

Orientation and Re-Orientation:
Sovereignty and Environmental Degradation

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between sovereignty and the problem of environmental degradation. The thesis argues that modern sovereignty, particularly as it is expressed through the sovereign state, is both a significant contributor to the problem of environmental degradation as well as a barrier to effectively addressing that problem. By thinking about sovereignty as a political orientation that shapes understandings of temporality, spatiality, identity and political community we can begin to develop the theoretical resources needed to reorient thinking and action. Furthermore, the thesis argues that environmental degradation, while a manifestation of problems with the orientation(s) of sovereignty, can also serve as a catalyst for political reorientation.

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past” ~William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*

“What is the late November doing
With the disturbance of the spring
And creatures of the summer heat,
And snowdrops writhing under feet
And hollyhocks that aim too high
Red into grey and tumble down
Late roses filled with early snow?
Thunder rolled by the rolling stars
Simulates triumphal cars
Deployed in constellated wars
Scorpion fights against the Sun
Until the Sun and Moon go down
Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns.”~ T.S. Eliot, *East Coker*

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Orientation and Re-orientation: Sovereignty and Environmental Degradation

Introduction

Media depictions of climate change now offer a vision of end-times to rival that of the nuclear danger. But if the global nuclear danger is characterized by its shocking immediacy (minutes and hours), climate danger works on an opposite temporality constituting a slower violence that is treacherous precisely because it is so incremental that it is difficult in any given moment to sense a change in the environment or to connect discreet issues (such as sea level or drought or violent weather) to industrially generated greenhouse emissions. It is a cumulative- and momentum-driven process operating on so vast a scale that it raises basic questions about human perception, memory, and the terms of visualization necessary for a planetary-scale problem.¹

On June 1, 2017 United States (US) President Donald J. Trump announced that his administration was pulling the US out of the 2015 Paris Climate Accord. Although the accord represents an imperfect process and inadequate commitments to fight global climate change, it has been widely viewed as a breakthrough in the efforts to establish robust international cooperation to address the challenges associated with climate change and to arrest its consequences. US withdrawal from the agreement has been met with defiance by some, including wealthy and powerful US states like California, Washington and New York,² and pledges of re-doubled commitment to the agreement from other major actors including China and the European Union.³ The Paris Climate Accord, then, is not dead. However, the decision of the Trump administration highlights some of the most difficult problems and tensions associated with trying to develop and sustain the international cooperation needed to address a transnational problem like climate change. At the center of these problems and tensions is sovereignty.

¹ Masco, J. 'Crisis in Crisis,' *Current Anthropology* 58: S15 (2017) p. S70.

² Press Office of Washington Governor Jay Inslee, 'Inslee, New York Governor Cuomo, and California Governor Brown Announce Formation of United States Climate Alliance,' June 1, 2017. Accessed at: <http://governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-new-york-governor-cuomo-and-california-governor-brown-announce-formation-united>

³ Boffey, D. and Nelsen, A., 'China and EU Strengthen Promise to Paris Deal with US Poised to Step Away,' *The Guardian* June 1, 2017.

In his announcement that he would be pulling the US out of the agreement, Trump stated doing so represented a “reassertion of America’s sovereignty.”⁴ The invocation of sovereignty to justify retreating from or rejecting international agreements or organizations is hardly unique to Trump or to climate change agreements. Rhetoric that appealed to the idea of taking back sovereignty was at the center of the campaign in the UK to leave the EU in 2016,⁵ and concerns about sovereignty animate disputes about participation in international regimes like the WTO, especially for countries such as China.⁶ The purpose of this thesis is not to account for the role that sovereignty plays in the success or failure of climate change agreements, or other international agreements and institutions with a view to making those agreements or institutions stronger or better. Instead, this thesis is interested in what climate change, or environmental degradation more broadly,⁷ can help us understand about sovereignty and its relationship to political modernity, and the ideational problems that are part and parcel of political modernity, especially expressed through sovereignty. The overarching argument of this thesis is that environmental degradation is a material consequence of problems with sovereignty in political modernity, and that as such sovereign states and the international state system predicated on sovereignty should be approached and analyzed as problems or barriers to addressing the challenges of environmental degradation, rather than treated as sites of cooperation, progress, or indeed, optimism.⁸ The primary goal of this argument is not to

⁴ Trump, D., ‘Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord,’ Office of the Press Secretary. June 1, 2017. Accessed at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/01/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord>.

⁵ ‘Dreaming of Sovereignty: Talk of Taking Back Power May be Delusional, but More Democracy is Not,’ *The Economist*, March 19, 2016.

⁶ Potter, P.B., ‘China and the International Legal System: Challenges of Participation,’ *China Quarterly*, 191 (2007), pp. 699-715. See also: Carlson, A. *Unifying China, Integrating the World: Securing Chinese Sovereignty in the Reform Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), Chapter 5 Battle to Secure Sovereignty in Changing World, pp. 224-248

⁷ I use the term environmental degradation throughout the thesis rather than simply climate change because environmental degradation encompasses the intensification of catastrophic weather and the overall rise in global temperatures of climate change, as well as diminished biodiversity and species loss, rising sea levels, resources depletion, changing disease patterns and other effects that altogether represent changing environmental conditions that undermine the stability or continuation of life as we know it for humans and other species.

⁸ This is in contrast to thinkers such as Richard Beardsworth and Robyn Eckersley, who argue that we should look to states because they have the capacity to address international challenges and may well be the only game in town. Eckersley’s work in this area will be discussed at length in Chapter 4. See: Beardsworth, R. ‘Towards a Critical Concept of the Statesperson,’ *Journal of International Political Theory*, 13:1 (2017), pp.

offer an alternative political approach to the problems of environmental degradation, but to help develop a better means to grasp the problems of political modernity that have led to environmental degradation and other transnational challenges. The ability to name and recognize these problems is a necessary and urgent step in any effort to secure or improve the ability of people to live in relation with each other at both local and global levels, especially in light of environmental degradation which reveals how poorly some groups of people, societies, and cultures have thus far been able to do so. This thesis will endeavor to show that sovereignty, despite its success in enabling some powerful forms of political relations amongst people, cannot bear the weight of a problem for all of humanity like environmental degradation, and that it in reality entraps people in political relations, frameworks, and practices that generate and worsen environmental degradation.

The thesis will focus in particular mainstream institutions and actors, and especially on more powerful, developed states such as the US and the political subjects within them that benefit more from maintaining the modern international system. There are several reasons for this, including that more powerful states have a greater ability to set the agenda regarding international responses to climate change despite their outsized historical and contemporary contributions to the problem, and that the understandings of security, stability and control that more powerful countries pursue prevent the breakthrough or success of more radical discourses and approaches. The thesis provides a more comprehensive understanding of sovereignty in political modernity as an orientation that helps explain the problematic present focused or short-term perspectives of their self-interest exhibited by more powerful states in relation to a long-term and transnational problem like environmental degradation. It also helps explain the development and maintenance of a hierarchy among states and political subjects, despite purported juridical equality, based on exclusionary and exploitative practices that lessens the impact and limits the development of radical alternatives, practices, or perspectives.

100-121; Eckersley, R. *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004).

The thesis argues that sovereignty should be viewed as an orientation, rather than a concept or set of practices.⁹ An orientation conditions attitudes, practices and relations towards something.¹⁰ By thinking of sovereignty as an orientation, we will be better able to understand how political communities and political subjects or individuals are constituted in relation to each other and to time, the concept of nature, and the international system they exist within in political modernity. The claim that sovereignty should be thought of as an orientation is similar to recent work by Jens Bartelson who argues that we should think of sovereignty as a symbolic form that organizes understandings of politics in the modern West, at least.¹¹ Unlike Bartelson, however, this thesis examines and emphasizes the temporal dimensions of sovereignty and sovereign subjectivity. The thesis argues that sovereignty has helped provide certain understandings of and relationships to time and nature that have contributed to environmental degradation. This is in part because, the thesis argues, sovereignty as an orientation has helped shape a sense of politics tied to the present in political modernity which limits people's ability to respond effectively to a long-term challenge such as environmental degradation. This is because this primacy of the present makes it difficult to imagine a problem like environmental degradation that accumulates and unfolds over time, or to imagine political alternatives that might be more adaptable to environmental degradation. In order to establish the idea of sovereignty as an orientation and clarify the significance of the relationships to time sovereignty helps constitute in political modernity, I draw from works by historians, postcolonial critics and Medieval Studies scholars, especially Constantin Fasolt and Kathleen Davis, to examine how historical practices and techniques such as periodization helped develop the

⁹ Hidemi Suganami in particular develops the idea of sovereignty as a set of practices through which sovereignty continuously authorizes itself. Suganami, H. 'Understanding Sovereignty through Kelsen/Schmitt,' *Review of International Studies*, 33:3 (2007), pp. 511-530.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the need for political orientation see: Saramago, A. 'Orientation in World Politics: Critical Theory and Long-term Perspectives on Human Development,' PhD Thesis, Aberystwyth University (2015), pp. 12-15. As Saramago points out, the concept of orientation has played a central role in political thought, in part due to the prominence of the concept in the work of Immanuel Kant. See especially: Kant, I. 'What is Orientation in Thinking?' in *Kant: Political Writings*, edited by Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹¹ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form* (London: Routledge, 2014). The idea of sovereignty as a symbolic form and how it varies from sovereignty as an orientation will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

modern state and international system, and how the idea of modern individuals has emerged. Using this work to help understand the emergence of the modern, free individual also demonstrates how a 'We-I' balance that emphasizes the individual or 'I' at the expense of 'We' relations, and short-term perspectives of crises at the expense of long-term perspective has developed in modernity. Drawing from the work of Norbert Elias and Bruno Latour, the thesis argues that the out of balance 'We-I' balance of modernity both makes it more difficult to establish the cooperative efforts needed to address environmental degradation and contributes to environmental degradation by creating a sense of modern individuals as separate from and dominant over nature, and whose existence is predicated on patterns of overconsumption and atomization.

Understanding how sovereignty orients political relations in modernity makes it clear why attempts to address environmental degradation from within the frameworks provided by the sovereign international system are unlikely to succeed. The thesis uses work by John M. Hobson and others to examine how, despite the notion that all states are juridical equals, inequality and hierarchy characterize the international system. It draws from postcolonial and post-structural literature, especially by R.B.J. Walker, to argue that particular, Western understandings of political communities and subjects have been universalized in such a way that states and groups of people that do not fit the template of European states, property relations, or cosmologies are considered less legitimate, which leads to a situation that makes it difficult to develop alternative means to understand and organize political relations. The thesis will argue that, because inequality and hierarchy are constitutive parts of the modern international system, rather than a problem that might be fixed by expanding liberalism or democracy, positions that foreground the need to change in relation to environmental degradation as a matter of justice will never be sufficient on their own to galvanize the changes or reorientations necessary. Because inequality and the injustices that result from it are central to the organization of political modernity, drawing attention to that inequality and injustice and trying to address them without treating political modernity itself as a problem are unlikely to work. In that sense, the thesis views environmental degradation as a potential

opportunity because, by showing that environmental degradation cannot be adequately addressed by the modern international system and is in fact driven or made worse by that system and the political orientation and relations within it, it may be possible to understand political modernity itself as a problem that requires attention, rather than where all solutions must start from. The thesis helps explain why it is difficult for more radical approaches to environmental degradation to find purchase in mainstream thinking by arguing that the political orientation of sovereignty conditions the organization of political communities, the constitution of political subjects, and the relations between them in a hierarchical way that excludes or co-opts and undermines the impact of such approaches. Again, the thesis argues that significant problems have always existed with political modernity oriented by sovereignty, and environmental degradation simply clarifies those problems and gives them urgency. The thesis, then, seeks to make a contribution to broadly critical literature that is concerned with inequality and injustice in the modern international system by treating environmental degradation as a potential catalyst for moving political critique and political action forward by showing that it is the political relations of inequality and domination in modernity that are leading to environmental catastrophe.

The thesis is not a counsel of despair merely because it argues that the sovereign international system and sovereign states cannot fix environmental degradation. Instead, by showing how sovereignty has oriented understandings of politics in modernity and enabled more powerful states and political subjects that can undermine efforts to address environmental degradation to maintain their own advantages, the thesis hopes also to show that developing the imaginary capacity to conceptualize new forms of political relations and practices, and to reorient perceptions of time and nature, is possible. Understandings of individuals, communities, and political relations have been and can be constructed differently. This is not an easy task, particularly because the thesis argues that the division of academic labor and practices of knowledge production are implicated in the constitution and maintenance of political modernity, but it is not impossible. The general disposition of the thesis is that politics has a living quality; as communities and

subjects interact, they change and grow and can learn new ways of relating. Sovereignty once enabled this process of change and growth, but because of the way that it has oriented politics to divisions, boundaries, and atomization it has become an obstacle to growth, and to the development of political imagination that might foster that growth. The thesis argues that the consequences of environmental degradation may be severe enough to challenge and disorient perceptions of nature and the 'We-I' balance in such a way that people can develop the political imagination required to change and establish new political relations and understandings.

The first chapter will give an overview of debates about perspectives of sovereignty. Major critiques of, and challenges to, sovereignty from post-structural perspectives are especially important in this chapter because the thesis as a whole is interested in what critique itself has done to practices and understandings of sovereignty and the politics that it has enabled. The influence and character of Carl Schmitt's interpretation of sovereignty are also a particular focus of this chapter because of the important role that crisis or decision plays in the temporal dimensions of sovereignty and the exercise of sovereign power and prerogative. As these debates reveal, and as this thesis will argue throughout, claims to sovereignty are always claims to power, although the meaning of that power shifts and alters over time and with changing conditions. This chapter will also argue that it is helpful to think of sovereignty as an orientation that constitutes, individuals/subjects, communities and the international system and brings them into relation with each other.

The second chapter develops the idea of sovereignty as an orientation by examining how history as a form of knowledge and historical techniques and practices have helped establish and reinscribe sovereignty as the condition of possibility for the political in modernity. The chapter uses work by Constantin Fasolt and Kathleen Davis in particular to examine the relationship between sovereignty and the historical technique of periodization and the temporal dimensions of sovereignty as an orientation which have helped to create practices and understandings of politics tied to the present. This is key to understanding the connection between sovereignty and environmental degradation because it helps explain both why a sovereign international system has

trouble dealing with problems with a large time horizon and lays the groundwork for understanding how sovereignty and sovereign subjectivity create the conditions that have led to environmental degradation.

The third chapter further extends the analysis that sovereignty should be thought of as an orientation that helps constitute a problematic hierarchy between states and political subjects that in turn contributes to the transnational problem of climate change. It turns specifically to the discipline of IR, and similar to Beate Jahn, argues that IR is world making, not just explanatory. It then argues that some of the theories and practices of IR, such as the 1648 Peace of Westphalia periodization, have served as a supporting project of modernity, through sovereignty. The chapter also begins to analyze how this affects international relations in the world and how understandings of the international predicated on sovereignty can act as an obstacle to understanding and addressing problems in the world, like climate change and others. Part of this argument, that is carried throughout the thesis, is that disciplinary and academic practices or techniques help create certain understandings of the world which are then often put into practice, but they also leave out important aspects and experiences of the world that cannot be captured by these forms of knowledge. IR treats sovereign nation states as juridical equals or the primary agents of political relations, but the world often does not reflect that. Why this happens and how academic practices help condition political practice in the world are important to reflect on. The move to critique the Eurocentrism of IR by Hobson and others is welcome, but that should not mean that the discipline merely works to include previously excluded peoples and viewpoints. We must also pay attention to what Eurocentrism has wrought, and the power it has wielded over excluded groups and in the development of world problems. This thesis, and this chapter in particular, attempts to demonstrate that Eurocentrism and practices of the modern West/Europe have led to the development of wide ranging problems that that same modernity is particularly ill-equipped to deal with. Environmental degradation is the most obvious and urgent of these problems.

Chapter 4 develops the argument that environmental degradation is a manifestation of ideational problems with modernity, and that those problems must be addressed if there is to be any hope of meeting the challenges of climate change. It extends the discussion of the spatiotemporal dimensions of sovereignty as a political orientation that rests on divisions and hierarchies between states, people, and nature and develops the idea of an out of balance 'We-I' balance that helps explain why this political orientation is also key to making sense of the role of property and capital in the problem of environmental degradation. The role of powerful states and the secure subjects within them in driving environmental collapse through the disproportionate and unsustainable exploitation of resources will be introduced here and carried into the final chapter. The chapter also provides a sympathetic examination of more radical approaches to environmental or ecological problems and the limits they encounter in the international system. It continues to clarify why matters of justice will never be sufficiently compelling to generate the changes needed to address environmental degradation through a critique of cosmopolitan proposals for altering political communities.

Chapter 5 examines important weaknesses in more mainstream approaches to environmental degradation and critiques the role of powerful states and the behavior of their political subjects in developing effective responses to climate change. The chapter argues that because the modern international system contributes to environmental degradation while also making it more difficult to address, literature that accepts the basic assumptions and frameworks of the orientation of sovereignty towards political relations and community cannot resolve the challenges that environmental degradation poses to politics or survival. In particular, the chapter will focus on work by Andrew Dobson and Robin Eckersley. These are prominent, influential thinkers on environmental and ecological issues whose work critiques the inequalities of the modern international system and acknowledge some of the difficulties of developing robust cooperation between sovereign state, while still trying to work with the categories, assumptions, and actors of the international system. The chapter argues that the utility or impact of their work is

constrained by their understanding of and limited engagement with sovereignty and the significance of the 'We-I' balance for environmental issues that the political orientation of sovereignty helps constitute. The chapter then begins to set up the argument of the conclusion that some of the more shocking impacts of environmental degradation may enable disorientation and reorientation towards understandings of political relations that might be better able to meet the challenges of environmental degradation. Although this is not certain, the thesis will finally argue that there have been major alterations of peoples' perceptions of time, space, politics and nature over time as the result of significant events or technological changes, which suggests that further reorientations and changes are possible.

Chapter 1: The Influences of Critique and Sovereignty as Orientation

As a historical production, as a problem, as a response to a problem that also generates subsequent problems, sovereignty is especially resistant to attempts to identify it as a thing, rather than as a highly variable practice that nevertheless works by generating its own appearance as a thing delimiting its own production. Tricky stuff, sovereignty, as the metaphysicians will already insist, but also as the theorists of contemporary political practice are increasingly compelled to recognize once again.¹²

Introduction:

This chapter provides a brief overview of key debates about and critiques of modern sovereignty over time, and begins to develop the argument that sovereignty should be thought of as a means of orientation which has enabled certain political imaginaries and settlements. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section is subdivided into four sections which examine prominent understandings and critiques of sovereignty. The first sub-section addresses debates about the foundation and location of sovereignty. The second sub-section examines critiques that focus on the essence and mutability of sovereignty. The third sub-section looks at the stronger form of critiques about the mutability of sovereignty which highlight not just its mutability, but the contingency associated with the exercise of sovereign power. The fourth sub-section examines the stronger form of the critiques that focus on the essence of sovereignty. These critiques center on moments of exception or decision, usually in times of perceived crisis, in which sovereign power is exercised. The stronger forms of critiques regarding the contingency and essence of sovereignty dealt with in these two sub-sections are particularly important because the way in which sovereignty renders politics or political relations contingent is a key part of understanding how sovereignty constitutes a ‘presentist’ temporality for politics in modernity.

In the second main section, the chapter will then begin building the case that sovereignty is how politics have been made sense of or organized in the modern West.¹³ According to the Oxford

¹² Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World* (New York: Routledge Press, 2010), p. 196.

¹³ This position is similar to Jens Bartleson’s understanding of sovereignty which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2. Bartleson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form* (London: Routledge, 2014).

English Dictionary, to orient someone is to align or position them relative to the points of a compass or other specified positions.¹⁴ This section argues that sovereignty has enabled processes of orientation between political subjects, and towards political communities, time and nature. It then begins to argue that the orientations of sovereignty, especially its temporality, have become disabling when it comes to developing new political imaginaries and settlements to address new challenges like environmental degradation, although this argument will be developed and addressed extensively in the next chapter and throughout the rest of the thesis. This section will also briefly discuss the relationship between sovereignty and security and the security dimensions of environmental degradation.

Sovereignty Debates and Contestations in the Literature

There is a long history of debates ranging from whether or not sovereignty is obsolete or receding in political relevance or if it is timeless, as well as debates about its mutability, its essential characteristics, its constitutive power, and its inescapability. Since the late 1980s, a powerful case has been made for the fundamental contingency of sovereignty, as well as for the inherent violence of the concept founded primarily in the ideas of Carl Schmitt regarding sovereign decision and exception. An overview of these critiques is important for understanding changing conceptualizations and practices of sovereignty in the world. First, this section will briefly discuss a common, basic account of sovereignty, as well as longstanding contestations over sovereignty and its location and meaning. Second, the section will discuss contemporary critiques of sovereignty from either contingency or essentialist decisionism that has grown out of Schmitt's thinking and what their implications are for political imagination and organization.

Sovereignty as a claim to authority

¹⁴ *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 1025.

Sovereignty has been described as a sponge concept¹⁵ that is ‘highly ambiguous’ and ‘heavily contested’,¹⁶ as well as a ‘master concept’¹⁷ and the ‘assumed locus of political community and authority’,¹⁸ or, as the condition of possibility for the political in the modern world. It is a central and centrally important concept of International Relations (IR), although the ambiguity associated with the concept can be a source of frustration, both in theoretical debates and in practice. Modern sovereignty developed out of a political project to establish certain actors as the legitimate wielders of authority over smaller political communities supposedly emerging distinct from universal conceptions of community associated with empire and Christianity,¹⁹ and has been a target of contestation and critique from its first modern articulations. Sovereignty, or the idea that there are certain loci of authority (whether these are spatial or found in persons such as a monarch and aristocracy) over which nothing or no one else rules, is a concept that can be traced much farther back in history (depending on interpretations) than the ‘modern’ period. However, the assumptions and conceptual power of sovereignty have grown and found their clearest expression in the modern, sovereign state and the system that sovereign states are situated in.²⁰ Within this theoretical framework, some of the most common assumptions are that the possibility of political community is theoretically commensurate with subjecthood contained within territorially bounded states in which individuals are citizens and where they are able to live and express their political will, whereas outside of these states, constructed through the expression and practices of sovereignty there is anarchy, insecurity, and no theoretical basis for the exercise of political

¹⁵ Bartelson, J. *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 15

¹⁶ Halmo, K., and Skinner, Q. ‘Introduction: A Concept in Fragments,’ in *Sovereignty in Fragments: The Past, Present and Future of a Contested Concept*, edited by Hent Kalmo and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp.11-12.

¹⁷ Osiander, A. ‘Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth,’ *International Organisation*, 55:2 (2001), p. 270.

¹⁸ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory: Sovereignty and the Limits of the Political* (New York: Routledge Press, 2008), p.3.

¹⁹Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity: A Genealogy of Agamben’s Critique of Sovereignty,’ *Anthropological History*, 11:1 (2011), pp. 23-61. See also: Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, and Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*.

²⁰ Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, p. 100. See also: Jahn, B. *Liberal Internationalism: Theory, History and Practice* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) pp. 56-57, 67.

engagement or negotiation. Sovereignty constitutes individuals as subjects in relation to the state, where authority is vested, and, within the bounds of its power, they can be free; states, in turn, exist and interact as theoretical equals in a system where there is no higher or binding authority. This is not to suggest that these features of sovereignty are not heavily contested themselves, but rather that they are commonly articulated both by those providing overviews of sovereignty and those intent on critiquing the concept.²¹ This basic account has also been contested or modified by the English School which argues that there is an international society that has developed between sovereign states that often moderates their relations with each other.²²

This framework and its core idea of supreme authority within a particular territory were originally subject to contestation because it challenged and undermined different locations of authority and power such as empire, and traditional privileges associated with actors such as the church and aristocracies, and later Enlightenment critics challenged the absolute authority of sovereignty on the grounds of imperialism and despotism.²³ The development of modern sovereignty and these early contestations can be read as attempts to claim authority for different groups or actors and locate sovereignty at different sites, such as in the person of the monarch, the state, the nation or people, or law,²⁴ as well as temporally by contesting when modern sovereignty and sovereign states were founded and how far into the past and future sovereign authority

²¹This is a common narrative of modern sovereignty. See for example: Philpott, D. *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Brown, C. *Sovereignty, Rights and Justice: International Political Theory Today* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), Hinsley, F.H. *Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and Laski, H. *Foundations of Sovereignty and other Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919) According to Bartelson, it is also one commonly articulated by critics of sovereignty. Bartelson, J. *The Critique of the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²² The classic statement on the English School comes from Bull, H. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1977/2012). See also: Dunne, T. *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

²³ Bartelson, J. 'Sovereignty,' in *Critical Imaginations in International Relations*, edited by Aoileann Ní Mhurchú and Reiko Shindo (New York: Routledge, 2016) pp. 183-195. See also: Foucault, M. *Society must be defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, edited by Mauro Bertani and Francois Ewald (London: Macmillan, 1992/2003), Muthu, S. *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), and Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*.

²⁴ Bartelson, J. 'Sovereignty,' p. 182, Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*.

extends.²⁵ These early forms of contestation over the location and temporality of sovereignty will be taken up extensively in Chapter 2 in order to demonstrate how struggles over sovereignty helped produce an idea of the foundations for political modernity. Chapter 3 will further challenge the already contested notion that sovereign states are equal within the international system.

Essence and mutability

Later critiques of sovereignty, while also concerned ultimately with the location and exercise of authority or power, shifted towards debates about the essence of sovereignty, whether or not sovereignty was becoming or is obsolete, and its mutability. Debates about the essentials of sovereignty often took the form of a contest between sovereignty as a fact versus sovereignty as a norm,²⁶ or whether sovereignty can be found in law. What is most significant in this debate is that it takes sovereignty to be “an immutable feature of political life and a necessary condition of political order.”²⁷ Although debate has moved on from the fact/norm question since Morgenthau and others worked to reconcile the political and legal dimensions of sovereignty, the idea of sovereignty as the condition of possibility for the political or international relations remains.

