

critiques, one methodological and the other theoretical, that I may address.

The first charge is of conceptual looseness regarding the term “sovereignty” in which discrepancies exist between narrower conceptual definitions and broader notions in the empirical cases. This is frequently on account of, as Srivastava has argued in her own book, the idealized and lived versions of sovereignty that are often used interchangeably yet at odds with each other. In my research, leaders and diplomats tended to discuss policies rather than principles (except in broad, non-specific ways), though the implications for sovereignty were usually clear. Their understandings were inferred by combing archival sources or from secondary interviews of others who interacted with them (the costs and barriers of direct interviewing being prohibitive, although the post-Covid Zoom era may alleviate one part of this perennial problem for comparative regionalists). The challenge for me was how to maintain fidelity with such usage or inferred implications against a concise theoretical definition.

The simplest way to map permutations of sovereignty was along an axis between two extremes of a regional organization’s potential influence on the state; i.e., from total non-interference (where the OAU was in the 1990s) to full authority over the state (a hypothetical situation potentially realisable had the “United States of Africa” proposal succeeded). Even so, linearly modelling a locus of agency between state and regional organization has difficulties with some conceptions, such as the case study of the “ASEAN minus X” principle, which was simply a sovereignty bypass rather than power over any state. These reflect the non-linearity of these debates even as they test different conceptions of sovereignty. Ultimately, case variation (methodologically, the need for significant cases with variant outcomes of acceptance, rejection, or qualification) for me was a higher priority than conceptual stringency, which would have greatly limited the empirical set of cases investigable.

A more fundamental question Srivastava raises is the interrelationship between power and utility, as she describes, “divorcing the creation of ‘greater utility’ from normative force.” She is correct that I only tackle it in a single footnote, albeit one that encapsulates a very large debate in sociology (see Dave Elder-Vass, “Developing Social Theory Using Critical Realism,” *Journal of Critical Realism* 14[1], 2015). The path out of this feedback loop is to use time as a methodological separator. This means that at the outset of each case, I take the initial preferences as fixed, and any changes of preferences thereafter are mapped by the movement of actors across norm circles. Therefore if an actor initially believed a norm held low utility, but became convinced otherwise, it should be observable within the period of the case study by their movement to a different norm circle. This model thus only seeks to explain *movement* rather than their original

positions, and as I show in the book, the practices of agenda control, use of shared norms, and *metis* are adequate for such explanations.

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The idealized conception of sovereignty in popular imagination is visible everywhere: From Disney movies to dictators, the inalienable rights of a sovereign are frequently invoked, yet the extent of the “sovereign” reach of a state is far more ambiguous in practice, as numerous previous works have discussed (for example, Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, 1999.; Dominik Zaum, *The Sovereignty Paradox: The Norms and Politics of International Statebuilding*, 2007; John Agnew, *Globalization and Sovereignty: Beyond the Territorial Trap*, 2018). This disjuncture between idealized, and as Swati Srivastava terms it, “lived”, sovereignty, is present and well-attested to, particularly in law where principles and practices frequently diverge (*de jure vs de facto* distinctions).

For Srivastava, the problem of these two forms is that the idealized version of sovereignty is indivisible, whereas lived sovereignty is intrinsically fragmented or incomplete due to its fundamental *divisibility*. That divisibility opens the space for not just contestation, but also overlap and competing claims over sovereign functions. As she states, “divisible practices of sovereign power are perpetually in productive friction with representations of indivisible sovereign authority” (p. 34). Because states do not have the competence nor capacity to manage all possible domains, these are often delegated or else the gaps are filled by non-state actors.

Srivastava suggests three types of public-private hybridity that vary by formalization and recognition: contractual, institutional, and shadow hybridity. Contractual hybridity results from formal outsourcing of sovereign functions. Institutional hybridity may not be so overt but develops where private entities interact and influence state entities through networks that may or may not be formalized or public. Finally, shadow hybridity is the least formalized or public type, often relating to functions that explicitly require confidentiality of information, but whose results are therefore by nature opaque and not open to public scrutiny.

