Realism, sovereignty and international relations: An examination of power politics in the age of globalization

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Realism, Sovereignty, and International Relations:
An Examination of Power Politics in the Age of Globalization

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Many globalization theorists make the claim that the state, in its current Westphalian context, is no longer a viable unit of analysis in comparative politics or international relations. Globalists claim that in the wake of unprecedented, global integration, the state is either in retreat or on the verge of full scale extinction. In a general sense, this paper explores whether there is a sufficient amount of evidence to supports the claims of globalists that the state is dying. Moreover, the paper looks at the specific issue areas of international trade, multilateralism and the environment to determine what effects globalization has had there and if traditional state activity and autonomy have been replaced or eroded by the forces of globalization. The paper takes a realist view and therefore seeks evidence that globalists are incorrect in their assumptions. Through the use of primary and secondary sources this thesis seeks evidence of state autonomy and state centered strength relative to the force of
globalization. Additionally, the paper reviews the principal globalization literature and juxtaposes the globalist thesis with what is actually happening in the world, i.e., current trends and events. Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to address the question of whether realist or globalization theory best represents the state of world events. The major conclusion presented here is that, particularly in the west, realism and state sovereignty continue to prevail in the issue specific areas of trade, multilateralism, and the environment.
Power moves the world for good or ill, and no sovereign nation will give up its power ... not now and not ever.

~ Richard M. Nixon

Introduction

Are these words which were first uttered by President Nixon during the tense era of the Cold War still accurate in today’s ever globalizing world? If the former president were alive today, would he recognize the current state of geopolitics? Indeed, is the realist tradition of power politics and analysis of the international arena through the states system still alive or has it been supplanted by rapid globalization and the takeover of multinational corporations and intergovernmental organizations? Simply put, has the state lost substantive power in the wake of globalization? The purpose of this thesis is to find evidence of state autonomy and a recognizable Westphalian model of world politics in this so-called age of globalization and thereby contest the idea that the world is so markedly different since the time nation-states were first conceived, or at least since the end of the cold war. Additionally, this paper seeks to
move beyond theory to provide qualitative evidence that the international system is still best understood when examined through the realist perspective.

Before the above questions can be properly addressed and answered, however, there is the question of how to properly address and answer them. This brings us to matters of methodology and data collection. This thesis proposes to draw on primary and secondary sources which cover issue areas such as sovereignty, trade, multilateralism, and the environment. Which both globalists and realists claim to be able to explain. By examining the current literature as well as newspaper and journal articles and government documents, the hope is to be able to provide a sufficiently broad data pool to answer the questions this thesis poses. The data will then be interpreted through the respective theoretical lens’s of realism and globalization to assess which theory best describes the historical events identified within the data.

Currently, questions of state power and the continued usefulness of realist theory are being addressed with ever intensifying frequency within international relations literature. In particular, an increasing number globalization theorists make the claim that the state, in its current Westphalian context, is no longer a viable unit of analysis in comparative politics or international relations. Globalists claim that in
the wake of unprecedented, global integration, the state is either in
retreat or on the verge of full scale extinction.¹ In so doing, these
theorists begin their analysis of geopolitics by taking as a given that
the states system is defunct
and no longer can be used as an analytical tool to explain the ebb and
flow of geopolitical power. Instead, globalization theorists turn their
attention towards world markets and transnational networks of
production, trade and finance to explain politics and world society.

Globalization is a contested term, to be sure, and I, personally
have read no account of globalization which does not quickly admit
that globalization means different things to different groups. Mostly,
however, scholars agree that the least contested aspect of
globalization is its economic component, and it is therefore the most
widely written about.² Other aspects of globalization include the
proliferation of multilateralism, international law, and greater
international governance.³ Indeed, it is the global market and
international governance which are among the primary interests of this
research. The issue areas of globalization are many, but these issues
have specific implications for the state, according to globalization
theory, and therefore will receive the greatest attention in this
examination.

Realists, however are quick to address these alleged implications
for the state by offering their own account of globalization. Realists argue, among other things, that evidence of a highly integrated world economy is nothing new and that globalization is dependent on state support. Moreover, realists look, traditionally, to security issues and military matters to inform their understanding of the interstate system. Although neorealists do view growing markets as another potential source of wealth and power, they are adamant that states mustn’t be ruled by them. These are all issues which will be developed later in this examination, however.

Theoretical Grounding

First, I turn towards a brief discussion on the role of theory within the literature. The conflict between realist perspectives of the world and the challenges which globalization theory poses to those perspectives is not new within globalization or international relations literature. Much of what has been, and is being, written, however, is greatly rooted in theory -- where would-be understandable concepts of how world political systems operate are hidden in the often dense and exhausting language of academia. Along these lines, I am inclined to agree with Bernard Grofman who writes that he has “... no tolerance for obscurantism, whether it be couched in words or mathematical symbols.” One of the goals of this thesis, then, will be to explain a
sufficient amount of theory (which is necessary to our understanding), but also to find out where theory and historical events intersect. For me, one of the most striking gaps in the literature is the lack of a bridge between the theoretical and the ‘real world.’ Indeed, how can globalization or realist theory inform our understanding of the world order without proof of practical applications and genuine explanatory value? To answer this question we must find a link between the realm of the classroom and textbook to that of the stock exchanges and the political and military battlegrounds of the real world. As Burchill explains, “... theorists cannot stand outside of the political and social worlds they are examining because theory follows reality.” If the theory, for example, is that the global market prohibits state regulation of its own economy, then, this analysis proposes to find evidence of this as manifested in actual events. Likewise, if realists claim that one way in which the state retains power is by simply ignoring multilateral organizations when it’s convenient for them to do so, then, let there be case-in-point examples from which to draw on.

As may already be clear, the case for state sovereignty and realism as a useful tool for understanding geopolitics will turn more on what is demonstrable in world events and less on a focused analysis of competing theoretical paradigms -- theoretical being the operative word. Too much of what has already been written seems to take place
in a vacuum of reality where scholars postulate lofty notions and snipe at each other’s work which is meant only for a very exclusive audience in the first place. Understanding politics should be an inclusive endeavor, and no academic posturing has ever been helpful to me as a student. One can only imagine that it is equally unhelpful to anyone else wishing simply to understand more about what drives world events. Again, Bernard Grofman informs us that “... by and large, the proof is in the pudding; if you claim to have something useful to say about some aspect of political life, then you ought to say it, and let other people decide whether ... [it] helps them understand politics.”8 This is, by no means, to say that theory is not helpful.

Political and economical theorizing can, indeed, help us to understand politics. Certainly, theory is even essential to our understanding of the world. Facts alone are not enough, as Fred Halliday explains, facts are innumerable and may not always speak for themselves.9 Theories are needed, therefore, to provide some preconceptions about which facts are relevant and which are not. Theories provide an intellectual structure to the subject matter of international relations and make positivist studies of the same, all the more understandable. 10

Additionally, theory guides our efforts to know more about which
units of analysis are appropriate and what the significant links are between them. In this way, we can view theory as not only following reality, but also reality following theory. As Cox argues, there is a real world in which documented, historical events take place, and theory is made through a reflection upon those events, but reality is, in turn, made by theory when “theory feeds back into the making of history by virtue of the way those who make history … think about what they are doing” through a particular ideological lens. In other words, those who subscribe to a particular theory of international relations are likely to perpetuate that theory through the choices they make, thereby creating a reality which has been guided by their adherence to a specific worldview.

The point of this discussion, then, is that political theory, on its own, proves nothing, and, likewise, facts, by themselves, are not self-explanatory and do not provide us any conceptual framework from which to understand the ‘whys’ and the ‘hows’ behind the facts. Indeed, theory and reality are not antonyms of one another, rather they reveal things about the other that they cannot reveal about themselves -- they need each other.

The present examination, however, will consider theory mainly from the perspective of how well it follows, or represents, reality within the areas of trade, multilateralism, and the environment. One, of the
goals of this thesis, then, will be to synthesize the historical, political world with that of the academic whenever possible, with an eye towards finding evidence of the specified issue areas as being more understandable through a realist construct than a globalist. Additionally, this thesis looks almost exclusively at the role of western powers and the U.S. in particular within these areas. It is assumed, therefore that the conclusions of this thesis have their grounding in the realist posture of powerful western states and specifically the U.S.