Sovereignty in Fragments, edited by Quentin Skinner and Hent Kalmo, is one collection that both usefully underlines the persistence of the essentialist understanding of sovereignty as well as providing a bridge to debates about the mutability of sovereignty. It draws from a wide range of contemporary critics including Skinner, Stephen Krasner, Martti Koskenniemi and others who affirm that sovereignty remains central to international relations and politics despite arguments that

²⁵ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty* and Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, especially the introduction, pp. xiii-xxi, and Chapter 1: A Dangerous Form of Knowledge, pp. 1-45. Early modern contestations over the location and foundation of sovereignty and the sovereign state, especially temporal contestation, is dealt with extensively in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

²⁶ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, pp. 41-49. See also: Suganami, H. ‘Understanding Sovereignty through Kelsen/Schmitt,’ pp. 511-520, Schmitt, C. *The Concept of the Political: Expanded Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), Kelsen, H. ‘Sovereignty and International Law,’ in *In Defense of Sovereignty*, edited by W.J. Stankiewicz (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 115-131, and Morgenthau, H. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1985), especially pp. 328-330.

²⁷ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 49.

insist on its obsolescence, while at the same time drawing attention to the mutability of sovereignty and ultimately defending its utility in understanding and organizing political life. In the introduction, the book details the contested nature of sovereignty in IR and political theory and claims that the frustrations over this contestation have repeatedly led for calls to dispense with the concept of sovereignty altogether as obsolete and unfit to whatever purposes it has served. Arguments for obsolescence tend to share three critiques that attack the basic framework or narrative of sovereignty, set out in the beginning of this chapter. These three core and most sustained critiques of the sovereign state and states system are that 1) the reality is that states are not equal within the system, 2) certain groups and peoples are marginalized and disempowered as a result of the operations of sovereignty despite the promise of citizenship, and 3) that with the rise of transnational problems such as nuclear weapons and climate change the sovereign state system may be inadequate or unsustainable.²⁸ Since at least the beginning of the World Order Models Project (WOMP) in the 1960s, obsolescence critics have argued that sovereignty fails to reflect the reality of the political world, particularly in light of globalization, and that it is thus desirable and the necessary to move away from the Westphalian order.²⁹ Also, the complex interdependence between states and the increasing flows of information, people, knowledge, money and carbon emissions are sometimes given as reasons for setting aside or moving past the idea of sovereignty³⁰ because “[I]t seems to bring with it so many hidden meanings and connotations of absolutist forms of government that a more moderate age, committed to international law and increasingly enmeshed in the web of global interdependence, simply has no use for it.”³¹ I will return to these critiques in Chapter 3 to argue that that first two critiques are not failures of sovereignty to reflect reality, but rather the logical outcomes of sovereignty in conjunction with the modern state in political

²⁸ Kalmo, H. and Skinner, Q. ‘Introduction: A Concept in Fragments,’ p.11.

²⁹ Dalby, S. ‘Against ‘Globalization from Above’: Critical Geopolitics and the World Order Models Project,’ *Environment and Planning: Society and Space*, 17:2 (1999), pp. 181-200.

³⁰ See for example: Strange, S. *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Sassen, S. *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalisation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), Sassen, S. *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006).

³¹ Kalmo, H., and Skinner, Q. “Introduction: A Concept in Fragments,” p.12.

modernity; in relation to the third critique, the thesis argues that the sovereign system is not merely inadequate or unsustainable in relation to transnational problems, but that it is a primary driver of transnational problems, especially environmental degradation, and a barrier to their amelioration. In terms of the *Sovereignty in Fragments* collection, it takes the line that it is not possible to somehow set sovereignty aside because sovereignty is too closely bound up with our entire understanding of politics and what constitutes the political. One of the major weaknesses of critiques of sovereignty that suggest that sovereignty and the political processes it enables can be set aside in favor of rationally better outcomes and practices is that: “[w]ith the subversion of the political space of territorial sovereignty, the global governance discourse comes up with an impoverished conception of order that is exclusively based on efficiency and structural necessities and leaves no room for a sensible account of the political.”³² This means that critics who argue that sovereignty is obsolete and thus turn to a global governance discourse that they think better accounts for complex interdependence and economic and intellectual flows disregard the significance of the political in terms of the constitution of political communities and subjects. Political communities and subjects, and the relations between them, are reduced to instrumental relationships of efficiency and necessity in this perspective. Furthermore, these critiques of sovereignty serve only to keep it in place as an ambiguous but central concept because even while arguing against sovereignty as the organizing principle of politics, these critics employ the assumptions about political order and community associated with sovereignty.³³ Some argue that the world would be more just and free by dispensing with sovereignty,³⁴ but sovereignty is still considered by many to be “the master concept of legal and political philosophy,”³⁵ signaling the continued acceptance of R.G. Collingwood’s argument that “[S]overeignty is merely a name for political activity, and those who would banish sovereignty

³²Späth, K. ‘Inside Global Governance: New Borders of a Concept’ in *Criticizing Global Governance*, edited by Markus Lederer and Philipp S. Müller (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 21.

³³Halmo, K., and Skinner, Q. ‘Introduction: A Concept in Fragments,’ p.2. This strongly echoes Bartelson, J. *Critique of the State*, 2001.

³⁴Arendt, H. *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 210-211 and Ward, I. ‘The End of Sovereignty and the New Humanism,’ *Stanford Law Review* 55:5 (2003) pp. 2091 –112.

³⁵Kalmo, H. and Skinner, Q. ‘Introduction: A Concept in Fragments,’ p. 35.

as an outworn fiction are really only trying to shirk the whole problem of politics.”³⁶ Many theorists and critics of sovereignty hold that understanding why and how it is the case that sovereignty is the predicate for international politics would still need to be done, even if somehow setting aside sovereignty would lead to a more just and free world, which itself is disputed in this collection.³⁷

Skinner, for example, provides a brief genealogy of the sovereign state, excavating past usages and understandings of the concept to gain a better understanding of its present form. Skinner does not think that his genealogy will provide us with an uncontested understanding of the sovereign state, and indeed he is not impressed with what he views as the currently predominant understanding of the state as “nothing more than the established apparatus of government,”³⁸ but he still thinks that a genealogy may help us settle on a more useful dominant understanding of the state. Skinner’s genealogical turn here suggests a departure from what he called for in ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,’³⁹ and *Visions of Politics*,⁴⁰ but one that is perhaps not too significant. Skinner had argued for a sharper divide between history and political philosophy that involved not writing histories of concepts but histories of the usages of concepts.⁴¹ The shift in this chapter seems to be one of examining the histories of usages of a concept and then making a judgment about which usage was best or should be rescued. Skinner ends by advocating a return to the fictional theory of the state, in which the state is conceived of as a person because it will “furnish us with a means not merely of testing the legitimacy of government conduct, but of vindicating the actions that governments are sometimes obliged to take in times of emergency. If there is a genuine national crisis, there must be a strong case for saying that the person whose life

³⁶Collingwood, R. in Kalmo, H., and Skinner, Q. ‘Introduction: A Concept in Fragments,’ p. 13.

³⁷ See especially: Krasner, S. ‘The Durability of Organized Hypocrisy,’ pp. 96-113 and Koskenniemi, M. ‘Conclusion: Vocabularies of Sovereignty-Powers of a Paradox,’ pp. 222-242.

³⁸Skinner, Q. ‘The Sovereign State: A Genealogy,’ in *Sovereignty in Fragments*, p. 27.

³⁹ Skinner, Q. ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,’ *History and Theory* 8:1 (1969) pp. 3–53.

⁴⁰ Skinner, Q. *Visions of Politics, Vol. I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002).

⁴¹ Skinner, Q. ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,’ p. 53. Skinner puts this approach to work most clearly in *Foundations of Modern Political Thought, vol. I and II*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

most urgently needs to be saved is the person of the state.”⁴² Skinner thinks it is important to think of the sovereign state in a way that helps us grasp its importance to constituting political spaces and life that is secure and legitimate, but more than mere governance.

The essentialist debates and the offshoot obsolescence arguments posit that what is important about sovereignty are its essential components, or its nature. However, as alluded to above, a further influential conceptualization of sovereignty is concerned with the mutability of sovereignty, with some viewing mutability as the most essential element of sovereignty. “Here sovereignty refers neither to a brute fact of political life nor to a legal norm, but to the institutional amalgamation of both: sovereignty is an institution, and as such, capable of both reproduction and transformation by virtue of its mutability.”⁴³ Representatives of this position include Krasner,⁴⁴ Robert Keohane,⁴⁵ Luke Glanville,⁴⁶ Daniel Philpott⁴⁷ and Eckersley,⁴⁸ who argue that the underlying ambiguity of sovereignty make it mutable or adaptable to changing conditions within states and the international system, allowing it to adapt to conditions of globalization or stretch to accommodate developing norms regarding responsibility, intervention, cooperation and interdependence. This is not quite Alexander Wendt’s move in which sovereignty (or anarchy) “is what states make of it”⁴⁹ because core meanings or assumptions about sovereignty which posit it as a predicate of political organization, wherein the view is reinforced that the international system is self-regulating and states and self-contained, are still explicitly accepted by those arguing for

⁴²Skinner, Q. ‘The Sovereign State: A Genealogy,’ p. 46.

⁴³ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 49.

⁴⁴ Krasner, S. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) and Krasner, S. ‘The Durability of Organized Hypocrisy,’ pp. 96-113.

⁴⁵Keohane, R. ‘Political Authority after Interventions: Gradations in Sovereignty’ in *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas*, edited by J. L. Holzgrefe and Robert Keohane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). pp.275-298.

⁴⁶ Glanville, L. ‘The Myth of ‘Traditional’ Sovereignty,’ *International Studies Quarterly*, 52: 2 (2013), pp. 79-90.

⁴⁷ Philpott, D. *Revolutions in Sovereignty*.

⁴⁸ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*. Eckersley’s work on the possibilities represented by the mutability of sovereignty for addressing environmental degradation are dealt with extensively in Chapter 4.

⁴⁹ Wendt, A. ‘Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics,’ *International Organization*, 46:2 (1992), pp. 391-425.

mutability.⁵⁰ For them, the concept can be stretched to accommodate and account for changing norms and practices like intervention, but it remains the fundamental organizing principle guaranteeing distinct states in an anarchical system.

An important feature of the above debates about sovereignty is that while they do entail criticisms of practices of sovereignty and the political imaginary or settlement in the world that it helps constitute they more or less recognize that sovereignty organizes and enables politics and international relations, and that the international system basically works, or that there are at least no workable alternatives. Embedded in these debates about the concept and practices of sovereignty is a sense of the significance of relationships of authority, but also of community.

We all know the many well-founded critiques of sovereignty. But there is a bright side to sovereignty that describes the character of collective life as a project – a set of institutions or practices in which the forms of collective life are constantly imagined, debated, criticized and reformed, over and again. The wish to participate in such a project is defeated and lost in the replacement of sovereignty by ‘global governance’ and its cognates. Attending to outcomes or empirical feelings of legitimacy cannot articulate a collective self-formation in which one’s preferences and ‘purposes’ are formed and reformed in collective decision-making processes and in which they are not expected to remain stable over time. ‘Effective governance’ assumes that human beings are born ready-made, with stable and unchanging preferences, always acting with a view to maximizing utility. This is a familiar image, of course. But it is a limited, passive and sad image.⁵¹

By this understanding, we as subjects or individuals have been constructed and constituted in relation to the idea of sovereign authority and protection. Sovereignty thus enables people to formulate and express identities that are not fixed and given but formed or constituted through the act or processes of living together. Humans are not human in isolation but become so through their interactions with each other. There is a living quality of politics and political relations that sovereignty can reflect because it brings together questions of power, authority, legitimacy, and responsibility as well as identity formation. This is important “[B]ecause we have an intuitive sense of social life as something else, and more than the production of security or welfare, and that the acceptable exercise of authority is something other than the production of good outcomes. For

⁵⁰ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 56.

⁵¹ Koskeniemi, M. ‘Conclusion: Vocabularies of Sovereignty-Powers of a Paradox,’ p. 252.

authority is not simply about outcomes but also about selfhood and relationships to others.”⁵² As the next section will demonstrate, there is a growing sense that sovereignty is not, or at least no longer, the best means of enabling collective life and that this view of sovereignty fails to account for the harms associated with sovereignty. However, Koskienniemi’s point about the importance of a sense of collective life is important to bear in mind when arguing against sovereignty and trying to reimagine or reorient political life. Although it is problematic to assume that sovereignty is exhaustive of the possibilities for the formation and continuation of collective political life for peoples and communities because while “many are sufficiently privileged to take a gamble of trusting in the freedoms and securities promised by the modern states... it is also a gamble that very many people have lost, and lost very badly,”⁵³ sovereignty has provided a sense of identity and collective life for many that is lost in critiques that the concept should be abandoned.

Contingency and entrapment

Arguments for the mutability of sovereignty still assume that certain essential meanings or assumptions about sovereignty are consistent over time, in part to make analyses of sovereignty intelligible to inquiry.⁵⁴ This position began to be challenged by theorists such as Richard K. Ashley,⁵⁵ Walker,⁵⁶ and, formerly at least, Jens Bartelson,⁵⁷ arguing that the meaning of sovereignty is contingent upon its use, which necessarily varies. The argument from contingency assumes that

⁵²Koskienniemi, M. ‘Conclusion: vocabularies of sovereignty-powers of a paradox,’ p. 251.

⁵³Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, p. 71.

⁵⁴ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 62.

⁵⁵ Ashley, R. K. ‘Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism and War’ in *International/Intertextual Relations*, edited by James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Macmillan, 1989) pp. 259-322, and Ashley, R.K. ‘The Powers of Anarchy: Theory, Sovereignty and the Domestication of Global Life,’ in *International Theory: Critical Investigations*, edited by James Der Derian (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995) pp. 94-128.

⁵⁶ Walker, R.B.J. ‘Violence, Modernity, Silence: From Max Weber to International Relations,’ in *The Political Subject of Violence*, edited by David Campbell, Michael Dillon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 137-160, Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Walker, R.B.J. ‘Sovereignty, Identity, Community: Reflections on the Horizons of Contemporary Political Practice’ in *Contending Sovereignities: Redefining Political Community*, edited by R.B.J. Walker and Saul H. Mendlovitz (London: Lynn Rienner, 1990), pp. 159-186.

⁵⁷ Bartelson, J. *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*.

sovereignty has, in fact, been largely *uncontested* in international relations and international law as their undisputed foundation and the basis for political organization,⁵⁸ in contrast to other critiques that assume sovereignty is an essentially contested concept.⁵⁹ Contingency critics argue that rather than being a thing in the world, sovereignty is a set of practices that has helped create and maintain the divisions that are supposedly essential or characteristic of international relations. Contingency theorists have a nomothetic understanding of concepts and, as such, they argue that sovereignty has no essence or essential characteristics. Its meaning is entirely contingent upon its use in discourse, meaning that there is no such thing as sovereignty outside of discourse and “the relationship between the very term sovereignty, the concept of sovereignty and the reality of sovereignty is historically open, contingent and unstable.”⁶⁰ However, unlike those who argue for the benefits of the mutability of sovereignty, for contingency critics this openness or contingency is a problem because sovereignty is used as an ideological claim to organizational power and meaning,⁶¹ and because the reproduction of reifications of sovereignty lead to a sense of entrapment. Critical contingency theorists like Walker argue that sovereignty, despite being an historically specific answer to a particular set of problems about how political community was spatially and temporally organized after the dissolution of universalized, medieval hierarchies in Europe, has itself been universalized through processes of reification in which the historically specific concept of supreme authority within a given territory has been turned into a thing that exists independently in the world and organizes it.⁶² Walker writes:

[t]he principle of state sovereignty expresses an historically specific articulation of the relationship between universality and particularity in space and time. As such, it both affirms a specific resolution of philosophical and political options that must be acknowledged everywhere and sets clear limits to our capacity to envisage any other possibility. As both resolution and limit, it enters into the practices of states, the categories

⁵⁸ Bartelson, J. ‘Sovereignty,’ pp. 185-186.

⁵⁹ See: Pusteria, E. R.G. *The Credibility of Sovereignty: The Political Fiction of a Concept* (Heidelberg: Springer International Publishing, 2015), pp. 34-36 and Wendt, A. and Duvall, R. ‘Sovereignty and the UFO,’ *Political Theory*, 36:4 (2008), pp. 607.

⁶⁰ Bartelson, J. *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, p. 2.

⁶¹ Ashley, R.K. and Walker, R.B.J. ‘Conclusion: Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the question of Sovereignty in International Studies,’ *International Studies Quarterly*, 34:3 (1990), p.383.

⁶² Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside*, p. 62.

of those who analyze states and even aspirations of those who would like to dispense with states. As a practice of states, it is easily mistaken for their essence. As a category of analysis, it is easily treated as the silent condition guaranteeing all other categories. As a source of inspiration, it affirms that the only alternative to it is a return to the same, albeit on a larger-global-scale.⁶³

Here, the meaning of sovereignty is contingent upon use, but it has been used as a foundation or origin of power that has been reproduced as timeless or universal through Eurocentric conceptions of political relations despite being historically specific, and the effect of that reification is to undermine political imagination and alternative possibilities for political organization and identity. The sense that contingency theorists leave us with here is that sovereignty can be used to mean anything, and that it has been used as a way to legitimate claims to power and authority with severe consequences for those who are on the outsides or margins of the system that claims to power and authority based on sovereignty have organized and maintained. Furthermore, reifications of its meaning over time have been put to uses that entrap us within its discourse and the political system it constitutes.

These contingency theorists initially had, in a sense, tried to ‘debunk’⁶⁴ sovereignty to show that it is not a timeless foundation for authority, and that it has been used to support claims to power and forms of political organization that are often harmful and that have not been challenged or contested, despite the insistence by mainstream critics that it is an essentially contested concept.⁶⁵ However, the consequences of the reifications of sovereignty these theorists have identified suggests that there is no way to think outside of the way sovereignty conditions or enables political interaction and organization.⁶⁶ Despite the fact that many who have undertaken the contingency

⁶³ Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside*, p. 62.

⁶⁴ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 60.

⁶⁵ See Walker and Ashley who argue that sovereignty is never really contested: Ashley, R.K. ‘The Powers of Anarchy: Theory, Sovereignty, and the Domestication of Global Life,’ pp. 94-128; Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside*, pp. 163-64, Walker, R.B.J. ‘Sovereignty, Identity, Community: Reflections on the Horizons of Contemporary Political Practice,’ pp. 159-186. Harmful practices and outcomes that these theorists associate with sovereignty are taken up in Chapter 2 and extensively in Chapter 3, which will deal with how sovereignty orients political thinking and acting, and how this orientation might be shifted.

⁶⁶ Bartelson attributes this in part to the idea that “what one contests, one always presupposes and therefore also to an extent de-contests” which means that “many...ended up reaffirming sovereignty as an inescapable condition of the modern order.” In Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 60.

critique of sovereignty did so in an attempt to advocate or enable alternative possibilities for political community and authority the contingency critique itself leaves the possibility of alternatives with little analytical purchase because it still assumes distinct, bounded political communities and takes for granted states and the international system.⁶⁷ A further concern that has been raised by these critics is that, in their efforts to combat the problematic outcomes they associate with reifications of sovereignty, the alternative is a ‘reduction to purpose’ view where political authority is legitimated only by how well it meets certain outcomes such as the provision of security or welfare, themselves contested and politically charged notions.⁶⁸ Critical contingency theorists motivated by concerns about sovereignty undermining or disabling political imagination have hence reinforced a situation in which sovereignty entraps political imagination and in which arguments from contingency are used to justify enhanced practices of domination and intervention:

[s]overeignty has been turned into something granted, contingent upon its responsible exercise in accordance with the norms of an imagined international community. Governmentalization has brought new strategies of interference and intervention, and many of these are justified by stretching the concept of sovereignty beyond its modern meanings, a move greatly facilitated by the widespread view that sovereignty is mutable and contingent. If sovereignty is what we make of it, then anything can be made of it.⁶⁹

The next subsection will argue that this has contributed to a sort of backlash or retreat to arguments that the essence of sovereignty is contingency, which can be read as the moment of decision or state of exception, following from Schmitt. Both this and the contingency arguments that wished to debunk sovereignty have troubling implications for the possibilities to alter or reorient political imagination and organization in ways that might help address a problem like environmental degradation. However, the final section of this chapter will turn explicitly to why sovereignty (and even reifications of it) have been politically enabling and will begin to set up why thinking in terms of orientation opens up more political possibilities for addressing a problem like environmental degradation.

⁶⁷ Bartelson, J. ‘Sovereignty,’ p.187. See also: Bartelson, *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 2.

⁶⁸ Koskenniemi, M. ‘What use of sovereignty today?’ *Asian Journal of International Law*, 1:1 (2011) p. 66.

⁶⁹ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p.97-98.

Contingency theorists concerned with debunking sovereignty focused their critiques on the theoretical limits of political organization and understanding that sovereignty imposes, but this criticism led to a sense of entrapment because it then appears that no alternative basis for political order is possible without transcending the conditions that reifications of sovereignty have constituted.⁷⁰ Furthermore, by their reading one of the key problems with sovereignty is that it acts as a transcendental origin of power and authority.⁷¹ Thus, as Bartelson has recently argued, this has led more critical theorists to return to an essentialist view of sovereignty as a means of critiquing problematic or illegitimate practices and concentrations of power.⁷² Derived from the works of Carl Schmitt, this return to the essence of sovereignty, or the treatment of sovereignty as a political fact that reflects the essence of political life, has a cursory appeal in that it seems to provide a means to critique or step back from the governmentalization or ‘reduction to purpose’ move identified above because it posits that there is a core or key quality of sovereignty that cannot be reduced to mere administration. This has been motivated in particular by concerns about the concentration of power in and imperial practices of the United States.⁷³

According to Schmitt, the sovereign is ‘he who decides he exception’⁷⁴ and the sovereign is both inside and outside the law because the point at which the sovereign is essential is the point at

⁷⁰ Bickerton, C., Cunliffe, P., and Gourevetich, A., ‘Politics Without Sovereignty?’ in *Politics Without Sovereignty: A Critique of Contemporary International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 29. Bickerton et al. argue that the post-structural critique of Walker, Ashley and others is a problem because “what begins as a theoretical critique of the limits on our understanding ends by dissolving the very possibility of agency.” The larger point their work is trying to make is that modern sovereignty emerged in response to historical conditions and that no viable alternative bases or forms of political organization have been offered by the post-structuralists or have emerged from critiques of sovereignty. This does little to answer post-structural critiques that sovereignty limits political imagination and possibilities, or that while it may have emerged out of historical conditions, those conditions were/are particular to only certain historical experiences and universalizing the historically specific nature of modern sovereignty is problematic.

⁷¹ Ashley, R.K. ‘The Powers of Anarchy,’ p. 103. See also: Bartelson, J. *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, and Walker, R.B.J. ‘Sovereignty, Identity, Community.’

⁷² Bartelson, J. ‘Sovereignty,’ p. 187.

⁷³ Teschke, B. ‘Fatal Attraction: A Critique of Carl Schmitt’s International Political and Legal Theory,’ *International Theory*, 3:2 (2011) pp. 179-227. See also: Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity,’ p. 25.

⁷⁴ Schmitt, C. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. 1985, p. 5.

which he decides that the law (or the norms and rules governing normal political interactions and behavior) must be set aside in order to preserve or defend the political community (the state) over which he has authority.⁷⁵ Thus, critical theorists have turned to Schmitt's work as a way to name and critique the proliferation of 'states of exception'⁷⁶ that have been decided upon by the exceptionally powerful United States and that help condition the shape and practices (and even the idea of) the post-Cold War international community. The 'international community' formed through these claims to exception over issues like terrorism⁷⁷ and nuclear security⁷⁸ takes on a life of its own in the sense that it does not require the explicit action of the US (as a stand in for imperial sovereign power) to make other states or international organizations behave in certain ways, because the US has 'set the rules of the game', quite apart from being in the best position to win it. Whereas

⁷⁵ Schmitt, C. *Political Theology*, pp. 5-7.

⁷⁶ Agamben, G. *State of Exception*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). While Agamben bases his understanding of sovereignty and exception on Walter Benjamin's work, Benjamin's work itself is thoroughly bound up with Schmitt, although Benjamin is profoundly uncomfortable with the violent implications of sovereignty, in a way that Schmitt is not. Benjamin, however, makes clear his intellectual debt to Schmitt, even if he does not embrace Schmitt's calmer perception of the implications of sovereignty. See especially Benjamin, W. *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1931-1934*. Edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pg. 79 and Benjamin, W. "Critique of Violence" in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, edited by Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1986). Agamben has taken Schmitt's work to an extreme, both in the sense that he takes the exception as the norm, and that the only way to escape this exceptionalism is through another sort of ultimate exception whose rupture would represent breaking away from political forms constituted by sovereignty. The extremity of his work is most obvious in *Homo Sacer* in taking the position that instead of the concentration camp representing the extreme limit of politics in modernity as it does for Hannah Arendt from whom he derives his argument, it has instead become the rule because "the state of exception actually constituted, in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested," Agamben, G., *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 9. Part of the reason that this is so extreme is that Agamben views sovereignty as a totalizing concept that describes modern political communities and political power, and in which the political subjectivity of sovereignty has become a straitjacket, because he no longer believes it to be possible to return to earlier forms of political subjectivity, or to develop alternatives. Non-sovereign political communities are an impossibility for Agamben, which is notably different from Arendt, especially in *On Revolution*, where she uses the example of early American townships as an alternative means to form political community. She generally insists both that sovereignty is a problem, but more importantly that non-sovereign political communities and political power is not only possible, but also preferable. Arendt, H. *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), see especially Chapter 5, Foundation II: *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, pp. 179-214. Arendt is better at elucidating problems and asking questions rather than providing answers, and I question the construction of her public, political space. However, I share her critical disposition towards sovereignty as well as her belief in the importance of political community and the possibility of non-sovereign political community and power, rather than Agamben's position. This will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 3.

