



Sovereignty and National Security

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The Russo-Chinese Alliance and Its International Impact

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The traditional concept and practice of sovereignty is a threat to national security. Globalization is real in every aspect of human life. Ideas, viruses, technologies, pollutions, culture, and business flow across borders with little or no impediments. Comprehensive strategic thinking requires knowledge of threats emerging in foreign countries, and the will to act across borders.

Globalization and Technology have changed the International Environment, the concept, practice, and norms of Sovereignty are Dangerous Fictions The Peace of Westphalia, “marked the advent in international law of the modern European State system, or system of sovereign states. The diplomats who assembled at Westphalia represented independent powers which recognized no superior or common tie.... Europe was understood to consist in a large number of unconnected sovereignties, free and detached atoms, or states, which acted according to their own laws, following their own political interests, forming and dissolving alliances,

exchanging embassies and legations, alternating between war and peace, shifting position with a shifting balance of power.”¹

Sovereignty is more of a fiction, than a reality. And, today this concept, this idea is a threat to national security. To restrict actions, to refrain from influencing the spread of ideas, to avoid efforts to influence cultural, social, and economic conditions in foreign countries because of sovereignty, because of adherence to a way of thinking and acting that is no longer functional or valid, is a failure. It is a failure to use all the sources of national power to protect and advance the interests of the people and the state.

Sovereignty is an idea that in many ways, many practices has passed into history. Yet some states still embrace this concept and practice the norms of

1) Robert R. Palmer and Joel Colton, A History of the Modern World (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 145.

sovereignty. States should openly acknowledge this fiction, and respond to the world as it is, not the way it was. The national security of a state rests with its understanding of and ability to use all of its sources and means of power: political, diplomatic, economic, social, cultural, intellectual, informational, and military. And even if a state openly adheres to the practices of sovereignty, for diplomatic reasons, it still, covertly, should abandon the practices and seek to strategically influence events, behavior, and culture in foreign countries. This issue is a matter of national security. Consider the following examples.

The Breadth of the Problem

During the global pandemic of 2020-2021, over 500,000 Americans died of COVID-19. No nation, no state could ignore the global pandemic we have just witnessed. The virus was not restricted to the borders of the United States, or China, or any state. What happened in one country influenced the lives of the people across the planet thousands of miles away. People died on every continent on Earth; however, the way countries handled the COVID-19 virus mattered, the lies or truths they told (the governments of both China and the United States lied about the virus), the competence or incompetence with which states treated the virus (the Trump Administration was incompetent), and the functional or dysfunctional cultural norms of their people (some Americans refused to wear masks) influenced people's lives across the globe. What happens to people in states on the other side of the planet can have real consequences at home. The COVID-19 virus did not recognize sovereignty. What mattered was how states responded to the virus, and failure in one state influenced people across the planet.

In The Mueller Report, published in 2019, the conclusion was that: "The Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion." Mueller found that:

The IRA [Internet Research Agency] conducted social media operations targeted at larger U.S. audiences with the goal of sowing discord in the U.S. political system. These operations constituted "active measures"..., a term that typically refers to operations conducted by Russian security services

aimed at influencing the course of international affairs.... The IRA made various expenditures to carry out those activities, including buying political advertisements on social media in the names of U.S. persons and entities.... Facebook estimated the IRA reached as many as 126 million persons through its Facebook accounts.²

Sovereignty did not stop Russia from decisively interfering in the American presidential election in 2016. The Russian government helped elect Donald Trump, President of the United States. The internet and social media do not recognize international borders or national sovereignty. In the 2020 election the Russian again sought to influence the outcome; however, other states joined in the effort. According to American intelligence agencies, the Iranians, the Chinese, and other powers sought to influence the election. Sovereignty did not stop the Russian, the Iranians, or the Chinese from trying to influence the election. And political leadership mattered. The Trump Administration mattered to Putin and the people of Russia.

Technologies and ideas flow across borders today at the speed of the light, the speed of the internet. Old, persistent, ugly ideas of racism and white supremacy were resurrected and given new life by Donald Trump. He used his media presence to continuously attack China, calling COVID-19, the "China Virus." Racial attacks on Asian Americans, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian communities increased over 100 percent. And in March 2021, a white man murdered six Asian women, a Hate Crime. The Confederate flag, long a symbol of racism and hate in America, has crossed the Atlantic and is now used by hate groups in Germany. Should the Korean government, or the Japanese government, or the Chinese government be silent? Or, should they strategically use their power to influence politics, culture, behavior, and social norms in the United States?

In 2020, a Black Man, named George Floyd, was murdered by a white policeman in Minnesota in the United States.³ Multiple bystanders from various angles recorded the public execution. Images of the

2) Robert S. Mueller III, The Mueller Report (New York: Shyhorse Publishing, 2019), 52, 53.

3) This is not uncommon in the United States. White people have been lynching Black people for centuries. However, this blatant public execution by a white policeman was caught on camera and posted on the internet, YouTube.

murder were flashed around the world at the speed of light, sparking protests in foreign states. Should governments in foreign countries sit quietly and do nothing, or should they advance ideas, political and cultural norms that reflect their values and enhance the security of their people? The Communist government of the People Republic of China has reneged on its promise to the people of the Hong Kong and the people of the world. Democracy is being suppressed and the surveillance-state imposed. Again, should governments, should, Korean, Japanese, and American governments simply watch, maintaining the diplomatic protocol of sovereignty, or should they have strategies that commit real resources to fight against the crushing of democracy in Hong Kong? Global warming, climate change, and pollution do not recognize national borders, do not recognize sovereignty.

