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STATES OF CONTINGENCY

GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS OF SOVEREIGNTY AND INTERVENTION IN AMERICAN STUDIES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Steffen Adrian Wöll

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UNIVERSITY OF LEIPZIG
Institute for American Studies
Beethovenstr. 15, 04107 Leipzig

Prof. Crister S. Garrett

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Introduction: Fault Lines

> *I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people. The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves.*
>
> Henry A. Kissinger (qtd. in Goodman 2006)

In his address to the nation in the fall of 2014, Barack Obama outlined the strategy of the United States for a military intervention aimed at the destruction of the self-proclaimed Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL. In a telling rhetoric move, Obama put particular emphasis on the terrorist organization's name, claiming that "ISIL is not 'Islamic' [...]. And ISIL is certainly not a state." Especially the latter part of this statement reveals a number of issues in which present-day geopolitics and International Relations scholarship are deeply entrenched: the legal framework, academic interpretation and practical application concerning the nexus between territorial sovereignty, self-determination, and external interventions into these maxims. In fact, the current crisis in Iraq and Syria renders visible a number of peculiar and long-standing challenges of nation states like the United States and supranational organizations like the United Nations and NATO, most notably to maintain a coherent logic between the mantra-like postulation of the spatial integrity of territory on the one hand and simultaneous violation of this principle legitimized through, for instance, the "war on drugs" or the "war on terror" on the other hand.

Indeed, the Obama administration has constantly underestimated the relevance of geography for movements like the Islamic State and Boko Haram in Nigeria by pooling them together with al-Qaeda, whose "organization [is] flexible, operating as a geographically diffuse network of autonomous cells. The Islamic State, by contrast, requires territory [the caliphate] to remain legitimate, and a top-down structure to rule it" (Wood 2015).[1] Instead, stress is put on the fact "that thousands of foreigners – including Europeans and some Americans" (Obama 2014) have relocated into the territory of the caliphate, hence unfolding the transnational dimension of this crisis and distracting attention away from the regional dynamics of Iraq and Syria as—in part again due to US intervention and foreign

[1] Its diplomatic non-recognition and inbuilt expansionism through constant *jihad*, however, do not prevent the caliphate to fall under Max Weber's definition of a state as "that human community, which within a certain area of territory [...] successfully lays claim to a monopoly of physical violence" (1958, 510-11).

policy—"weak" and "rogue" states. Interventions against perceived threats based on such terms like in Kosovo, Iraq, and now against ISIS hence seem to be symptomatic for the advancing poststructuralist deconstruction of Westphalian sovereignty and the domestic/foreign division that dominated the twenty-first century, and which some argue from a geopolitical standpoint constitutes "the essence of globalization" (Cooper 2003, 110).

In view of these developments, the broad objective of this paper is to provide an analysis of the dynamics of and fault lines between two key concepts of IR studies, namely state sovereignty and intervention, either humanitarian or military, and either by states or intergovernmental organizations. Centered around the critical evaluations of Stuart Elden's *Terror and Territory* (2009) and Helle Malmvig's *State Sovereignty and Intervention* (2006), a range of geopolitical and theoretical research questions is being approached through the analytical lens of American Studies and International Relations. Based on these evaluations, I argue that while territorial integrity is frequently invoked as the geopolitical groundwork of US and Western foreign policies, its violation via military or humanitarian interventions leads, quite paradoxically, to both the diminution and re-affirmation of the concept of sovereignty. As a consequence, the scholarly supposition of a globalized, trans- or postnational geography has to be re-evaluated in the light of a renewed emphasis on the importance of territory.

Such an analysis and its results gain significance not only from their connection to recent developments but also from their responsiveness to some central questions of IR and American Studies scholarship, such as: In how far do US interventions proliferate or contribute to the formation of a hegemony and global "empire"? How productive and applicable is poststructuralist deconstructionism of spatial entities for the *realpolitik* of recent geopolitical developments? Can interventions in territorial sovereignty be captured properly by the transnational framework, or does this represent a (privileged) Western stance that further destabilizes fragile postcolonial state constructs, especially in the Middle East?