Before outlining the thesis to come, I wish to briefly address an issue of semantics. Some scholars have suggested that if there is ‘globalization’ then there cannot truly be an ‘international system.’ In spite of this dichotomy that some globalization theorists see, this thesis will continue to refer to the scheme of the world as an international one for two reasons. First, the notion that the international system does not exist would be the very antithesis of this study. Secondly, although much of the existing globalization literature does call into question the continued relevance of states, there is not yet a consensus on exactly how irrelevant states have become. Indeed, this last point highlights one of many debates within the globalization camp. For now, however, issues of internal or external debate will be set aside until they are dealt with later this study. I turn now to an outline of what is to come.
The first chapter will examine the foundational and contemporary literature from both the realist and globalist perspectives. This literature review is necessary to understand the assumptions, traditions, theoretical constructs, and historical underpinnings of these two paradigms. Without this examination of the base ideas of each theory, it would be nearly impossible to provide evidence that one template is more adequately equipped than the other to inform our understanding of the international system. Also in this chapter, I will include a brief explanation about why this thesis examines these two particular features of international relations, when they are certainly not the only facets from which to chose.

Chapter two will examine the specific issue areas of trade and multilateralism. This chapter will draw on positivist accounts from both areas to make the case that continued state sovereignty and the dominance of realist perspectives still characterize international relations.

Chapter three will look at the environment as another important area where globalization and the state intersect in a struggle for leadership. Again, theory juxtaposed with specific events will guide our assessment of the role and extensity of dominance vis-à-vis explanatory powers that either theory has to offer.
Chapter four will be the final chapter in which the study summarizes main points from the body and examines miscellaneous issues of sovereignty which are important but did not warrant their own individual chapters.
Chapter 1. Globalization and Realism: Assessing the Literature

One challenge of any literature review is deciding which authors to cover and deciding which works must be left out. The challenge becomes even greater with a topic like globalization because it is so prolifically written about. Simply typing in the word ‘globalization’ into the internet search engine Google produces over 100 million “hits.” In addition to the challenge of sorting through the literature there is the ubiquitous problem of first defining what is meant by ‘globalization.’ Many authors begin by trying to define globalization at the outset of their work only to be forced to explain that there is no overarching definition of the term. Rather than to try to struggle through an outright definition which would inevitably be rejected, at least by some, this review will first document the origins and characteristics of globalization and refrain from giving a focused account until it has a specific implication for the state. Thus, the goal of this review will be to start broadly and historically and then narrow quickly to the body of globalization literature which deals directly with consequences for the state.
Globalization: Origins and Characteristics

David Harvey writes about the historical origins of globalization going “at least as far back as 1492 if not before.” Harvey is referring to Columbus’s voyage to the new world, to be sure, and he sees an early act of globalization in Columbus’s intercontinental journey. Indeed, through this example, Harvey identifies a key characteristic of globalization which he calls the “compression” of time and space. The idea here is that technology enables us to go further and faster in terms of the geographic spaces by which we are (or were) constrained. Still other accounts of the history of globalization reach as far back as the prehistoric period. Yale University’s center for globalization research reports that globalization is an historical process that began with “.... the first movement of people out of Africa into other parts of the world.” It was through this process that influences from outside lands such as ideas, products, and customs first became exports, and thus became another key identifier of globalization and remains so today. Globalization, it is argued, is more than just the speed and distances which humans can travel -- it is also the melding, borrowing and adapting of those outside influences. However, chronicling the ancient history of what today’s scholars now view as globalization would be an unnecessary, not to mention impossible, detour since this study is concerned with globalization in the contemporary era.
Suffice it to say, the majority of the literature indicates that globalization is not a new phenomenon -- it just has new features. David Held and Anthony McGrew help us understand those features and give us a more contemporary and formally academic historical account of globalization. Held and McGrew identify nineteenth century sociologist Henri de Saint-Simon and early twentieth century geographer Halford MacKinder as being among the first intellectuals to recognize how modernity was integrating the world. Indeed, MacKinder recognized the connection between land, society, and modernity as far back as 1904 when he identified the railroad as shifting the balance of power from the sea to the land in terms of dominance and importance to modern industry. Held and McGrew further explain the academic roots of globalization as emerging from debates about the growing interconnectedness of human affairs, world systems theory and theories of complex interdependence.

It wasn’t until the early 1970s, however, that the term ‘globalization’ was first used. It was during this time that the world saw its first glimpse of modern globalization characterized by rapidly expanding political and economic interdependence. Specifically, the modern era witnessed the first mass international commercial promotion of such brand name goods as Coca-Cola, Campbell soups,
Singer sewing machines, and Remington type writers.\textsuperscript{21} All of this has, of course, been facilitated by an explosion in science and technology which globalists say is major driving force behind the phenomenon. Intercontinental air travel, the world wide web, and the mass circulation of newspapers, magazines, film and television broadcasts all contribute to a highly interconnected and rapidly shrinking, or compressed world, say globalization theorists.

The literature, however, is quick to point out that technological advances are only \textit{one} aspect of globalization, albeit an important one. Manfred Sterger writes of the dangers of viewing globalization as being a single process. Instead, argues Sterger, it is a set of processes that operate simultaneously.\textsuperscript{22} For Held and McGrew, it is likewise a dangerously reductionist and misleading view which conceives of globalization as being rooted only in technology or economics. For globalists, the process (of global connectivity) is political, cultural, environmental, religious, and ideological in \textit{addition} to its economic and technological components. Moreover, globalization theorists do not see the process as being even throughout the world nor is it assumed that this process is happening with the same pattern or depth across each domain.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, globalization theorists would reject, for instance, the assumption that cultural and economic globalization are identical or even comparable across time and space.
While not wishing to give a reduced account of globalization, or its mammoth body of literature, the scope of the present study is too narrow to allow for a meaningful discourse on the many dimensions of globalization which do not concern this thesis. Thus, such rich topics as the equity of globalization, its polarizing effects on human emotions and the conflicting points of view within the paradigm must be merely acknowledged here and not academically undertaken so that the discussion can turn to a more focused avenue of globalization and its assumptions about the state.

*Globalization and Modern States*

As was established in the introduction, one of the most contentious claims in globalization literature is the notion that nation states are losing their power to govern autonomously within their own borders. Susan Strange writes that “Today it seems that the heads of governments may be the last to recognize that they and their ministers have lost the authority over national societies and economies that they used to have.” ²⁴ Mostly, this argument turns on globalist’s assessment of the world as being less hierarchical and more multilateral and being driven by an increasingly integrated world market which dominates the globe with the principal of sovereign capital – not sovereign government.
As early as 1987, James Rosenau called for a theory of “post internationalism” to describe what he saw as the state-centric structure of the world “passing into oblivion.” Rosenau’s call for a new theory of world organization is based on the emergence (since the 1960s) of what he calls subgroups which are nongovernmental and governmental transnational actors. These groups, argue Rosenau, have created a decentralizing effect on world politics because they possess a highly pluralistic nature thereby taking emphasis away from any single dominant actor, or groups of actors --namely the state.

The existence of these subgroups, says Rosenau have turned world political dialogs toward a multilateral bent and new public issues such as terrorism and debt crisis have signaled a new era of a truly transnational global agenda. Finally, Rosnenau argues that as a result of the decentralizing tendencies of this new “subgroupsim” states have been weakened and doubts about their authority and legitimacy emerge.

Joseph Nye goes further still in his discourse on transnational actors and intergovernmental agencies by rejecting Huntington’s earlier assertions about such organizations’ irrelevance and proclaiming their usefulness to and influence over states. International organizations are relevant, Nye claims, because they help to transform potential coalitions into explicit ones. Moreover, their
influence over sovereign governments rests with their ability to encourage a redefinition of national-interests and the potential for states to become dependent on transnational organizations for information and policy coordination.\textsuperscript{28}

Nye, along with Robert Keohane, has also written about the parallels between globalization and what was identified in the 1970s as ‘complex interdependence.’ Although they claim some differences in semantics exist, the basic worldview of complex interdependence, i.e., multiple channels between societies, multiple (and relevant) non-state actors, multiple issues not arranged in a clear hierarchy, and the irrelevance of the threat of force among states, is what currently describes aspects of contemporary globalization.\textsuperscript{29} This description of the world is not a traditional one for international relations but globalization theory is changing traditions. In some cases, authors write not only of the demise of the state, but also the demise of the discipline of ‘international relations.’ Linklater and MacMillon argue that ‘global politics’ should replace IR.\textsuperscript{30} Although the pair do not elaborate on what the significant differences would be in such a new academic approach, they do suggest that traditional international relations studies do not possess a clearly bounded intellectual domain or a distinctive subject matter. This suggestion is but another assault on the realist paradigm which will be discussed later in this chapter.
However, what is arguably globalization theory’s most pronounced and most prolific force in claiming the obsolescence of the Westphalian model is the heavily relied upon economic logic used to buttress the argument. Kenichi Ohmae, explains that conventional nation-states have become unnatural business units in a global economy. Ohmae is among a group of scholars known within the literature as ‘hyper-globalists’ who see global markets as being perfectly integrated and who are the most vocal in announcing the death of nation-states. Their argument is that if consumers are able to buy products from around the world and producers are able to manufacture their goods from (or at least source from) anywhere in the world, then the notion of national economies becomes redundant. A car has no need of two steering wheels, in effect. Additionally, capital is more mobile now than at any other time in history and states with unfavorable global market policies do not receive foreign investment. The market, thus, determines national economic policies for states wishing to receive steady investment flows. And with this development, a major source of national sovereignty is lost, globalists contend.