Globalization is real in every aspect of human interaction. The peoples of the world are more interconnected than ever before in history. "Distant occurrences and developments can come to have serious domestic impacts while local happenings can engender significant global repercussions."⁴ The concept of sovereignty as it has evolved and been practiced since the 17th Century, is no longer a viable practice for the international environment. The concept and practice of sovereignty needs reexamining. Instead of practicing the pretense that sovereignty still matters, nation-states should acknowledge that sovereignty restricts actions and is no longer a valid course of action, and pursue policies, strategies, and practices that are designed to influence the behavior of foreign governments and the thinking and behavior of their people.

Redefining Sovereignty

There is a larger body of scholarship on the concept of sovereignty. An examination of these works is beyond the scope of this essay. However, there have been numerous efforts to redefine the concept of sovereignty.⁵ In the Atlantic Charter, President

Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill set out a vision to redefine sovereignty and the international environment :

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea, and air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontier, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measure which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.⁶

With these words Roosevelt and Churchill established a practice of disarming some states. Churchill interpreted this last paragraph of the Atlantic Charter as followed: "Finally, not the least striking feature was the realism of the last paragraph, where there was a plain and bold intimation that after the war the United States would join with us in policing the world...."⁷ In other words, in regard to national security Churchill planned to ignore the concept of sovereignty to police the world.⁸ The concept of sovereignty is not an absolute. It is, and has been, relative to power. National security, imperialism, economic expansion, geographic control of a region have caused powerful states to ignore the sovereignty of smaller/weaker states. In 1945, with the invention of nuclear weapons, the concept of "the disarmament of such nations," took on a new urgency.

In 1945, the Charter of the United Nations was published. Article 2, stated:

The Organization and its Members, in pursuit of the Purposes stated in Article 1, [To maintain international peace and security] shall act in accordance with the following Principles: 1. The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members... 7. Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize

4) David Held and Anthony McGrew, edited, *The Global Transformation Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000), 3.

5) See: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd Edition (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); and Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008).

6) Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), 443, 444.

7) Churchill, *The Grand Alliance*, 444.

8) Since the 18th Century, imperialist powers, Britain, France, Russia, the United States, and Japan, have ignored the sovereignty of other states.

the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter....⁹

Today “matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state” can affect the lives of people in states thousands of miles away. Government have responsibilities to the people they serve. They are required to identify, recognize, and respond to all threats to health, welfare, and the quality of life of their people. To perform this primary purpose, the reason for which they exist, governments are required to understand and continuously develop all their sources of power and implement policies, strategies, and practices that help create the international and national environments that are most conducive to the vitality, growth, health, and happiness of their people, a world that engenders their highest values, ethics, and beliefs.

Today, in our interconnected world, nations and states have access to new sources of power. The internet and social media are sources of power. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are sources of power. Expertise, excellence, and competence in medicine, engineering, sciences are sources of power. Vaccines and PPE are sources of power. Culture, ideas, ethic, values, and beliefs are sources of power. The ideas, practices, and norms of democracy in Hong Kong and Taiwan, or racism and white supremacy in America are sources of power. These are sources of power that are available to all states—small and large. If states fail to recognize these sources of power, if they failed to develop policies and strategies that employ all their sources of power to create a world that enhances the quality of life of their people, then they are failing in their most basic task—the security of their people.

Smaller states, such as South Korea, have traditionally been unwilling to violate the sovereignty of larger more powerful states. In contrast, more powerful states such as the U.S. and China have been considerably more willing to violate smaller states’ sovereignty. With the sources of power noted above, smaller states have the same access to power as the larger states. Under Putin’s leadership, the Russians have conclusively shown that the domestic environment, the internal politics of a nation can be decisively influenced through the internet and social media, through the identification

and exploitation of cultural divisions, such as racism, and through a well-organized, goal-directed, well-funded, technologically sophisticated information / disinformation campaign to influence behavior and attitudes.¹⁰ The Russian campaign to influence the American election in 2016 will go down in history as the most successful information / disinformation campaign in history. Any state that ignores what happened, that fails to develop these capabilities, that fails to incorporate these methods into their national security strategy, is failing its people.

Net Assessment

COVID-19, the Russian Disinformation Campaign in the United States, and the rise and spread of racial hate in 2020, have shown that sovereignty does not matter, that international borders do not adequately protect people, and that all states are vulnerable to indirect attacks from foreign adversaries. National security is a function of the ability of governments to identify, develop, and deploy all the sources of power available. Korea, Japan, Israel, the European Union, the United Kingdom, China all should have policies and strategies to influence domestic politics in the United States. And, the United States should have policies and strategies to influence domestic politics and culture within these states.

I realize that many governments have already recognized the facts delineated above and have devoted resources to implement such policies and strategies. Some things are better done quietly. However, smaller states have been less willing to develop such strategies, and that is a mistake. The silence of some states with considerable power is hard to comprehend and sad to see. Sovereignty is a fiction. Viruses, ideas, disinformation, hate, and technologies traverse borders. National security requires knowledge and cultural understanding of what is going on in foreign countries and actions to counter negative, adverse developments that have the potential to impact the security of the nation, the people. States needs to discard the concept of sovereignty. It is no longer a valid way to organize and conduct human interactions on Earth.

9) Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice. (San Francisco, California, 1954), 3.

10) Robert S. Mueller III, *The Mueller Report* (New York: Shyhorse Publishing, 2019), 59.