignty of the nation-state, in our time, is 'an attempted solution to the problem of the separation between a community and its state' (Blaney and Inayatullah 1996: 88). As will be shown, such a solution has typically consisted in the suppression and universalising of different claims to political identity in the name of an over-arching sovereign principle. It is clear that the power of the state over the national community – namely, its monopoly over political identity and the interpretation of space – will always have competition from other quarters, such as ethnicity and gender.

As Barkin and Cronin contend, understandings of sovereignty are tied to the prevailing climate of political practice:

...[When] international norms legitimise state rather than national sovereignty, the international community and its institutions will tend to defend the rights of established states against nationalistic claims of domestic ethnic groups. On the other hand, when norms of international order favour national over state sovereignty, the international community will be more sympathetic to pleas for national self-determination, often at the expense of established states (1994: 108).

There are therefore two paradoxes inherent in the construction and sustenance of the nation-state itself. The first is that the exclusivist logic underpinning the notion of sovereignty lends itself to two often violently-opposed interpretations. Hence, the fusion of 'nation' with 'state' in the name of sovereignty constitutes a form of unstable equilibrium in which the structural integrity of the 'nation-state' alternates between nationalist and statist foundations. In other words, whilst the specific expression of sovereignty may be constant, the expression of singularity, identity and exclusivity, that which is considered to be 'sovereign' changes. The central problem of sovereignty lies in trying to reconcile its sole exclusivist logic with locating the source of legitimate authority within a variably-defined political boundary. There has therefore been a continuum from statist to nationalist modes of legitimising 'sovereignty', and the fragility and internal tensions within the nation-state attest to the problematic nature of sovereignty.

The second, and arguably more important paradox is in the genealogy of the nation-state itself, specifically within the context of the modern understanding of sovereignty. It was the Westphalian moment that heralded the emergence of the state as the supreme locus of authority and power. This ended both the Church's transnational claims to political authority. It replaced the overlapping and pluralistic jurisdictions of kings, nobles and clerics that characterised the late medieval system with the singular and exclusivist logic of state sovereignty (Ruggie 1986; Barkin and Cronin 1994). As Ruggie points out, the distinction between internal and external political realms – 'inside' and 'outside' – is a modern phenomenon, the constitutive bottom-line of the states-system (Ruggie 1986: 142-3). State sovereignty in this context is an institutionalised authority within a clearly demarcated territory, one that is a self-justifying and self-perpetuating: historical possession legitimating continued jurisdiction and authority. Hence, in most of Europe the origins of state

sovereignty can be traced to the legal titles and dynastic ties that provided the basis to territorial claims and which consequently laid the groundwork for the modern state (Poggi 1990; Barkin and Cronin 1994). In this way, the legitimation of state sovereignty is akin to the legitimation of property in law: possession. An absence of claims by others leads to ownership. At a deeper level, the rationale behind this conception of sovereignty lies in trying to formulate a self-contained and elegant ‘solution to all troubles, theological, ontological and political’ (Walker 1996: 18).

Walker strongly emphasises that sovereignty is a social convention and, more crucially, an illusion ‘[albeit one] that both expresses and constitutes the greatest powers of human creativity and violence’ (1996: 18). The most important feature of sovereignty suppressed by international relations conventionalism is its *arbitrary* nature. Indeed, Hobbes’s declaration that the duties of political subjects are owed to the state, rather than to the person of the rule can thus be viewed as marking the end of one distinct phase in the history of political theory and practice, and the commencement of the more familiar modern one. As Skinner asserts:

[It] announces the end of an era in which the concept of public power had been treated in far more personal and charismatic terms. It points to a simpler and altogether more abstract version, one that has remained with us ever since and has come to be embodied in the use of such terms as [the state] (1989: 90-1).

Hobbes’s significant formulation of sovereignty in the history of political thought is often highlighted. The fact that it is arbitrary is usually ignored or glossed over. Sovereignty, in Walker’s reading, is never simply there. It must be made to work and it has to be enacted and instituted through social practices (1994: *passim*). Hobbes offered modernity a solution, but it was one that jealously obscured alternative solutions.