⁷⁷ Teschke, B. 'Fatal Attraction,' pp. 180-181.

⁷⁸ Kaur, R. 'Sovereignty without hegemony, the nuclear state, and a 'secret public hearing' in India,' *Theory, Culture, Society*, 30:3 (2013) pp. 3-28.

analyses and practices of sovereignty that view it as mutable or contingent lead to sovereignty being treated not as a matter of course between juridically equal states, but as something ‘granted contingent upon the exercise of responsibility,’⁷⁹ this essentialist perspective treats sovereignty as the ability of powerful actors to instantiate norms for the international community through exceptionalism or treating events and phenomena like terrorism as exceptional issues that demand certain responses. The appeal of this perspective on sovereignty and exceptionalism is that it seems to provide the basis to critique concentrations of power and practices of imperialism or domination, as power can theoretically be named as sovereign, and identified and located. However, several critics of this move have pointed out that it represents a fundamental misreading or lack of awareness of the genealogy of the assumptions of sovereignty and their mutually constitutive relationship to political modernity,⁸⁰ which means that this form of critique based on Schmitt leads to the same entrapment as the critiques from contingency because sovereignty “is accepted as the sole, basic and universal term for describing political power and community,”⁸¹ when what would be more helpful would be to contemplate how political relations and political communities might be organized or understood differently than through a sovereign frame. This is where what are meant to be revolutionary critiques of sovereignty, particularly work on sovereignty by Giorgio Agamben, stumble. Agamben, and those that follow his critique of sovereignty, accept the re-definition of political community as subjecthood articulated by Hobbes, Bodin and other contributors to the project of political modernity “as both an empirical reality and as the critical object against and through which future politics must be defined” which “has never failed to be deeply disabling for both scholarship and politics,”⁸² because:

What we need instead- and with real urgency- is a positive framework for political thought, which...refuses to accept the definition of political life defined by sovereignty, even as the basis for critique. What we cannot afford is to have so many of the most thoughtful and creative thinkers of our moment distracted by a theory that takes them away from the hard

⁷⁹ Bartelson, *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, pp. 97-98.

⁸⁰ Teschke, B. ‘Fatal Attraction,’ pp. 179-227, Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity,’ pp. 23-61, Bartelson, J. ‘Sovereignty,’ pp. 184-195, and Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*.

⁸¹ Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity,’ p. 25.

⁸² Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity,’ p. 23.

political work that is at hand – learning to think outside of sovereignty, so that we can begin to both comprehend and imagine the full implications of the colonial and imperial imposition of sovereignty on the traditional institutions of the world (including in Europe), as well as the possibilities potentially open to us for local and non- sovereign political futures.⁸³

Sovereignty does not have to be coterminous with politics, although in political modernity it is treated as such because sovereignty is the way that we organize and understand the political world.⁸⁴ Critiques of sovereignty that call for a rejection of sovereignty and sovereign political communities and power or rupture from the political forms of sovereignty are often understood as radical positions. However, because these critiques have already accepted the assumption that political communities must be organized by sovereignty, and that this means subjecthood, they provide no critical purchase that might allow for alternatives to be imagined that might better address the concerns they have about the political forms the sovereignty enables and conditions.⁸⁵

This road to entrapment based on the works of Schmitt entails other complications. In this construction of sovereignty, when sovereignty and the power of decision are thought through and located within the state, the prospects for inter-state cooperation are always limited, and the possibility of violence is always present because sovereignty is “a routine practice whereby an ultimately unauthorized authority continuously authorizes itself as the authority,” in which “[S]ubjection of life to arbitrary violence, or its constant possibility that becomes a reality in extreme form at various times and places, would seem embedded in such a practice.”⁸⁶ Violence attends sovereign decision because the process of deciding what is in (and under the protection of the sovereign) and what is out, or who is friend and who is enemy in Schmitt’s language,⁸⁷ is inherently exclusionary and it entails the suspension of the legal and political order that would otherwise guarantee rights, rules, and obligations. In a sovereign states system, peace and internal

⁸³ Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity,’ pp. 52-53. See also: Walker, R.B.J. ‘International Relations and the Concept of the Political,’ in *International Relations Theory Today*, edited by Ken Booth and Steve Smith (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 322.

⁸⁴ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity,’ p. 51.

⁸⁶ Suganami, H. ‘Understanding Sovereignty through Kelsen/Schmitt,’ p. 529.

⁸⁷ Schmitt, C. *The Concept of the Political*, especially pp. 27-37.

stability are underwritten by the possibility of violence. “Paradoxically, while theories of international relations address themselves explicitly to the extremes of violence on the colliding edges of modern states, they shy away from the violence immanent in a civilization that requires the violent edges of the modern states to guarantee claims to goodness, truth and beauty within. In effect, international relations is the place to which the violence of modernity may be legitimately deferred.”⁸⁸ Contingency theorists aiming to debunk sovereignty have kept in focus the violence that attends sovereignty as a problem, but their critique leads them to a sense of entrapment by sovereignty that precludes alternatives. In contrast, theorists that have drawn on Schmitt have forgotten or ignored the outcome of these critiques and the way that sovereignty entraps possibilities for thinking about political communities. “[t]he single most debilitating fact for the development, in practice, of political community in the modern period has been the tendency of political thinkers to accept as the political question, par excellence, the question of how one can create political liberty from a condition of sovereign subjection,”⁸⁹ meaning that as a result, they are left attempting to derive possibilities for freedom from the concept of sovereignty,⁹⁰ which cannot support that freedom because modern sovereignty is synonymous with subjection, or, as Arendt puts it “in the realm of human affairs sovereignty and tyranny are the same.”⁹¹

Sovereignty as an Enabling and Disabling Concept

Re-inventing or rethinking political community if sovereignty is accepted either as the organizing principle of political community *and* if it is rejected as an organizing principle is entrapping because it means that political community is still being thought in relation to and through sovereignty and the political form it has found its clearest expression through, the state. The

⁸⁸ Walker, R.B.J. ‘Violence, Modernity, Silence: From Max Weber to International Relations,’ p. 155. The civilization referenced in this quote is a particular, European understanding of civilization. Chapters 2 and 3 will explore my fully the relationship between modern sovereignty and European civilization, and the violence that attends it.

⁸⁹ Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity,’ p. 52.

⁹⁰ Jennings, R. ‘Sovereignty and Political Modernity,’ p. 23.

⁹¹ Arendt, H. *On Revolution*, p. 153.

recent vote by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union is a useful example here. Arguments in favor of leaving the EU invoked recovering or taking back Britain's sovereignty despite evidence that it would be detrimental to the economic and other interests of the country,⁹² and that those campaigning for the exit misrepresented the difficulties and financial realities of leaving the EU.⁹³ The norms and obligations associated with treaties and cooperative frameworks are never fully embedded when sovereignty is located in the modern state. Because of the ever-present possibility of a moment of decision or exception in which a sovereign decides that the interests of its state demand that it not cooperate, abide by treaties, or remain part of international institutions, sovereignty renders international cooperation unstable. "[a] community actually founded on this sovereign will would be built not on sand but on quicksand. All political business is, and always has been, transacted within an elaborate framework of ties and bonds for the future—such as laws and constitutions, treaties and alliances— all of which derive in the last instance from the faculty to promise and to keep promises in the face of the essential uncertainties of the future,"⁹⁴ but sovereignty undermines this faculty to keep promises. The unexpected result of the Brexit referendum served as a reminder that the wildly improbable is still always possible when sovereign authority and the power of decision resides in the state. States can decide to preserve their sovereignty, even at the expense of the collective decision-making and identity-formation processes that sovereignty is meant to enable.⁹⁵ If understandings of political community are thought through sovereignty, it undermines decision making and identity formation processes happening outside of

⁹² 'Dreaming of sovereignty,' in *The Economist*, March 19th, 2016.

⁹³ Applebaum, A. 'All the Worst Lies about Brexit are about to be Revealed,' *The Washington Post*, September 8, 2017.

⁹⁴ Arendt, H. *On Revolution*, p. 163.

⁹⁵ The narrative surrounding the Peace of Westphalia usually suggests that the division of space into states enabled autonomy and self-determination within the bounds of each state's territory. According to this narrative, early modern princes "sought sovereign authority as a protection for a people, for their local prerogatives, for their immunities, for their autonomy, all of this as a shield from the impositions of a more universal entity... an empire," Philpott, D. *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, p. 254. The next chapter will argue that even in terms of the historical conditions from which modern sovereignty is assumed to have emerged, there have always been problems with this narrative, but in any case, the self-determination and collective decision-making processes sovereignty is meant to have enabled or secured in the early modern period are increasingly ineffective in response to the pressures of transnational problems like environmental degradation.

the bounds of the political communities, i.e. states, that sovereignty constitutes. Thus, political unions like the EU, or cooperative inter-state organization that might be developed to try and address a transnational problem like environmental degradation, are unstable because sovereignty renders their ability to make promises for the future contingent.

What all of these critiques that end in entrapment indicate is that sovereignty is an enabling and disabling concept. Politically enabling and disabling concepts exist on a continuum that, rather than being only bi-directional, moves in multiple directions. Politics, which is fundamentally about how we live in relation to each other, cannot be static because as people live alongside and engage with one another their interactions will produce constantly changing sets of conditions that require constant negotiation and re-negotiation. A politically enabling concept is one that allows these processes of negotiation to occur. Issues of power, authority, answerability and responsibility in politics are the site of continuous contestation because any answers or solutions create new questions and problems. A concept becomes disabling where it becomes static or creates a barrier to actors engaging in these processes of negotiation. A concept like sovereignty illustrates how a concept is both enabling and disabling, to different degrees at different points. Sovereignty helps answer (and ask) where power and authority are located.

Politics occurs at different levels and involves different actors and may require the advent of more and different types of actors as conditions change, but modern sovereignty has become disabling precisely at these different levels and for these different actors. Because modern sovereignty lays claim to issues of power, authority, answerability and responsibility it is where actors like individuals or citizens, or groups smaller than that of a state might look to for recourse and responsiveness to conditions that affect them, but those conditions may not be pitched at the level that an actor like a sovereign state operates. More significantly, part of the processes of negotiation that sovereign states have enabled is predicated on not recognizing or being bound by

higher forms of authority or different locations for collective action, or recognition.⁹⁶ Sovereignty then disables us from thinking collective action and recognition at a higher level because the processes it has enabled led to the establishment of the sovereign state, which wields the power of decision as to when and what it will recognize or be responsive to and bound by. As Walker points out:

Sovereignty...is a very odd phenomenon, a claim to absolute power/authority that was itself arbitrary, thinkable only in some thought experiment of a timeless world capable of switching instantly from natural condition to abstract principle in the shake of a utilitarian/Protestant calculation; thinkable, that is, on the basis of a claim about what must have been at the beginning predicated on quite radical assumptions about what the modern, free and equal, desiring man had already become. Sovereignty...can never be simply *there*. It has to be put into practice in order to identify the character, location and legitimacy of political authority, especially the authority to judge what is authoritative.⁹⁷

Again, if we think of sovereignty in Schmittian terms, the sovereign is both inside and outside the law, and he who decides the exception.⁹⁸ Here, laws cannot bind the sovereign because the key quality of sovereignty is the ability to decide when law is to be set aside to preserve and defend the existence of laws and the order they delimit. A sovereign entity can agree to be bound by laws and the conventions that they establish, but sovereign power cannot be alienated indefinitely in this way. Even in cases of international criminal law, states have different ways of handling their compliance with the law, and countries like the US have refused to submit to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.⁹⁹ International agreements, conventions, and laws are perpetually contingent on the sovereign never deciding that there is an exception to them. This contingency makes it impossible to rely on promises of responsibility, cooperation and the acceptance of embedded norms.

⁹⁶ Philpott's work is instructive here as someone who largely embraces the Westphalian narrative of sovereignty. "[s]overeignty procured freedom in this limited, but important sense: the holder of sovereignty was immune from rival claims to authority from both within and without its territory...supreme authority within its territory. The words 'supreme' and 'within' imply exaltation and enclosure, the sealed space for governance that sovereignty bequeaths." Philpott, D. *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, p. 254.

⁹⁷ Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, p. 191.

⁹⁸ Schmitt, C. *Political Theology*, pp. 5-7.

⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch 'The United States and the International Criminal Court,' (2017), accessed at: <http://pantheon.hrw.org/legacy/campaigns/icc/us.htm#Related%20Documents>.

Sovereignty is closely associated with the political form of the state, and this becomes problematic in relation to problems that exist on a different scale to states. The sovereign states system developed as a result of the process of negotiating and delimiting collective action, often through power struggles and attempts to create empires.¹⁰⁰ However, the scope of the need for collective action is different in relation to problems such as environmental degradation and nuclear weapons than the scope of collective action enabled by states. These are problems that have the ability to destroy states, and therefore, the politics that they enable. Sovereign states are a barrier to negotiating collective action on the scale needed to address these problems and secure the continuation of politics. Agreements, conventions, regimes and norms developed within this system are subject to the contingency inherent in sovereign power.

Sovereignty has become more of a disabling concept in international politics when it is thought through the lens of transnational problems such as environmental degradation. Although there has been work being done interrogating our traditional narratives that surround the development of sovereignty and more room for questioning what it means and what practices are associated with it, its close association with the political form of the state helps turn sovereignty into a conceptual barrier, as well as a political one. Through the reifications of sovereignty, sovereign power is the power of decision or emergency.

In the different critiques examined above what is consistent is that when emergency looms, the power of decision becomes important, either because the power of decision is taken as the essence of sovereignty or because of the violence attendant to reifications of sovereignty.

Sovereignty,

As a proto-theological notion... is both present and absent (like God) at the same time, so large that we cannot see it as against the details of the world it has created. All we see is the routine of the *potestas ordinata* that manifests itself in the daily routine of our institutions – neither ‘absolute’ nor ‘perpetual’ in any meaningful sense. And yet, once those routines come under

¹⁰⁰ See: Linklater, A. *Violence and Civilization in the Western States-Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), especially Chapter 5 The European States System and the Idea of Civilization, pp. 186-225.

stress, we immediately begin the hesitant grapple towards some secular equivalent of the *potestas absoluta*, a justification or a theory that enables the re-founding of routine as the relative (and non-threatening) truth of what we do.¹⁰¹

The ability to decide on an exception is not threatening when threats do not seem imminent. If the sovereign is inside and outside of the law and determines when the law is to be set aside in order to preserve what he is sovereign over, then it is in times of emergency or crisis that the power of sovereignty becomes most obvious and problematic. Planning for the future, trying to make changes, and choosing to be responsible are undermined by the threat that a state or states will assert their sovereignty through the act of decision and refuse to go along with collective, international decision-making processes. This is a particular problem when individual states construct collective efforts to meet a goal or challenge as threat to themselves, and thus refuse to cooperate or actively thwart collective or international cooperation. The US has repeatedly done this in relation to climate change treaties and agreements, with President George W. Bush opposing the Kyoto protocols because they were unfair to the US and would harm its economy,¹⁰² and President Donald J. Trump working to scuttle US commitments to the Paris Climate Accords.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Koskenniemi, M. 'Conclusion: Vocabularies of Sovereignty-Powers of a Paradox,' p. 235.

¹⁰² Bush, G. "President Bush discusses global climate change" *George W. Bush White House Archives*, June 11, 2001, accessed at: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010611-2.html>. In these remarks, Bush first highlights the uncertainties surrounding climate change, stating "Yet, the Academy's report tells us that we do not know how much effect natural fluctuations in climate may have had on warming. We do not know how much our climate could, or will change in the future. We do not know how fast change will occur, or even how some of our actions could impact it... The policy challenge is to act in a serious and sensible way, given the limits of our knowledge," which can be read as an attempt to downplay the significance of human contributions to climate change to provide justification for not pursuing aggressive policies to combat the problem. He then emphasizes the unfairness of the agreements to the US: "The world's second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases is China. Yet, China was entirely exempted from the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol. India and Germany are among the top emitters. Yet, India was also exempt from Kyoto... Kyoto is, in many ways, unrealistic. Many countries cannot meet their Kyoto targets. The targets themselves were arbitrary and not based upon science. For America, complying with those mandates would have a negative economic impact, with layoffs of workers and price increases for consumers. And when you evaluate all these flaws, most reasonable people will understand that it's not sound public policy." However, this interpretation of the protocols and of cooperative efforts that ask more of the US than others fails to reflect the fact that the US and other developed countries have been the largest historical contributors of greenhouse gases, and that its population is much smaller than other top emitters like China and India, meaning that the 'American way of life' is deleterious to the environment. See: Masco, J. 'Crisis in crisis,' *Current Anthropology*, 58:S15 (2017), p. S72.

¹⁰³ Milman, O., Smith, D., and Carrington, D. 'Donald Trump confirms US will quit Paris climate agreement: world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter will remove itself from global treaty as Trump claims accord 'will harm' American jobs,' *The Guardian*, 2017. These issues will be explored more extensively in Chapter 4.

The collective decision making and identity formation processes that sovereignty enables are central to the political in modernity, and to the ability of people to negotiate how to live in relation to each other. However, with the growth of transnational challenges like environmental degradation, people need new collective decisions making and identify formation processes, which sovereignty in conjunction with the modern state inhibits. Sovereignty retains its appeal, quite apart from its power, because:

[w]e sometimes invoke sovereignty to express frustration and anger about the way what present themselves as unavoidable necessities of a global modernity are diminishing the spaces of collective re-imagining, creation and transformation. At those moments it might be useful to remember that this was what sovereignty meant for those who struggled against theocratic rule in early-modern Europe, stormed the Bastille at the peak of the Enlightenment or invoked it to support decolonization in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁴

The global modernity now ushered in or created by states demands new ‘spaces of collective re-imagining, creation and transformation,’ thought outside of states and the individual, rational subject because of problems like environmental degradation that their practices and understandings of the world have helped cause. This thesis is troubled by the relationship between sovereignty and the modern state precisely because the state now captures and limits these collective self-formations and decision-making processes in such a way as to render them less able to respond or engage with a problem like environmental degradation.¹⁰⁵ This is because, as the contingency theorists especially have pointed out, sovereignty in relation to the modern state disciplines and directs our thinking about what is possible in practices and understandings of international politics.¹⁰⁶ Sovereignty is a means we have developed of bringing issues of power, authority, legitimacy, responsibility, freedom and subjectivity together and finding a way to speak about or locate them. Again, however, the relationship between sovereignty and the state has become increasingly problematic because “the principle of state sovereignty codifies a historically specific answer to

¹⁰⁴ Koskenniemi, M. ‘Conclusion: Vocabularies of Sovereignty-Powers of a Paradox,’ p. 253.

¹⁰⁵ That environmental degradation is driven by the political imaginaries and settlement of sovereignty to questions of political community and subjectivity will be argued more completely in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

¹⁰⁶ Walker, R. B. J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, p. 14

historically specific questions about political community,”¹⁰⁷ when we are faced with new questions, especially about political community, that demand different answers.

There is, of course, an important and longstanding relationship between sovereignty and security, with some arguing that a primary purpose of the development of the modern sovereign states system was to provide security for states themselves, and their subjects.¹⁰⁸ In the past 30 years at least, there has also been a push to broaden the security agenda to include areas such as environmental, economic and social threats.¹⁰⁹ The concept of human security, which acknowledges that sometimes the security interests of states are not commensurate with the security or safety of the people within them and that human security needs include food, water, economic stability, and freedom from oppression or threats has become increasingly prevalent.¹¹⁰ A Critical Security Studies (CSS) agenda has also developed in that time that has pushed for a move away from the viewing the state as the referent object of security¹¹¹ and more closely analyzing the political dimensions of security or how security practices and theories help shape political order.¹¹² An important strand of CSS has argued that the concept of security itself is exclusive, totalizing and

Walker, R.B.J. ‘Sovereignty, Identity, Community,’ p. 173.

¹⁰⁸ Dalby, S. ‘Environmental Geopolitics in the Twenty-first Century.’ *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 39:1 (2014) pp. 3-16; Agnew, J. ‘The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory.’ *Review of International Political Economy* 1:1 (1994) pp. 60; Cudworth, E. and Hobden, S. ‘Beyond Environmental Security: Complex Systems, Multiple Inequalities and Environmental Risks.’ *Environmental Politics* 20:1 (2011) pp. 42-59.; Burke, A., Fishel, S., Mitchell, A., Dalby, S., and Levine, D. J. ‘Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR.’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44:3 (2016) pp. 499-523.

¹⁰⁹ Buzan B., Wæver O., and de Wilde J. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

¹¹⁰ Fierke K.M., *Critical Approaches to International Security*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Newman, E. ‘Critical Human Security Studies,’ *Review of International Studies* 36 (2010) pp. 77-94; Booth, K. ‘Security and Emancipation,’ *Review of International Studies* 17:4 (1991) pp.313–326; Wyn Jones, R. ‘On Emancipation: Necessity, Capacity and Concrete Utopias,’ In: Booth K. (ed.) *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (London and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005) pp. 215–235.

¹¹¹ Krause, K. and Williams M.C., (eds) *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases*. (London: UCL Press, 1997) Wyn Jones, R., ‘“Travel Without Maps”: Thinking about Security after the Cold War,’ In: Davis MJ (ed.) *Security Issues in the Post-Cold War World* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996) pp. 196–218.

¹¹² Nunes, J. ‘Emancipation and Critique’ *Security Dialogue* 43:4 (2012), pp. 347.

violent¹¹³ and hence that there should be a decisive move away from security thinking if there is any hope for political transformation.¹¹⁴ This approach to security has been contested by other CSS scholars who argue that security is too important a concept and too powerful an instrument for policy makers and political actors to be abandoned,¹¹⁵ especially if, as Ole Waever has argued, security is a Schmittian concept because it is defined in terms of “exception, emergency and a decision.”¹¹⁶ A more positive framework for CSS based upon the ‘Aberystwyth School’ work of Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones also exists.¹¹⁷ The Aberystwyth School emphasizes a link between security and emancipation because security is concerned with reducing constraints on peoples’ lives¹¹⁸ and emancipation is concerned with reducing structural and other oppressions on people such as threats of violence like war, structural oppressions like slavery and threats to identity such as cultural imperialism.¹¹⁹ The individual is the most important security referent here, and security should be concerned with “real people in real places.”¹²⁰

At first glance, emancipation-based security approaches are appealing because of their emphasis on practical engagement with security concerns that affect peoples’ lives in order to

¹¹³ Aradau, C. ‘Security and the Democratic Scene: Desecuritization and Emancipation,’ *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7:4 (2004) pp.388–413; Van Munster, R. ‘Security on a Shoestring: A Hitchhiker’s Guide to Critical Schools of Security in Europe,’ *Cooperation and Conflict* 42:2 (2007) 235–243; Shepherd, L.J. *Gender, Violence and Security* (London and New York: Zed, 2008).

¹¹⁴ Nunes, ‘Emancipation and Critique,’ p. 349. See also: Huysmans, J. ‘Security! What do you Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier,’ *European Journal of International Relations* 4:2 (1998) pp. 226–255.; Huysmans, J. *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Aradau, C. ‘Security and the Democratic Scene: Desecuritization and Emancipation,’ *Journal of International Relations and Development* 7:4 (2004) pp.388–413; Peoples, C. ‘Security after Emancipation? Critical Theory, Violence and Resistance,’ *Review of International Studies* 37:3 (2011) pp. 1113–1135.

¹¹⁵ McDonald, M. *Security, the Environment and Emancipation: Contestations over Environmental Change* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012) p. 163.

¹¹⁶ Wæver O. ‘Politics, Security, Theory,’ *Security Dialogue* 42:4–5 (2011), pp. 478.

¹¹⁷ Waever, O. ‘Aberystwyth, Paris, Copenhagen: New ‘Schools’ in Security Theory and their Origins between Core and Periphery.’ Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Montreal, 17–20 March, 2004; Nunes, ‘Emancipation and Critique,’ pp. 345–361.

¹¹⁸ Booth, K. *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp.110, 112

¹¹⁹ Booth K. ‘Nuclearism, Human Rights and Constructions of Security (Part 2),’ *The International Journal of Human Rights* 3:3 (1999) p. 49.

¹²⁰ Wyn Jones, ‘Travel Without Maps,’ p. 214 in Nunes, ‘Emancipation and Critique,’ p. 351.

develop practical strategies to provide greater security for people. However, this thesis ultimately tends to share the view of CSS scholars that advocate a move away from security thinking both because the logic of security is too closely bound to the state and modern international system¹²¹ as well as to the modern, individual subject.¹²² Security discourses tend to reproduce a sense of the primary importance of the survival of the state and the maintenance of sovereignty over the territory of the state,¹²³ because “At its core, the politics of security is obsessed with the survival of the sovereign.”¹²⁴ This in turn is an obstacle to the reorganization of political practices and relations that environmental degradation demands because “Climate security in the long run is not a matter of environmental change causing political difficulties, but rather a matter of contemporary political difficulties causing accelerating climate change.”¹²⁵ As this thesis argues, it is the modern international system and the states and subjects within it constituted and oriented by sovereignty that are driving the problem of environmental degradation and climate change. Security discourses in IR make it more difficult to comprehend a global problem like environmental degradation because they help maintain the modern international order.¹²⁶ “IR is one of few disciplines that is explicitly devoted to the pursuit of survival, yet it has almost nothing to say in the face of a possible mass extinction event,”¹²⁷ because the survival it focuses on through security discourses is that of

¹²¹ Fagan, M. ‘Security in the Anthropocene: Environment, Ecology, Escape.’ *European Journal of International Relations* 23:2 (2017) pp. 292-311; Dalby, S. ‘Anthropocene Formations: Environmental Security, Geopolitics and Disaster.’ *Theory, Culture & Society* 34:2-3 (2017) pp. 233-252; Cudworth, E. and Hobden, S. ‘Beyond Environmental Security: Complex Systems, Multiple Inequalities and Environmental Risks,’ *Environmental Politics* 20:1 (2011) pp. 42-59.