These hybridities are then explored in a fascinating range of case studies from the Early Modern period (the English East India Company or EIC) to contemporary examples: Blackwater, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and Amnesty International. In tackling

such a varied set of cases, Srivastava shows the fecundity of her framework, one able to explore probing questions on the nature of sovereignty as it evolves through public-private functions. In showing how all the cases operated and exercised sovereign functions outside the state, she also shows how competence relates to authority: Competent performance itself confers legitimacy but also vice versa. Poor performance undermines that legitimacy and leads to reversals, a discussion she unfortunately avoids by omitting the story of the end of the EIC's sovereign powers after the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny.

Srivastava concludes that if the extent of sovereignty's boundaries are ambiguous, so too is responsibility. The ability for both public and private entities to use this ambiguity to shirk accountability from their performance of sovereign functions represents dangers for publics in democracies.

The cases all involve sovereign functions outside the territorial border of the contracting sovereign power. The EIC and Blackwater are specifically tasked to perform functions of the state in foreign ventures. The ICC and Amnesty, as international organizations, use their agency to variously act in international fora or galvanize publics outside the jurisdictions in question. This is puzzling, since territoriality has been an essential characteristic defining the limit of sovereignty since the medieval period. Is the implicit condition that hybridity proliferates in off-shore jurisdictions? This also makes it difficult to connect these with Srivastava's conclusions that correctly draw attention to social media companies whose public functions but private governance are implicated in the domestic politics of the states where they operate.

These implications might be better explored if she had selected cases where a state contracted a non-state entity to take on those sovereign functions within its own borders, in domains associated with traditional sovereignty. The rise of the NGO in the 1970s, performing public functions such as healthcare or environmental protection (unlike the human rights criticism of the Amnesty International case in the book) has very different implications about sovereign hybridity than Srivastava's cases do.

Other forms of hybridity are also not explored, for example where government officials have legal private occupations in countries where being a legislator is a part-time job. Such an individual embodies another type of hybridity that is not explored in this book. Thus while the book's framework explores several spectra of internationalized hybridities, it does not cover sufficiently forms of hybridity within the domestic jurisdiction of the state.

In attempting such an ambitious work, Srivastava also invites ambitious questions. There is some under-specification in the definition of "sovereign functions". Srivastava starts with "public functions" and the exercise of "public power" that is perceived as legitimate. (p. 47). These become, through competent practices, a source of

"sovereign power" and perhaps "sovereign authority" (p. 48), though she notes that the final leap is problematic for most actors. While it is understandable that Srivastava wants to avoid essentializing characteristics, she has ended up with overly broad criteria for sovereign functions.

This leads to a question of how or to what extent her cases (with perhaps the exception of the EIC) sought to extend their *sovereign* authority (as opposed to for example, *legal* authority, which is frequently private, even in dealing with public functions). If Srivastava wished to show how hybridity is "a vital source for exercising sovereign power" (p. 231), is she making the claim that Amnesty International was attempting to do so in her case study? This implication might have benefited by explaining necessary and sufficient conditions for sovereign power, as well as what emergent characteristics extend beyond the sum of individual "sovereign" functions.

There is also the larger debate that this book leaves out. The definition and scope of "sovereignty" is not merely lacking consensus, but is contested in political theory, as the history of human rights attests. What powers a sovereign ought to wield are a matter of debate, with different jurisdictions forming their own answers to the question. This means that individual states vary in their exercise of sovereign functions and no model can contain all possibilities.

The collapse of communism largely settled the question of who should allocate resources (markets, not sovereigns) in economics. Today, goods are usually considered private until they generate externalities. Under these conditions—which may lead to market failure—the state is the legitimate actor to intervene to provide these "public goods". All well in theory, but which goods are agreed to produce externalities is frequently contested (consider the debates over smoking, carbon emissions, sugar taxes, welfare coverage, etc.), never mind ideological debates on the role of the state itself.

Is "hybridity" generative of, a solution to, or a compromise on these fundamentally unsettled questions of the permissible reach of the state? In employing the ideal-type conception, Srivastava's model leaves out the political theory debate which would have enriched discussions on hybridity. Yet to convince the reader that privatization of some sovereign functions is a worrying trend as she does in the conclusion, this is surely a question she must comment upon.