Fast forward a century after Westphalia and one sees the emergence of the modern concept of the ‘nation’ (Barkin and Cronin 1994; Poggi 1990). The distinguishing feature of modern nationalism is the claim that nations, understood in Weberian terms as ‘communities of sentiment’, should be politically self-determining. In addition, group sentiment (read as ‘national solidarity’) should serve as the sole criterion in defining the nation, or who ‘the people’ are. With the evolution of modern nationalism, there is a tension between two opposing principles, namely state sovereignty which stresses the link between sovereign authority and territoriality, and national sovereignty which is predicated on the relationship

between sovereign authority and a defined population. The nation-state in the modern sense is therefore simultaneously an expression of sovereignty and the irreconcilability of these two opposing principles. The primacy of the 'nation-state' in the literature glosses over the problematic nature of the nation-state, as well as its origins. 'Nation' and 'state' have not always gone together, but that the 'state' actually precedes the notion of the 'nation'. Therein lies the second paradox that I earlier alluded to, that is the nation-state, which is far from being a victim of globalising forces is itself prone to endogenous decay and fissioning. Denham and Lombardi contend that 'the [nation-state] as the pre-eminent international actor and as the exclusive source of political identity is gradually yet decisively being challenged' (1996: 1).

It is not that anonymous forces 'out there' are attacking and eroding the viability of the nation-state, it is simply that the cement that holds the nation-state together is giving way, and that those cracks in the adhesive have always been present. Witness in recent times the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. These calamitous events are the starkest proof that the two ideals of 'state sovereignty' and 'national sovereignty' cannot be simultaneously fulfilled. Therefore, whilst Blaney and Inayatullah are correct in arguing that the principle of sovereignty locates authority and legitimacy within a territorially-bounded community, they fail to take note of the conflicting relationship between territoriality and nationality, that is the two different understandings of sovereignty.

In his critical study of nation-states and nationalism, Benedict Anderson suggests that the nation-state is an 'imagined community' (1991: *passim*). He argues that '[it] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (1991: 6). Similarly, to speak of a stable national citizenry exists, is to 'fix' and stabilize the content of that citizenry through discursive practices. Consider the common constructivist themes at play, that is how nations 'imagine themselves', statecraft, 'states are what states make of it'. The nation-state is seen as a metanarrative construct, one which constructs itself as a hegemonic, self-identical 'subject' through the imperfect fusion of 'nation' with 'state'. The viability of the nation-state is maintained through a plethora of strategies, ranging from the exercise of coercion and violence, to the literature on which political discourse is conducted. These strategies are mounted in order that the territorial state

coincides and overlaps with the nation it purports to represent. As Anderson further argues, the creation of that subjective identity entails two steps. Firstly, the creating and then secondly, limiting different, be it within or without sovereign boundaries (1991: *passim*).

The realist assumption of sovereignty as an already settled question leads to what Cynthia Weber refers to as ‘blindness to the historicity of sovereignty’ (1995: 2). It is more appropriate, she asserts, to ponder ‘how the meaning of sovereignty is stabilized’ and ‘[how] the meaning of state sovereignty is fixed in theory and practice’. It must be highlighted that sovereignty was a concept articulated and made fashionable in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. As Walker wryly puts it, ‘politically speaking, God died around the time of Machiavelli, not of Nietzsche. Sovereignty was in effect His earthly replacement’ (1996: 22).

The historicity, arbitrariness, even ‘imagined nature’ of the nation-state forces us to ask the question: ‘what is it that makes people love and die for them, as well as hate and kill in its name?’ Part of the answer lies in the fact that the nation-state is only viable to the extent to which it is thought to have always existed. The narrative of the nation-state, or its ‘biography’ as Anderson puts it, is accompanied by ‘characteristic amnesia’ (1991: 204). Statecraft, in addition to the inscription and maintenance of borders must also demonstrate the illusion of ‘eternal imminence’ to the state, a convenient fiction to which modernity has been a willing accomplice. It is by forgetting how the coupling of ‘nation’ with ‘state’ takes place that renders the enactment of statecraft possible in the very first place.