Ohmae and other hyper-globalizers do not stand alone in their assessments, however. Strange notes that “authority in society, and over economic transactions is legitimately exercised by agents other
are subject to it." Many globalization proponents contend that mass economic integration is bringing about a process of ‘denationalization’ through the establishment of “transnational networks of production, trade and finance.” Globalists also make frequent references to a ‘borderless world.’ In this globalist vision of the world, nation-states are demoted to a position of simple conduits for the flow of global capital with few real powers of their own. States are merely institutions that find themselves in between the mechanisms of global governance. Globalists further explain the demise of the nation-state by the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in the early 1970s. This resulted in a tremendous volume of unregulated capital which transformed the relationship between states and markets. That change in relationship manifested itself by making transnational capital more powerful (some say) than national economic sovereignty. Scott Burchill explains:

The relationship between a nation’s economic prosperity and the world’s money markets is decisive. Because most states are incapable of generating sufficient endogenous wealth to finance their economic development, governments need to provide domestic economic conditions which will attract foreign investment to their countries. In a world where capital markets are globally linked and money can be electronically transferred around the world in microseconds, states are judged in terms of their comparative ‘hospitality’ to foreign capital: that is, they must offer the most attractive investment climates to relatively scarce supplies of money. This gives the foreign investment community significant leverage over policy settings and the course of a nation’s economic sovereignty.

In Burchill’s account, like the hyper-globalists’, capital has become the new Leviathan -- the new sovereign.
Part of the globalization claim to the erosion of state sovereignty then, lies in the creation of a liberal global market. In this market, stock brokers in New York, Tokyo, and all cities in between are able to exert control over individual economies. States ignore the requirements of international markets at their own risk, say globalists. In Burchill’s examination, the loss of economic sovereignty has been by a process of either enthusiastically giving it away or unhappily surrendering it. In this way, the globalization thesis may also be seen as a neo-liberal assault on the realist theory of international relations.

Classic Realist Assumptions and the Skeptics’ Thesis

Lest one think that realism, the most enduring paradigm in international relations, has no rebuttal for its critics, we now examine two bodies of realist literature. The first portion of this review will look at the history of realism and its classic assumptions about the nature of humankind vis-à-vis implications for political relations with other states. The second, and more substantive portion of this literature review will look at the so-called ‘skeptics’ thesis.’ This is the body of realist literature which directly rebuts globalization theorists. Moreover, as is the case with globalization theorists, not all realists fit perfectly into the realist ‘ideal type.’ In other words, there is some
fractionalization within and among realist thinkers. Issues such as the
definition of power and whether or not power balances are struck by
statesmen or occur naturally are not universally agreed upon by all
those who claim to be realist thinkers. Therefore, the review of
realist literature to follow is based on classic realist assumptions where
it is not presupposed that those assumptions always reflect reality but,
rather valid generalizations about international politics.

Classic Realism: Origins and General Characteristics

Realism is based on four primary assumptions. The first
assumption is that the state is sovereign and is the primary unit of
analysis in international relations. Non-state actors such as
international organizations are of use only for matters that do not
concern immediate security interests. When such interests are at
stake, states will either try to manipulate or simply ignore non-state
actors. The second assumption of realists is that the state is a unitary
actor. In other words, the state speaks with one voice -- one policy on
international matters. Third, realists assume that the state is a rational
actor, i.e., the state will make choices which maximize the benefits to
the state. Fourth, realists assume that national security tops the list of
priorities within the hierarchy of international issues. These
assumptions, like realism itself, did not materialize from thin air,
however. Indeed, there is a history of realism.

Realism has its theoretical roots in the works of such authors as Hobbes, Machiavelli, and Thucydides to name a few. All of these authors were pessimistic about the nature of humans. In their estimation, humans are self interested beings who will take whatever they are strong enough to take. Indeed, this argument was put forth by Thucydides in his classic work *The Peloponnesian War*. In what is arguably one of the most memorable passages, “The Melian Dialog,” Thucydides recounts a pivotal moment when Athenian generals try to convince the Melian people to surrender or be destroyed. According to the Athenians, “You must act with realism ... for we both alike know that in human reckoning the question of justice only enters where there is equal power to enforce it and the powerful exact what they can and the weak grant what they must.”\(^{43}\) Thucydides is generally regarded as the first writer in the realist tradition and his first lesson seems clear: the powerful take; and the weak are taken from.

Machiavelli was no less stark in his characterization of politics and human behavior. Indeed, in *The Prince* Machiavelli wrote about the world as it *is* not as it *ought* to be.\(^{44}\) Although Machiavelli never *advocated* amoral behavior he understood that moral principles must be divorced from the realm of reality:

Many have imagined republics and principalities which have never been seen or known to exist in reality; for how we live is so far removed from how we
ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good.45

Thomas Hobbes also wrote about the ‘realities’ of the world in *Leviathan*. Hobbes posited a ‘state of nature’ before the creation of society where humans would live in a world characterized by “continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man [as] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”46 Hobbes argues that the only way to overcome the wickedness of human instincts and to escape the state of nature is to vest power and authority in a leviathan. This so-called leviathan uses power to coerce desired behavior from citizens thereby allowing them to live a life relatively free from violence.

Early realists such as Carr and Morgenthau drew heavily on Hobbes’ state-of-nature theme to describe the structure of the states-system.47 It is dangerous, conflictual and violent. Without world governance, or a world leviathan, states must always be prepared for war. The best way to be prepared for war is to maintain a powerful military so that a state might impose its will whenever necessary and keep a “balance of power.” Thus, realists will discuss ‘power politics.’ For realists, power politics traditionally refers to military issues.

Realists are quick to point out that although sovereignty and autonomy may be considered rights in legal theory, in practice, military power,
and nothing less, is what keeps state territory sovereign.

As may already be clear, globalization theory and realist theory differ greatly on what constitutes autonomy. For globalization theorists, a perceived loss of economic autonomy is evidence enough to claim that the state is in decline. For realists, the issue of autonomy is not an economic one, rather it is a realpolitik, or military matter. Realists also assault the globalization theory of mass economic integration and its implications for the state, but this is an issue which is developed in greater detail in the skeptical literature which I turn to now.

The skeptics’ literature is a realist critique of globalization literature. Thus, skeptics are mostly realists who are referred to as skeptics within the literature. The first major assault the skeptics make on globalization theory is to question the assertion of some globalists that the world is experiencing unprecedented levels of economic integration. Indeed, skeptics examine the current global market and compare it to the market of the early twentieth century. Their overall analysis is that the current U.S. economy is no more globalized today – measured by the share of trade in its output total – than it was before 1914. For instance, the net outflow of capital from Great Britain in the four decades before 1914 averaged 5 percent of gross domestic product, compared with 2 to 3 percent for Japan over the
last decade. Nor was the financial crisis of 1997-99 the first to be global in scale. Indeed, previous global economic shocks include “Black Tuesday” on Wall Street in 1929 and the collapse of Austria’s Creditanstalt in 1931. Moreover, the 1970s witnessed skyrocketing oil prices which prompted OPEC to lend excess funds to developed nations who, in turn, redistributed the money to developing nations in Latin America and Africa. The developing nations needed the surplus money to fund expansionary fiscal policies, but the money ran out which led to the global recession of 1981-83. And by 1986, more than 40 countries worldwide were mired in severe external debt.