¹²² Mitchell, A. ‘Is IR Going Extinct?’ *European Journal of International Relations* 23:1 (2017) pp. 3- 25.

¹²³ Agnew, J. ‘The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory.’ *Review of International Political Economy* 1:1 (1994) pp. 53–80; Cudworth and Hobden, ‘Beyond Environmental Security,’ p. 45; Dalby, S. ‘Rethinking Geopolitics: Climate Security in the Anthropocene.’ *Global Policy* 5:1 (2014) pp.1-9; Fagan, ‘Security in the Anthropocene,’ pp. 292-231.

¹²⁴ Debrix, F. ‘Katechontic Sovereignty: Security Politics and the Overcoming of Time.’ *International Political Sociology* 9 (2015) pp. 143.

¹²⁵ Dalby, ‘Rethinking Geopolitics,’ p.1. See also: Fagan, M. ‘Who’s Afraid of the Ecological Apocalypse? Climate Change and the Production of the Ethical Subject.’ *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 19:2 (2017) pp. 225-244.

¹²⁶ Cudworth, E. and Hobden, S. ‘Beyond Environmental Security,’ p. 45.

¹²⁷ Burke, A., Fishel, S., Mitchell, A., Dalby, S., and Levine, D. J. ‘Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR.’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44:3 (2016) pp. 517.

the state, which is sometimes extended to the individual subjects within them. Chris Methmann and Delf Rothe point out that securitization of climate politics does not lead to action that addresses the underlying factors that drive climate change,¹²⁸ while Olaf Corry points out some of the dangers of focusing on security in relation to the climate:

If the climate becomes something somebody has done to somebody else, this changes climate politics quite radically. If climate politics were to become securitized, climate engineering might end up pushing global agreements on mitigation even further into the future. Securitization would shift climate politics into the category of politics in which exceptional means are legitimately used, undermining multilateral and cooperative efforts necessary for an effective global mitigation regime.¹²⁹

Securitization and security discourses are not promising avenues for addressing the problems that underlie environmental degradation because of the way they reproduce and enforce practices and understandings of sovereignty.¹³⁰ Environmental security approaches tend to reinforce the separation of humans from the environment, which, as chapter 4 will address in more detail, are part of the political orientation of sovereignty. Even ecological security approaches which are more aware and critical of human embeddedness with the environment do not adequately account for the ways that the modern political system and subjects within it contribute to environmental degradation because of the lack of attention paid to “complex inequalities” that constitute the modern international system.¹³¹

Conclusion: Sovereignty as Orientation: An Introduction

This chapter has examined common articulations or conceptualizations of sovereignty, as well the most prominent critiques of sovereignty in order to show its significance to understandings

¹²⁸ Methmann, C. and Rothe, D. ‘Politics for the Day After Tomorrow: The Logic of Apocalypse in Global Climate Politics.’ *Security Dialogue* 43:4 (2012) pp. 327.

¹²⁹ Corry, O. ‘The International Politics of Geoengineering: The Feasibility of Plan B for Tackling Climate Change.’ *Security Dialogue* 48:4 (2017) pp. 306.

¹³⁰ Simon Dalby, for a prominent example, makes the point that security and sustainability discourses maintain a neoliberal international order that is the cause of environmental degradation in the first place. See: Dalby, S. ‘Anthropocene Formations,’ pp. 233-252, and Dalby, S. ‘Framing the Anthropocene: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.’ *The Anthropocene Review* 3:1 (2016) pp. 33-51.

¹³¹ Cudworth and Hobden, ‘Beyond Environmental Security,’ p. 42. Chapters 3 and 5 especially will deal directly with the argument that the political orientation of sovereignty helps constitute a hierarchical international system based on increasingly problematic inequalities.

and practices of politics in modernity. It has also begun to argue that the political forms and relations that modern sovereignty has enabled have become increasingly problematic, especially with regards to transnational challenges like environmental degradation. The task then becomes one of finding ways to think about the role that sovereignty plays in relation to the political that might avoid the problem of entrapment that the critiques outlined above encounter, so that we are also capable of imagining political communities and practices that can effectively address the challenge of environmental degradation.

The thesis argues that thinking of sovereignty as an orientation will enable this because it allows us to take on board the consequences of sovereignty and reifications of sovereignty that critics have identified without concluding that there is no hope for the development of alternative political possibilities that can address these consequences.¹³² Again, to orient someone is to align or position them relative to the points of a compass or other specified positions.¹³³ Conceptual orientation is how people make sense of who and where they are in relation to specified conceptual positions, such as space and time, as well as in relation to each other. Sovereignty is a conceptual orientation that enables people to make sense of themselves as individuals and in relation to each other. It positions them spatially and temporally by demarcating and maintaining the inside and outside of political communities to which they belong and, in theory, in which they might flourish. The next chapter will explain how modern understandings of sovereignty orientates people, particularly modern, Western subjects, towards certain political communities, understandings of time and space, and orientates their identity as certain kinds of individual subjects, primarily through practices of historical writing and periodization. Bringing together temporality, spatiality, community and identity as parts of a constellation or compass that we are orientated by will make it clearer how the political settlements, practices and identities that have become increasingly

¹³² The idea of sovereignty as an orientation bears similarities to Jayan Nayer's idea of sovereignty as a philosophical invention in Nayer, J. "On the elusive subject of sovereignty" in *Alternatives*, 39:2 (2014), pp. 124-147 and especially to Bartelson's argument that we should think of sovereignty as a symbolic form in Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹³³ *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, p. 1025.

problematic in relation to environmental issues developed. Thinking of sovereignty as an orientation that encompasses these different points will also help thinking in terms of the shifts or reorientations that environmental degradation demands because then sovereignty is not a thing (or reifications of a concept) in the world that people need to (but cannot) break from.

Chapter 2: The Political Project of Modernity and Sovereignty as an Orientation: History as Technology

History only appears to be a form of knowledge about the past. In truth, history serves to confirm a line between now and then that is not given in reality. The complementary relationship between history, politics and nature...goes deeper than mere agreement on dividing respective spheres of influence. History is constitutive of modern politics, constitutive of the kind of modern state that claims sovereignty for itself and the autonomy of individuals subject to nothing except their consciences and the laws of the physical universe. The prohibition on anachronism? It merely seems to be a principle of method by which historians secure the adequacy of their interpretation. In truth, the prohibition on anachronism defines the purpose which the discipline of history exists: to divide the reality of time into past and present.¹³⁴

As the word indicates, this tempest is eminently temporal.¹³⁵

Introduction

The primary task of this chapter is to develop the idea of sovereignty as an orientation that was introduced at the conclusion of Chapter 1. The chapter will demonstrate that sovereignty is an orientation that helps constitute political subjects, communities and the system they are located within and that this orientation brings them into relation with each other. It examines arguments from philosophy of history, historiography, and international political theory that illuminate the role sovereignty has played in the constitution of modern historical consciousness and modern political actors. The work of historian Constantin Fasolt and Medieval Studies scholar Kathleen Davis are especially significant because they help clarify how practices of writing history, especially periodization, are of particular importance in explaining how the modern idea of sovereignty emerged and continues to serve as the condition of possibility or foundation for modern political engagement and understandings, despite extensive critique and dissatisfaction. By establishing that sovereignty is an orientation, this chapter will provide the grounds for understanding why

¹³⁴ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. 13.

¹³⁵ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016), p. 11.

sovereignty and sovereign political subjectivity must be engaged with in order to effectively reorient political practices to address environmental degradation.

The chapter is divided into six sections that will make it clear why sovereignty should be thought of as an orientation. The first section discusses the idea of orientation, why it is a useful way to understand sovereignty, and how thinking of sovereignty as an orientation can be differentiated from a similar argument by Bartelson that sovereignty is a symbolic form. The second section develops the argument that the temporal dimensions of sovereignty are important in understanding the emergence of the modern individual and the sense of the 'present.' To do this, the section begins to examine the relationship between modern sovereignty and history as a form of knowledge or technology. The third section turns to the historical technique of periodization to show how it helps maintain sovereignty as the condition of possibility for the political in modernity. This section will also begin to examine how modern notions of progress have contributed to the problem of environmental degradation, although this will be revisited at length in Chapter 5. The fourth section focuses specifically on the medieval/modern periodization to further explain how historical techniques and historical thinking have enabled sovereignty to serve as the organizing framework, or orientation, of political modernity. This section also extends the argument that understandings of time help shape understandings of politics. Section five examines how sovereignty shaped the development of modern historical consciousness in political modernity and what this means for the study and practice of International Relations.¹³⁶ The final section of the chapter will consider what the temporal dimensions of sovereignty mean for the problem of environmental degradation, especially in terms of the temporal boundaries and limited political time horizon sovereignty helps constitute and re-inscribe in modernity.

¹³⁶ The arguments presented here will also be revisited more extensively in chapter 3.

Sovereignty as Orientation: Constituting the Constellation of the Political in Modernity

To orient something is to bring it into relation with and therefore explain its relation to other entities and concepts. Thinking of sovereignty as an orientation is useful because in understanding sovereignty as something that brings entities such as individuals and political communities into relations with each other and with concepts such as space and time, it is possible to account for the pervasive persistence of sovereignty, and for its apparent contingency that was examined in the last chapter. Sovereignty as orientation illuminates how sovereignty functions as a way of constituting and making sense of political communities and individuals by aligning them with certain understandings of space and time, and with each other. It is not merely a set of rules or practices that guide political interactions, it provides a constellation in which the political can be accessed or mediated. When sovereignty is viewed as an orientation how and why it has served as the grounds for political engagement, negotiation and association becomes clearer. The most significant points that sovereignty orients into a political constellation with each other are the political community of the state, the sovereign, individual subject, time disciplined into history and historical consciousness, and space or territory.

The idea of sovereignty as an orientation bears some similarities to Bartelson's argument that sovereignty should be thought of as a symbolic form.¹³⁷ According to Bartelson, "[a] symbolic form represents a perspective taken of an object rather than a representation of its essence" and symbolic forms are "[o]bjective, not by virtue of existing outside of time and space, but by virtue of being able to organize words and things into meaningful wholes and render these wholes accessible to knowledge."¹³⁸ Sovereignty is a symbolic form because it is the way that Westerners have organized and understood the political world in modernity because "sovereignty is a mode of objectivation that has been allowed to structure the production of both meaning and experience."¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*.

¹³⁸ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, pp. 14-15.

¹³⁹ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 15

While I would agree that sovereignty is the way in which the political has been organized by Westerners in modernity, my analysis differs from Bartelson's in key ways. Most significantly, Bartelson's understanding of sovereignty is broadly geometric, meaning both that he is focused on how sovereignty conditions the division of space or territory into bounded communities, and that his symbolic form is focused on the constitution and interactions of those bounded communities within a geometric template. He uses examples of the relationship between geometric forms and their constitution in the world, like triangles, to explain the relationship between the symbolic form of sovereignty and what it constitutes and organizes in the world, writing: "Even if all triangular objects in the world were to be destroyed, this would hardly affect the status and validity of the concept of a triangle. And conversely, even if all geometrical knowledge were erased from the human mind, this would hardly affect the triangular objects that already happen to exist in this world."¹⁴⁰ The function of sovereignty, then, is not to represent objects in the world like states, but to constitute them in accordance with a certain form or template of what a state should be.¹⁴¹ This is also his response to critiques of sovereignty that claim it is obsolete because it does not accurately represent the relationships between states in the international system. "To criticize the concept of sovereignty on the grounds of its lack of correspondence with the objects thus constituted would then be tantamount to criticizing the drawing of a building because of its mismatch with the end result."¹⁴² In this way, Bartelson is attempting to maintain that sovereignty is absolutely central to how the political world is organized and perceived, while accounting for any misalignments between the form of sovereignty and the character, behavior and constitution of sovereign communities as states-in the world. I would argue, however, that it is impossible to make sense of sovereignty without better accounting for its temporal dimensions. In that case, thinking of sovereignty as an orientation, instead of as a symbolic form, provides a fuller account of how sovereignty has constituted and organized the political world in modernity, and that it provides a

¹⁴⁰ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 16.

¹⁴¹ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 15

¹⁴² Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 15

better explanation for and response to critiques that identify a mismatch between understandings and practices of sovereignty and the international system and states within it that sovereignty organizes. This is primarily for two, interrelated reasons. The first is that part of understanding sovereignty as an orientation entails thinking of sovereignty as something that helps people to perceive and make sense of time, how they relate to it, and how orientations to time inform the constitution and location of political authority and community. Second, it is the temporal dimensions of sovereignty that help establish and maintain pervasive inequalities or hierarchies within the international system. A geometric or spatial understanding of sovereignty will always be insufficient on its own when it comes to explaining the division of territory into the bounded communities of states, the constitution of the subjects within them, or the relation between subjects, communities and system. Furthermore, paying attention to the temporal aspects of sovereignty makes it easier to understand inequalities and exclusions in the modern international system not as failures of the system or as a failure of principles of sovereignty to reflect the realities of the international system, but as a major part of its constitution. Therefore, the reality of the modern, sovereign international system can be apprehended not as a basically functioning system that has failed to deliver on some of its promise to ameliorate the problem of difference,¹⁴³ but as a system that functions exactly as its form would predict, and in ways that create problems which its form cannot contain or fix- environmental degradation being the example explored in this thesis.

That sovereignty plays an important role in understandings and divisions of political space is a commonplace idea within IR,¹⁴⁴ but the relationship between sovereignty and understandings of or orientations toward time is under-explored, although it is growing area of research in the

¹⁴³ I take the idea of 'the problem of difference' from Inayatullah, N. and Blaney, D. *International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004).

¹⁴⁴ See: Walker, R.B.J. 'The Doubled Outsides of the Modern International' in *Out of Line: Essays on the Politics of Boundaries the Limits of Modern Politics* by R.B.J. Walker (New York: Routledge Press, 2016) pp. 65-81 Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside*, Ruggie, J. G. 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,' *International Organization* 47:1 (1993) pp. 139-174.

discipline,¹⁴⁵ and time itself has long been an important political theme.¹⁴⁶ One of the primary arguments of this chapter is that practices of history and historical writing helped create and maintain political modernity predicated on sovereignty by mediating understandings of time, or providing a sense of time that was linear and progressive, at least for Europeans. The chapter will focus on the historical technique of periodization in particular, and the effect of the medieval/modern divide in helping to constitute and maintain a present-centric temporality of sovereignty, or a sense of politics tied to the present, that gives agency and status to some actors and communities at the expense of others. In this way, the chapter will begin to clarify how knowledge practices in history contribute to the creation and maintenance of political modernity and inequality within the modern international system. Understanding the orientation to time that historical practices or techniques co-constitute with sovereignty will help clarify the orientation of political subjectivity and political community in the political constellation of modernity. To do this, the chapter will first explain the idea of history as a form of technology that helps create a sense of the present. The chapter will then turn specifically to the technique of periodization and how it is more than just a conceptual tool to divide time into historical periods intelligible to analysis. The chapter will argue that in fact periodization is a technique that helps justify or locate sovereignty historically in such a way that it serves as a means to organize the modern political world into an international system comprised of states. It will also argue that the technique of periodization does this in part by constructing and imbricating inequalities between historical, modern subjects and ‘timeless’ pre-modern others. The chapter will then analyze the role modern historical consciousness, constituted through periodization and other historical practices, plays in IR. The next chapter will explore the

¹⁴⁵ See for example: Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, Davenport, A. ‘The International and the Limits of History’, *Review of International Studies*, 42:2 (2016) pp. 247-265, Inayatullah, N. and Blaney, D. *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics: Thinking the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), and Hom, A.R. ‘Hegemonic Metronome: The Ascendency of Western Standard Time,’ *Review of International Studies*, 36(4), 2010, pp. 1145-1170.

¹⁴⁶ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016), p. 6. Malm argues that while the concept of space has become fashionable or more pre-eminent in critical thought recently, time is, in critical theory at least, “the long-favoured dimension, the classical vessel of structure, causation, rupture, possibility.”

role that periodization plays in the practices and self-understanding of IR more extensively. Finally, the chapter will begin to consider the relationship between the temporality of sovereignty and environmental degradation, although this will be developed further in Chapter 4.

History as Technology: The Creation of the ‘Present’ and the Emergence of the Individual

In the past several decades, several historians, medieval studies scholars and postcolonial critics have increasingly been asking questions not so much about what happened in the past but about what the past and future are, where they come from, and whether the implications of these concepts might be more consequential than previously recognized.¹⁴⁷ How do we distinguish past from present? Does everyone distinguish it in the same way? Have they always? Finally, what does it mean if they do not and have not? In exploring these questions, certain themes and ideas have emerged, pointing to a sense that history is a sort of technology, the use or practice of which helped to develop a sense of modernity as both a sociopolitical form and as a period marked by a progressive understanding of time and a move away from a superstitious collective towards enlightened or civilized individual subjects. Time and temporality are mediated through history in political modernity, establishing a sense of past, present and future.¹⁴⁸ Part of the argument of this section, and chapter as a whole, is that sovereignty serves an orientating function in history as a form of knowledge and the understandings of time it establishes. This is because sovereignty helps

¹⁴⁷ See: Schiffman, Z. *The Birth of the Past* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), Chakrabarty, D. ‘Where is the Now?’ *Critical Inquiry*, 30:2 (2004) pp. 458-452, Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, Fasolt, C. ‘Breaking Up Time-Escaping from Time: Self-Assertion and Knowledge of the Past,’ in *Breaking Up Time: Negotiating the Borders Between Past, Present, and Future*, edited by Chris Lorenz and Berber Beverange (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), pp. 176-198, Koselleck, R. *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985/2004), Davis, K. and Altschul, N. (eds) *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of ‘the Middle Ages’ Outside Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), and Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*.

¹⁴⁸ Schiffman, Z. *The Birth of the Past*, pp. 1-16 See also: Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, pp. 7-8, Fasolt, C. ‘Breaking up Time-Escaping from Time: Self-Assertion and Knowledge of the Past,’ pp. 194-195, and Koselleck, R. *Futures Past*, especially ‘Modernity and the Planes of Historicity,’ pp. 9-25.

establish boundaries and divisions between people or political communities that are temporal as well as territorial.

The historian Constantin Fasolt has emerged in recent years as one of the most forceful articulators of the relationship between sovereignty, history, and political modernity, which has been receiving more and more recognition in IR.¹⁴⁹ Fasolt writes from the perspective of history as a discipline about what he thinks of as a revolt that occurred between roughly the 15th and 18th century in which humanists, legists and jurists were attempting to carve out different political space from that offered by the supposedly universal and timeless one claimed by political actors such as popes and emperors.¹⁵⁰ Fasolt is one of several thinkers whose work is concerned with how history as a discipline is approached or practiced, which leads to questions and concerns over what history is.¹⁵¹ In this literature, and most explicitly in Fasolt's work, history is a technology that is used to not just to explain the world that we live in, but to create and reproduce it. "It does not simply lie around like stones or apples, ready to be picked up by anyone who pleases. It must first be produced. It is the output that results (usually in the form of books) when historians (experts in the technology) perform a certain set of operations (collecting, reading, analyzing, comparing, writing, editing, publishing) upon a certain class of objects (writings, paintings, buildings, coins, ceramics) in order to gain knowledge of the past. History takes effort."¹⁵² This technology as we know and use it today was developed between the 15th and 18th century as a means of political resistance or revolt against actors, such as the pope or emperors and monarchs, who based their claims to authority on timelessness and universality.

These rulers claimed not only universality in space. They also claimed universality in time. Both emperor and pope insisted that they were in communion with eternity, and both sought

¹⁴⁹ Fasolt's work is cited by a growing list of IR scholars, including Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, Davenport, A. 'The International and the Limits of History', Bartelson, J. 'Sovereignty,' and Lundborg, T. 'The Limits of Historical Sociology: Temporal Borders and the Reproduction of the 'Modern' Political Present,' *European Journal of International Relations*, 22:1 (2016), pp. 99-121.

¹⁵⁰ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, pp. 16-25.

¹⁵¹ See: Schiffman, Z. *The Birth of the Past*, Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, Holsinger, B. *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), Biddick, K. *The Shock of Medievalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

¹⁵² Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. xiv.

to embody the past as though it had endured over the centuries without change. They founded their authority on a deliberate anachronism that only a modern point of view can construe as an error in historical methodology. The empire and the papacy knew the distance in time between themselves and antiquity. But they judged it with a different measure from the one historians use. To charge them with failure to understand the course of historical events, as though they were schoolboys who had not listened to their master, is misleading. They were themselves the masters. If they did not appreciate history as modern people do, and never did succeed in building modern states, it was at least in part because that was not their ambition. Anachronism was built into the foundation of their government, a source of their authority, a means of enabling them to draw legitimacy from texts that dated from antiquity and bore the traces of an alien civilization.¹⁵³

Certain understandings have been rendered as natural or given by the practices of history, especially the idea that anachronism is error, and that everything must be placed in the context of its time. But, “[I]n truth, the prohibition on anachronism defines the purpose for which the discipline of history exists: to divide the reality of time into past and present,”¹⁵⁴ and this division in the reality of time helps create a ‘present’ that is free from or not answerable to the past. Fasolt is not alone in arguing that the sense of anachronism has been constructed through practices, and that something being out of its ‘correct’ placement in time is a relatively recent development that can be used as a political tool.¹⁵⁵ He makes a powerful argument here and elsewhere that the way historians break up (or periodize) the past and study it is a metaphysical endeavor that helps constitute and shape a certain reality or understanding of reality.¹⁵⁶ What the above indicates is that, as a result of the way history is done and used to understand the past, ‘modern’ people now think of actors who claimed their authority and power as result of an unbroken temporal continuity with antiquity as foolish or mistaken because the reading of evidence (or the operation of historical technology) does not support their claims. The difference between how people think about the past as a result of the understandings that the practices of history provide for them, and that these actors with a different

¹⁵³ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p.17.

¹⁵⁴ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p.13.

¹⁵⁵ Hutchings makes a similar point when she discusses how there is a tendency amongst political theorists to assume that there is one world-political time, and therefore to dismiss any temporal plurality they might encounter as anachronism, rather than as a legitimately different way of experiencing or understanding time and history. This point will be developed further below. Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, p. 126. See also: Schiffman, Z. *The Birth of the Past*, pp.1-16, Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, and Leslie, M. ‘In Defense of Anachronism,’ *Political Studies*, 18:4 (1970) pp. 433-447.

¹⁵⁶ Fasolt, C. ‘Breaking up Time-Escaping from Time,’ pp. 194-195.

understanding of the past is not that they were (or are) naïve, foolish or mistaken, but that they had different goals in terms of what understandings of the past offered them, and different ways of being in the world than those enabled by modern historical technology and the political conditions it helps to constitute and is situated within.¹⁵⁷ This interpretation of actors with different ways of understanding the past and time as mistaken, foolish, or backward has pernicious effects that will be unpacked more further below, but what is important to understand at this point is that that while ‘modern’ people now understand the past and, by contrast, the present in certain ways and through certain means, those understandings are the result of particular moves and modes of interpretation that are neither natural or inevitable. The way this type of history mediates the past was made, not given. Any understanding of a failure on the part of pre or non-modern actors and societies not to be or work to become ‘modern’ is a matter of judging them on terms different from their own. There are reasons that people judge from the vantage points that they do, and those vantage points are not objective but rather the results of largely successful moves to inculcate certain ways of seeing and understanding the world. This in itself is suggestive of the ways that the technology of history constrains the ability of people within political modernity to think beyond the limits or scope that it provides.

While the quote above refers to figures such as popes and emperors who staked claims to legitimacy based on different temporal understandings, the approach or technology in the operation of history constructs readings and understandings of peoples and situations now that prevent them from being recognized as legitimate. For example, when indigenous communities in Canada who

¹⁵⁷ This argument bears some similarities to Michael Williams’ analysis of Hobbes understanding of the importance of knowledge practices to the creation and maintenance of sovereignty, sovereign order, and sovereign subjects after the collapse of the traditional order of Christendom. “A central goal of Hobbes’ state of nature is to demonstrate to individuals (in a context dominated by the Thirty Years War and the English Civil War) the importance of the relationship between knowledge claims, political authority and social peace. A return to the state of nature is a metaphor (and a warning) illuminating the dynamics of social conflict arising from the absence of both cultural consensus and a sovereign authority to fix meanings, determine contested facts and the like....Hobbes seeks to convince individuals of the need for sovereign authority and the need to obey it. Moreover, he seeks to provide a rational foundation for political authority that would supplant the now unstable and unsustainable beliefs of traditional political authorities.” Williams, M.C. ‘The Hobbesian Theory of International Relations: three traditions,’ in *Classical Theory in International Relations*, edited by Beate Jahn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 257.

were dispossessed of the lands they used to occupy have brought claims against the state in Canada's legal system, they have faced the problem that the oral histories and traditions that they rely on to express their identity and understanding of its history in order to demonstrate their claims to land have been devalued and dismissed for lacking the scientific and objective qualities "good" evidence requires.¹⁵⁸ This is an issue revisited below and in the next chapter, but the problem here is that the historical technology we have operates in such a way as to render people and understandings outside of its limitations as inadequate and illegitimate. Reading alternative understandings of the world and the past through a lens that holds that only evidence of certain types, collected and verified in particular ways can establish claims stacks the odds against finding ways to recognize and negotiate differences that are not exclusive by definition and necessity.