In her study, Cynthia Weber considers various pressing questions pertaining to the constitution of the state as a sovereign identity. For example, she asks how a domestic community is distinguished and maintained, and how the state can be said to speak on its behalf (1995: 5-6). The argument here is simply that there is no ‘natural’ sovereign state because there is no ‘natural’ foundation of sovereignty. Indeed, poststructuralism disputes its very existence arguing instead that what really matters is the process by which the illusion of foundations is maintained. Hence, as Cynthia Weber asserts, ‘just who the people are and who legitimately can speak for them is contested and constructed daily in international practice’ (1995: 27). Contemporary changes in the discourse on sovereignty therefore reflect a postmodern reminder of our ‘forgotten’ origins. Arendt reminds us that not only is the disintegration of the nation-state a violent affair, but also that its fusion is shrouded in

violence: '[The] sovereignty of political bodies has always been an illusion, which, moreover can be maintained only by instruments of violence...' (quoted in Ehlstain 1995: 359). As the pre-eminent mode of political practice and organization in the modern age and the solution of humanity's spatiotemporal problems, the nation-state is also a major hindrance to the emancipation and progress of the species, as articulated by scholars such as Linklater (1990, 1996: *passim*). It is this 'amnesia' that lies at the heart of statecraft that makes the illusion of the nation-state's exclusivity as the sole site of political identity possible. Modern political identities are in fact, fractured and dispersed among a multiplicity of sites, 'a condition that is sometimes attributed to a specifically postmodern experience but one that has been a familiar, though selectively forgotten, characteristic of modern political life for several centuries' (Walker 1993: 161).

The Politics of Identity

This section returns to the argument made in the introduction, namely that the politics of identity and the politics of sovereignty are a mutually constitutive, intersubjective discourse. The linkage between the two avoids the crude assignment of causal/explanatory primacy to one or the other, whilst stopping short of the synthesis that Hegelian dialectic is predicated upon. The question of identity, at individual and collective levels is relegated to the margins of international relations theories; hence, the failure to uncover and challenge the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning identity-formation. In particular, the failure has consisted chiefly in the inability to account for the formation of individual identity in the social sciences, which is fundamentally informed by the Enlightenment conception of the modern subject as unitary, autonomous, interest-maximising and rational – in other words, as 'sovereign Man' (Peterson 1996; True 1996; Walker 1992). In both 'domestic' political science and international relations, accounts of collective identity generally assume a spatial model of public sphere agency and territorial nation-states. In these accounts, a dichotomy is created which locates political action in one sphere and mere relations in the other. Hence, the dichotomy of 'inside' and 'outside' distinguishes citizens, order and hierarchy within a territorially- and conceptually-bounded 'inside' from an anarchic, hostile 'outside'. Put another way, it posits the presence of identity 'inside' against

the absence of one 'outside'. These accounts are challenged by both empirical and epistemological transformations in the discourse that is international relations. As Peterson puts it, 'state-centric political identity no longer monopolises but shares the stage with a growing number of non-territorial claimants' (1996: 11).

Indeed, the spatial compressions and temporal accelerations that lie at the heart of globalization has rendered space and location increasingly irrelevant as compared to time-flows and non-spaces (and even virtual spaces). Identities hitherto conventionally 'grounded' in sovereignty of the nation-state and intrinsically territorial in its logic are losing ground to a politics of identity articulated in terms of ethnicity, gender, ecology and even virtual spaces and reality. The modernist conception of a unitary rational actor is giving way to a narrative of the Self that lies at the nexus of a multiplicity of different identities. In other words, it is a centre-less Self that is contrary to the Kantian tradition. And insofar as the Self is tied into the narrative of sovereignty, it has engendered a new discourse on how political communities are organised, as well as how political identities are constructed:

[Sovereignty affirms] a clear sense of here and there...Knowing the other outside, it is possible to affirm identities inside. Knowing identities inside, it is possible to imagine the absences outside (Walker 1993: 174).

In other words, there cannot be a Self without the Other, and it is the conflict between the two – the contestation of boundaries – that affirms sovereign identities.

The principle of sovereignty, that of the Self and the nation-state has held the key to the political discourse through which we have attempted to understand and reconcile identity with difference, Self and Other, 'inside' and 'outside'. Far from being an unshakeable basis for dealing with these questions, sovereignty is a discourse that constantly works to resolve all these contradictions that arise when we attempt to define who 'we' are. Moreover, it is an exclusivist discourse that has provided one unique though historically contingent account of political identity by marginalizing all other identity claims. As Beetham puts it:

All of us have a number of different identities to our social identity. What the nation-state does is to single out one of those identities, and assign it sole political validity, making it the exclusive basis of political allegiance (1984: 221).