Within this context, skeptics also address the issue of state-sovereignty. Skeptics not only deny unprecedented economic interconnectedness, they also do not believe that integration of any kind weakens the power of nation-states. There is no reason why it should. After all, skeptics agree that technological changes over the last 200 years have increased the flow of goods, people, and ideas—but, the problems encountered by such movements are not new. Indeed, the state is better able to respond to these issues now, say skeptics, than they were in the past. World capital markets provide more options for the state, skeptics contend, not fewer. Just as individuals who sign contracts do not lose their personal liberties, neither do states that sign international free trade agreements lose
their sovereignty. Skeptics further suggest that national governments play a bigger role in the world today because they claim wider economic and regulatory responsibilities. In this comparative historical/economic analysis, early twentieth century economic patterns are no different, in relative terms, than current trends. Moreover, skeptics assert that any notion of a weakened state because of the effects of global integration is simply false.

As Oppenheimer suggests, globalization relies on the community of nation-states continuing to value it. Indeed, many skeptics believe that globalization is not automatic or irreversible. Though some maintain that limitations on the state do exist because of growing interconnectedness, in the end, it is the state who will make final decisions and critical choices with regard to this global economy. The realist vision of the world is still very much in play, then, for most skeptics.

Skeptics also respond to globalization theorists’ claims about a loss of state control through a kind of cultural globalization which is purported (by globalists) to be carried out through the global media. This is the so-called CNN effect. Skeptics, however say that this pales in comparison to the havoc that followed the invention of the printing press. A mere 10 years after Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg, his ideas had circulated
throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{56} After the Protestant Reformation, some political leaders seized upon its principals as a way to legitimize secular political authority. No monarch could stop the spread of these concepts and many lost their lives as a result. Indeed, the sectarian controversies of the 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries were perhaps more politically consequential than any subsequent transnational flow of ideas – or capital.\textsuperscript{57} Additionally, the point skeptics are trying to make is one not only about the importance of previous movements of ideas and their implications for national sovereignty, but that it is nothing new. The state has endured and will continue to do so.

Skeptics also argue against the globalists’ claim that an integrated world produces a more peaceful global order.\textsuperscript{58} Globalizers say that economic continuity brings the potential for greater stability than in any previous period. However, the skeptics hasten to note the current unsettled nature of the world. For skeptics, national boarders still represent fault lines of conflict, not meaningless lines drawn on a map. Krasner points to the Israeli Palestini conflict, Indians and Pakistanis threatening to go nuclear over Kashmir, and Ethiopia and Eritrea clashing over disputed territories. Skeptics use such world events to contradict globalist’s claims about the increasing peacefulness of the world and to reaffirm that realist theory is still applicable in a post-modernist world.
Moreover, some skeptical literature provides examples of state unilateralism to illustrate their argument that international relations is better explained by realist theory than globalist theory. Mark Luper points to military unilateralism in Russia, in Chechnya, and the U.S., in Kosovo, to back this skeptical position.\(^{59}\) Also, some globalists claim that violence will continue to define the international system based on what they see as a localized world rather than a global one. Indeed, in their influential work, *Globalization in Question*, Hirst and Thompson claim that the world’s economy is evidence of localization and nothing else. They claim that there are 3 major power centers in the world today comprised of Europe, Asia, and North America.\(^{60}\) Skeptics see this fractioanlized world as giving rise to an increasing amount of political violence. Skeptical authors such as Robert Kaplan see the future as being a “clash of civilizations” just as Huntington wrote about in 1993.

Kaplan argues that globalization is very unstable and that it will cause further instability in the world which will ultimately lead to a surge in organized violence.\(^{61}\) Kaplan cites the growing number of young men in the West Bank, Gaza, Nigeria, Zambia, and Kenya, to name a few. He is worried that these young men will carry out political unrest within the next 20 years as the gap between the haves and the have-nots grows wider as a result of globalization. Kaplan also
believes that resource scarcity and terrorist attacks will lead to further destabilization in the world. Finally, Kaplan argues that future revolutions are likely and that globalization will lead to more complexity and strife before it might lead to stability.

Skeptical literature also address some of the more theoretical issues facing international relations in light of the globalization thesis. Some of this work focuses on whether or not globalization represents a paradigm shift in IR. Professor James Mittleman, co-chair of the council on comparative studies at American University, examines globalization and its contemporary opposition to determine if globalization theory poses a threat to standard interstate relations analysis. Mittleman draws heavily upon Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* to conduct his research. He also conducts his own literature review in which he examines realist, world systems theory, and globalization literature. He concludes that there has been no such paradigm shift and there will likely not be one in the near future. Globalization theory still has much work to do, Mittleman insists. Questions about how to map out all of the different forms of globalization and its genres still remain. Mittleman also asks how globalization can be global if it is mostly a western construct. Professor Mittleman’s final analysis is that globalization theory has produced only patchwork so far and is a “proto-paradigm,” at best.
Other theoretical issues focus on the idea of global order being on a kind of pendulum. Here is where there is some overlap between globalists and skeptics. A few skeptics see the world as being about as integrated as the globalists claim it is. However, they describe the current state of interconnectedness as being only temporary. These skeptics contend that highly developed and highly integrated communities have already existed and dissolved. The Renaissance was destroyed by the Reformation and its Catholic counterpart. Separatism, provincialism, and parochialism followed. In this way, the current state of integration can be viewed as being on a pendulum – we are presently in a state of globalization, but the pendulum will swing back to a familiar Westphalian system. The “pendulum skeptics” claim that the Great Depression of the twentieth century will be repeated in the twenty-first. There is going to be some type of shock to the system which will ultimately lead to a world which is on the downswing of a pendulum. This shock to the system is the natural response to a new and unfamiliar international or cosmopolitan world. The theory here is that historical patterns of the ebb and flow of interconnectedness are consistent. Based on this notion, some skeptics forecast the ebb of the twenty-first century. However, they hasten to note that the specifics on such a future cataclysm cannot be known, but believe that history shows us that its arrival (at some future point)
is inevitable.

This review of the skeptics’ literature might also be rightly called the realist or statist literature. Whatever it is called, it certainly poses some critical questions for the globalist theory. What is so global about a mostly western experience? After all, Africa, Latin America, Russia and the Middle East seem to be mostly left out of the globalization loop. And what of global markets? Are they really more integrated today than they were a century ago? Skeptical evidence suggests not. Indeed, capital flows in the nineteenth century, as a percentage of global economic product, were far greater than that of today. As for the demise of the nation state, skeptics say the globalists have a hard time justifying this assertion. Globalists forget or ignore the essential functions which the state performs. The state is still the only authority capable of taxing its citizens; commanding intense political allegiance; having monopoly control over weapons of war and their legitimate use; and finally, states are still the only authority capable of providing undisputed territory for living space and adjudicating disputes between its citizens.

Moreover, skeptical authors provide evidence that realist agendas still dominate the globe. Unilateral state action in matters of economics, politics, and war are not on the decline, skeptics say. Indeed, they matter as much as they ever have. The most important
events in international politics are explained by differences in the capability of states, not by economic forces operating across states or transcending them. Lastly, skeptics assault the notion that globalization offers a more stabilized world in which state conflict is unlikely. High levels of economic interdependence did not prevent the first world war nor has it been able to prevent conflict in the Middle East in recent years – the so called “era of globalization.”
Chapter 2. Confirming a Realist World:
Case Studies in Trade and Multilateralism

The literature review in the previous chapter outlined some of the major assumptions within the realist and globalization paradigms. What this study still seeks to put forth, however, is ‘evidence’ that the realist paradigm still holds the most explanatory value for students of international relations and that globalization theory is premature, if not mistaken outright, about its claims that the state is in decay. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to examine the issue areas of trade and multilateralism where globalists argue there is evidence of a withering state but, instead find evidence to the contrary. The majority of the examples provided here deal with issue areas as they pertain to the US. The scope of this chapter has been focused this way, not to reflect ethnocentric values but, rather simply to mirror the world as it is -- a unipolar system in which the US is the hegemon. Thus, it is argued in this chapter that Thucydides’ articulation of power vis-à-vis weakness still rings true even when there is, ostensibly, ‘international cooperation.’
Trade

Currently, the United States is one of over 140 nations which are member states of the World Trade Organization. It is this type of multilateral organization which globalists claim take away state sovereignty by placing restrictions on trade policies. It must be remembered, of course, that the WTO was created by states, for states which makes claims about withering autonomy seem dubious, to be sure. As one US trade representative put it, “The sovereignty argument is pointless, for every trade agreement we’ve signed in the past 200 years has in some way infringed on our sovereignty.” The implication here is, of course, that membership in the WTO does not translate into any measurable loss of autonomy.