Analysis: Sovereignty and Intervention

Deepening the Theme in the Context of American Studies

When the dissolution of the Soviet Union effectively ended the Manichean ideological division of the Cold War and heralded what Francis Fukuyama in a well-timed essay famously called the "end of history," namely "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human

government" (1989, 1), pivotal changes took place in the world's political geography. Since then, humanitarian and military (non)interventions including those in Kosovo, Rwanda, Afghanistan, and Iraq have "blurred familiar distinctions between here and there, center and periphery" (Pease 2011, 9). Also, they have lead to the belief that territorial sovereignty in this fragmented and decentralized new world order "is no more than a legal fiction, a man-made fiction" (Dimock 2007, 1). Traditional hierarchies of power and influence are fragmented and globalization is identified as an agent working against the exceptionalism of what Henry Luce in 1941 prophetically called the "American Century" (Keller 2010). Thus, the polycentric configuration of power structures diminished the conviction "that the world at large is isomorphic with [American] needs and ambitions, or should be" (Young 2002, 277).

In American Studies, these development are captured in what is described as the transnational turn, which emphasizes the importance of polyglot multilateral studies, comparative analyzes, and investigations of cross-border interactions. As a framework, it has largely superseded the long-standing interest in the "romanticized" myths and symbols that were taken as a basis and seen as potent generators of the nation-centric singularity of a unique American identity. Shelley Fisher Fishkin outlined this approach in her 2004 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, suggesting that "we are likely to focus less on the United States as a static and stable territory and population whose characteristics it is our job to divine, and more on the nation as a participant in a global flow of people, ideas, texts, and products" (2005, 24).[2]

Within this epistemic environment, the Westphalian System of sovereign nation states in stable border is progressively deterritorialized and the geopolitical impact of non-Western and non-state actors such as NGOs, global corporations, and multilateral trading blocs strengthened considerably. Increasing interconnectedness enabled by satellite television and the internet has also macerated the notion of isolated peoples separated by solid borders, spawning views of a shared global consciousness as a consequence of this postnational synchronization (Tyrrell 2007; Volkmer 2014). Yet this rational also introduced new binaries as the "imagined" and idealized globalized community of individuals, groups, and activities clashes with the "real" world of hard geopolitical interests of sovereign states (Iriye 2002, 58). In fact, their interests differ greatly: Whereas many nongovernmental organizations are dedicated to nonprofit and pacifist goals, the foreign policies of the US and other global powers like Russia and

[2]Others have argued that this turn towards "*discourses* of hybridity, [...] diaspora, and the study of international contact zones" (Lenz 2011, 391; original emphasis) in fact reflects an increasing academic powerlessness in face of a monolithic and still unchallenged socioeconomic national core (Grabbe 2014, 32).

China and their implementation point in the opposite direction. Here, domestic sovereignty and territorial integrity are elevated and reconstructed in the notion of a "homeland" while they are simultaneously denied and subjugated to economic and military interests via interventions abroad. Whereas an increasing number of humanitarian organizations advocate the guarantee of basic human rights as a precondition for legitimate government and see sovereignty less as authoritarian but as a responsibility (Ayoob 2002, 84), Western states themselves have become a source of infringements, most notably in Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.

The conceptualization of the US as a nation state has underwent a rudimentary transformation in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 as the USA PATRIOT Act facilitated the "Homeland Security" state. Externally, the "war on terror" against deterritorialized terrorist networks targeted states whose sovereignty was nullified on the grounds of their harboring of terrorists and alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Here, and in a multitude of other instances, US foreign policy occupied an exceptional position as a "global state regulatory apparatus responsible for securing and maintaining the rule of law across the planet" (Pease 2011, 11). The field of tension between sovereignty and intervention then appears as a stage in the theater of International Relations and American Studies that is able to provide some answers to issues regarding the reorganization of geopolitical space in the framework of transnationalism.

Theoretical Considerations

In order to establish a firm theoretical basis for the following book reviews, a number of key concepts need to be explicated beforehand, which will then serve as central analytic criteria. Firstly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) defines territory as "[t]he extent of the land belonging to or under the jurisdiction of a ruler, state, or group of people." While the etymology of the term is contested,[3] it strongly relates to the Westphalian System of political order that is based on the co-existence of sovereign states and in which the appropriation of a clearly defined, geographically delineated extend of land and the airspace over it are the subject of unabated political authority, notwithstanding the democratic or authoritative nature of this system. In the realm of poststructuralism, the globalized reconfiguration of territory was rendered visible most prominently by Gilles

[3]The *OED* locates the source of the word in Latin "terra," but it may also stem from "territorium," a derivation of "terrere," to frighten. Therefore, a direct connection to the term "terror" seems possible, leading to the concept of "territorium" as "a place from which people are waned of" (Roby 1871, 363).

Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of deterritorialization, which is used in a variety of academic contexts from psychoanalysis to economic theory. In the environment of migration and diaspora, it supposes—in very broad terms—the disentanglement of a local community whose cultural practices are uprooted from the inhabited territorial space (Appadurai 1990, 304).

Secondly, sovereignty from Anglo-Norman *sovereyneté* (*OED*) is apprehended as a doctrine of international law that goes back to the Peace of Westphalia signed in 1648, and that is an important paradigm of the International Relations system today, hence the term Westphalian System. This system rests on a number of principles, most notably state sovereignty, the right of political self-determination, legal equality among states, and the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of another state (Osiander 2001, 251). In the light of twenty-first century geopolitics, however, the doctrine has been critiqued as anti-humanitarian, anti-democratic, and unable to accommodate the erosion of rigid borders caused by globalization. In her essay "The Westfailure System," Susan Strange summarizes this view: "From a globalist, humanitarian and true political economy perspective, the [Westphalian] system [...] has been an abject failure" (1999, 345).[4]

Thirdly, the nexus of (internal and external) interventions also has relevant methodological implications. Most states have passed laws that grant special permissions to exercise force and transcend laws in a situation that endangers the state's unabated sovereignty. Legal theorist Carl Schmitt described such a national emergency as a "state of exception," upon which Giorgio Agamben builds his argument in his 2005 book of the same name. Agamben shows how the crisis of September 11 gave rise to a latent domestic state of exception in form of the Homeland Security legislation and eroded the domestic/foreign dichotomy.[5] Externally, the US created institution like Guantánamo Bay that deterritorialized their occupants in legal black holes as much as they reterritorialized them in extralegal spaces of exception.[6]

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[4] In the same year, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair also stated that the Westphalian System was anachronistic in the globalized context and attempted to "set out a new, post-Westphalian, 'doctrine of the international community'" (qtd. in Bellamy, Williams, and Griffin 2010, 37).

[5] A 2005 *Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support* report explicates that the US can "no longer think in terms of the 'home' game and the 'away' game. There is only one game" (Department of Defense 2005, 40).

[6] Concretely, Agamben argues that the post-9/11 legislation of the Bush administration "radically erases any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnameable and unclassifiable being. Not only do the Taliban captured in Afghanistan not enjoy the status of POW's as defined by the Geneva Convention, they do not even

Lastly, to legitimize military interventions as part of the "war on terror," sovereign states were labeled as "failed" or "rogue," while terrorism was compared to a contagious disease that, in Richard Haass' words, "respects no boundaries – moving from country to country, exploiting globalized commerce and communications to spread" (Department of State 2001). To use the broad metaphor of Daniel Drezner's latest book, these states act as zombies that spread the "contagion" of terrorism to neighboring states or regions whose anemic power structures or "immune systems" are susceptible to the "virus" of militant Islamism. This in turn gives the United States and its allies sufficient justification to regard their sovereignty as contingent and intervene while exploiting the opportunity "to acquire new territory, squelch irredentist movements, settle old scores, or subdue enduring rivals" (Drezner 2011, 19).

Stuart Elden, Terror and Territory (2009)

Stuart Elden is Professor of Political Theory and Geography at the University of Warwick in Coventry, England. He has published and edited a number of books that are epistemologically situated at the thematic overlap of politics, geography, literature, and philosophy. Elden's latest publication *The Birth of Territory* (2013) was awarded the Association of American Geographers Meridian Book Award for Outstanding Scholarly Work in Geography. His broad interdisciplinary approach is rendered visible in his current work in progress titled *Shakespearean Territories*, in which studies the role of territory in Shakespeare's plays (University of Warwick 2015).

His 2009 book *Terror and Territory* uses the "war on terror" as an indicant for the changing perspectives on the geographic integrity of nation states and need of taking into consideration the permeability of borders. Situated firmly in the transnational approach, the book scrutinizes the cogency of traditional "two-dimensional" tools of IR and their usefulness in this reconfigured environment. Drawing on both conventional and poststructuralist theories like Levebvre's politics of social and political space, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of re/deterritorialization, and Agambian spaces of exception, the stability of the relationship between "the spatial dimension of politics and the political dimensions of space" is closely examined based on the "war on terror" (Elden 2009, xix). Hence, *Terror and Territory* pertains to the fields of tension revolving around local, regional, national, and global spaces, as well as the challenges to the field of IR posed by recent scholarship in the field of American Studies.

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have the status of people charged with a crime according to American laws" (2005, 3).