Developing history as a technology used to understand the past and its relation to the present in certain ways also helped to create or develop the kinds of actors able to assert themselves over the present.¹⁵⁹ Understanding the past through this kind of history involves relying on evidence,

¹⁵⁸ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, 116-117. The *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia* decision of 2014 is a landmark case where (partial) aboriginal title to traditional lands was finally recognized after over a decade of litigation and appeals to stop the government of British Columbia from issuing logging permits for Tsilhqot'in land without their permission. The case in question only settles disputes relating to less than 2% of Tsilhqot'in land, and one of the major ongoing difficulties for the Tsilhqot'in and other indigenous groups in Canada is that in order for them to protect their lands they have to prove in court that they have a legitimate title to it. This involves proving that they had full occupation of the land at the time Canadian sovereignty was established. Junger, R., Young, J. and Ryan B. 'Supreme Court declares Aboriginal Title in Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia,' *McMillan Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, (2014), pp. 1-8. This means that indigenous groups must use the court system of the state to challenge the state's sovereign claims, and that they must adapt to that state court system's definition of evidence and land title in order to do so, which has placed them at a disadvantage when it comes to trying to protect their traditional lands because of a plurality of understandings about land possession rights or the meaning of occupation.

¹⁵⁹ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p.223-224. To make this point, Fasolt examines the work of Hermann Conring, a 17th century German intellectual and professor whose work on history and politics helps reveal the changes in European thought regarding both, or what Fasolt terms the historical revolt. To show the modern relationship between history as a form of knowledge and the 'science of politics' Fasolt quotes Conring: "History is only a guide to the stricter sciences. Its delights depend on the arts and sciences it serves. To grasp history's delicious fruits is therefore not given to everyone. Only those can do it who know by their own talent how to abstract general laws and universal principles from individual events, or have learned to do so from their teachers. Once the principles are known, experiments are all it takes to arrive at absolute knowledge of reality." The point of this understanding of history is not to portray the past as it actually happened, but to use production of knowledge about the past to create certain understandings of the present. Of Conring's arguments about history and politics Fasolt writes: "They presuppose a temporal perspective, a clear awareness of the difference between what is now and what was then, and an unbending will to turn that difference to contemporary purpose by dissociating ancient law from universal truth and by subjecting law to the responsibility of individual human agents reacting on grounds of morality and nature to

textual or otherwise, in order to decide what is and is not legitimate. The evidence used to reconstruct the past on these grounds is the product of someone's agency or of relations between people in which some possess more agency than others. It has been created through writing or other workmanship (in the case of artifacts such as paintings, music, and buildings). Someone is responsible for it through their labor or their resources. This is not a point to be overlooked or simply accepted as a fact. This understanding of how evidence is produced is a part of the production of our understanding of modern, free individuals. If history comes to us through the actions of individuals and groups, in this way of seeing the world individuals become responsible for the creation of history in the present through their freedom.

Historical perspective permitted humanists to offer an interpretation of authorities like the Bible and Roman law that was not merely new or better but of a different kind: interpretation with reference to time that viewed a text as the result of human agency, distinguished one time from another, and made that difference the principle of its approach. They changed the order of the world. Equipped with objectivity, they relegated medieval universalism so firmly to the past that one can barely speak of it today without provoking suspicions of heresy, treason, or irrelevance. They put the faith in evidence so firmly into place that things unrecorded and unrecordable seem to have lost all chance of gaining recognition. They won what has to count as one of the more one-sided victories in the long line of humanity's attempts to remake the world in its own image.¹⁶⁰

This change in the order of the world involves a shift towards viewing history as a progressive march through time and seeing the modern world as comprised of autonomous, free individuals that can exert themselves to shape the time that they are in or occupy.

This is not an argument for intentionality or invention on the part of the humanists or others. They did not set out to create the world anew and would not have acknowledged doing so. Rather, they were actors that Fasolt explicitly argues staked their claims on, and, more importantly, believed that they were keeping faith with the true meanings of evidence like texts and historical records that could provide bases for argument and authority that conferred greater legitimacy on

the particular and purely accidental circumstances of their times. They constitute a great 'not so!' to the universal claims of the Roman empire and a resounding 'yes!' to the sovereignty of states over politics and individuals over themselves. They sum up the essence of the historical revolt." This way of understanding, or producing knowledge of history and politics and the relation between them helped to constitute sovereign states, sovereign individuals and practices of politics in modernity.

¹⁶⁰ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, pp. 21-22

those who wielded them. It also created new political possibilities. This involved offering contending interpretations of evidence, but also of temporalities. The provision of alternative accounts of the progression of time and its meaning served to introduce the idea of alternative *ways of being* in the world.

By exploding the temporal unity of the period from ancient times to the present, the humanists changed truths that had enjoyed apparently unshakeable permanence into mere antiquities. They transformed things that seemed self-evidently true into things of the past that were henceforth impossible to know without a special effort. They demoted the universal power of the pope and emperor from present experience to an aspect of history that had to be judged by means of evidence. Exploiting that potential inherent in altering temporal perspectives was their greatest accomplishment.¹⁶¹

Fasolt's humanists were introducing a new temporality that laid claim to the present as a site of power. By advancing arguments that rulers like the pope and emperor, and the orders that they embodied, represented a vision of time that was universal, sacred and, by extension, removed from the everyday experiences of those governed by that order they were also able to proffer the alternative vision of power that was located in and concerned with the present. Rather than a world where questions of power and politics were deferred into a sacred future, denying all but the most elite, and arguably semi-divine figures (such as the pope and emperor) access to power and politics, the humanists were helping to construct a world in which it is the future that is deferred in favor of the present. Such a move grants access to power and politics to a different level of actor, and provides ground for the development of different, effective political forms smaller than universal empires but larger than heavily localized communities, namely, states. Lesser princes can become sovereign rulers in units within a territory once those units are bounded temporally to the present. When the now matters, those who are able to wield power effectively at its site begin to matter more than those whose authority and sites of power are located in a distant, abstracted time.

In this way of seeing the world, modern, sovereign political subjects are free individuals that exists within historical time and are responsible, as a result of their freedom, for the creation of history in the present. A part of this freedom consists in freedom from the past and future; the

¹⁶¹ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. 20.

modern actor is tethered to the present. In terms of the future, this is because the prospective time horizons that actors must deal with are limited.¹⁶² They are free and responsible actors, but part of that freedom comes from the limited temporal scope of their responsibility; they are responsible for the present, and political cooperation or plans that address problems extending into the future, like environmental issues, are beyond the scope of their responsibility. This agent (who is also a subject of sovereign, free authority) is part of the process of reproducing and sustaining a world in which the onus of freedom is placed on individuals. They are burdened by freedom in part because they are not expected to answer to past or future actors but also cannot ask past or future actors to answer to them. Essentially, the modern, free actor is not asked to be responsible beyond their own present (or death), and cannot hold another modern, free actor responsible beyond their own temporal horizon either.¹⁶³ In this way, modern, sovereign subjects who flourish in territorially *and* temporally sovereign states are exactly unprepared, and unable to prepare for the whims *fortuna*, in Machiavellian terms, because their temporal freedom limits their ability to exercise *virtu*, in the sense of planning for the future.¹⁶⁴ This is an oppressive kind of freedom in that it limits the possibilities for collective action and makes it difficult to address problems that extend beyond the centrality of the present, like environmental degradation.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Fasolt *The Limits of History*, p.7. This is an important point in relation to environmental degradation. The prospect of climate change driven by greenhouse gas emissions related to industrialization raises debates about intergenerational responsibility. The effects of past emissions are beginning to be felt now, whereas emissions released now will intensify problems for the future, making it difficult to assess responsibility over time, or as Malm puts it “The person who harms others by burning fossil fuels cannot even potentially encounter his victims, because they do not yet exist. Living in the here and now, he reaps all the benefits from the combustion but few of the injuries, which will be suffered by people who are not around and cannot voice their opposition. Each generation...faces a perverse incentive to ‘pass the buck’ to the next, which also profits from its own fossil fuel combustion while dodging the pain from it, and so on, in a vicious cycle of infliction of harm.” Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, p. 8.

¹⁶³ Fasolt, ‘Breaking up Time-Escaping from Time,’ pp. 194-195.

¹⁶⁴ Machiavelli, N. *The Prince*, edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), see chapter 25 What Fortune Can Effect in Human Affairs, and How to Withstand Her, especially where *Fortuna* is described as a river in flood. Here, *virtu* is the ability to prepare for the flood.

¹⁶⁵ This is especially true in terms of cutting carbon emissions. The impact of emissions is cumulative, meaning that the longer we wait to curb emissions the greater the consequences will be and the more extreme measures will need to be taken to eliminate carbon emissions. Estimates vary, but we may have between 7 to 20 years to bring carbon emissions down to zero and still have a hope of stopping warming beyond 2 degrees Celsius (the threshold it is generally agreed where conditions would still be relatively safe and stable). If

Again, Fasolt's actors did not view themselves as trying to impose particular understandings of the past in order to justify their present political positions, and indeed there is a tendency amongst some historians to write about the works of these actors as the "discovery" of a feudal past in the different countries and eras that they were concerned with. This is a practice that was effectively brought to the attention of contemporary generations of Medievalists through the work of historians such as Elizabeth Brown in her article "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe"¹⁶⁶ which laid the groundwork for historians to question if there was a feudal past to discover, or a feudal history that was created. The latter is effectively argued by historians by tracing the work of several 16th century jurists reading the same and similar sets of documents within a body of texts known as the *libri feudorum* to make their arguments and draw their conclusions, which often differed greatly depending upon the perspective that they were examining the evidence from and the political positions that they wished to confirm.¹⁶⁷ This reading into the past, again, does not have to be intentional. It is a practice that reflects the human element of politics and its relationship to the technology of history where people shape and are shaped by the context that they are operating within in a continuous, dialogical process. Over time, this process produces and reproduces ways of understanding and acting that may seem natural or given, but are still reflections or manifestations of the technological operations of history.

The Historical Technique of Periodization: More than 'Making Sense' of Time and History

As noted above, Fasolt's work is amongst a growing number of those concerned with what it means to do history and what the impact of the practices of history are. Sovereignty is at the

emissions are brought down steadily over the course of that time, the changes may not be so onerous, but the longer they are delayed the more extreme and disruptive they will have to be. See: Anderson, K. 'Climate Change Going Beyond Dangerous: Brutal Numbers and Tenuous Hope,' *Development Dialogue*, 61:3 (2012), pp. 16-40, Stocker, T. 'The Closing Door of Climate Targets,' *Science*, 339 (2013), pp. 280-282, and Mooney, C. 'New Climate Change Calculations Could Buy the Earth Some time- If They're Right,' *The Washington Post*, September 18, 2017.

¹⁶⁶Brown, E.A.R. 'The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe,' *The American Historical Review*, 79:4 (1974), pp. 1063-1088.

¹⁶⁷ See especially: Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty* and Reynolds, S. *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

center of these concerns because they directly¹⁶⁸ or indirectly¹⁶⁹ explore how the technology of history maintains sovereignty as the condition of possibility for the political in the modern world. These works by historians attempting to trace the limits and relationship between the political and our understanding and practices of history are extremely important to understand what history itself is and what it does to help create political modernity. This section will examine one of the most consequential historical techniques, periodization.

In *Periodization and Sovereignty* Kathleen Davis argues that the current political order and the form of the modern state are grounded upon an act of periodization that divides the medieval and the modern world and translates particular, European experiences into global categories and politics.¹⁷⁰ This periodization is “[n]ot simply the drawing of an arbitrary line through time, but a complex process of conceptualizing categories, which are posited as homogenous and retroactively validated by the designation of a period divide,”¹⁷¹ which “[v]alidates the global application of narrowly conceived definitions of political forms.”¹⁷² Davis traces the historiography of sovereignty and the state during the sixteenth century to reveal its political dimensions and the role that periodization has played in substituting for a foundation for conceptualizations of sovereignty. The periodizing move is an attempt to justify the political form of the state that depoliticizes, or removes it from processes of contestation, by constructing an understanding of the structure of the medieval world the modern state has emerged from. This is managed through the promulgation of the medieval/modern categories in which sovereignty, the social contract and subjection were theorized based off of the lord and vassal of feudal relations, which in turn allowed theorists such as Jean Bodin to maintain the social contract when arguing for absolutism, while at the same time rejecting the “feudal” because of its association with subjugation and slavery. As Davis explains,

¹⁶⁸ See: Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*.

¹⁶⁹ See: Holsinger, B. *The Premodern Condition*, pp. 51-42, Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now*, especially pp.16-24. Dinshaw’s discussion of the modern concept of ‘now’ and medieval/modern periodization is particularly illuminating in terms of understanding how the production of knowledge in academic or intellectual spheres creates and reinforces experiences of the world.

¹⁷⁰ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, pp.3-5.

¹⁷¹ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p.3.

¹⁷² Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p.5.

At the very moment the colonial slave trade began to soar, in other words, feudal law and slavery were grouped together and identified as characteristic of Europe's past and a non-European present. To this history we owe the later, persistent association of the Middle Ages with subjugation, as well as the role of the Middle Ages as the enabling figure of exclusion in much philosophical and political thought.¹⁷³

The "medieval" is associated with the irrational, regressive, superstitious, and brutal. More importantly, it is associated with the past, thus when contemporary people are labeled "medieval" they are "[b]anned from the story and relegated to the past."¹⁷⁴ This 'denial of coevalness,'¹⁷⁵ casts people out of history or modernity to the past where oppression and slavery belong, even when these practices exist contemporaneously. Susan Buck-Morss writes about the colonial slave trade that propped up the economies of Western Europe at the same time that Enlightenment thinkers were trumpeting man's inalienable right to freedom.¹⁷⁶ Enlightenment figures such as Rousseau declared their abhorrence of slavery in theory but ignored its practice, which underwrote the societies that they were living in.¹⁷⁷ As noted above, slavery had become associated with the past, despite the fact that the institution was very much a part of their present. 'Temporal othering'¹⁷⁸ causes slavery and oppression to belong to pre-modernity, a time of feudal oppression which makes it difficult to acknowledge or confront contemporary instances of practices associated with that pre-modernity. This does not mean that contemporaries of Rousseau or other Enlightenment figures did not recognize and oppose slavery, but rather that the language and understanding that surrounded (and surrounds) practices such as slavery treat it as a hold-over or visitation from the past instead of something that reflects lived, current realities that can and should be confronted and dealt with. Slavery was a growing practice in European colonies at the same time enlightened calls for the freedom and recognition of all men were gaining force in Europe;¹⁷⁹ feudalism, closely associated

¹⁷³ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p.24.

¹⁷⁴ Buck-Morss, S. 'Hegel and Haiti,' *Critical Inquiry*, 26:4 (2002), p. 850.

¹⁷⁵ Fabian, J. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 31.

¹⁷⁶ Buck-Morss, S. 'Hegel and Haiti,' pp. 821-822.

¹⁷⁷ Buck-Morss, S. 'Hegel and Haiti,' pp. 830-831.

¹⁷⁸ Prozorov, S. 'The Other as Past and Present: Beyond the Logic of 'Temporal Othering' in IR Theory.' *Review of International Studies*, 37:3 (2011) pp.1273-1293.

¹⁷⁹ Buck-Morss, S. 'Hegel and Haiti,' p. 831.

with slavery in the European political imagination, had just been ‘discovered,’ and the universal enlightenment ideals being promoted in Europe were not extended to the people who were actually being enslaved at the same moment in time. The actual practice of slavery could not be allowed to exist in the early modern European ‘present’; it was written out of the contemporary story and ‘relegated to the past.’ Where enslavement and other oppressive practices have occurred since that time their existence has been attributed to the pre-modern, medieval conditions that allows those practices and the people that engage in and suffer from them to be viewed as not a part of the world and its current history.¹⁸⁰ “With the conversion of space into time, the constructed temporal backwardness of the savage is equated with the imagined temporal origins of the European self...the spatially distant other is thereby converted into a temporally prior self.”¹⁸¹ European history has become a world history of progression through time, moving towards modernity and freedom, whereas the Middle Ages, as it was constructed in Europe, again “[i]s a mobile category , applicable at any time to any society that has not “yet” achieved modernity or, worse, has become retrograde.”¹⁸² This constructed periodization is an exclusionary force that denies people access to the present and confers on them an alterity that serves to preclude engagement with the powerful or the modern. They can then more easily become subjected to the machinations of the powerful, rather than viewed as cohorts, because they are living out of time and are not subject to or beneficiaries of modernity. When something is labeled as medieval, backwards or uncivilized it can be ignored and excluded from the world. The medieval/modern divide still has this power, where

¹⁸⁰ Jahn discusses this in terms of the temporal fragmentation of liberalism. She argues that Locke, in order to persuade people that a liberal political system based on private property was good for everyone, rather than just a small class of propertied elites, presented “the historically specific interests of a small group of his contemporaries in private property, individual freedom, and government by consent as *natural* principles of human life.” He did this by interpreting “features of contemporaneous indigenous communities as expressions of these principles [of a pre-modern state of nature]; he then produces a composite picture of a society made up of these elements and finally presents this society as ‘a Pattern of the first Ages’ of human social life- that is, a society in the state of nature.” This effectively relegates contemporaneous communities outside of historical time in order to establish and justify the conditions for a modern system of political liberalism. Jahn, B. *Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 53. The next chapter will look more directly at the influence of this temporal fragmentation on IR as a discipline, and what it means for the study and practice of modern politics.

¹⁸¹ Inayatullah, N. and Blaney, D. *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, p.56

¹⁸² Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 5.

people are excluded from modernity and more susceptible to exploitation or subjugation because they are not part of the modern narrative.¹⁸³ The designation of indigenous groups as uncivilized or savage was used as a pre-text to justify colonialism,¹⁸⁴ of course, but these exclusions persist in terms of trying to deny indigenous groups collective rights of self-determination or access to traditional lands. The designation of ‘backwards’, indigenous or traditional cultures and cultural practices are sometimes identified as barriers to development that in turn justify interference or exploitation by more developed, progressive states.¹⁸⁵ Naming someone or some group as medieval or backwards is an inherently exclusionary, often oppressive move because, as Dipesh Chakrabarty asks: “[C]an the designation of something or some group as non or premodern ever be anything but a gesture of the powerful?”¹⁸⁶ Moreover, this division or designation is an operation of sovereignty, as sovereignty relies on the exclusion of people or groups that exist or move through the world in a different or non-modern way.

This move invalidates difference, which, along with excluding people, curtails explorations of alternatives modes of doing, being, or organizing. This creates a barrier to re-conceptualizing political communities or political relations because:

[B]y providing a singular point of departure, a global “medieval” past anchors this homogenization of cultural forms. More specifically, this singularized point of departure validates the global application of narrowly conceived definitions of political forms—such as modern democracy, feudal (or “rogue”) states, and “secular” government—the limits of which have been formulated through the periodization of the medieval and the modern.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ See: Jahn, B. *Liberal Internationalism*, especially pp. 56-60, Williams, D. and Young, T. ‘Governance, the World Bank and Liberal Theory,’ *Political Studies*, 42:1 (1994) pp. 84-100.

¹⁸⁴ Jahn, B. *Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 60-70. Jahn argues that the tensions inherent in liberalism meant that the creation of liberal sovereign states based on property rights depended on colonial expansion.

¹⁸⁵ Williams, D. and Young, T. ‘Governance, the World Bank and Liberal Theory,’ pp. 84-100. Postcolonial critics draw attention to the enduring hypocrisies of the international system in which some cultures, societies or states are labelled as backwards for certain practices, even when those same issues of corruption plague ‘modern’ developed governments as well. Scholars such as Biswas have also interrogated practices of designating some countries as too underdeveloped or irresponsible for nuclear programs, for example, despite manifest irresponsibility on the part of ‘modern’ and responsible states already in possession of such weapons. Biswas, S. “‘Nuclear Apartheid’ as Political Position: Race as a Postcolonial Resource?” *Alternatives*, 26:4 (2001) pp. 485-522.

¹⁸⁶ Chakrabarty, D. *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. xi-xx

¹⁸⁷ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 5.

This matters not just because of the injustices associated with ‘temporal othering’ that can serve as a pretext for excluding people because they are somehow outside of modernity, like members of indigenous communities, but also because of the growth of transnational problems like environmental degradation that might demand new conceptualizations of political relations and communities. Some might argue that the order established in political modernity, in part through the use of politicized historiography to justify a sovereign international system that is sometimes unjust towards weaker members and excluded groups, has more benefits than harms because order must be maintained for justice to ever be possible.¹⁸⁸ However, if the international order of political modernity itself contributes to the problem of environmental degradation and acts as a barrier to imagining political alternatives it then becomes a source of *disorder* that needs to be problematized. Whether and to what extent sovereignty in political modernity mitigated conflicts over difference in an anarchical international system becomes less important than whether or not the modern political world that sovereignty has constituted and shaped is capable of meeting a challenge of global concern like environmental degradation.

Environmental degradation poses a further challenge to the persistent argument that the modern international system, which developed and expanded in tandem with colonialism, has been a net benefit for the world, and that therefore the power imbalances that attend the system were and are justifiable, despite critiques by post-structural and postcolonial critics that question or impugn them.¹⁸⁹ As more work is done on the history of industrially driven climate change, it becomes clear

¹⁸⁸ Bull, H. *The Anarchical Society*. p. 83

¹⁸⁹ Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, 2012, especially pp. 214-233. Hobson has done a particularly good job of tracing the tendency in international theory to ‘whitewash’ international imperialism and colonial expansion, or Eurocentrism more broadly, as having done more good than harm. His discussion of members of the English School’s habit of portraying imperial expansion as an overall good that helped spread European institutions and norms, despite some moral failings and drawbacks, is especially instructive and will be taken up more in the next chapter. For contemporary examples of explicit apologies for imperialism and colonialism see, if you must, Gilley, B. ‘The Case for Colonialism’ *Third World Quarterly*, (2017), Gilley, B. ‘Chinua Achebe of the Positive Legacies of Colonialism,’ *African Affairs*, 115:461 (2016) pp. 646-663, Ferguson, N., *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York, Penguin Books, 2011)- a defence, if not celebration, of Western imperialism and colonialism is a running theme in Ferguson’s work, as well as in his public/media comments. See: Cotterill, P. ‘Niall Ferguson’s Ignorant Defence of British Rule in India’ *New Statesman*, August 16, 2012.

that Western modernity and the spread of empire underwritten by growing use of fossil fuels has much to answer for in terms of both the dangerous concentrations of carbon in the atmosphere now, as well as a global economy predicated on continued fossil fuel consumption.¹⁹⁰ Environmental degradation explodes the temporality of the modern present and calls notions like ‘progress’ and ‘civilization’ into question as we see the accumulating consequences of past ‘progress’ predicated on fossil fuel consumption:

From this historical standpoint, climate change is not so much a surprising reversal of fortunes as a *lifting of the veil* on two centuries of fossil capital- which is, of course, the literal meaning of the Greek word *apokalyptein*. The truth has been hidden from view; the present moment reveals the meaning of what has been going on for a long time. Benjamin’s angel of history ‘sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at its feet’; Theodor Adorno concurs- ‘normality is death’- but emphasises that the eternity of horror ‘manifests itself in the fact that each new form outdoes the old. What is constant is not an invariable quantity of suffering, but its progress towards hell: *that is the meaning of the thesis of the intensification of antagonism.*’ From the very start, at the very smallest scale- in the hot factory, the smoky street, the mine laden with explosives- there emerged a pattern- some swept away by the storm we call progress, others sailing to their fortunes-subsequently magnified and iterated on progressively larger scales, until climate scientists discovered it in the biosphere as a whole, where the self-similar storm now spirals on. Every impact of climate change unfolds a fraction of that hitherto folded past.¹⁹¹

Environmental degradation and climate change are re-writing history that heretofore told a story of progress and development following from the spread of European ideals and technologies in the modern, industrial age.¹⁹² As sea levels and temperatures rise, droughts and storms intensify, ecosystems collapse and health risks from climate change proliferate,¹⁹³ it becomes even more difficult to tell the story of modernity as a forward march of progress, from a medieval, backwards, superstitious past to an enlightened, rational present. Given the accumulation of carbon in the

¹⁹⁰ See: Paterson, M. and Newell, P. *Climate Capitalism: Global Warming and the Transformations of the Global Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, and Chakrabarty, D. ‘Climate and Capital: On Conjoined Histories,’ *Critical Inquiry*, 41:1 (2014) pp. 1-23.

¹⁹¹ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, p. 393. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁹² The idea of an unsettled past that is called into question by the present can be found in a range of thinkers, see: Fasolt, C. ‘Breaking Up Time,’ pp. 176-196, Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, p. 6., Benjamin, W. ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History,’ in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 245-246. Benjamin further makes the point here that past’s claim on the present “cannot be settled cheaply.”

¹⁹³ World Health Organization. ‘Climate Change and Health’ *World Health Organization Fact Sheet* (2017), accessed at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs266/en/>. The WHO estimates that between 2030 and 2050 climate change will cause an additional 250,000 deaths per year from pollution, heat stress, the spread of mosquito and tick-borne illnesses and natural disasters.

atmosphere-driven by industrialization in the 19th century and phenomena like modern transportation technology, food production and the growth of consumer consumption patterns-and the consequences of that carbon concentration for the environmental stability that human life depends on- the societies or civilizations that continue to predicate their way of life on carbon energy sources or deny that there is a problem seem positively backwards, irrational, or unenlightened.¹⁹⁴

Medieval/Modern Periodization as a Means of Enabling Sovereignty

This section works to extend the analysis that understandings of time and the temporal dimensions of sovereignty orient political relations between and among subjects and communities in such a way that they entrench inequalities between those designated as modern and those excluded from modernity. This is important to understand because the next three chapters will argue that the inequalities attendant to the modern, sovereign international system make it incapable of addressing the problems of environmental degradation adequately. In *The Problem of Difference*, Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney argue that “[r]eason dictates sovereignty as a spatial solution to the problem of moral and religious uncertainty; power is spatialized in the state, thereby transforming a dangerous diversity of individual opinions and wills into a sovereign opinion and will.”¹⁹⁵ By this reading, while the advent of modern sovereign states have sometimes been touted as the means to ameliorate religious and political conflicts over differences that plagued the pre-modern world, they are instead part of strategy to defer, deny and suppress difference. Religious and political differences were constructed or interpreted as problems or sources of conflict, but Inayatullah and Blaney contest the inevitability of this. The dominant interpretation of the supposed

¹⁹⁴ Though of course it is not only modern Europeans or Westerners that continue to rely on fossil fuels or actively contribute to the problems of environmental degradation, to deny the outsized role of wealthier societies and states in creating the conditions for crisis is impossible. The progress of Western civilization is turning in on itself, and the conspicuous consumption patterns of wealthy elites, even when they are not Western themselves, are modelled on a Western (primarily American) way of life or standard of living. Masco, J. ‘Crisis in Crisis,’ p. S72, Malm, A., *Fossil Capital*, p. 390. This line of thought will be taken up more extensively in Chapters 4 and 5.