Indeed, other member states view the US role in the WTO as simply another means to impose its will on weaker states. Indeed, the media reported in December of 1999 that India, Egypt and other third world countries were incensed over “the richest, most powerful nations” led by the US, to threaten trade sanctions against those nations that failed to comply with international labor standards. India’s commerce minister, in particular, claimed that the threat of such sanctions was merely a protectionist effort (in the guise of idealism) to rob developing nations of their greatest trade advantage – cheap labor. Many academics from developing nations also see labor
and environmental issues as conditions of trade deals as just another way in which stronger countries manipulate the system in order to enrich themselves and thereby solidify their own power to ensure that the cycle continues in their favor.\textsuperscript{70} Jagdish Bhagwati, Columbia University economist, points out that such conditions on trade deals are often selectively enforced. For instance, during the abortive trade talks in Seattle in 1999, President Clinton cited India for its child labor problem but made no mention of lax enforcement of laws to protect workers in garment sweatshops or migrant farm workers in the United States.\textsuperscript{71}

From the standpoint of developing nations, it would seem that the WTO is but another means for powerful states to retain their power, especially since weaker states do no possess the retaliatory capabilities of stronger states.\textsuperscript{72} But it is not only weaker states who have had grievances with the US over its self-interested policies. At times, the US has sought to use trade as a method to force other, more powerful, states to adhere to its foreign policy initiatives.

One such example was the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 which was seen by US allies as a measure of extraterritoriality and was widely condemned. The Act was an extension of the US trade embargo against Cuba and was ostensibly designed to protect private property rights in Cuba.\textsuperscript{73} The real intention, however, was to punish other
nations for trading with Cuba thereby creating a so-called secondary embargo. Specifically, title III of the legislation allowed former Cuban land owners who had since become US citizens to sue (in American courts) non-US citizens who “traffic” in property stolen by the Castro regime. Moreover, title IV of the act denied US visas to executives and major shareholders (and their children) from companies that dealt in expropriated Cuban property.

International response to the passage of the Helms-Burton Act was harsh. The United Nations passed a resolution denouncing such legislation and lawmakers in the EU, Canada and Mexico all passed retaliatory measures making it illegal for their domestic firms to comply with Helms-Burton. Indeed, the Canadian government, following the US example, passed the Godfrey-Milikin Act which provides a legal remedy for Canadian citizens seeking restitution from Americans for trafficking in confiscated Canadian property. Specifically, the law allows "descendants of United Empire Loyalists who fled the land that later became the United States . . . to establish a claim to the property they or their ancestors owned in the United States that was confiscated without compensation, and claim compensation for it in the Canadian courts, and to exclude from Canada any foreign person trafficking in such property." After initial negotiations with the US failed to provide a solution,
the EU sought a dispute resolution in the WTO claiming that the US had violated international law and was in violation of the agreement which established the World Trade Organization. For its part, the US refused to cooperate with the investigation. Ambassador Booth Gardner of the US insisted that the issue did not fall under the purview of international trade but, rather involved US national security issues and warned the WTO that “proceeding further with this matter would pose serious risks for this new and invaluable organization which is only at the early stages of its development.”77 The mood in Congress was, likewise, hostile against WTO involvement. Presiding over a 1997 hearing before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade, Congresswoman Ilena Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida) condemned the European Commission’s calls for WTO adjudication in the Helms-Burton Matter. A transcript of the hearing reveals an openly defiant attitude where Ros-Lehtinen states that “... no U.S. Government leader would, in good conscience, allow the WTO or any other outside entity to determine what the United States can or cannot do to protect our own interest” and that “No outside entity can dictate who can or cannot enter U.S. borders.”78

Clearly, sovereignty was an issue at this hearing but not in the sense that it was ever in question -- the US had/has no intentions of sharing decision making power over its national interests with a
multilateral organization -- or any other kind. It is also interesting to note that the transcript of this hearing shows that the committee members’ comments are not actually directed to the WTO but, rather to the EC for attempting to bring the matter before the WTO and to Canada and Mexico for seeking remedies under NAFTA. Thus, we see a continuance of state-state relations rather than a state-multilateral quarrel.

As for genuine WTO involvement, the European Union did, in fact, formally request dispute settlement and an investigative panel was formed in November of 1996. Eventually, however, the EU abandoned this course to resolve the matter outside of the framework of the WTO. Since the US expressed no optimism that the organization could offer a remedy to the situation and threatened to carry out its initiatives regardless of any panel recommendation, the EU made a wise choice by seeking to negotiate a settlement with the US over the Helms-Burton Act -- which has been modified but remains in effect today. It is generally believed that if the US were to deny a settlement recommendation, it would seriously damage the credibility of the WTO. Worse yet, such a move “would probably undo the delicate world trade regime that the United States has sought to promote.”

No one in the international community seemed to truly believe
that the US was concerned about ‘national security.’ Rather, this case is demonstrative of a powerful nation trying to force others, in a backdoor effort, to adopt its personal political agenda. We see in this case that national self-interests do not evaporate because of international free trade policies but instead are redirected in complex and covert ways. Ultimately the Helms-Burton Act was rendered ineffective not by the WTO, but by other sovereign nations enacting their own legislation which nullified the Act.

This case is important to the present study because it illustrates that the US has been willing to upset international trade flows by acting unilaterally, that it has the capability to do so, that its executive and legislative bodies are unwilling to allow trade issues to trump national sovereignty, and finally that economic integration only works when states do not defect from the system.

It is not argued, however, that the WTO is a weak institution or that the US and other powerful states consistently ignore international trade laws. The argument is that globalization theorists put forth a false dichotomy when they suggest that such institutions as the WTO or other multilateral organizations weaken state power. A preponderance of state sovereignty may coexist with international law. The point is that states reserve the right to use it whenever national interests are at stake or when domestic pressures compel states to act
authoritatively within the system. Most of the time, particularly on trade matters, compliance with systemic governance is in accord with national interests.  

Rather than weakening state power, participation in the WTO can actually increase it -- particularly for already dominant actors. For instance, the WTO statistical database reports that the US makes up more than 15 percent of the annual budget and that the EU is responsible for 42 percent. Making up such a formidable portion of the budget allows for control of the organization’s size and composition. Some have suggested that the WTO is kept understaffed on purpose to make it harder for weaker states to navigate its complex legal system while larger states rely on their own highly trained professional staffs. In particular, keeping the WTO legal staff at a skeletal size is beneficial to more powerful states who might seek to overburden the legal staff which totaled only 10 people in 2000. Ambassadors of larger states claim the reason for this is to avoid “excessive legalism” but others view it as a strategic move on the part of more powerful nations to give themselves greater latitude in settling disputes on their own.  

Other features of the WTO which are likely to render it relatively unthreatening to national sovereignty are the many so-called ‘escape clauses’ found within the agreement that established the organization.
Currently, there are no fewer than a dozen clauses which allow states to take unilateral protectionist actions for a variety of reasons. Most of these safeguard measures are in place to provide protection to politically powerful domestic constituencies of larger states although some also serve to assist the unique problems faced by developing nations. In any event, the WTO has shown a ‘legalistic deference’ to such protectionist safeguards and allows for abrogation of trade agreements when the clauses are invoked.

This is not to say that the invocation of such clauses are automatically upheld, however, as we saw in March of 2002 when George W. Bush invoked a protectionist clause on steel imports. A WTO dispute panel (and eventually an appellate body) found the US measures to be inconsistent with the WTO Safeguard Agreement of 1994. The dispute settlement body requested that the US bring its measures into conformity or face legal retaliatory measures by other member states. In November of 2003 President Bush did, in fact, reverse his decision and lifted the steel tariffs following the WTO recommendation. Rather than being a coup for international law, however, this case was more about domestic politics and reelection strategy for Bush. The safeguard measures could only have been in place for 3 years under WTO rules and, as it was, were in place for over 1 year.
In the end, the president got to appease the domestic steel industry for a while, and then be seen as reluctantly capitulating to a WTO proposal to drop the tariffs which is in the much larger interests of the US in the first place. After all, the US is one of the most vocal advocates of free trade, therefore such trade barriers do not really serve national interests and steel exports make up only a very small percentage of production. Thus, risking a potential international trade war just to protect the steel industry was an untenable position for the US which was very likely quite pleased to “comply” with the WTO request. Indeed, had the president not been hedging for reelection, steel tariffs may never have been an issue to begin with.