Globalization with its impact on the territorial and conceptual boundaries inform the viability as well as our understanding and practices of sovereignty. It creates new spaces and

ways for new and different ways of articulating solutions to the pressing questions of social justices and political identity. Globalization therefore implicates not only the nation-state and the principle of sovereignty at many levels, but also engages the wider political reality by transforming the established ways and concepts of our political understanding. Sovereignty is the primary device by which spatial demarcations are inscribed and legitimated, as well as the main means by which the boundaries of political knowledge are formed. Through a fundamental restructuring of international relations into world politics via spatial compression and temporal acceleration, globalization renders our identity hitherto grounded in the territorial nation-state highly problematic.

The emergence of a global world order with de-territorialised and accelerated flows and interactions suggests that ‘the claims of state sovereignty can no longer effectively resolve all political contradictions in space and time’ (Walker 1993: 161). The emergence of a global process (or processes) suggests that the sovereign state which has been long held as the prime locus of political possibilities, social justice and order is giving way to different avenues of forming political identities, whether in terms of ethnicities, a single humanity, gender, classes or even nations-without-states. It is only by engaging with sovereignty – through ‘statecraft’ that one is able to see beyond the limits of a political imagination that is dogged and bounded by the principle of sovereignty and admit that the ‘renewed assertions of various cosmopolitan claims’ (Walker 1993: 171). With the increasing weakness of the state in relation to global processes, as well as the increased fragility of the fusion of ‘nation’ with ‘state’, the marginal voices silenced by statecraft have once again begun to speak and are rising to crescendo. The monopoly of sovereignty as the basis on which political identity is constructed is being challenged by forces beyond the control of governments and other apparatuses of statecraft. As Devetak argues:

Critical international theory reacts against the conventional tendency to associate community with the state or nation [or nation-state]...By refusing to take the sovereign state as an idealised form of community it challenges the state’s role as sole constructor of identity, and invites rethinking the nature and limits of moral and political community under changing global conditions (1996b: 168).

Sovereignty, as Walker argues, can be read from ‘outside’ and ‘inside’, because the discourse on sovereignty demarcates an ‘outside’ from the ‘inside’ (Walker 1992, 1993).

Furthermore, Bartelson argues that sovereignty is bound up with political knowledge and practice, and the principle of sovereignty suggests the necessity in defending territorial and imagined borders, as well as prefiguring the formation of identities (1995: *passim*). With the splintering of the political discourse into ‘domestic’ political science and relations between states, the limits to how ‘the good life’ can be attained stops literally, at the water’s edge. Beyond the territorial borders of the nation-state lies the eternal tragic realm of anarchic, self-help behaviour of states. Political identity grounded in the sovereign nation-state is only possible ‘inside’; ‘outside’ exists the negation of identity. Hence, politics ‘inside’ takes on a temporal quality in which progress and change are possible, whereas relations ‘outside’ are spatial in character and exhibits continuity and primitiveness. At the same time, the resolution of spatiotemporal contradictions through sovereignty is not without problems. As Linklater points out, the state as a ‘limited moral community promotes a form of particularism which generates insecurity and estrangement through rigid boundaries between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, ‘us’ and ‘them’ (1990: 28). The viability of sovereignty, and more accurately the possibility of statecraft lies in universalising if not marginalizing internal dissenters and particularisms.

Whilst emphasising the transcendence of state powers and national boundaries by global processes, globalization has also highlighted the increasing significance of ‘micro-processes’ that take place at the local or sub-national level. In light of this, one can no longer hold the state to be the sole place of politics, nor can politics be solely conceived of in terms of sovereignty and citizenship. Instead as Stern argues, ‘the multiplication of sites of politics undermines every effort [of statecraft] to identify a singular place of ultimate authority and thereby challenges any attribute of or claims to sovereignty’ (1996: 30). Far from being confined within the static parameters of sovereignty, the politics of identity must be intertwined with the practices of statecraft. Hence, insofar as political identities are bound up in sovereignty, it is impossible to determine beforehand what is political and what is not. Indeed, to define the sovereign political identity is to engage in the politics of identity itself, along with the attendant inclusions, exclusions and suppressions.

Ashley’s examination of the link between ‘modern mancraft’ and ‘modern statecraft’ proves to be particularly useful in casting some light on the complex relationship between the discourse on sovereignty and the politics of identity. Ashley argues that the sovereign state

must be read in conjunction with the sovereign subject because it was formed through a ‘social “compact” between man and state – the former as the source of truth and meaning, the latter as the site and resources that modern discourse reserves for the exercise of force and violence wherever history refuses to bow to man’s reason’ (1989: 268). He further writes:

[State] and domestic society assume the privileged place of the original rational identity, man, and they can easily assume this place, because in all variants of the modern political narrative, the state secures the legitimacy of its reason in a compact with rational man (Ashley 1989: 286).