To begin with, throughout the book Elden criticizes the idea of one-sided deterritorialization, meaning the plain abandonment of the concept of territory. For him, transnationalism and global terrorism have not simply diluted the classical understanding of geography, but instead force us to re-evaluate the "relation between state, sovereignty, and territory" (34).[7] He sees 9/11 and the subsequent "war on terror" as the results of various territorial struggles and failed post Cold War policies. Elden's analysis gains substance and thematic currency by stressing not only US but also Islamist desires for empire and the establishment of a caliphate, which has now become a reality through the actions of ISIS. Here, the text rightly accentuates the role of "territorial control [that] then acts as the foundation for a transnational or even global *jihad*" (42, original emphasis). Hence, Elden aptly underlines the significance of spatial objectives for extremist movements, which until the rise of ISIS had been commonly buried under the dominant "network" trope, which tends to underestimate the territorial dimension of recent developments (61). In fact, rather than seeing al-Qaeda as solely a dispersed network or part of a larger "clash of civilizations" (cf. Huntington), it needs to be considered in the context of territory and (lack of) state sovereignty, namely as "exploiting the lack of territorial sovereignty exercised by some of its host states" (Agnew 438).

As a consequence, Elden justly cautions left-wing commentators of dismissing territorial ambitions as obscure and subordinate to the struggle against Western imperialism (45). Thus, the idiosyncrasy of the caliphate has to be regarded as an allotrope that escapes the Western geopolitical framework of clear territorial divisions, Westphalian Sovereignty, and even the secular notion of citizenship. Rather, its metaphysical groundwork and disregard of clear delimitation to neighboring areas (i.e., expansionism) vests it with a transcendental quality hardly accessible for Western policy makers. Conversely, as Devji argues, the caliphate at the same time constitutes an "anti-geographical space, since [it] possesses neither center nor periphery" (2005, 84). The incentive of constant *jihad* also blurs the lines between citizens and militants, regimes of war and peace, and hence "military and civilian space and create[s] uncertainty about the very boundaries within which we take civil society to be sovereign" (Appadurai 2006, 17). Against this background, the book convincingly rejects claims of Islamist global aspirations as anchored purely in theology; instead, Elden suggests that "there is a continually intertwined and productive relationship between Islamist metaphysics and geopolitics" (40). Regrettably, the text refrains from drawing tangible geopolitical conclusions from such assertions since the argument contents itself with the observation that the spatial ambitions of radical Islamism are "[n]either wholly global or local, nor straightforward territorial, and certainly not entirely deterritorialized" (54). Thus, the notion of both sovereignty and state as tangential concepts for the geopolitics of

[7]Unless marked otherwise, all direct citations in this section are taken from Stuart Elden's book.

Islamism undermines the author's approach to use them as the primary criteria for investigating this nexus to some extend.

Interestingly, Elden reveals Western foreign policies as being often informed by fictions, especially in the Middle East where the US and international community tend to imagine utopian (liberal democratic) states to follow from its interventions without taking into account existing complexities of spatial structures. Indeed, the core element of many U.N. Security Council resolutions—the guarantee of territorial integrity—was compromised right after the declaration of its inviolability in the case of Iraq. In the words of Australian senator John Cherry, "[a] fine way to commit to the territorial integrity of a nation is by invading it. That is what we are doing" (qtd. in Elden 2009, 116). Elden argues that on the one hand, territorial control is presupposed as indispensable for regional stability and global security. On the other hand, this strategy is antithetic to the interventions that actually take place and their consequences. Thus, by violating the sacrosanct doctrine of sovereignty, the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have themselves enabled the proliferation and "'breeding ground' for nonstate power" (109).

Through the examples of postcolonial South America and Africa as well as the former Soviet Republic the book illustrates how the dominant geopolitical principle of *uti possidetis* (what is yours will stay yours) clashes with the right of self-determination, being used to preserve the status quo and avoid the emergence of extralegal spaces (143). Conversely and somewhat conflicting, Elden sees Kosovo as a precedent for the contingency of state sovereignty and classical IR doctrine as states are increasingly seen as having external responsibilities (163). He thus asserts a transformation from sovereignty as Westphalian control over territory to sovereignty as accountability to the international community represented by the US and United Nations. Therefore, the Kosovo intervention heralded a shift in our perception of sovereignty on which the Bush administration could then built its justification (e.g., the genocide of Kurdish civilians) for the invasion of Iraq. In conclusion, current geopolitical policies are seen by Elden as having twofold consequences: On the one hand, they imply a deterritorialization as territorial sovereignty is eroded via interventions. On the other hand, they also lead to a reterritorialization since they emphasize territorial integrity by identifying its challenges by non-state actors with terrorism (169). This seemingly contradictory outcome, the book argues, actually creates a double standard that enables the implementation of U.S. global policy within the framework of globalization, namely the hegemonic "establishment of bases, the facilitation of free passage of its forces, of capital flows and access to energy" (175).