Overall, the US has shown an active interest and belief in the WTO system and, along with the EU, frequently utilizes the dispute settlement mechanism within the organization. The US has a good track record of compliance with WTO recommendations, so far, and also has had a number of significant outcomes in its favor. Still, dispute settlement does not equal rule enforcement and, in the end, the WTO must rely on its member states to take action when other members ignore the rules. Thus, just as realists have characterized international relations, the WTO also operates on the principal of ‘self-help’ where each state generally acts in its own interests and then must calculate the response of other member states. The WTO is very
much a member-driven organization but, as has been argued here, some members drive more than others, i.e., larger states with more to contribute to the budget.

Finally, numerous examples could be offered of cases where dispute settlement reports sided with or against US trade policies. The point is that the US government is the only body with the authority to decide whether adjustments in policy will be made. Reports from WTO panels do not grant federal agencies or state governments legal authority to modify their regulations or procedures or to cease to enforce any specific laws or regulations. Even in the cases where the US chose to change its policies, there were other options. For instance, on issues which the US may not be willing to negotiate, there is always the option of compensating trading partners in other ways. Additionally, we see that in some cases the US has had the political power to move issues beyond the venue of the WTO as was illustrated by the Helms-Burton case. In the end, none of what we know about the WTO in its first eleven years suggests that it is a significant threat to US sovereignty. Rather, US attitude so far has been to continue to support the organization which it had long sought to create and make the most of its ability to control it.
Multilateralism and the US Paradox

If the US disposition towards multilateralism in trade relations can be characterized as assertively cooperative, then what about its record in other multilateral endeavors? The answer is more assertiveness and less cooperativeness. The WTO is not the first multilateral organization which the US has either sought to create or strengthen but, paradoxically, the US has been reluctant to tie itself too tightly with international institutions and their rules.90 In this section, we turn our attention toward some of the more notable unilateral US policy choices of the new millennium.

The Kyoto Protocol:

In recent years, one of the most infamously regarded unilateral acts of the US has been the rejection of the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto agreements were originally drafted by the United Nations in December of 1997 for the purpose of reducing worldwide carbon dioxide emissions and other so-called greenhouse gasses.91 The conference held in Kyoto, Japan was attended by 160 nations the result of which was the commitment of industrialized nations to reduce CO₂ output by an average of 5 percent below 1990 levels by sometime between 2008 and 2012. By May of 1998, 34 counties had signed the treaty and among them was the United States. Indeed, the US even committed to
a 7 percent reduction.\textsuperscript{92}

However, to go into effect, the protocol needed to be \textit{ratified} by 55 industrial nations responsible for at least 55 percent of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions. Nations accounting for only 44 percent of emissions had ratified the treaty by January of 2004. Among the most notably absent were the US and Russia. The Clinton administration never submitted the Kyoto Protocol to Congress for fear of its rejection and when President George W. Bush took office, he effectively spelled the demise of the agreement when he announced in 2001 that the US would not be a party to it.\textsuperscript{93}

With the US making up about 35 percent of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions, and Russia making up roughly 17 percent, either nation’s ratification of the protocol could have achieved the target 55 percent which was required for the agreement to go into effect.\textsuperscript{94} Instead, however, the Kyoto Protocol was impotent for years until it finally took effect in February of 2005 after Russia ratified the agreement in the Duma. According to the United Nation’s department of public information, there are now 156 parties to Kyoto with more than 30 of them being industrialized states. This is a significant number of participants, to be certain, and this kind of group action cannot be ignored. We see here, then, that the impact of globalization has been a very real force in this issue area, where the realities of
environmental degradation have indeed forced a majority of nations into a course of action which does limit state sovereignty while at the same time helping to affirm globalization’s claims about the power of multilateral action.

Despite years of fierce international pressure, however, the US never ratified the agreement in the Senate and has not yet. Although it may be a dead point now since the protocol has been ratified elsewhere and the US is in effect a ‘free rider’ taking advantage of potentially lower carbon dioxide levels while not having to sacrifice anything of its own. More to the point, however, the US, once again, asserted its sovereignty by turning its back on international consensus.

The International Criminal Court

The International Criminal Court was established by the Rome Statute of 1998 for the purpose of prosecuting individuals responsible for ‘crimes against humanity’ when national governments are unable or unwilling to do so. The ICC may often be confused with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the World Court, which is one of the Six Principal Organs of the United Nations. Although both courts are associated with the UN, the ICC is an independent organization with its own budget.\textsuperscript{95}
During the waning days of the Clinton administration, the United States was a signatory of the treaty which established the ICC. Although officials in the Clinton administration and many US lawmakers were actually opposed to the treaty, on December 31, 2000, the US met a mandatory deadline to sign it in order not to forfeit its right to further participation in ICC negotiations. The hope was to continue to lobby for concessions which the US felt were necessary to protect Americans from being prosecuted under the ICC. However, without the desired amendments to the treaty, administration officials knew there was little hope of ratification. Indeed, Senator Jessie Helms (R-N.C.), Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee had vowed that any such proposal brought before the Senate that would bring an American citizen under foreign jurisdiction would be “dead on arrival.”

The US had a formidable list of objections to the ICC but chief among them was that it would have an independent prosecutor with too much discretion about which cases to try and that US service members or civilian personnel could be brought under the jurisdiction of the court. At a July 23, 1998 hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Helms expressed great resentment over the possibility that “any so-called International Court was ever going to be reviewing the legality of the US invasions of Panama or Grenada
or the bombing of Tripoli or ... holding any American presidents, defense secretaries, or generals to account."

In the end, Senator Helms and others never saw their fears realized because the treaty establishing the ICC was never sent to the Senate for ratification. Moreover, when George W. Bush took office the treaty was, effectively, "unsigned." In a 2002 letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan outlining the US decision, Bush administration officials said that "The United States does not intend to become a party to the treaty .... Accordingly, the United States has no legal obligation arising from its signature." Still, the ICC did become active on July 1, 2002 after 60 states had ratified the treaty. According to a March 2006 press release from the ICC the court has made only one arrest to date while other investigations are ongoing.

For its part, the US, once again, faced considerable pressure from the world, particularly from its European allies, to be a party to the ICC. Once the US found that it would be unable to secure the concessions it had wanted (namely that the members of the UN Security Counsel be given veto power over cases referred to the ICC) it began to peruse bilateral agreements with other nations to ensure immunity for US nationals should they ever be detained by the ICC. Additionally, Washington threatened weaker states into such agreements by promising to withdraw economic aid. NATO allies were
likewise threatened with the withdraw of military assistance.\textsuperscript{102} Although this case may not be characterized as strictly unilateral -- the US does find itself in strange company. Other nations to have rejected the ICC include Iran, Syria, Sudan, North Korea, China and Libya. Suffice it to say, the US finds itself at odds with most of the rest of the world on this issue but stands behind its decision not to be a party to the court. Only time will tell if lack of US participation will ultimately doom the ICC and seriously weaken its credibility and effectiveness. Like the WTO, however, the ICC is limited by having no means of compelling cooperation in punishing non-compliance and it is still up to individual parties to the ICC to cooperate when in some cases it may be more advantageous for national governments to let certain indicted individuals slip through their fingers. At any rate, given the honor system style of justice which the ICC must rely on, it is unlikely to be a threat to sovereignty any time soon, despite US concerns.

\textit{ABM Treaty}

In October of 1972 a bilateral treaty between the former Soviet Union and the US went into effect. Known as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, it was designed, essentially, to ensure the mutually assured destruction of the two nations should they ever engage in nuclear war.
Both Parties agreed to limit qualitative improvement of their ABM technology, thus leaving unchallenged the penetration capabilities of the other’s retaliatory missile forces.\textsuperscript{103} The world had changed significantly after the Cold War, however and, in 1998, the US Congress established the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States. The Commission reported in July of 1998 that,

Concerted efforts by a number of overtly or potentially hostile nations to acquire ballistic missiles with biological or nuclear payloads pose a growing threat to the United States, its deployed forces and its friends and allies. These newer, developing threats in North Korea, Iran and Iraq are in addition to those still posed by the existing ballistic missile arsenals of Russia and China, nations with which the United States is not now in conflict but which remain in uncertain transitions.\textsuperscript{104}

Although the Clinton administration took no steps, on the basis of this report, to withdraw from the ABM treaty with Russia, the next administration did.