¹⁹⁵ Inayatullah, N. and Blaney, D. *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, p. 36.

medieval period in Europe is that it was a feudal society riven by religious conflicts. This interpretation holds that these conflicts only ended with the move towards throwing off the constraints of feudal law and establishing sovereign states so that religious differences would not inexorably lead to violence between communities and that people within states might be better able to pursue their notion of the good life without the hierarchy and oppression of a feudal order. As alluded to above, this historical narrative is questionable, or the result of suspect interpretations. The European medieval world was far more multifarious in terms of governing structures and property relations than the typical narrative surrounding feudalism acknowledges.¹⁹⁶ Davis and others argue that it is the culmination of political moves made not by ‘medieval’ persons but by mainly by sixteenth century jurists such as Charles de Moulin and Francois Hotman.¹⁹⁷ Throughout surviving medieval documents, mostly found in the *libri feudorum* referred to above, there are some references to the idea of fiefs and vassalage and an academic law of fiefs, but it was not the structure of medieval society. Feudalism did not govern the customary practices or laws relating to property in what is considered the medieval period,¹⁹⁸ and indeed feudalism as an organizing system for society did not exist as such until it was created by sixteenth and seventeenth century scholars to ‘organize the past and provide arguments for the present so that ideas about it gradually spread to the public.’¹⁹⁹ Those ‘arguments for the present’ that historian Susan Reynolds refer to still reverberate today in our understanding of what it means to be ‘medieval’, both in the past and in the present. Those arguments were developed in the pursuit of the legal origins of Europe, as a

¹⁹⁶ Reynolds, S. *Fiefs and Vassals*, especially pp.1-15. Reynolds’ work calls into question understandings of feudalism and medieval law and property relations which underpin how the medieval world is viewed. She examines several different medieval kingdoms to provide a fuller and more complicated portrait of the ‘medieval period,’ and shows that much of the way that the middle ages in Europe is understood is the result of later scholars and jurists constructing narratives and understandings of the time to serve their own political ends.

¹⁹⁷ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, especially Chapter 1, ‘Sovereign Subjects, Feudal Law, and the Writing of History,’ pp. 23-50. See also: Reynolds, S. *Fiefs and Vassals*. Davis’ argument here also echoes that of Fasolt, although he tends to focus on ‘early modern’ historians, whereas she examines the role of jurists, usually working on behalf of princes or political rulers.

¹⁹⁸ Reynolds, S. *Fiefs and Vassals*, p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ Reynolds, S. *Fiefs and Vassals*, p. 7.

means to try and locate sovereignty.²⁰⁰ The difficulty, if not futility, of this project arose out of the ‘sovereign paradox’ in which, again, the sovereign is both inside and outside the law as “he who decides the exception.”²⁰¹ Because the possibility of a ‘state of exception’ in which the autonomy or existence of the state might be threatened by its own legal order and norms always exists, someone must be empowered to decide on the exception which may require the suspension of an existing legal order to preserve the state itself. Therefore, there can be no ‘location’ of sovereignty in any legal foundation, if the logic of the sovereign requires that he or she be willing and able to suspend any such legal order in which sovereignty might be based for reasons of state.²⁰² The solution to this problem, in as much as a solution was possible, was to ‘identify’ feudal relations as the basis for sovereignty, despite the fact that those relations were not identified so much as created through the highly politicized interpretation of select historical documents and sources that jurists such as Du Moulin and Hotman employed to justify the state and align with their agenda.²⁰³

Earlier in the chapter it was noted that periodization is posited as a method of making sense of history over long periods of time by historians,²⁰⁴ supposedly when significant ruptures or discontinuities in understandings of and approaches to the world have been identified. For Davis, however, periodization is not an innocent or natural act, and it is not simply a dividing line through time that makes it easier to grapple with the past or changes over time; it governs our understanding of the past and shapes our conceptions of history and historical events.

The extent to which we grant an existential status to such periodization by fiat depends not only upon our willingness to read with dominant historiography and its organization of categories, and to comply with the selection and description of texts and events according to the strictures of “modern” intellectual history, but also to cooperate in the slippage between institutionalized limits and historical essence. In other words, it requires us to retrospectively collapse the difference between history and a theory of history, and thus reify the basis of what is always a particular sovereign claim upon “the now”.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 7.

²⁰¹ Schmitt, C. *Political Theology*, p. 36.

²⁰² Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 14.

²⁰³ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 25.

²⁰⁴ Delogu, P. *An Introduction to Medieval History* (London: Duckworth Publishers, 1994), p. 60.

²⁰⁵ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 20

By accepting the medieval/modern period divide as a fact achieved at a certain point in time, we allow that divide to be depoliticized, in the sense that the medieval/modern period divide is rendered as something that is not open to or a matter of political contestation or negotiation but treated as a natural, inevitable move. We then close ourselves off from considering the processes involved at the site of the supposed division.

The sacred and the secular, and their relation to understandings of time is arguably the most significant issue that she raises regarding our conception of the medieval in reference to the period divide. As alluded to above, the politics of time is a concern of medievalists, post-colonialists and others who recognize that time is used to construct our understanding of people, ideas, and arenas, as well as to grant or deny them status according to where they are located in relation to the political act of placing someone or something in (or out of) time. However, Davis draws our attention to the tendency to operate under the assumption that the Middle Ages had only a sacred and universal conception of time. At issue here is the sense we have of the quality of historical time that is granted to medieval period as opposed to the modern. Essentially, in the medieval/modern periodization, the medieval does not have historical time the people move through on a line or path of progression. Modernity differentiates itself from the medieval initially by claiming that unlike the medieval period, the modern has history and direction. The medieval is tethered to a religious conception of time that allows it no mobility or politics of time within its own period. Historical and political time is only allowed to begin once the break or division between the medieval and the modern has occurred; prior to the de-sacralizing or secularization of time, time is supposedly understood only in terms of the possibility of or wait for salvation. If salvation or the sacred are the only referent people are allowed to have for understanding time, they are not allowed to have a dynamic or political history; they are held in place (and in time) waiting for a sacred moment. What is allegedly different about the modern, where the rupture occurs that the medieval/modern periodization is based on, is when the realization dawns that the sacred moment is not coming-when the prospect of salvation loses its force and no longer defines the horizon. “The liberation of Europe’s political,

economic, and social life from ecclesiastical authority and religion was defined as the very basis of politics, progress and historical consciousness; correlatively, Europe's "medieval" past and cultural others, mainly colonized non-Christians, were defined as religious, static, and ahistorical—thus open for narrative and territorial development."²⁰⁶ To put it another way, "...periodized, telic history is a conceptual basis and legitimizing tool of world-scale aggression."²⁰⁷ Historical and political time is only allowed to begin once the break or division between the medieval and the modern has occurred.

In order for the medieval/modern divide to work, the medieval has to operate as an undifferentiated category. For there to have been a rupture significant enough to justify the moment or fact of division, the Middle Ages has to be homogenous; otherwise, we would need to see the change as a process of transformation rather than a leap from one age to the next. Seeing change over time as a divide between two times periods rather than as a process (that does not occur as a singular moment of rupture) serves and continues to serve the concept of modernity because it enables modernity to be understood as time of linear, enlightened progress in opposition to the static or backwards medieval period characterized by superstition and unjust feudal relations.

Davis uses the example of the work of the Venerable Bede to demonstrate that there was more than one understanding of time, and that there were different understandings of time with their own political and historical implications, and that were themselves political and historical moves.²⁰⁸ The conception of time that the modern assigns the medieval in the medieval/modern divide is, broadly speaking, that of Augustinian eschatology with its salvific focus; however, the Venerable

²⁰⁶ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 77

²⁰⁷ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 84.

²⁰⁸ Davis is not the only medievalist to point out that there are 'pre-modern' orientations to time, within medieval Europe and outside of it, or that orientations to or understandings of time are often part of political projects. Dinshaw critiques modernist temporal regimes and the modern sense of the 'now' by using asynchronous medieval tales to try and point out that peoples' lives always involves multiple temporalities beyond linear measurements moving forward through time, and to try and expose "the modernist impediment to our apprehension of such heterogenous temporalities." Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now?* p. 7. She recognizes that modern regime of temporality is sometimes a straitjacket that prevents people from understanding more and different things about the world.

Bede's understanding of time is different, and it is an overtly political project. Bede was an early 8th century Northumbrian monk interested in justifying a particular political order in flux at the time in his part of the world, and he did so by articulating a conception of time that grounded the political order he was vested in preserving and extending. According to Davis, Bede posited that "...time is a function of difference, inextricable from measurement that always requires calculation, and existing meaningfully only insofar as it is ultimately incalculable (sic), its futurity open rather than determined. He instantiates this as a mathematical, cosmological, and historical principle drawn from two basic theological tenets: one cannot know the end of time, or more precisely, the "time that remains in this world"...; and the salvation of the world, as well as of the individual depends upon both human and divine action."²⁰⁹ Not only did he understand himself and the world he lived in as having a history, he understood the political implications of having a history, and the uses to which understandings of time and history could be put. This differential understanding of time is a direct challenge to competing understandings of time that posit a knowable, calculable end of time that will arrive in the form of salvation. There is much that could be said about the kind of politics Bede was trying to shore up, but Davis makes it clear that his temporal moves were political moves. Indeed, "Bede later became the first author to use *anno domini* (A.D.) dating in a historical narrative, thereby attaching history, in the form of Christian politics, to the sacred at the point of a division in time."²¹⁰ A.D. dating was a decisive (sovereign) move that made Christian politics and history the politics and history that governed and made sense of the world. Bede was grounding a political order with reference to an idea of the sacred, but it was one possible political order, not the only one, and this move was powerful enough to persist over time as a way to legitimate or de-legitimate certain approaches to politics (or disguise that they were/are approaches to politics, not just the way things are). "By definition, a division in time purportedly outside politics and based on a relation with the sacred both defines and regulates politics."²¹¹ Davis points to the example of

²⁰⁹ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 106.

²¹⁰ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 1.

²¹¹ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 3.

substituting ,common era' dating for A.D dating as a "change that does little to diminish the effect of a globalized Christian calendar, and in fact privileges its order under a rubric that appears both secular and universal...The sleight of hand that facilitates the privileged universalism under which only (sic) "European" politics can identify as "secular," and only "secular" politics can be legitimate, is medieval/modern periodization."²¹² This is a political move, and it was a political move at its inception with actors such as Bede, but we have forgotten the political character of this division in time, accepting it as a natural part of reality, and that this forgetting allows us to think and act as though it does not have a history with consequences for the modern world.

This is important in at least two ways. First, Bede's motivation for articulating his conception of time is his understanding that such understandings are political and have an impact on our conduct in and regulation of the world. His understanding of time allows people to become and emphasizes that they *are* (or were) historical agents. Second, it shows that there was contention and difference over understandings of time. The medieval period did not have a monolithic, un-interrogated sense of time. This raises questions about what purpose it might serve to characterize medieval temporality in such a way, and about the impacts or consequences of modern temporality characterized as having one world-political time. Davis' work on Bede, as well as work by Carolyn Dinshaw on disparate understandings of and relations to time for other medieval figures,²¹³ provides another way of understanding what Hutchings refers to as the need to think world-political time as heterotemporality.²¹⁴ Narratives that suggest the displacement of one uniform conception of time as a static wait for salvation with another uniform conception of time as historically progressive both limit the ability to imagine or make sense of different political possibilities. They suggest that

²¹² Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 3.

²¹³ Dinshaw makes it clear that the point of this work is to provide a richer experience of time and thus of life, which in turn might lead to more just relations between different groups of people, modern and 'non-modern.' "I want to glimpse the possibilities, most broadly, of a more just and more attached nonmodernity...that is, find this *now*, this moment that is not detached and not disenchanting. I want more life." Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now?* p. 39. The 'more attached' language is a gesture to Bruno Latour and his emphasis on the divisions or detachment of modernity, which is discussed in the next section, and in Chapter 5.

²¹⁴ Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, p. 176.

people can only move backwards or forwards, and that there is only one way of moving forwards. Even the most radical political theorists who accepts the assumption of one world political time confirms “that the range of possibilities, and of possible remedies, inherent in world politics derive from a temporal trajectory inherent (for good or ill) in western modernity.”²¹⁵ This has consequences for peoples’ ability to imagine what is possible, a capacity that is increasingly important when it comes to a problem like environmental degradation which demands adaptation and reorientation.

Sovereignty, History, and Historical Consciousness in IR

Up to this point, the chapter has explored work that clarifies the role that history plays in constituting and enabling political modernity oriented or organized by sovereignty, and revealing the temporal aspects of sovereignty as an orientation. It is useful now to begin to connect this to IR in order to begin to see both the role of history and sovereignty in the discipline. This section will first begin to examine how IR theorists understand history and periodization. It will then turn back to the relationship between history as a form of knowledge or technology and sovereignty in IR. IR theorists frequently argue that IR has a history problem, whether because it is ‘presentist’,²¹⁶ somehow does not take history seriously enough,²¹⁷ or that it focuses on the wrong historical events and time periods in order to explain and understand the present state of the world and the

²¹⁵ Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, p. 159. The next chapter will pick up this point as it relates more directly to IR and political imagination.

²¹⁶ Latham, A. *Theorizing Medieval Geopolitics: War and World Order in the Age of the Crusade* (New York: Routledge Press, 2012) pp. 1-3.

²¹⁷ See: Osiander, A. ‘Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth,’ pp. 251–287, Teschke, B. *The Myth of 1648*, pp.13-44 on the historical dimensions of IR.

discipline.²¹⁸ History as myth, or mythologizing history is both overtly²¹⁹ and implicitly²²⁰ engaged with by IR scholars and that engagement revolves around the idea of the origins of modern international relations and IR as a scholarly discipline. In different ways, all of these scholars want IR to take history more seriously, and they are attempting re-assessments of interpretations and uses of history centered on the contested historical foundations of IR as a discipline. 1648 is often the point of departure for their arguments, and all of them have different destinations, however this thesis is ultimately arguing that IR's history problem is not one that originates within the discipline itself, but with how historical practices and understandings have developed in tandem with sovereignty.

Periodization is at issue for all of the critiques mentioned above, whether the technique is explicitly recognized or not. Apart from Daniel Philpott, who ends largely content with Westphalia as the site of a period divide that marks the emergence of the modern states system, IR theorists who critique the use of history in IR such as Teschke, Jeremy Larkins, Andrew Latham, Barry Buzan and George Lawson are seeking a 'better' periodization than the one represented by the Westphalian narrative.²²¹ Larkins locates the important period division in the Renaissance, rather than Westphalia, while Teschke and Latham not only identify different dividing lines in the relevant history of IR, but also wants more subtlety brought into the discussion. Teschke argues that the transition to modernity

²¹⁸ There are several examples of scholars suggesting a 'better' starting point from which to understand IR. For an argument that emphasis needs to be moved to the 19th century see, of course, Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity, and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); see Larkins, J. *From Hierarchy to Anarchy: Territory and Politics before Westphalia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) for the case that it is the Renaissance that provides a better starting point for IR.

²¹⁹ Latham, A. *Theorizing Medieval Geopolitics*, pp. 26-35, Teschke, B. *The Myth of 1648*, and Osiander, A. *Before the State: Political Changes in the West from the Greeks to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008): 2.

²²⁰ Philpott, D. *Revolutions in Sovereignty*. Philpott's work emphasizes the importance of ideas or understandings about politics and sovereignty for transformations or revolutions in both. His reading of the history of the Peace of Westphalia and what he calls the global expansion of Westphalia through colonial independence is too credulous and uncritical in terms of what those ideas are and where they come from, however.

²²¹ Teschke, B. *The Myth of 1648*, p.5, Larkins, J. *From Hierarchy to Anarchy*, pp. 7-12, Latham, A. *Theorizing Medieval Geopolitics*, pp. 8-14, Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. *The Global Transformation*, pp. 317-319, Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. 'Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,' *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:2 (2014), pp. 437-462.

occurred as a process over time, rather than in a moment of rupture, while Latham argues that the concept of historical ruptures is too dominant in IR and that there is a more process-oriented view of history that should be incorporated into IR, although he decides to try and combine rupture and process thinking in his work in the interest of being balanced, rather than abandoning or offering a more sustained critique of rupture based thinking.²²² Latham also makes a plea for IR to take the medieval period more seriously on its own terms, something I will return to below in considering the role that medieval/modern periodization in particular plays in the self-understanding of IR. In any case, for most of these critics, better periodization in IR involves looking at a longer period of time with a more nuanced perspective on the development of modernity and processes of change occurring within it.

‘Better’ periodization is central to their critiques of the use of history in IR. This is a problem because ‘better’ periodization still comes down to an understanding of periodization as a point of division in time, or a process surrounding such a division. It is superficial. It is also widely assumed to be necessary in IR and in the discipline of history itself. The historian Paolo Delogu, for example, argues that:

The recognition of homogenous and significant stages in the course of history is of much use, for the straightforward purposes of categorizing and pigeonholing historical phenomena, and for a fuller comprehension of the inter-relatedness of the actions of societies in the past. Without designated periods it would be impossible to plot the long-, medium- and short term patterns that have shaped civilization, and so to understand the reasons underlying change and its timing²²³

Historians are often careful to point out some of the most obvious problems associated with periodization, and that dividing the past into periods requires a great deal of judgment and analysis if it is to be meaningful, and that meaning is not entirely captured by the process of periodization. “[h]istorians will often be heard to express reservations about this subject [periodization], and to complain about the inherent arbitrariness of conceptually subdividing the continuous passage of

²²² Teschke, B. *The Myth of 1648*, Latham, A. *Theorizing Medieval Geopolitics*, pp. 26-28.

²²³ Delogu, P. *An Introduction to Medieval History*, p. 60.

time. Historians know that in the past, as in the present, individuals and societies' lives rarely involve definitive caesuras. They also know that the application of a single framework of periods can be misleading...²²⁴ This reasoned assessment of the utility and drawbacks of periodization might be appreciated, however, as Davis and other historians have begun to forcefully argue that awareness and reservations are not enough.²²⁵ This is because periodization, particularly medieval/modern periodization, represented in IR by 1648, is a methodological choice that has far-reaching consequences for how we understand the world that we live in, how we conduct ourselves within in it, and for some it acts so as to constrain their opportunities to live in the modern world.

As the most forceful articulator of this critique, Davis argues that the current political order and the form of the modern state are grounded upon an act of periodization that divides the medieval and the modern world and translates particular, European experiences into global categories and politics.²²⁶ This periodization is again “[n]ot simply the drawing of an arbitrary line through time, but a complex process of conceptualizing categories, which are posited as homogenous and retroactively validated by the designation of a period divide,”²²⁷ which “[v]alidates the global application of narrowly conceived definitions of political forms.”²²⁸ Davis again traces the historiography of sovereignty and the state during the sixteenth century to reveal its political dimensions and the role that periodization has played in substituting as a foundation for conceptualizations of sovereignty.²²⁹

This work helps to illuminate why critiques of the use of history in IR that call for re-periodization of the discipline, a shift in emphasis to different time periods such as the 19th century, or a change in the way IR treats or uses a time period are problematic and deserve more sustained

²²⁴ Delogu, P. *An Introduction to Medieval History*, p. 59.

²²⁵ See: Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, pp. 4-12, Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now*, pp. 17-21.

²²⁶ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, pp. 3-5.

²²⁷ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 3.

²²⁸ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 5.

²²⁹ That sovereignty lacks foundation, or is a self-authorizing authority is echoed by several IR Scholars. It is particularly prominent in Walker's work. See especially: Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, p. 14, and Suganami, H. 'Understanding Sovereignty through Kelsen/Schmitt,' p. 511.

reflection.²³⁰ When IR scholars call for the discipline to take history more seriously, to shift focus to different points in history, or to re-periodize they fail to recognize the work that periodization does in inscribing and affirming sovereignty, how it shapes our understanding of the world or the international they study, and what it can mean for people who live within that world. The medieval/modern divide, marked in IR by the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, is produced through history as a form of knowledge and has consequences for people now in terms of their ability to engage politically in the modern world. This divide helps constitute what kinds of actors and ways of being in the world are and are not legitimate, what they are able to say, and what we are able to say and know about them. Modern, sovereign subjects are theoretically afforded the political identity that allows them to count or to engage, whereas the medieval (or: backwards, indigenous etc.) are excluded or marginalized as the other against which people understand themselves.

To take one example of a theorist whose works calls for better engagement with history that does not adequately engage with the implications of periodization, Latham makes a plea to curtail the abuse of history he sees in the fields of political science and IR. One of his main thrusts is to take the medieval period seriously on its own terms rather than approaching it with a presentist mindset.²³¹ While at first glance this may seem like a reasonable request, taking the medieval period seriously on its own terms becomes something of an absurdity when we examine the advent and function of the medieval period in relation the modern conditions of the political. ‘The medieval’ is a periodized construct brought into being to be destroyed in order to justify or found modernity. As Fasolt makes clear:

So long as politics continues to rely on sovereignty and citizens exercise their right to self-determination, there needs to be some medieval period in the past from which they have progressed...the tripartite pattern of true ancient origins, corrupt medieval intermission, and modern emergence to sovereign self-determination is built into history itself-not, to repeat,

²³⁰ See especially: Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. *The Global Transformation*, pp. 317-319, Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. ‘Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,’ *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:2 (2014), pp. 437-462.

²³¹ Latham, A. *Theorizing Medieval Geopolitics*, pp. 26-35. See also: Latham, A. ‘Theorizing the Crusades,’ *International Studies Quarterly* 55:1 (2011) pp. 223-243.

because that is what happened, but because it is a transcendental category of the historical imagination, a necessary condition for the very possibility of thinking about the past as history and living now.²³²

Latham is particularly concerned with what he calls ‘soft presentism’ which is “best understood as the tendency to view history through the lens of contemporary questions and concerns in order to illuminate the present rather than the past.”²³³ But in an important sense, illuminating the present, or rather, showing how illuminated the present is compared to the past is what the medieval is for. Latham and others want to mitigate the abuse of history in IR as they see it, which revolves around not having a rigorous, scientific approach to history, and treating or using history as myth,²³⁴ but it would be better to think of these so-called abuses of the past as products of the technology of history, especially the technique of periodization, that help to construct understandings of the present. The next chapter will deal with specific examples of this in the discipline, especially the recent work of Buzan and Lawson who have explicitly called for a re-periodization of IR away from 1648 and one that would demote the position of sovereignty in IR.²³⁵ The focus in this chapter remains on the significance of periodization itself as a historical technique and its relationship to sovereignty.

Periodization is posited as a method of making sense of history over long periods of time by historians,²³⁶ supposedly when significant ruptures or discontinuities in understandings of and approaches to the world have been identified. Again, however, periodization is not an innocent or natural act, but a political move. Dividing historical time into different periods can never be a straightforward way of making historical analysis easier. Such divisions help shape understandings of historical events and the past, as well as understandings of history as a form of knowledge. Davis makes this clear in relation to the medieval/modern divide:

[p]recisely through the slippage from local history to universal category, from singular event to narrative fulcrum, the effects of periodization are dissimulated and thus entrenched. The

²³² Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. 228. This point is also echoed by Walker; see especially: Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, 135-144.

²³³ Latham, A. *Theorizing Medieval Geopolitics*, p. 32.

²³⁴ Latham, A. *Theorizing Medieval Geopolitics*, p. 32.

²³⁵ Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. *The Global Transformation*, pp. 317-319, Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. ‘Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,’ pp. 437-462.

²³⁶ Delogu, P. *An Introduction to Medieval History*, p. 60.

belief in a break between a medieval and a modern (or an early modern) period ever more intensely assumes world-historical implications for categories such as the sovereign state and secular politics- that is categories with both ideological and territorial stakes- and for exactly this reason the “Middle Ages,” like modernity before it, has been vaulted from a European category to a global category of time...Periodization...does not refer to a mere back-description that divides history into segments, but to a fundamental political technique- a way to moderate, divide, and regulate- always rendering its services *now*.²³⁷

By accepting the medieval/modern period divide as a fact achieved at a certain point in time, we allow that divide to be depoliticized, in the sense that the medieval/modern period divide is rendered as something that is not open to or a matter of political contestation or negotiation but treated as a natural, inevitable move, and close ourselves off from considering the processes involved at the site of the supposed division.

While IR is often blind to the function of historical techniques like periodization in the construction of the modern political world, something examined at length in the next chapter, there are works within IR that make it easier to grasp the complexities of the relationship between authority in the political realm and knowledge production via history as a technology, as well as work on time that and temporality that clarify the role of history as technology. Karena Shaw writes from within IR about how sovereignty sets the conditions for the political as people understand and engage with it in the modern world, focusing on how sovereignty disciplines knowledge and knowledge production. Shaw begins her analysis of the force of sovereignty in modern understandings of the political with Hobbes, arguing that his understanding of sovereignty is paradigmatic for IR and political theory. As her work is concerned with indigeneity she discusses his work in relation to ‘savages’, but she is in fact more centrally focused on how his work establishes the assumptions necessary for sovereignty to be accepted. She argues that Hobbes begins with how and what people can know, which serves to establish the conditions for sovereignty, which will become the conditions for the political.²³⁸ Claims to authority are enabled

²³⁷ Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, p. 5. Emphasis in the original.