Helle Malmvig, State Sovereignty and Intervention (2006)

Helle Malmvig is a Senior Research Fellow working in the field of foreign policy at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Copenhagen. Coming from a poststructuralist epistemological background, her research foci include International Relations, regional security and conflict resolution in the Middle East. Malmvig has written a number of works about the "Arab Spring" and popular uprisings in North African states and Syria. Her expertise has enabled Malmvig to take up the function as an adviser and consultant for the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She is frequently consulted as a commentator on Middle Eastern affairs in Danish as well as international media.

Malmvig's 2006 book *State Sovereignty and Intervention* explores how the antithetic reactions of the international community concerning the civil wars in Kosovo and Algeria that took place at the end of the 1990s may shed light on the increasingly problematic relationship between sovereignty and intervention, the realist and idealist dichotomy mentioned above, as well as conflicting geopolitical strategies. Her research foci thus underline recent trends towards the destabilization of the "boundary [...] between internal and external, the foreign and the domestic" among American Studies scholars and International Relations theorists (Malmvig xviii). Overall, the text performs a stress test regarding the traditional understanding of sovereign nation states being chiefly impelled by the Machiavellian *realpolitik* of "hard" national interests on the one hand, and the purportedly "imaginative" sphere driven by idealism and humanitarian concerns and its trans/postnational dynamics on the other hand.

To being with, the text uses (non)interventions and their rationale within the IR arena to explore how doctrines of sovereignty are constructed, re-affirmed, and normalized through interventions in other nations' sovereignty (xxii).[8] With its firm entrenchment in the poststructuralist approach, the book scrutinizes the responses of the international community to internal developments in Kosovo and Algeria. However, instead of drawing geopolitical conclusions or giving policy advice, the author sets out to perform a discourse analysis that centers on the semantic and linguistic units that are at the basis and construction of the concepts of sovereignty and intervention and the underlying power structures of their legitimation. In Malmvig's words, "rather than asking what sovereignty is, we should ask *how* sovereignty is" (xix, original emphasis). As a result, one of the book's most outstanding features is its ability to transcend the division between poststructuralist idealism and geopolitical *realpolitik*.

[8]Unless marked otherwise, all direct citations in this section are taken from Helle Malmvig's book.

Furthermore, the spatio-temporal dimension of legitimizing interventions is another cornerstone of Malmvig's analysis. Not merely content with destabilizing and deconstructing IR's "holy" notion of Westphalian state sovereignty solely through theoretical considerations or historical comparisons like others have attempted in the past, the text utilizes simultaneous scenarios to reveal the logic of their different treatment (26). Hence, Kosovo and Algeria are examined as temporally synchronous cases yielding utterly antagonistic responses by the same policies that justified their (in)action with the same reasoning in both cases: the sovereignty of the state in question. While this move may not be entirely original, it provides an intriguing angle from which Malmvig's argument profits immensely. By pointing out striking policy inconsistencies across varying spaces but at the same time—for which she consults a large spectrum of communiqué's and official documents—the text is able to both decode and deconstruct the discursive workings behind the rhetoric of (non)intervention in international politics, proving that poststructuralism can provide a productive analytic framework in the field of International Relations.

Irrespective of this intriguing approach, however, Malmvig's argument still falls victim to a veritable poststructuralist caveat. The dilemma is already inherent in the basic prerequisite of the author's methodological ambition as an attempt to debunk the institutionalized and naturalized methods of IR scholarship, which she suggests is "prevalently blind to its own circular logic of being and representation" (xix). In fact, the text is deeply anti-foundational and positions itself against the notion of a naturalized sovereignty (good) / intervention (bad) hierarchy, emphasizing the performative nature of both. However, whereas the Kosovo – Algeria comparison may be a well-chosen basis for this argument, Malmvig's methodological strategy proves ineffective to avoid the objection of being an agent of naturalization and creator of foundational structures itself, albeit under the pretext of poststructuralism. As it deconstructs the conventional positivist-Westphalian conception of sovereignty in IR, it equally reconstructs a new paradigm, namely Malmvig's main contention that the governing doctrine of sovereignty is solidified and normalized via the performance of political legitimization for both interventions and non-interventions (xxii).