In December of 2001 President George W. Bush announced that the US was unilaterally withdrawing from the almost 30 year old treaty. Bush said that he “concluded the ABM treaty hinders our government's ability to develop ways to protect our people from future terrorist or rogue state missile attacks.”\textsuperscript{105} The decision came after months of talks with Russian officials over Washington’s desire to set aside the treaty and negotiate a new strategic agreement had failed.

As for international response, Russian President, Vladimir Putin,
in a national television address, said that the US move “presents no threat to the security of the Russian Federation” but added that the US decision was, nevertheless, a “mistake.” Other international responses to the decision claim it may have the greatest consequences for China. Indeed, in response to the US move, China’s president, Jiang Zemin, said that Beijing’s official position on the matter is that it is opposed to any US missile defense program and the withdraw from the ABM treaty. There is international concern that the US could be upsetting the nuclear balance of power and pushing China to add atomic weapons to its stockpile, thus starting another arms race.

In spite of such concerns, the Busch administration has persisted in its “go-it-alone” policy of a missile defense shield and has no plans of letting its national security interests be held captive on the basis of what Chinese or Russian reaction might be. Whether or not one agrees with the logic of the administration’s policy, there can be no doubt that it is yet another exercise in state sovereignty which may result in other states exercising their sovereignty, too.

**Analysis**

The United States’ behavior in the World Trade Organization as well as in the cases outlined above seems to go more toward affirming a realist conception of the world than a globalist one. Indeed, much of
Thucydides’ assumptions about power are exemplified here. Currently, the US is the hegemonic leader of the world and can impose its will at a cost far less than that of a less powerful actor. Cooperation within the system does exist but only until participants have some reason to defect from it in order to pursue other courses, as was the case with the US and the ABM treaty. Additionally, this brief survey shows that powerful states have the option of taking a “buffet” approach to multilateralism by choosing to cooperate only in selected cases. The US, for example, accepts the International Court of Justice (ICJ) but has rejected the International Criminal Court (ICC). What explanation is there for such behavior? The final chapter of this study will deal directly with that question but for right now we can at least see that analyzing state behavior still has much to tell us about the political condition of our world.
Chapter 3. International Environmental Agreements: Constraints on Sovereignty?

In recent decades, much has been made over the notion that the environment does not respect national boundaries, i.e., pollution travels the world irrespective of outlined political boarders. Acid rain or, holes in the ozone layer may have been more or less caused by specific polluter countries but the environmental problems that result are not just problems for the countries of origin -- they are problems for the world as a whole. It has been variously argued that regardless of the sovereignty of nation states, no country has the right to ownership over, or the destruction of, the “global commons.” Toward this end, the past three decades have seen the emergence of new attention toward environmental issues and attempts by international organizations to regulate state behavior regarding its activities vis-à-vis the environment. The simple question this chapter wishes to explore is: Have these efforts been successful? To answer this question, however, we must first know what specific steps the international community has taken towards its espoused goal of a cleaner and “ownership free” natural environment.
The original United Nations mandate of over 50 years ago mentions nothing about the need for stewardship over the environment. Yet, 27 years after the world body’s creation was the first comprehensive international conference addressing environmental issues.\textsuperscript{108} Held in Stockholm, Sweden, the UN Conference on the Human Environment addressed the problems of human settlements, natural resource management, pollution, educational and social aspects of the environment, development and international organizations.\textsuperscript{109} The conference is probably best remembered, however, for advancing the creation of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and for institutionalizing the concept of the Common Heritage of Mankind, which is an attempt to define what areas constitute global commons -- such areas include, but are not necessarily limited to, international waters, the deep seabed and orbital space. In addition to defining the global commons, the Common Heritage of Mankind promotes the idea that everyone should benefit from common areas, not just those nations with the means to exploit them. Thus, the North-South divide is a major issue when it comes to the environment -- a topic which I address later in this chapter.

A mere 13 years after the first UN convention to address global environmental concerns came the UNEP sponsored Vienna Convention
for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on
Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The world was shocked in
1985 at the discovery of the ozone ‘hole.’ The Vienna Convention was
a pledge to protect the ozone layer, but the specific commitments
came in 1987 through the Montreal Protocol.\textsuperscript{110} The Convention and its
Protocol were issue specific, however, and in 1992, a much more
comprehensive UN conference on the environment was held in Rio de
Janiero.

The UN Conference on the Environment and Development,
variously referred to as the Rio Conference, the Earth Summit, or just
UNCED, was the largest UN conference to date.\textsuperscript{111} On the agenda were
issues of desertification, biodiversity, climate change, and
deforestation. This conference produced 3 non-binding agreements:
The Rio declaration (a statement of ethics to guide environmental
governance into the twenty-first century), Agenda 21 (a lengthy
program of action which addresses a wide array of environmental
issues), and a statement of forest principals (an overture toward
managing deforestation).\textsuperscript{112} The conference also established a new UN
institution -- the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), set
up to help monitor and implement Agenda 21 initiatives.

This is a significant number of participants, to be certain, and
this kind of group action cannot be ignored. We see here, then, that
the impact of globalization has been a very real force in this issue area, where the realities of environmental degradation have indeed forced a majority of nations into a course of action which does limit state sovereignty while at the same time helping to affirm globalization’s claims about the power of multilateral action.

Since Rio, there have been other issue specific conventions and one World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in Johannesburg. Still, has over 30 years of worldwide attention and the creation of new UN programs and commissions been able to steer the world away from realism and wrest control of state sovereignty in an effort to curb environmental problems that are universally recognized? As might be predictable from examples in the previous chapter -- the answer is ‘no.’

*State Sovereignty v. Global Environmentalism*

Indeed, rather than weakening sovereignty, Lorraine Elliot argues that the UN, through such conferences as the one in Rio, can actually affirm it. The problem, says Elliot is that issues of environmental security are still seen through the lens of state interests. For example, it has proven impossible to open a dialog on the need for a forests convention (which the Rio Conference called for) because those countries that ‘own’ tropical forests have claimed this
was a sovereign resource issue and that they will reject any sort of binding treaty that might result from such talks. In the meantime, deforestation continues at their discretion.

Additionally, the CSD reported to the UN General Assembly in 1997 on the status of Agenda 21 implementation in the so-called “Rio+5” that progress had been slow at the national level of many countries because of domestic trouble in passing the appropriate legislation. Also problematic has been the nature of many of the agreements worked out at the Rio Conference. As noted earlier, the agreements merely established basic aims, but did not formally bind or commit countries to any specific course of action. Also adding to the permissive nature of the agreements was the fact that they were pockmarked with qualifying phrases such as “where appropriate” or “subject to national legislation” or “as far as possible.”

Such language is clearly a deference to state sovereignty and is reaffirmed in many environmental agreements going as far back as the Stockholm Declaration where principle 21 states that (with no evident regard for the disparate directions of its two main points):

States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

We find almost verbatim language in principle 2 of the Rio declaration,
the preambles of the Vienna Convention and the Desertification Convention. It also appears in principle 1(a) in the forest principles, in the preamble to the Climate Change Convention, and in article 3 of the Biodiversity Convention, which also states in its preamble that ‘states have sovereign rights over their own biodiversity resources.’

*The Environment and the Leverage of the North*

With developed states making only vague overtures to a commitment to the environment and taking the opportunity to reconfirm their sovereignty with every new agreement, developing nations are reasserting their own sovereignty to protect their right to development. Elliot explains that great tensions still exist between the North and the developing South over environmental issues which serve only to ramp up the sovereignty posture of the South. Part of the problem, it is argued, is that the ostensible quest for environmental globalism is simply a cloak for the North’s desire to influence the South in the name of risk prevention. As Elliot puts it, “The identification of a common or global heritage of humankind as a basis for global governance has been strongly resisted by many countries in the South, as one more form of control - a green imperialism or an environmental neo-colonialism.” In this context, the South perceives the North to possess a ‘what’s mine is mine and what’s yours is mine’
attitude in terms of how common heritage is defined. This, no doubt, helps to explain why some developing states sought to reject a convention on forests.