Ultimately, Srivastava's contribution to the "sovereignty" debate is a rich and wide-ranging study that impressively deploys a range of qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the murky borders around sovereign functions in public and private spheres. The insightful observation she makes is that sovereignty itself is transformed through its practices, featuring hybrid characteristics between state and non-state entities. The dilemma she poses between the idealized and lived forms of

sovereignty, between indivisible principle and divisible practices—and how private entities engage in and even capture sovereign functions through this ambiguity—form the central contribution of this book. Its discussion between the conceptual issues of “ideal types” against the need for these to form markers along a spectrum for analytical purposes is excellent.

A final thought that the book raises is one of how we go about analysing fundamental concepts in political science. Humankind as knowledge-maker is prone to categorization and ordering of types to make sense of our world. But reality, whether evolutionary or social, often operates along spectra without discrete markers between “types” except those we impose. As Srivastava reminds us, while we may use the concepts instrumentally, we should be mindful that it is a methodological step that risks obscuring nuance and variation that are the source of evolving conceptions. This prompts the final question that is only hinted at in the book: How might this book’s insights inform our understanding of the future evolution of sovereignty? This would entail asking about the conditions through which sovereign power moves between public and private: How large are these hybrid spaces where private entities may wield sovereign power? What causes retreat of the state or of the quasi-sovereign? This has largely been the domain of critical theorists following Carl Schmitt (see Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, 1985; Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2005), but the empirical study is sorely in need of updating for the twenty-first century.

Response to Joel Ng’s Review of *Hybrid Sovereignty in World Politics*

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— Swati Srivastava 

My thanks to Joel Ng for his excellent engagement with *Hybrid Sovereignty in World Politics*. As Ng notes, the book is motivated by reconciling the realities of enmeshed public/private relations in global governance with the stylized representations of separate state and nonstate realms in International Relations. The book presents sovereignty as a hybridization of two modalities: *Idealized Sovereignty*, where sovereign authority is represented exclusively in “the state” per the doctrine of indivisibility developed by early modern theorists, and *Lived Sovereignty*, where achieving sovereign competence involves divisible practices of state and nonstate actors in a variety of social relations. In hybrid sovereignty, public/private hybridity is both integral to sovereign power and a challenge to sovereign authority.

For Ng, there is some under-specification in the book’s definition of sovereign functions. I agree, and this is actually an important methodological choice. Rather than begin with a universal definition of what is sovereign, I look for sovereign competence in the organization of three realms: violence, markets, and rights. Within these realms, I argue that sovereign competence takes on many forms such that there are no singly agreed upon ways to exercise violence, organize markets, or protect rights, making the study of sovereignty less deterministic. Indeed, as Ng himself writes, “what powers a sovereign ought to wield are a matter of debate.”

Across the sovereign realms of violence, markets, and rights, the book’s empirical scope concerns transnational organizations since they raise especially thorny questions for global sovereign politics. Ng suggests privileging the territorial aspect of sovereignty and selecting cases “where a state contracted a non-state entity” domestically. While *Hybrid Sovereignty* flags important work in this area, such as on rebel governance or the private provision of public goods, my focus on organizations that operate transnationally, like Blackwater, the International Chamber of Commerce, and Amnesty International, is to leverage the ambiguities of converting sovereign power into sovereign authority outside the standard territorial claims and legitimation debates of domestic politics.

Moreover, the contemporary cases each represent one of three ideal-types of public/private hybridity. Contractual hybridity (seen through Blackwater) features formal, publicized performances where sovereign power is negotiated in public/private contractual exchanges. Institutional hybridity (explored through the International Chamber of Commerce) features informal, partly publicized performances where sovereign power is negotiated through public/private institutional linkages. Shadow hybridity (as revealed in Amnesty International) features informal, non-publicized performances where sovereign power is negotiated in public/private shadowy bargains. The typology was inductively derived from a hundred-year analysis of the English East India Company. The contribution of the ideal-types is to underscore that not all public/private relations in *Lived Sovereignty* are the same (thus, going beyond contracting), nor do they implicate *Idealized Sovereignty* in singularly positive or negative ways.

Finally, I concur wholeheartedly that the book prompts questions about what treating sovereignty as hybrid means for the future evolution of sovereign governance. I hope that other researchers join me in exploring the conditions under which hybrid sovereignty thrives and when changes in *Lived Sovereignty* generate fundamentally new kinds of *Idealized Sovereignty*.