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**John Agnew. Globalization and Sovereignty. Lanham, MD:
Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.**

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John Agnew. *Globalization and Sovereignty*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009.

In 2003, *The Economist* published a highly circulated article titled, “The Revenge of Geography” in response to numerous and widely distributed claims of the “end of geography” in the era of globalization. The argument of those predicting geography’s demise is that in a world increasingly characterized by rapid flows of information, money, and people through distributed networks over national boundaries, geography is no longer important. Geography, in this argument, is equated to the state, and the “end of geography” essentially describes the loss of boundaries (deterritorialized states) on the political world map.

In his book, *Globalization and Sovereignty*, John Agnew counters this notion of the end of geography and proclaims geography’s continued significance despite globalization by exposing the commonly held myths surrounding sovereignty and globalization that lead to various erroneous claims (such as that of a “flattening world”). He proposes that sovereignty, in an era of increased flows of people and capital through very specific networks, is in fact much more complicated than what most writers on these topics propose, which is typically an “either/or” framework: either an absolute state territorial sovereignty (power not affected by globalization) or a globalized world without state sovereignty. Agnew proposes instead a more pluralistic understanding of sovereignty through delineation of four different sovereignty regimes that more accurately accommodate the variable nature of political authority in an era of increased but uneven flows of capital, information, and people.

In the first chapter, Agnew exposes the myths of globalization: globalization is creating a flat world; globalization is an entirely new phenomenon; globalization occurs in tandem with liberalization; globalization is antithetic to the welfare state; and globalization is the only option (p.13). While he agrees that this epoch involves “the declining military viability of even the largest states, growing global markets, expanding transnational capitalism, and modes of governance alternative to that of the territorial state (such as the European Union, the various UN agencies, the World Bank and the IMF) (p. 24),” he also argues, later on, that the uneven effects of globalization make it impossible to fully categorize its effects on sovereignty in one direction (typically toward sovereignty’s demise, p. 195).

In exposing the common myths surrounding sovereignty in chapter two, it becomes apparent why a more accommodating framework for understanding sovereignty in the current era is necessary. Prior to exposing these myths, however, Agnew spends some time discussing the necessary attributes of state formation: exclusivity and mutual recognition; there is no territory without a state (except Antarctica, which he does not mention) and vice versa. As such, territory “underpins nationalism and representative democracy (p. 31).” The sovereignty myths he exposes are in relation to this common view of the state (non-interference based on the recognition of boundary lines). The first myth exposed is that of the “body politic,” which describes a highly territorialized view of sovereignty. Under this definition, the state is essentially “the legal embodiment of national identity” (p. 52), and sovereignty involves literally

protecting the “body” (the state) from harm, both internally and externally. Essentially, maintenance of order is the goal. However, this is a problematic view, as it accounts only for security, not opportunity (both of which are essential goals of a state). In reality, opportunity (particularly the needs of trade, investment, and alliance) has often superseded the need for territorial security.

Secondly, Agnew discusses the commonly held myth of the “nation-state”, in which boundaries delineate a clear “inside” and “outside” of a territory. This nation-state ideal corresponds to nationalistic goals; however, contrary to most understanding of nationalism in lieu of nation-states, most evidence indicates that national identities usually form *after* the delineation of boundaries, through expulsions, ethnic cleansing, forced assimilation, and other efforts towards cultural homogenization. With free flow of people, information, and capital over national boundaries in the current era, distinguishing who is “in” and “out” becomes increasingly complicated. Further, the rise of the political and economic power of supranational organizations in recent decades also weakens the nation-state view of sovereignty.

Finally, Agnew exposes the myth of the “sovereignty game,” which espouses the notion of co-equality between states and territorial integrity (from which non-interference emanates). This view of sovereignty fails in the sense that most states have never been immune to external influences; further, many states are the product of decolonization. While these states do have international legal sovereignty, because of political and economic instability (engendered by the colonial relationship), the notion of co-equality certainly does not exist across all states (e.g. most of sub-Saharan Africa).

Considering the limitations of these views of sovereignty, Agnew, in chapter three, describes four differing sovereignty regimes that more accurately describe the variable nature of sovereignty given the “migration of authority” (p. 122) across levels of government and between territories evidenced in the current era. The first regime is the *classical regime*, in which both despotic and infrastructural power (the former equates to power among elites and interest groups while the latter indicates the provision of public services via the state—together they comprise the two central functions of states) are deployed within a specified territory through highly centralized political power (e.g. China). In contrast, *imperialist regimes*, as exemplified by many countries in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, do not experience strong central state authority; infrastructural power is either non-existent or very weak, and despotic power belongs to outside interests (such as large lending institutions like the World Bank). *Integrative regimes*, as represented by the EU, according to Agnew, are often-times challenged in functionally complex and non-territorial ways as states relinquish some level of territorial control for the greater good. Finally, *globalist regimes*, such as that of the US, involve the exercise of sovereignty well beyond territorial boundaries. In the globalist regime, essentially, other, non-territorial mechanisms have significant control; New York, London, and Tokyo increasingly represent the collective center of this regime.

To illustrate how these regimes provide a more accurate understanding of the variable nature of sovereignty during globalization, Agnew discusses two examples of state-controlled

entities that have been dramatically affected in recent decades: national currencies and immigration. For each example, he provides four different categories describing states' differing strategies for managing flow of money and people within and across national boundaries, with accompanying case studies illustrating how the four sovereignty regimes map against the four categories for each example and, where appropriate, how those controls have changed with increasing flows of both elements (money and people) over national boundaries. For example, China, representing a classical sovereignty regime, has a territorial currency system, in which a national currency dominates the state territory, as compared to an integrative regime (e.g. the EU) with a shared currency system. In terms of migration, the European Union would represent a "reticent state," meaning immigration is not warmly accepted, and citizenship is based more on ethnicity than on civics, as opposed to the US, an "immigrant state" with a civic model of citizenship and recognition of immigrants' important contributions to society.

While Agnew argues that the four regimes are simply a guide for understanding the various forms sovereignty can take in the current era, the overall narrative presented in this book focuses much more on the rationale for these four regimes rather than the regimes themselves. Greater analysis in terms of how countries, beyond the examples given, fit or do not fit into these fairly complex categories (despite Agnew's claims of their simplicity on p. 132) would have strengthened their definitions and thereby strengthened Agnew's argument on the necessity for thinking about sovereignty more pluralistically in the era of globalization. Further, the case studies he did use to illustrate his models were not always states: some were regions (e.g. South America) and others supranational organizations (e.g. the European Union); in arguing for the changing nature of state-based sovereignty regimes in the current era, it seems that all case studies should be states. Despite this minor critique, Agnew's book most definitely thoroughly and thoughtfully exposes the highly problematic and fairly popular simplistic categorizations of the effect of globalization on state sovereignty.

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