Just as Bhagwati and others have claimed that powerful states selectively enforce trade rules, there has long been concern among states in the South that the same pattern is being repeated with environmental standards which, indeed, are often linked to trade. For example, Stringent environmental, health, and safety standards for everything from electronics to food are making it harder for the world’s poorer nations to export products to lucrative markets in North America, Europe and developed Asia. In March 2006 UNCTAD’s Trade and Environment Review (TER) suggested that these trade barriers could actually be opportunities for poorer countries to adopt a strategic, anticipatory approach to new environmental standards instead of dealing with each problem as it arises.¹¹⁸ Part of the problem, however, is that international standards are set by Western governments and can often be quite difficult to meet for a number of reasons. For instance, pesticide residue is measured in parts per billion and can only be detected with the latest equipment. Many countries in the developing world are, thus, unlikely to have access to such sophisticated detection devices. Also, meeting standards is often made difficult by the lack of internationally recognized testing procedures.¹¹⁹
Moreover, meeting the costs and technical challenges of international environmental standards often proves a daunting challenge for developing countries which may be lacking in financial, institutional, or technical expertise.

Even though UNCTAD’s Trade and Environment Review suggests that poor countries can turn Western environmental standards (trade barriers) into worthwhile exporting opportunities by becoming knowledgeable about the latest environmental requirements, and emphasizes a “shared responsibility” for environmental protection, the report says little about rich countries helping poorer countries adapt to Western standards. Examples such as this one only reinforce the notion of some that powerful nations use human rights issues, labor standards and, in this case, the environment as a tool of foreign policy. In a 1998 paper submitted to the WTO by the Indian Embassy, there exists a “controversial relationship between trade and [the] environment … and the essential objective is [to] … use trading advantage and market power to unjustly change an other country’s policies/behavior.”

The dominance of the weak over the strong, even if by new and innovative means, continues to be a theme in state relations -- even when those relations are within the framework of respected international organizations such as the UN. For scholars like Elliot, the
UN does not prevent such unevenness for the simple reason that it cannot prevent it. To ask whether the problem lies with the UN system or with sovereignty is to miss the point, Elliot states, for the UN system is national sovereignty and global governance remains state centric and self serving. Marc Levy suggests that the best the UN can do is to coax its member states along a path of cooperation and compliance but, in the end, the UN represents only a ‘kinder, gentler’ face of sovereignty, at best. Clearly, for Elliot and Levy and their colleagues, the UN does not move beyond sovereignty but only pretends to do so.

Analysis

Issues concerning the environment will continue to be salient in the future whether for their ability to bring harmony to international policy or for their divisiveness in it. Common sense would suggest the former, but current evidence suggests the latter. It is becoming increasingly impossible to separate environmental issues from trade issues and the current trend has been for trade to take precedence, even if this is at the expense of the environment and the indignation of the third world. In this respect, globalists are correct in placing an emphasis on trade though some mistakenly see it as the subject and not the object of international relations. Moreover, sovereignty will
continue to be an issue where the environment is concerned. In the face of self interest and autonomy, there is little support for a supranational dispute resolution body to deal with environmental noncompliance. Without the credible threat of punishment, the best solution that the international community has come up with so far has been to publicly humiliate offending states in the media. The success of such ‘shame campaigns’ is questionable, however, and in the case of non-commitment rather than noncompliance it has proven even less effective as was demonstrated in US resolve not to be a party to Kyoto in spite of intense international pressure. There mere fact that NGOs or other non-state constructs must resort to such means says much about the inability of institutions to regulate state behavior. As the costs of compliance with international environmental agreements grows higher, the observance of such agreements is likely to continue to be at the convenience of governments and a continued deference to national sovereignty.
Chapter 4. Conclusion

At the outset of this thesis I drew on the words of Richard Nixon to set the tone for the thrust of the study. The message in his words is clear -- power can be good or bad, but whichever one it is; once people or nations have it, they never give it up. One addendum to this sentiment with which the former president himself would likely agree is that power is never given up willfully, i.e., unless those who have more power take it forcibly from those who have less. Indeed, this has been a recurrent theme in the present study. Regardless of how one wishes to give it intellectual or linguistic life -- it is still power. More of it, less of it, all of it -- it does not matter, for we are still talking about power. President Nixon was quite correct, then, to assert that it (power) drives the world for good or bad and that sovereign states will never yield it unless there is some foreseeable benefit to them, or it has been wrested from them. States are rational actors, of course.

The proof is not in the words of Thucydides, or Machiavelli, or Hans Morgenthau, or even in those of Richard Nixon. Rather, the proof is in the real world. This study has shown a world which is only lightly enameled in political globalization as conceived of by those who
espouse its theoretical victory (a la Kuhn’s Structure of *Scientific Revolutions*) over realism and real world victory over internationalism. Once the surface of that enamel has been scratched, however, the true nature of the geopolitical order is revealed. Of course the enamel consists of high-minded notions of fairness and goodness and safety and equality-for-all as manifested in such organizations as the UN, and the WTO, and in “universal” principals about then need for justice to penetrate national boarders and in political and environmental treaties meant to make our world safer and more unified. The evidence often shows, however, what a thin veneer these ideals are and what truth lies beneath.

The truth is that nations are self interested and have successfully sought to retain their own dominance, such as it may exist, relative to the power of other nations. This thesis does not purport to claim the existence of globalization is a myth, however. Indeed, the myth is not globalization, but, rather, that globalization has eclipsed the state as the dominant force in global politics. The evidence in this thesis would suggest, if anything, that intensified globalization, i.e., increased multilateralism, new attention to international safety and environmental standards and global trade agreements only serve as a tool to legitimize the dominance of the strong over the weak. In this way, the state may be seen as embracing some aspects of
globalization in order to carry out political agendas. It is also worth remembering that on the rare occasions when global institutions and international law cannot be manipulated to suit the needs of powerful states -- those institutions and laws are simply ignored. Indeed, ignoring the riggings of international cooperation when it doesn’t advantage a particular actor is standard operating procedure in realist politics. It brings to mind Rousseau’s classic allegory of the stag hunt where defecting from the hunt in order to pursue one’s own interests regardless of how it will affect the rest of the group is always a possibility. This thesis has provided evidence that defection is an option which is employed more or less frequently depending on the power of the defector to withstand any possible consequences. The US with its relative power is a frequent defector from ‘the hunt’ as we have seen.

For those who view the practice of this kind of politics as at least an alternative to violent conflict in disputes, there is, unfortunately, no such relief from bloodshed caused by the willfulness of nations. Violence remains a characterizing mark of the international system. At the time of this writing, the United States is engaged in a violent occupation of another country, Hezbollah and Israel have recently gone to war, and North Korea has test-fired an ICBM in a defiant gesture against the world. Sadly, these events help to confirm a realist
vision of the world which is still defined by anarchy and the
helplessness of IGOs (ostensibly designed to steer the world away
from such violence.) The evidence in this thesis points to these
organizations as reflecting only balance-of-power politics, however.

Likewise, IGOs that relate to commerce (such as the WTO) may
also suffer further impotence in the future if the world’s powers feel
that they can no longer benefit from free trade. Indeed, realists have
long pointed out that there is nothing inevitable about globalization.
International relations is only what the community of states say it is.
States can and will put controls on trade, currency and capital if it
suits their national interests. The US has demonstrated its
willingness to take such measures in the steel tariffs case and even
went so far as to try to place controls on the trade of other nations in
the Helms-Burton case.

If political realism continues to dominate the course of
international relations, the future of the environment is also likely to
be bleak. Extensive degradation has already taken place and more of
the natural environment dies everyday. Even with global awareness
and UN initiatives there seems to be little cause for hope in this arena.
If realism is taken to its logical ends, however, governments will
someday be forced to give environmental issues the attention
which they deserve but this may only be after resources are so scarce
that governments view them as much of a security issue as an arms race.

Finally, this thesis has hopefully confirmed that the state remains sovereign and is not in retreat as elements of globalization theory have suggested. It is further hoped that this thesis has shown that overlapping the theoretical template of realism with historical events in the real world remains the richest way to understand the geopolitical. Globalization theory has its place, to be sure, but has yet to truly rival realism as an explanatory mechanism within the field. If, however, students of politics take to heart Robert Cox’s theory/reality loop as explicated in the introduction, then there may be hope that realism is just as reversible as realists think globalization is. If we believe this, then change is possible -- but for now, political realism and continued state sovereignty are still thriving characteristics of the international system.
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