In other words, the discourse of the state – statecraft – is a heroic practice because it inscribes the sovereign state as a present entity in the midst of an anarchic and therefore terrifying ‘outside’.

Postmodernism sees the sovereign state as a Cartesian subject writ large, and therefore susceptible to the various critiques that have assailed modern subjectivity. The state and its creator, the sovereign man ‘occupy the same historico-discursive space’ (Slawner 1996: 140). They are therefore simply two different sides of the same coin; they are different aspects of what Ashley calls the ‘paradigm of sovereignty (1989: *passim*). ‘Paradigm of sovereignty’ means ‘a specifically, historically *fabricated*, widely circulated, and practically effective *interpretation* of man as a sovereign being’ (Ashley 1989: 269, emphasis mine). What must be borne in mind is the logocentric nature of sovereignty: it is fabricated political practice that has crystallised into an illusion of reality, and a convenient fiction maintained by its practitioners. The paradigm of sovereignty is an interpretation that has been reified into an ontological foundation on which various socio-political practices, including the politics of identity can be built. It is fabricated in history and through continued practice, and must be continually fabricated in the face of dissensions and resistances. Statecraft, the practice of sovereignty, demarcates space so that outcomes are expected and predictable: life ‘inside’ is ordered and rational, whereas life ‘outside’ is chaotic and dangerous.

The paradigm of sovereignty is enabled by a particular brand of identity that is rooted in spatial demarcation and totalization. It consists in the articulation of problems, fears and difference, and then locating it ‘out there’ beyond the discursive confines of the sovereign state. Statecraft does not simply consist in solving problems and dangers in the name of an antecedent sovereign entity, but by inscribing those problems and dangers in order to enframe a totalised ‘identity’ from an exteriorised ‘non-identity’. Statecraft and the politics of identity

cannot be separated from each other simply because they both involve constructing political identities – populations of identity (‘nation’) grafted onto a rational, hierarchic centre (‘state’) – and articulating and defeating the dangers they face. Moreover, the very practice of statecraft is predicated on the activity of securing identity from non-identity.

Doty asserts that state sovereignty finds expression in and is validated by the expression of national identity. It then follows that when the feelings of community and solidarity can no longer be accommodated safely within the confines of the nation-state, the ‘us-versus-them’ dimension of the identity discourse gives way to a more complex, multi-dimensional one in which elements that fuse come into conflict with elements that fissure (Doty 1996: *passim*). For instance, the advent of the information economy in the late 1990s has created sharp asymmetries such as the widening poverty gap and the digital divide, resulting in a backlash of cynicism and disenfranchisement of the globalization project. More importantly, the rolling back of state power and autonomy in everyday life (sometimes voluntarily) and the deference to the discipline of market forces has led to an unravelling of the social contract that first binds people into a community, and which in turn fuses that community to the state.

Sovereignty hence articulates and affirms (and is in turn reaffirmed by) the historically specific conditions informing our political knowledge and life. Furthermore, it answers or at least addresses our questions about identity, justice and how to attain ‘the good life’. The ongoing discourse on sovereignty is crucial to any potential possibility of rearticulating our identities, both collectively and individually. As Walker argues, ‘[as] nationalist or globalist, we can know who we are through knowing where we are’ (1993: 179). What he means is that alternative constructions of political identities lie in the current writing (and re-writing) of the sovereignty text. The emergence of global processes do not merely challenge the viability of the nation-state: it must be interpreted at a much deeper level of laying bare the inadequacies of contemporary statecraft. The logic of de-territorialisation hints at the possibility of a transition from international *relations* to a genuine world *politics*, and results in what Mlinar refers to as ‘a transition from *identity as an island* to *identity as a cross-road*’ (1992: 2, original emphasis). In other words, the possibility of the exclusivity of sovereignty as the basis of identity must give way to a multiplicity of subjectivities.