²³⁸ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p.19.

by an epistemological system that is based on the production of an identity that relies on exclusion (of distant others, or savages) and on assumptions about the desires, motivations, and ways of understanding that can exist between people as a result.²³⁹ For Shaw, a key element of the work Hobbes does in constructing his understanding of sovereignty is that he relies on naturalizing and universalizing assumptions about people, human nature, and what are the legitimate ways of being.²⁴⁰ Once these assumptions about identity and difference are accepted, sovereignty becomes the obvious solution to the problems that they pose and sovereignty itself is insulated from political contestation because it has become the inevitable and necessary precondition for political community.²⁴¹ This sense of inevitability has a significant impact on IR because even when people are critical of sovereignty, they accept the ontological grounds for politics it provides in terms of the state as a spatial and temporal resolution to the “problem” of identity and difference Hobbes has naturalized.²⁴²

For Shaw, Hobbes moves on sovereignty that became paradigmatic for IR and political theory were achieved through history:

History begins and ends with modern sovereign states: states as spatial containers discipline Time into History, and within the bounds of state sovereignty History continues its one-way path of Progress. Outside these neat boundaries, anarchy and timelessness reign: either in the realm of the pre-state/primitive, “known” (and produced) by anthropology, or in the modern inter-state world, “known” (and produced) by international relations. With the spatial domination of the state/international relations boundary, anthropology is thrown out of space and into time, into either the premodern or the static and unlocatable realm of “difference.” States sovereignty thus enables and marks the boundaries of both disciplines. Between lies the proper place for modern political life: the state “known” by disciplines

²³⁹ Shaw’s interpretation echoes Mike Williams’ analysis when he points out that: “Hobbes actually seeks the *creation* of such actors {materially self-interested actors}, hoping to limit the basic irrationality of human action through the adoption of practices of material self-interest. The kind of individuals that Hobbes seeks to promote (one might even say create) are those who have literally *learned* to think of themselves and their worlds in terms of objective material calculation, and who thus provide the foundation upon which a stable politics can be built. The epistemic materialism that he advocates is thus not an abstract methodological assumption, as ‘ontological materialism’ has come to be understood in International Relations: it is a political commitment, a central element of his attempt to establish new intellectual and practical foundations for authority in a culture wracked by violence and conflict.” Williams, M.C. ‘The Hobbesian Theory of International Relations,’ pp. 260-261.

²⁴⁰ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p.39.

²⁴¹ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p.39.

²⁴² Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p. 38.

such as politics and sociology. In this way, the disciplining of thought expresses and reinscribes sovereignty, rendering it both obvious and necessary.²⁴³

As the target of her analysis is on the impact of sovereignty on indigenous populations, she is contrasting the effects of the relationship between sovereignty and history on the constitution and possibilities of conduct for the disciplines of IR and Anthropology in terms of what they mean for indigenous people. However, her discussion of sovereignty and knowledge is also crucial in analyzing the relationship between sovereignty and modernity. Her conclusions about sovereignty and indigeneity support the argument that practices of sovereignty and the system it has generated have not failed by excluding and marginalizing certain actors and peoples, but have succeeded precisely on the terms that sovereignty sets out. In addition, part of what she is saying here echoes Fasolt in his argument that history is a technology that was used and developed to help create the political world we live in and constitute us as subjects in that world, which is defined by sovereignty:

Its [history] chief attraction consists of the enhanced control it promises to human beings over the world of self and society....But now we seem no longer to have a choice. Our survival as the human beings that we have made ourselves depends upon the smooth operation of the historical machine. The machine has grown so unwieldy [it] requires more energy than it would be worth the effort if we could do without. It seems, however, that we can no longer do without. In that respect as well, history resembles other forms of technology. Invented more or less by chance, adopted for its stupendous benefits, it has become an indispensable necessity. History allowed us to create a new kind of humanity. Now we cannot think of any other kind. The knowledge on which we called to assert our freedom now limits our liberty."²⁴⁴

How people understand themselves in relation to 'past', 'present' and 'future' is linked to the kinds of political beings or subjects that they are. Although it is often overlooked, or seems so natural as to be invisible, the temporality of modern, Western politics is at least as important to the constitution of the political form of the state and the subjects that live within them as are territorial conceptualizations and demarcations.

A sovereign state is usually defined as one whose citizens are free to determine their own affairs without interference from any agency beyond its territorial borders. But freedom in space (and limits on its territorial extent) is merely one characteristic of sovereignty.

²⁴³ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p. 83.

²⁴⁴ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. XIV

Freedom in time (and limits on its temporal extent) is equally important and probably more fundamental. Sovereignty and citizenship require freedom from the past as least as much as freedom from contemporary powers. no state could be sovereign if its inhabitants lacked the ability to change a course of action adopted by their forefathers in the past, or even one to which they once committed themselves. No citizen could be a full member of the community so long as she was tied to ancestral traditions with which the community might wish to break...Sovereignty and citizenship thus require not only borders in space, but also borders in time. Borders in time are moments of foundation or conversion to mark the point where sovereignty and citizenship begin and the past leaves off. They guarantee presence to the state by setting it apart from the past.²⁴⁵

As noted above, the importance of temporalities, understandings of time and their relationship to history, historical consciousness and the functions of history are receiving more and more attention within IR. Problems that are global and long-term in scope, such as environmental degradation, raise questions not just about peoples physical or spatial relations to each other, but about how they are related in time, and what responsibilities or obligations such problems might entail. Theorists with a critical edge, or those concerned with questions of justice and emancipation and the problems of exclusion and discrimination that seem inherent to practices and understandings of sovereignty may look to the past to try and understand the present and end up questioning the very notions of past and present, and how we relate to them. In a passage with clear echoes of Fasolt, and which gestures towards the discussion of periodization in this chapter, R.B.J. Walker writes:

“[i]t should be clear that much depends on how it has become possible to draw the lines of discrimination marking boundaries, borders and limits, in time quite as much as in space, and on how we have been encouraged to think about boundaries, borders and limits as if they were indeed just simple lines distinguishing here from there, now from then, normal from exceptional, possible from impossible or intelligible from unintelligible. The journey that is proposed as a move from a politics of the international to a politics of the world may be easily understandable as a simple line drawn from one condition to another, but this line especially, with its capacity to mobilise claims about spatiotemporalities that must be at work in contemporary political life, ought to make us think much more carefully about how complex practices of drawing lines have come to be treated as such a simple matter.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. 7.

²⁴⁶ Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, p. 6

This thread runs through Walker's work,²⁴⁷ and the role of time and its relationship to history have also been considered by IR theorists.²⁴⁸ Andrew Davenport's work, for example, bears a close relationship to some of the key arguments of this thesis, in part because of his own close engagement with Fasolt. His argument is that history and the historical consciousness associated with modernity are fundamental to sovereignty and sovereign subjectivity because: "They are part of the metaphysical security apparatus of sovereignty: their primary purpose is not to rescue the past for experience but rather to maintain the dividing line between the past and the present for the sake of the freedom of the modern subject,"²⁴⁹ which reflects the same insistence in this thesis that practices of history are co-constitutive with sovereign subjectivity and the ways of being and ways of knowing that subjectivity enables and disables. In his work, he is concerned that the historical consciousness of modernity has become naturalized to the point of invisibility, making it all the more difficult to conceptualize or imagine beyond the borders or limits (and limitations) of modern historicity and the politics able to operate within modernity.²⁵⁰ This is important because "the interconnection of historical experience and understanding with sovereignty and political subjectivity has long preoccupied critical thought,"²⁵¹ and a deficiency or inability to recognize the construction of our historical consciousness (particularly that it *has* a construction) in turn limits critical thought and its potential within IR. His concerns that the importance of modern historical consciousness and its relationship to political subjectivity are under-examined both within IR and by modern historians is well taken, but in fact IR would have a rich resource available to it in addressing this problem if it would look to it. Medieval history (in terms of the academic discipline or practice), medieval historians, and others who have engaged with its historiography and considered the role medieval history plays in our understandings of modernity and ourselves as

²⁴⁷ See: Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside*.

²⁴⁸ See: Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, Hutchings, K. 'What is Orientation in Thinking? On the Question of Time and Timeliness in Cosmopolitical Thought,' *Constellations* 18:2 (2011) pp.190-204, Inayatullah, N. and Blaney, D. *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, Davenport A., 'The International and the Limits of History,' pp. 247-265.

²⁴⁹ Davenport, A. 'The International and the Limits of History,' p. 263.

²⁵⁰ Davenport, A. 'The International and the Limits of History,' p. 262.

²⁵¹ Davenport, A. 'The International and the Limits of History,' p. 249.

modern subjects provides an extensive illumination of the borders and boundaries of modern historical consciousness and temporality, as well as what it means for the kinds of people or actors that we can be and become.

Perhaps the most obvious reason that this would be the case is because the medieval functions as a means of validating and authorizing the idea of modernity as a “progression”; this was also addressed earlier in the chapter, but to reiterate, the idea of modernity requires an emergence from something (worse) that has come before. Again: “the tripartite pattern of true ancient origins, corrupt medieval intermission, and modern emergence to sovereign self-determination is built into history itself-not, to repeat, because that is what happened, but because it is a transcendental category of the historical imagination, a necessary condition for the very possibility of thinking about the past as history and living now.”²⁵² The lot of medievalists is the supposed ‘corrupt intermission’, and many question the notion that the ‘progress’ of modernity should be considered an un-interrogated good. They also consider the history of their own place in the academic discipline of history in ways that challenge modern history’s claims over the present or the concept of now, by looking to who or what is excluded from it. Kathleen Biddick draws attention to how the medieval functions as modernity’s ‘other’,²⁵³ while others focus critiques on the medieval/modern divide not just to change the point of division, but to enable different understandings of temporality.²⁵⁴ Carolyn Dinshaw’s work in particular disrupts understandings of the possibilities of temporality available outside of modern historical consciousness and historicity.

Dinshaw explores different temporalities available outside (and therefore within) modernity and sovereign temporality by looking at different temporal understandings, particularly of the concept of *now* that existed alongside or overlapping with each other in what is designated by modernity as the medieval period. The motivations of her work are manifold, but all are concerned

²⁵² Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. 228.

²⁵³ Biddick, K. *The Shock of Medievalism*, pp. 1-5.

²⁵⁴ See: Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, Holsinger, B. *The Premodern Condition*, and Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now?*

with the limitations of sovereign subjectivity in modernity. She takes aim at the exclusivity and the discriminatory or undemocratic nature of that subjectivity by, in part, critiquing the knowledge production associated with modernity and (as an extension of modernity) professionalization, examining the role of amateurism in the development of medieval history. This is a jumping off point, again, for questioning the limitations to people's subjectivity or the understandings of time or historicity that modernity provides. "[p]articipating in non-modern ways of apprehending time, can help us to contemplate different ways of being, knowing and world making."²⁵⁵ For Dinshaw, what happens in our academic institutions, and the exclusions that exist there as a result of the knowledge production associated with modernity and linear understandings of time and progress, is closely linked to exclusionary political practices that impact people who do not fit neatly into its categories, such as indigenous peoples, or any persons or groups that might be considered 'queer'.²⁵⁶

Dinshaw uses the work of sociologist Bruno Latour, who also frequently engages with the medieval and the medieval/modern divide, to help capture concerns about modernity and the notion of progress within modernity.²⁵⁷ Here he captures concerns about modernity and the notion of progress belonging to it that are significant for those excluded from it, or those concerned with reorienting subjectivity in light of a problem like environmental degradation:

Whereas the modern always went from the confused to the clear, from the mixed to the simple, from the archaic to the objective, and since they were always thus climbing the stairway of progress, we too are going to progress, but by always descending along a path that is, however, not the path of decadence; we shall always go from the mixed to the still more mixed, from the complicated to the still more complicated, from the explicit to the implicit. We no longer expect from the future that it will emancipate us from all our attachments; on the contrary, we expect that it will attach us with tighter bonds to more numerous crowds of *aliens (sic)* who have become full-fledged members of the collective

²⁵⁵ Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now?* p. 24.

²⁵⁶ Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now?* p. 20-21.

²⁵⁷ Latour's work is laced with questions and contemplations about what modernity is and the role of progress in it, stemming from concerns about the influence of Cartesian Dualism and its subject/object division on both how we understand science and relate to the world. See: Latour, B. *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), Latour, B. *The Politics of Nature*, Latour, B. "'Onus Orbis Terrarum' About a Possible Shift in the Definition of Sovereignty" *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 44:3 (2016) pp. 305-320 Latour, B. "Does the Body Politic Need a Bew Body?" *Yusko War-Phillips lecture*, University of Notre Dame, November 2016. Latour, B. *The Politics of Nature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). Chapter 5 will return to his analysis about the division between politics and nature in modernity.

that is in the process of being formed. “Tomorrow” the moderns cry, “we shall be more detached.” “Tomorrow” murmur those who have to be called non moderns, “we shall be more attached.”²⁵⁸

What medievalists and others who engage with it understand, in part because of their experience with the exclusions of modernity, is that it excludes people, temporalities, ways of knowing and being, and therefore, possibilities that may be required in the fullness of time(s) to enrich our capacity to meet a problem like environmental degradation.

Sovereign Temporality and Environmental Degradation

The previous two sections have helped clarify the roles that historical practices and techniques play in constructing a political modernity predicated on sovereignty. Understanding these roles helps make it clear the ways in which sovereignty as an orientation creates a sense of the political as bound to the present. This is important because while sovereignty has a clear territorial element that is acknowledged and addressed throughout the literature in IR and international political theory, the temporal aspects of sovereignty also have extensive ramifications both for groups that are excluded from the sovereign present and for the ability of people to address long-term, far reaching problems like environmental degradation. As Shaw’s work was used to explain above, sovereignty and sovereign states discipline time into history.²⁵⁹ Sovereignty, regardless of variations in conceptualizations, understandings and practices, has temporal dimensions in which it is not just claiming and exercising power and autonomy within physical boundaries, but also within boundaries of time, specifically over the present. A sovereign political entity or actor theoretically does not have to answer to those outside of its borders, unless they are made to or choose to in instances of conflict or cooperation. This is obvious in terms of territorial boundaries, but it is also the case in relation to temporal boundaries. A sovereign entity or actor does not have to answer to or for the past or future beyond a very limited time horizon, such as the length of a generation or the

²⁵⁸ Latour, B. *The Politics of Nature*, p. 191 in Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now?* p. 38.

²⁵⁹ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*.

lifespan of an actor.²⁶⁰ The temporal boundaries and limited time horizon that understandings and practices of sovereignty instantiate create a significant barrier to adequately engaging with or addressing problems that have different time horizons, such as nuclear weapons and, particularly, environmental degradation. Much of the rhetoric and reporting that recognizes and is concerned with the problem of environmental degradation claims that people are in a race against time to prevent catastrophe. Even passing familiarity with the consequences of climate change and resource depletion that are already being seen and the ones that may arise²⁶¹ make this language seem easy to accept, but the times are not the same for everyone, both in terms of when catastrophe might hit and how people understand and experience time.²⁶² The problem of environmental degradation has temporal components, including when different manifestations will develop and expand, which generations will be effected by which problems, and how much (and what kinds of) time there may be to avoid or ameliorate different issues.²⁶³ As Malm points out:

Wherever we look at our changing climate, we find ourselves in the grip of the flow of *time*. The transfer of carbon from geological reserves to fireplaces and thence to the atmosphere, into the running carbon cycle from which it was locked away for ages and eras, sets the process in motion. But the effects are always delayed. It takes time before a certain quantity of CO₂ emissions is realized as a corresponding amount of warming, and before the warming takes its full toll on the ecosystems... The release of one tonne of CO₂ would not be so dangerous were it not for the billions of tonnes already out there; it is the total accumulation that pushes temperatures upwards, and the more that has been emitted, the smaller the prospect of limiting the ongoing rise... If we wait some time longer and then demolish the fossil economy in one giant blow, it would still cast a shadow far into the future... At its core, then, climate change is a messy mix-up of time scales. The fundamental variables of the process... operate over seemingly unrelated temporal spans, all refracted in the moving, elusive present of a warming

²⁶⁰ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. 7. See also: Fasolt, C. 'Breaking up Time,' especially pp. 185-185 about how insisting on the division between past, present and future undermines the sense of a shared form of life in a society.

²⁶¹ I use the term "may arise" here because the effects of climate change are so multi-varied and fast moving they have become very difficult to predict, leading to a situation of "post-normal science" in which we cannot test or measure effects with certainty, but which the scientific knowledge and measures available tell us that the problems are high stakes and urgent, not because environmental degradation may not be a problem. Turnpenny, J. 'Lessons from Post-Normal Science for Climate Science-Sceptic Debates,' *WIREs Climate Change* 3 (2012), pp. 397-407. Chapter 5 will deal with the unpredictability of the consequences of environmental degradation more extensively.

²⁶² Chakrabarty, D. 'The Climate of History: Four Theses,' *Critical Inquiry*, 35:2 (2009) pp. 197-222.

²⁶³ For example, according to different models even if carbon emissions into the atmosphere were ended today, the effects of the carbon that has already been released would create worsening conditions in terms of climate change for up to another 40 years because of the dynamics of the carbon cycle. See: Meehl, G., Washington, W., Collins, D., Arblaster, J., Hu, A., and Buja, L. 'How Much More Global Warming and Sea Level Rise,' *Science*, 307:5716 (2005), pp. 1769-1772.

world... every *conjuncture* now combines relics and arrows, loops and postponements that stretch from the deepest past to the most distant future, via a now that is non-contemporaneous with itself.²⁶⁴

In order to meet the challenges of environmental degradation and adapt to the changes it will bring, it is important that people are able to grasp and adapt to the temporal aspects of the problem. People have different experiences, understandings and perceptions of time that are measured in different ways from clocks to calendars to a sense of membership in a generation or communities and religions that reckon time on smaller or larger scales than that of ‘standard’ Western clock time.²⁶⁵ As alluded to above, the politics of time is a concern of medievalists, post-colonialists and others who recognize that time is used to construct our understanding of people, ideas, and arenas, as well as to grant or deny them status according to where they are located in relation to the political act of placing someone or something in (or out of) time, which is achieved through historical technology in connection with sovereignty. The political frameworks we operate within and the concepts and tools used to delimit and navigate these frameworks have temporal dimensions that are just as important to analyze as their territorial dimensions. If people fail to recognize or struggle to grasp the significance of the temporal dimensions of their political frameworks, they will have even more difficulty adapting to the challenges of environmental degradation or taking the necessary steps to end their dependencies on fossil fuels.

The temporal aspects of sovereignty discussed above also grow out of the ‘sovereign paradox’ and the struggle identified by Davis over the location of sovereignty. Again, the sovereign is inside and outside of the law because of the possibility of a state of exception in which he or she would have to decide that upholding the state’s existing legal order has come to represent a threat to preserving and continuing the state’s existence.²⁶⁶ Sovereignty, then, is bound to the present. Even if the legal order of a state makes provisions for the future, nothing can bind the sovereign to those provisions if he decides that they represent a threat to the preservation and continuation of the state.

²⁶⁴ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, pp. 7-8. Emphases in the original.

²⁶⁵ Hom, A.R. ‘Hegemonic Metronome: The Ascendency of Western Standard Time,’ pp.1145-1170.

²⁶⁶ Schmitt, C. *Political Theology*, pp. 5-7.

The *moment* of decision is what matters, and that moment occupies the present. The decision may never be taken; the sovereign may decide against identifying or taking the exception, but in as much as anything is constitutive of sovereignty, the ability to decide on the exception is crucial. If sovereignty exists, there is no power above the sovereign to prevent the moment of decision, and any other provisions or undertakings of the legal order of a state, whether internal or in cooperation with other states, are always contingent—the sovereign is not bound to them if he decides that they are what threaten the state. A state then may agree to compromise or cede its sovereignty as a matter of cooperation with other states to address an international problem like environmental degradation, or to attempt to secure some future goal, but that compromise or cession and those future goals become void if the decision is taken that they represent an exception. Without a mechanism to enforce cooperation and secure future based goals *against* the moment of sovereign decision, plans for the future are always under threat from the possibilities of the sovereign present, and planning for the future is an essential part of coping with environmental degradation.

The medieval/modern divide produced through history as a technology has consequences for people now in terms of their ability to engage politically in the modern world. This divide helps constitute what kinds of actors and ways of being in the world are and are not legitimate, what they are able to say, and what we are able to say and know about them. Hutchings writes “Within predominant contemporary diagnoses of, and prescriptions for, world politics the problem is not that the co-existence of a plurality of orientations goes unrecognized, so much as that the meaning of this plurality is always already homogenized by reference to the authoritative space/time of Western modernity.”²⁶⁷ Modern, sovereign subjects are theoretically afforded the political identity that allows them to count or to engage, whereas the medieval (or: backwards, uncivilized, indigenous etc.) are excluded or marginalized as the other against which people understand themselves. This is problematic in itself, but it also has major implications for how people are able to engage and conduct themselves politically in relation to transnational, existential problems like environmental

²⁶⁷ Hutchings, K. ‘What is Orientation in Thinking?’ p. 201

degradation because this account of sovereignty constrains possibilities for being or becoming different kinds of actors, with different kinds of relations to each other and the environment.

An important aspect of sovereignty that is problematic in relation to the state is the subjectivity that is constituted in relation to sovereignty. Understanding sovereignty as an orientation helps people understand and become who they are in relation to each other, as well as in relation to sovereign authority, wherever that is vested. In a sovereign states system, people are under the protection of a sovereign if they are included within a sovereign community as citizens. IR can benefit from deeper engagement with debates in philosophy of history and historiography about sovereignty and the subjectivity that it constructs in order to understand the limitations that people's conceptualizations of themselves as subjects/individuals impose in relation to thinking about problems of environmental degradation and the re-orientations that it demands.

There is a fruitful dialogue in IR between post-colonialists and medievalists that focuses on sites and practices of exclusion, or on those who are obviously marginalized in a sovereign system. However, the exclusions of sovereign subjectivity are important not just for people who have been marginalized, but for those for whom sovereignty seems to have enabled as well. Sovereignty constitutes people as rational, individual subjects that can flourish within the confines of a rational, sovereign state,²⁶⁸ however their constitution as rational subjects or individuals excludes some dimensions of their being human.²⁶⁹ “Yet what ‘we’ really are is, after all, citizens, and citizens of particular states. This was the identity that was created for us in early modern Europe. For all that modernity has come to be understood as an obsession with universal reason, it is an obsession informed by a prior admission that we are not, after all, human, at least politically.”²⁷⁰ Furthermore,

²⁶⁸ Williams, M.C., *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 44-45, and Koselleck, R. *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1988), p. 24.

²⁶⁹ Koselleck, R. *Critique and Crisis*, p. 43.

²⁷⁰ Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside*, p. 158.

the guarantee for the rational, sovereign state and the subjects constituted in relation to it is underwritten by the irrational possibility of sovereign decision.

Conclusion: Sovereignty as Orientation and the Potential for Disorientation

This chapter has helped explain why understanding sovereignty as orientation provides a fuller picture of how history and historical practices relate and are brought into relation to political subjectivity and political community. People are involved in practices of orientation and use concepts such as sovereignty to understand their relations to each other, as well as their relations towards concepts like time and nature. Sovereignty in modernity orients people and communities like points in a constellation that then makes a certain understanding of the political intelligible. Sovereignty as orientation is powerful, and it has been integral to the political project of modernity. However, thinking about sovereignty as an orientation also helps make clear that sovereignty, and the relations and understanding it helps constitute and maintain, is not a given. Just as things can be orientated, they can be disorientated or re-orientated. As this chapter has explored through Fasolt's work in particular, there was a time when sovereignty was part of processes of re-orientation towards what became political modernity. Sovereignty as orientation avoids the traps examined in Chapter 1 in which sovereignty is extensively critiqued and denaturalized but still seems inescapable. The next three chapters explore the need to expand the capacity to imagine other political possibilities and way to orientate towards each other and the environment. Chapter 3 will focus more explicitly on work in the discipline of IR that clarifies its role in maintaining sovereignty as orientation in modernity, and work being done that could begin to shift or disorient this. Chapter 4 will help provide a more integrated understanding of the temporal and spatial dimensions sovereignty and what they mean for understandings of nature and humanity in modernity. Chapter 5 will examine the problem of environmental degradation and the role sovereignty as an orientation plays in that, as well as how sovereignty as an orientation is challenged by environmental degradation.

Chapter 3: A Eurocentric, Modern International: IR as a World Making and Maintaining Project of Modernity

*[t]o be modern is to envision time as irreversible, to think of it as a progression that is forever propelled forward by revolutionary ruptures: these in turn are conceived of on the analogy of scientific innovations each of which is thought to render its predecessor obsolete. And obsolescence is indeed modernity's hellfire. This is why this era's most potent words of damnation, passed down in an unbroken relay from Hegel and Marx to President Obama, is the malediction of being 'on the wrong side of history.'*²⁷¹

*We have never been modern.*²⁷²

Introduction

The previous chapter explored the idea of sovereignty as an orientation to the political that brings the political subject, community, and system into mutually constituting relationships with each other, particularly in terms of its temporal dimensions. It also examined how the historical technique of periodization helps constitute and maintain a present-centric temporality of sovereignty. This chapter will extend that analysis to the discipline of International Relations, and how some aspects or theories of IR operate as a support for the political project of modernity through periodization and a present-centric temporality. It will examine critiques from within the discipline about its Eurocentrism, especially those of Walker, John M. Hobson and Hutchings, which will help illuminate some of the connections between Eurocentrism and sovereignty as a means of political orientation in modernity. This chapter will argue that the international of IR is Eurocentric and modern because of assumptions that are foundational to the existence of the international. The chapter will also argue that IR supports the political project of modernity because the discipline is world-building, not merely explanatory, and because of the role of sovereignty in shaping the knowledge and practices of the discipline. The chapter is in three main parts. The first section examines the lack of commensurability between the world and the international that IR studies. The second section uses recent work by Buzan and Lawson to argue that periodization is

²⁷¹ Ghosh, A. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016) p. 123.