Integrated Analysis

The examination of both texts and their combined reading reveal a number of intersections between their approaches and arguments, yet also underline some problematic aspects of contemporary International Relations theory in the academic milieu of transatlanticism. Both authors realize territorial integrity and state sovereignty as the focal point of current geopolitics yet differ in their methodological treatment of this concept. However, a critical

synthesis of both texts demonstrates a well-defined overlap of their respective deductions on two distinct levels. Operating from the basis of the "war on terror" and its geopolitical ramification, Elden's book provides its readers with an empirical "bird's eye view" on state sovereignty, namely how it is constructed and (re)configured through geopolitical measures such as interventions. In opposition to Malmvig's approach, his study builds upon the making (territorializing) and unmaking (deterritorializing) of territory, which it thus sees a prerequisite for sovereignty. Consequently, the text treats territory as an ahistorical concept that is rendered *a priori* for sovereignty and therefore still anchored in the concept of territorial integrity anchored in the Westphalian System of international relations. Additionally, Elden's argument that every factor which is seen as upsetting this integrity today is coded as "terrorism" and legitimizes intervention has twofold and conflicting consequences: Firstly, it presupposes the curtailment of state rights, manifest in the notion of contingent sovereignty. Secondly, at the same time it also hints towards a confirmation of the traditional hierarchy between sovereignty and intervention where the latter is seen as a violation of the former. Malmvig's poststructuralist conceptualization in contrast tackles the same nexus from a different angle by scrutinizing not territorial manifestation and its representation but the discursive performance of sovereignty and intervention. This approach enables her to avoid indirectly working towards re-affirming the Westphalian System by taking its doctrines as a basis, while staying grounded in the arena of real-world geopolitics by building upon the examples of Algeria and Kosovo.

What is interesting however is that Malmvig's conclusions appear as analogous to Elden's argument, namely the existence of a hierarchy—which Malmvig sets out to deconstruct—between sovereignty and intervention that is reproduced and stabilized by the discursive legitimization of interventions. A quintessential reading of both texts thus depicts interventions in the territorial integrity of another state as both violation and confirmation of sovereignty. Against this background, the central argument of this paper should be regarded as the outcome of reviewing both books and their respective angles on the present issue. Concretely, this derivation corresponds to the analytical transcendence and synthesis of the subject's theoretical background in the light of the books, leading to the conviction that while state sovereignty is frequently invoked as the epicenter of US and intergovernmental policies, its violation via military or humanitarian interventions results, somewhat paradoxically, in both its diminution and re-affirmation.

Conclusion: Toward a New Geography?

Current events like the military intervention of a Sunni alliance led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen further exemplify the importance of the relationship between state sovereignty and intervention and should caution us not to cease in the exploration of this critical topic. Transnational scholarship has certainly made some vital contributions and has proven its usefulness in this field, even though it always runs the risk of being hampered by its own implicit doctrine of averting focus from the US whose policies continue to be an essential factor in contemporary geopolitics. What remains then is the hope that, if nothing else, this brief investigation may serve as a reminder not to disregard the geopolitical significance or attempt to simplify the theoretical dynamics of the correlation between sovereignty and intervention. Hence, the author is confident that the present paper has proven responsive to the themes that constituted the overarching framework of our Graduate Colloquium, which where molded into a firm basis for this concise investigation into the significance of sovereignty and interventions for contemporary geopolitics in the theoretical framework of transnationalism.

Finally, although the present study has yielded results that may seem paradoxical or even self-contradictory at first glance, this does not mean that it has been unsuccessful in some quest to reveal an obvious or even universal resolution. What it means, however, is that there are no easy answers to be found on the post-Cold War geopolitical map, neither for those creating nor for those interpreting its policies. Instead, we have to come to terms with the fact that—in a curious and somewhat postmodern operation of reverse decryption—complex policy responses to intricate postcolonial and post-Cold War scenarios oftentimes result in even more complex outcomes. In the time since the "end of history," the Gordian knot composed of the strands of sovereignty and intervention has been tightened up firmly through a multitude of increasingly opaque territorial, social, and sectarian conflicts. As US and Western foreign policies have aptly demonstrated throughout the last two decades, this entanglement cannot be solved in an Alexandrian manner. The same conclusion then holds true for International Relations and American Studies whose scholarly supposition of a globalized, trans- or postnational geography has to be re-evaluated in the light of a renewed emphasis on the importance of the correlation between territory, sovereignty, and intervention.

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