Conclusion – Politics of Identity in a post-Sovereign World

This paper took a postmodern viewpoint and argued that political reality – insofar as it appears real to us – is *made*, not uncovered. Moreover, the whole gamut of our political knowledge and practices are grounded in, and indeed inseparable from, the making of that political reality. Hence, I have argued that sovereignty and the politics of identity are concepts, which are not only socially constructed but are always in the process of consolidation and reconstruction. Sovereignty is not an eternal verity of our political understanding, nor is the nation-state a permanent feature of it, although both have demonstrated impressive persistence and resilience since the moment of Westphalia. In adopting an anti-essentialist stance, I have argued that it is more apt to ask how sovereignty has been articulated and statecraft practised.

Contemporary events and transformations, such as advances in various technologies and the intensification of social processes subsumed under the rubric of ‘globalization’ are compelling changes in the political landscape (in both figurative and literal terms). They render an adaptation of political practices by a compression of space and the acceleration of transactions. As Camilleri and Falk point out, ‘it is reasonable to expect that changes in global culture and political economy may well have repercussions for the concept and practice of sovereignty’ (1992: 44). The ‘incredulity towards metanarratives’, which Lyotard (1979: xxiv) holds as a defining quality of postmodernism and which this paper has adopted, simply means that the illusion of an antecedent, privileged frame of reference for political discourse has been shattered. In applying this strand of thought to the examination of sovereignty and identity, this paper has argued that political discourse no longer needs to resort to a myth of social origins or a consecrated rule-book; instead, the discourse itself constitutes its very own rules.

As Walker has argued, sovereignty constitutes both the ontological foundation of political knowledge as well as its horizons (1993: *passim*). The sharp demarcation between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, and the equating of the ‘inside’ with sovereignty and the ‘outside’ with the lack of it, makes for a delimiting worldview. It is especially delimiting in the sense that the rigorous inscription of boundaries and the purging of instabilities suppress dissensions and tensions. In this respect, globalization at present poses the greatest challenge to the relatively

stable discourse on sovereignty by causing distinctly demarcated spaces to collapse and mesh into one another. The emergence of a global world order (or disorder) enables us not only to think of world politics in ways other than ‘mere relations between states’, but also forces us to acknowledge the contingency of the territorial nation-state as a particular expression of sovereignty, and as one of several building blocks on which identities are constructed.

The elegant and singular solution to modernity’s spatiotemporal problems is provided by the concept of sovereignty. This solution, however, is rapidly unravelling in the face of globalization. Not only that, it is now itself an obstacle to the emancipation of the human species from injustice, disorder and marginalization. Sovereignty, with its logic of indivisibility and exclusivity, constructs a political reality that is divided into ‘ethically opposed domains that nevertheless implicate each other’ (Bartelson 1995: 241), and makes identity possible in one, impossible in the other. The nation-state with its inception at Westphalia, was the pre-eminent Aristotelian ‘political association’ in which social justice was best served.

With the emergence of a complex global order, the nation-state itself now constitutes a stumbling block to the very problems it purported to solve. It has become ‘too big’ for local problems at the sub-national level such as hypernationalism and ethno-religious violence, ‘too small’ for the problems of governing the global economy and regulating problems such as environmental degradation and resource management, and simply inadequate in addressing the wider question of a more cosmopolitan conception of social justice. As Linklater argues, the answer to these questions lies in whether we conceive of ourselves as ‘national citizens’ or ‘global citizens’ (1990: *passim*).

By holding that ‘knowledge is political, and politics is based on knowledge’, Bartelson argues that ‘sovereignty is filled with a historically variable content’ (1995: 5-7). What this means is that the concept of sovereignty is always inscribed in sand, not cast in stone. Hence, it is possible for the discourse on sovereignty to move into fundamentally new and hitherto un-thought of directions. The transformations being wrought on the nation-state is not the sudden impact of a newly-unleashed process of globalization, but rather the fissuring of the nation-state and the changing norms of sovereignty are the culmination of a deep-rooted historical process which has consisted in trying to cement over these ‘cracks’ in the structure of the nation-state. Whilst laying bare such weaknesses and instabilities in the nation-state’s

conceptual structure, globalization also highlights new possibilities for the practitioners of statecraft and the authors of sovereignty discourse. Sovereignty contains within itself the seeds for its own re-writing. Because it is an unstable discourse that is never completely totalised, the political identities that stem from it are highly contingent. It holds potential for emancipation from the de-limiting categories of 'us' and 'them' due to the pressures from the confinement of political imagination within sovereign boundaries. It is time, as Lombardi asserts, to rethink what is political within a spatial and temporal world that 'moves too fast for existing markers and signposts' (1996: 158).

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