²⁷² Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

used to create a certain sense of the present in IR that is organized by sovereignty, and that therefore re-periodizing the discipline is not a simple matter. The final section uses work by Hobson in particular to examine the significance of hierarchy to understand sovereignty in political modernity. Finally, this chapter will set up the argument of the following chapters that the political project of modernity and IR as a discipline is not just inadequate for dealing with the problem of environmental degradation, but that it also contributes to environmental degradation because of the political settlements and understandings that sovereignty as an orientation has enabled and helped constitute.

The chapter will further develop the idea that IR, because of the role that sovereignty plays in it, serves as a pillar of support for the project of modernity.²⁷³ Later, the chapter will begin to examine disorientation as an integral part of reconstructing the discipline to meet new challenges and better acknowledge and address old issues of inclusion and exclusion that have driven postcolonial, subaltern, non-western and other critiques of IR.²⁷⁴ Calls for reconstructing the foundations of IR would benefit from thinking of sovereignty as an orientation because it provides a fuller picture of the interrelationships between political subject, community and system. This in turn will help clarify the reorientations that will be needed to make such reconstruction possible.

Sovereignty and Possibility

²⁷³ For an argument that IR is a political project see: Williams, M.C. 'In the Beginning: The International Relations Enlightenment and the Ends of International Relations Theory,' *European Journal of International Relations*, 19:3 (2013), pp. 647-665, especially 654-655. For an argument that modernity is a political project of which IR is a part see: Rengger, N.J. *International Relations, Political Theory and the Problem of Order: Beyond International Relations Theory?* (London: Routledge, 2000).

²⁷⁴ See: Hutchings, K. 'Dialogue Between Whom? The Role of the West/non-west Distinction in Promoting Global Dialogue in IR,' *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 639-647, Chakrabarty, D. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), Barkawi, T. and Laffey, M. 'The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies,' *Review of International Studies*, 32:2 (2006), pp. 329-352, Hobson, J.M. 'Is Critical Theory Always for the White West and for Western Imperialism? Beyond Westphalian Towards a Post-racist Critical IR,' *Review of International Studies*, 33:S1 (2007) pp. 91-116, Said, E. *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), Young, R. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), Bhambra, G. 'Historical Sociology, Modernity, and Postcolonial Critique,' *American Historical Review*, 116:3 (2011) pp. 653-662, Spivak, G. C. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999), and Spivak, G.C. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

This section will analyze the relationship between the international and the idea of ‘the world’ that the international helps mediate. It will consider whether ‘the world’ outside of the international of IR has a particular character that differs from what the world or worlds of those who are already excluded from the international of IR might be. It will also argue that although attempts to expand the international to include or incorporate non-western perspectives are useful in understanding the shortcomings and exclusions of IR, they are not in themselves enough to catalyze a reconstruction of IR. This relates to a wider argument of the chapter that pushing the boundaries of political imagination from within the international of the discipline of IR is problematic because of the periodizing moves and hierarchies canvassed in the following critiques, and because the orientation that sovereignty provides helps to shape understandings both of problems and how to solve those problems. Change or transformation will require a disorientation away from understanding sovereignty as a way of solving problems, and a re-orientation to seeing sovereignty as itself a problem.²⁷⁵

The international is not commensurate with ‘the world.’ This is a basic but important point that draws attention to the constructed or constituted nature of the international and the assumptions that it entails.²⁷⁶ The idea of the international assumes states with defined borders interacting in a system. That international system has rules and norms that both assume the existence or reality of states and shape the interactions of those states. The international, in short is predicated on states,

²⁷⁵ This argument follows Walker, who writes: “In my judgement, then, sovereignty will come to be an increasingly perplexing problem, not a condition to be confirmed as either present or absent; and political life will increasingly be articulated in relation to the boundaries, borders, and limits that we have become used to treating as mere demarcations between places where politics is supposed to happen.” Walker, R.B.J *After the Globe, Before the World*, pp. 14. The wider point this thesis is trying to make is that while Walker is correct that we should increasingly see sovereignty as a problem, it has *always* been a problem. It is only now becoming clear how much that is the case because sovereignty and the political settlements it has enabled in modernity, and for the West especially, have helped create the conditions that could destroy those political settlements. Environmental degradation is a material consequence of ideational problems with sovereignty in modernity that threaten the modern political world itself. This argument will be explored in more depth in Chapter 5.

²⁷⁶ For collections that explores the international and highlights the difference that place and experience can make in approaching the international see: Tickner, A. and Blaney, D. (eds) *Thinking International Relations Differently* (New York: Routledge, 2012) and Shilliam, R. (ed) *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

while the idea of ‘the world’ suggests a reality outside of the conventions and constructions of the international. That the international is made, however, does not mean that, in contrast, ‘the world’ simply is. It is not just that the world is a very different place depending on where one starts from,²⁷⁷ but that the idea of the world outside of the international is mediated by the international itself. As Walker argues, we cannot simply move from the international characterized by borders, divisions and fragmentation, to a unified or borderless world because the chimera of that inclusive, unified world is part of what justifies and makes possible the international of IR.²⁷⁸ Chapter 1 of this thesis canvassed understandings and critiques of sovereignty and how they lead to a sense of entrapment in which the possibilities for political imagination are constrained. A significant part of that sense of entrapment comes from analyzing an international comprised of sovereign states and their borders and imagining that the only moves to be made are to move forward to the universal where states and their borders are left behind, or to stay within the system and try to improve the functioning of sovereign states and the borders and relations between them, sometimes through international institutions and regimes.

To treat international relations and world politics as synonyms is to invite a seductive leap into discourses of universality and universalization. To treat them as antonyms is to invite an equally seductive leap into discourses of specificity and plurality. Both seductions rest on an even more profound desire to believe that, taken together, these very specific discourses of universality and plurality might eventually add up to a politics of the entire world...Accept this assumption...and we can only reproduce the logic of affirmation and negation enabled at the edge of the modern system of sovereign states that claims to be, but never can be, coextensive with the world. Read as both synonym *and* antonym, the relation between an international politics and a world politics affirms both the ambitions and limits-the possibility and impossibility- of specifically modern forms of politics: forms of politics that aspire to be universal, to engage the entire world, yet that must always eventually acknowledge, tacitly or explicitly, that the entire world is forever beyond reach.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ For example, indigenous peoples with different cosmologies or cultures with different understandings of relationality, nature or the existence and everyday presence of gods might understand or know a world (or worlds) outside of the international discussed here that is fundamentally different from what the world outside of the international might be for a western European person. For work that illuminates differences that suggest different ‘worlds’ outside the international see: Alfred, T. and Corntassel, J. ‘Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism,’ *Government and Opposition*, 40:4 (2005), pp. 597-614, Shilliam, R. *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) and Chakrabarty, D. *Provincializing Europe*, 2000.

²⁷⁸ Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe Before the World*.

²⁷⁹ Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe Before the World*, pp. 21-22.

What Walker means here is that, because modern politics and the modern international developed out of historically specific practices in response to historically specific problems that have since been treated as universal, the international sometimes seems like it might be or become commensurate with ‘the world’ in the sense of transcending all the particularities and borders of the international, but that possibility must remain forever on the horizon because the promise of the modern international to resolve the problem of difference has always legitimized it despite the impossibility of fulfilling that promise. The progress available through these moves, either towards universality or the perfection of the international system as it is, is quite conservative in that it either maintains the political settlements that have been enabled by sovereignty or scales up understandings of what a political settlement of issues looks like to a more universal level. Solutions to problems are still thought through the orientation that sovereignty provides to understandings of political subjects, communities and systems, even if those problems do not fit within the boundaries constituted by that orientation, such as environmental degradation or other transnational issues.²⁸⁰

A key reason for this re-tread of either a somehow improved international or a universalized world as the answer to problems with the international system is that the international of IR and thus the world imagined outside of it are thoroughly Eurocentric and grounded in modern, European assumptions about where, when and what politics can be, and who can legitimately engage or participate. These assumptions come from sovereignty as an orientation which shapes modern historical consciousness and the political imagination brought to bear on organizing political life and meeting political challenges.²⁸¹ The Eurocentrism of IR is a subject that has recently received increased attention from IR scholars that are interested in some of the shortcomings and exclusions

²⁸⁰ Hutchings makes a similar point in terms of how the assumption of one world-political present “disregards the extent to which it does or does not fit with the various presents of those people, institutions, communities and states not narrated as the vanguard of historical development.” Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, p. 165. When people assume one world political time, or the universal validity of one form of political settlement, they exclude both the reality and the possibility of alternatives.

²⁸¹ See: Walker, R.B.J. *Inside Outside*, Davenport, A. ‘The International and the Limits of History,’ Rengger, N.J. *International Relations, Political Theory and the Problem of Order*.

of the discipline, the way that they inhibit the discipline's ability to respond to and address political problems, and the ways in which the discipline itself might be creating or contributing to political problems.²⁸² These critiques and attempts at reconstructing the discipline along less Eurocentric lines are an important intervention, particularly as they illuminate the role that IR as a discipline has played in contributing to or creating some of the problems and inequalities that people drawn to the study of IR would like to address- although these critiques from within the discipline are insufficient on their own.

Whether someone working within the discipline wants to explain what they observe in the international, or whether they would like to change or improve it, it is essential to recognize that IR is implicated in what is observed, and in what some thinkers would like to change; the discipline is not a neutral ground.²⁸³ While many thinkers in IR recognize this, particularly post-positivists and postcolonialists, a sense of entrapment prevails in the discipline in terms of how to address this issue because of the way sovereignty orients thinking about the political and political relations because "the establishment of sovereignty in early modern Europe instantiated, for better or worse, *a particular way of being political* and thus recast the basic assumptions of the problem of order."²⁸⁴ Understanding the work that sovereignty does in IR, what it enables and who it enables it for is an important step in being able to reconstruct or reorient both the discipline and the international in the world, although the thesis also argues that it will take more than reflection and investigation into this issue to change or transform political thinking, practice and organization.

The next section will use the work of Buzan and Lawson to illuminate why 'doing better history' in IR will never be enough to address problems with underlying assumptions in the discipline that come from a particular, modern reading of history as a "vision of progress" that

²⁸² For arguments about the Eurocentrism of IR and its relationship to temporality and history see especially: Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, and Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*.

²⁸³ Jahn makes this argument particularly well in a recent article. Jahn, B. 'Theorizing the Political Relevance of International Relations Theory,' *International Studies Quarterly*, 61:1 (2016) pp. 64-77. See also: Onuf, N. *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

²⁸⁴ Rengger, N.J. *International Relations, Political Theory and the Problem of Order*, p. 6.

denies “the significance of the plurality of understandings and experiences of political temporality within the world.”²⁸⁵ The section will focus on disciplinary historical short-hands, particularly 1648 and the ‘Peace of Westphalia’ to understand how such historical short-hands can have profound effects on politics and why simply clarifying the historical reality of the basis for such short-hands or determining more accurate short-hands is insufficient and may be counterproductive or somewhat beside the point.

Periodizing IR: The Work of 1648 and other ‘Benchmark’ Dates

The previous chapter examined the significance of temporality, history as a technology and the role of periodization in sovereignty as an orientation. Within IR, these have become fertile areas from which to critique the discipline and advocate reorganizing or reorienting the discipline. The significance of 1648 for the construction of the discipline and its identity is, justly, a focal point, or point of departure for these critiques, because the 1648 date brings into focus how history has been used to construct the discipline and the understandings of the world that it helps to produce and maintain, particularly its Eurocentrism and relationship to modernity. There have been several explicit challenges to the accuracy and significance of 1648, and the Peace of Westphalia, as starting points for thinking about modernity and IR,²⁸⁶ and those have been picked up on and used by some interested in re-centering the discipline. In their recent work, Buzan and Lawson have called for IR to recognize its beginnings as the discipline it is today in the ‘long nineteenth century’ from 1776 to 1914, and to pay more attention to what they term the Global Transformation that occurred in that time period, which involved transformations in technology, industry, communications, and living patterns.²⁸⁷ Their work suggests displacing or diminishing the

²⁸⁵ Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, p. 127.

²⁸⁶ See for example: Teschke, B. *The Myth of 1648*, Osiander, A. ‘Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth,’ pp. 251–287, and Carvalho de, B. Leira, H., and Hobson, J.M. ‘The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths that Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and 1919,’ *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 735-758.

²⁸⁷ Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. *The Global Transformation*, Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. ‘Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,’ pp. 437-462. See also: Barry, B. and Lawson, G. ‘The Global Transformation: The Nineteenth Century and the Making of Modern International Relations,’ *International Studies Quarterly*, 57:3 (2013) pp. 620-634.

significance of 1648 for how the discipline is organized and understood, and they advocate both for thinking more carefully about and revising what they call ‘benchmark dates’ in IR.²⁸⁸ Their revised benchmark dates would bring the significance of the profound transformations of the nineteenth century to the fore in thinking about IR and how the international has come to be as it is. They also call for recognition that even their new benchmark dates would not be timeless. Things shift and alter in importance; 1945 may not always mean what it does to analysts now, and, hence, 1648 may not be the integral date it once was. Theirs is a fairly straightforward challenge to the place of 1648 in understanding modern IR, which ends up becoming its weakness because they focus too much on why 1648 is historically suspect as a shorthand for the beginnings of the modern international and, by extension, think that sovereignty plays an outsized role in the discipline.²⁸⁹ They want to shift the focus of the discipline to a time period they consider to be more significant to the reality of modern international relations, however, I would argue that IR would be better served by contemplating the purpose or effects of the sustained historical inaccuracies that surround the narratives about sovereignty in the discipline.

Buzan and Lawson here follow Andreas Osiander and Teschke in their assault on the ‘myth’ of 1648 in which they examine the ‘Peace of Westphalia,’ and its treaties and its context to bring forward the point that IR has built a self-understanding around principles for peace that were not in the Treaties of Westphalia or particularly tied to the year 1648.²⁹⁰ Osiander in particular seems disgruntled by the discipline playing fast and loose with history in thinking of the international system as ‘Westphalian,’ overstating the historical and contemporary reality of sovereignty,²⁹¹ and failing to pay due attention to the significance of the nineteenth century for both the discipline of IR and international relations in the world.²⁹² He does good historical work in order to dispel misconceptions about the time period around the 1648 settlement and the content of the treaties

²⁸⁸ Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. ‘Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,’ pp. 458-459.

²⁸⁹ Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. ‘Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,’ pp. 440.

²⁹⁰ Osiander, A. ‘Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth,’ pp. 251–287, Teschke, B. *The Myth of 1648*.

²⁹¹ Osiander, A. ‘Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth,’ pp. 269-273.

²⁹² Osiander, A. ‘Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth,’ pp. 281-284.

themselves that have been influential in IR, most especially in terms of the centrality and meaning of sovereignty. However, the more important question that neither Osiander nor Buzan and Lawson pay enough attention to is *why* 1648 is considered to be so significant for IR, or rather, what that treatment of 1648 has done to and for the discipline.

To be fair, Buzan and Lawson do recognize that benchmark dates have consequences, as they quote in their work de Carvalho, Leira and Hobson's observation that "'The myths [of 1648 and 1919] have had a tremendous function in disciplining our thinking about fundamental issues in international politics, "normalizing" it as common sense and providing the parameters or outer boundaries within which the disciplinary field is contained,"²⁹³ however, I would argue that they pass over this disciplining function in their desire to move the nineteenth century into the foreground for understanding modern international relations without seeing that the myths or historical shorthand of 1648 (and 1919) are precisely what has enabled IR to claim insight into the international as a realm apart or outside of normal political relations, and thus to shape the possibilities for political order and imagination, for some much more than for others.²⁹⁴ Buzan and Lawson understand that IR literature, because of its reliance on historical short-hands to organize how the international is thought about, often fails to address imbalances of power or injustice within the international, and suggest that refocusing on the nineteenth century to ground analyses of how the international came to be as it is would provide a better understanding of these issues and bring IR more in line with other disciplines that recognize the nineteenth century's significance. However, what they overlook, I would argue, is that IR being out of step with other disciplines and paying limited attention to matters of systemic disadvantages and injustice is not a flaw but a feature of IR as a world-making (or even policing or guarding) enterprise. It is worth directly examining the language they use to talk about shortcomings in IR in this respect:

²⁹³ Carvalho de, B., Leira, H. and Hobson, J.M. 'The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths that Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and 1919,' pp.756, quoted in Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. ,Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,' pp. 443.

²⁹⁴ Rengger, N.J. *International Relations, Political Theory and the Problem of Order*, pp. 177-179. See also: Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside*.

This complaint resonates with those who critique much existing IR literature for its weak appreciation of dynamics of imperialism, colonialism, dispossession and expropriation in the formation of modern international order (e.g. Keene, 2002; Shilliam, 2011; Suzuki, 2009). Like the ways in which 1919 delinks IR from its origins in imperialism, racism and geopolitics, other benchmark dates omit the inter-societal configurations which shape macro-historical shifts. Perhaps most notably, the jump from 1648 to 1919 leaves out the inter-societal reconfiguration that, during the ‘long 19th century’, both marked the transformation to global modernity and enabled the West to build a hierarchical international order. This period is the central concern for sociology, historical sociology, economic history, world history and law. Its absence from IR’s orthodox set of benchmark dates is both surprising and problematic.²⁹⁵

To start from the end of this quote, while it is problematic that IR leaves out the transformations of the nineteenth century and that its current benchmark dates of 1648 and 1919 obscure its own history of discrimination and oppression, it should not be surprising. As the previous chapter demonstrated, periodization is not an innocent act and it is not merely a means of organizing time/history so that they are more intelligible to analysis. That IR is organized around benchmark dates that cast it and the international it explains and helps construct in a favorable light is almost as unsurprising as that much of IR literature ignores its imperialist, racist history in favor of claiming an objective position from which to explain and describe a timeless system. By organizing a self-understanding around dates like 1648 and 1919 IR can be a discipline that strives for reason, order, and peace. 1648 and the Peace of Westphalia are a heuristic for the triumph of modern reason, when medieval, irrational religious disputes were settled and left behind. Modernity and the international system that IR studies begin where superstition and backwardness end. 1919 is the moment when IR became a discipline concerned with preventing warfare and securing peace, at least for the modern, rational world. That may not be historically accurate but being historically accurate was never the point. That ‘weak appreciation of dynamics of imperialism, colonialism, dispossession and expropriation in the formation of modern international order’ helps keep that international order in place by downplaying the significance of or ignoring those dynamics, which makes that order seem both more like the result of a natural or logical progression and better than disorder or even an

²⁹⁵ Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. ,Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,’ pp. 441-442.

unknown alternative order.²⁹⁶ Hobson makes this point in discussing examples of whitewashing imperialism in international theory:

In general, the upshot of the emergent Western racist-imperialist guilt complex was not so much a turn away from imperialism in practice...but a desire to hide or obscure imperialism from view in the body of international theory...In Hans Morgenthau's principle work...imperialism is reimagined not as a policy that the West had long deployed vis-à-vis the East, but as a *normal* universal strategy of aspiring great powers in relation to each other. This process...also finds its expression in Hedley Bull's pluralist English School theory, where we encounter a retrospective justification of pre-1945 imperialism as a benign process that diffused civilization across the world.²⁹⁷

Buzan and Lawson point out that the nineteenth century transformation that they want to bring to the fore of IR 'enabled the West to build a hierarchical international order;' is it that surprising that a discipline concerned with that international order and how to maintain it-and mitigate or avoid destabilizing factors like war-has not been organized around a time period in which its 'origins in imperialism, racism and geopolitics' are clearly evident? Those who generally view the international order as positive and necessary would not necessarily want that period to become a central starting point for analysis if it renders claims to neutrality, progress, or even necessity suspect. The self-reckoning that such a shift requires is perhaps too daunting without some other inducement, especially if the alternative is a narrative that gives the sense of something more noble, or at least natural and indispensable. An important point the Buzan and Lawson overlook is the organization of social science disciplines themselves during the 19th century. Their organization was driven in part by imperial expansion which relied on knowledge from emerging social science disciplines to justify imperialism on the basis of scientific racism, and temporal othering or

²⁹⁶Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, pp. 320-321. For examples see Bull, H. *The Anarchical Society*, and Bull, H. and Watson, A. (eds) *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

²⁹⁷Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, pp. 320-321. For examples see: Bull, H. *The Anarchical Society* and Morgenthau, H. *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948/1967).

fragmentation²⁹⁸ which disciplines like sociology, anthropology and especially IR and history supported through practices and techniques like periodization.²⁹⁹

The detailed historical reasons why the Peace of Westphalia is not what many thought it was have neither displaced the significance of 1648 to IR, nor adequately explained why it holds that position and what that means for and about IR. It is an historical shorthand for the transition to modernity or the modern, sovereign states system that has been repeatedly shown to be historically, factually suspect.³⁰⁰ While it may be the case that the discipline is in need of new benchmark dates, and to move away from 1648 and the idea of a ‘Westphalian’ international system or other dates such as 1919 that might need to be reconsidered as well, it is also important not to move too quickly past the effect that disciplinary historical short-hands have had and what the myths surrounding 1648 in particular have enabled within the discipline. The focus or organization of the discipline and prevalent disciplinary thinking and self-understanding are important because they are implicated in the international that IR studies. Replacing its benchmark dates or re-periodizing the discipline is not a relatively minor part of reconstructing the discipline so that it more accurately reflects and represents that international as it is, and so that it might be able to serve as a site for imagining political possibilities that are better able to respond to problems like environmental degradation. Buzan and Lawson’s moves are too conservative, or rather their notion of what improving or moving forward the discipline would look like does not fully consider what it would really mean to re-periodize.

²⁹⁸ See: Thakur, V., Davis, A., and Vale, P. ‘Imperial Mission, ‘Scientific’ Method: An Alternative Account of the Origins of IR,’ *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 46:1 (2017) pp. 3-23, Vitalis, R. *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), and Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, especially part I 1760-1914: Manifest Eurocentrism and Scientific Racism in International Theory, pp. 31-130.

²⁹⁹ See: Shaw, K., *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, especially Chapter 4, which provides a good discussion of the function of the division between IR and Anthropology for legitimizing imperial expansion: Sovereignty and Disciplinarity, pp. 59-85, and Dinshaw, C. *How Soon is Now?* pp. 16-24.

³⁰⁰ See for example: Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. ‘Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations,’ pp. 458-459., Osiander, A. Sovereignty, International Relations and the Westphalian Myth,’ pp. 251–287. Teschke, B. *The Myth of 1648*, Carvalho de, B., Leira, H. and Hobson, J.M. ‘The Big Bangs of IR’ pp. 735-758.

Re-periodizing the discipline might contribute to the undoing of the international that IR studies because it would bring to the fore practices of oppression and violence in the construction of the international system that would call into question its legitimacy or how much ‘order’ it provides for many of the populations that live within it. This is no bad thing, or not necessarily, but it would require a much more profound engagement with sovereignty as an orientation that has shaped understandings of how political order is enabled, what political community and engagement looks like, and who political subjects are and can be. This is precisely because sovereignty is not now and never has been a guarantor of equality among states or the promise of security and freedom through citizenship within the sovereign political community of the state.³⁰¹ Sovereignty is about where power is located, who has it and how it is wielded. The 1648 myth in particular casts sovereignty as a guarantor of equality and freedom in a system where that freedom and equality have been bought at the expense of the certainties of a universal empire characterized by superstition, oppression and backwardness. The vulnerabilities of a system of sovereign equals to war and conflict appear worth the trade off when the supposed alternative is portrayed in such a way. The 1648 story helps the modern political subject to know itself as a free individual who can flourish within the security of the borders of the sovereign political community of the state, rather than in a universal, Christian empire, for example.³⁰² No matter its shortcomings, the modern world 1648 established is taken as obviously better than what came before, and the only alternatives seem like a move backwards. To re-periodize would be to confront uncomfortable realities about the costs of freedom and individuality to the ability of people to live with each other, about which states are able to wield

³⁰¹ For a related point see Krasner, S. *Organized Hypocrisy*.

³⁰² Mike Williams makes this point in writing about Hobbes and the breakdown of Medieval Christian Empire. “A central goal of Hobbes’ state of nature is to demonstrate to individuals (in a context of dominated by the Thirty Years War and the English Civil War) the importance of the relationship between knowledge claims, political authority and social peace. A return to the state of nature is a metaphor (and a warning) illuminating the dynamics of social conflict arising from the absence of both cultural consensus and a sovereign authority...Hobbes seeks to convince individuals of the need for a sovereign authority and of their need to obey it. Moreover, he seeks to provide a rational foundation for political authority that would supplant the now unstable and unsustainable beliefs of traditional political authorities.’ Williams, M.C. ‘The Hobbesian Theory of International Relations, p. 257.

sovereign power, and what the promise and progress of modernity is if inequality, hierarchy, or domination are the real condition of the sovereign system.³⁰³

It is not that Buzan and Lawson are not interested in acknowledging and confronting inequalities and oppressive practices at the heart of IR,³⁰⁴ but that in focusing more on material changes in the 19th century and not fully considering what sovereignty as an orientation is and does for IR, they underestimate what kind of change re-periodizing and re-centering the discipline might bring about:

This period set the material conditions under which a global international system came into being. It forged the ideologies for which tens of millions of people died. And it generated many inequalities within the international order-political, military, economic and cultural-that continue to define contemporary international relations... Given the importance of these dynamics, it is little surprise that many social sciences see the global transformation as their starting point... it may be that the residual role IR plays within the contemporary academy is, at least in part, related to its failure to provide compelling accounts of global modernity. IR's failure in this regard means that the discipline is missing out on one of its core contributions to social science.³⁰⁵

The problem here is that they are concerned with bringing IR into line with other social sciences instead of thinking about the implications of the relationship between IR as a discipline and international relations and order in the world. Changing the discipline may mean changing the world that other social sciences exist within and study.

The work of Buzan and Lawson, and others that they draw from, is challenging the history of the international and thus the organization of the discipline of IR without fully considering that re-organization to better reflect reality might destabilize that reality. Such destabilization might be

³⁰³ Of course, the idea that equality defines the relationship between sovereign states in the international system would always have been questionable to people living in states that have not usually been treated like equals in reality. Hutchings makes this point especially clear in her discussion of perceptions of humanitarian intervention. "From the point of view of presents defined primarily in relation to colonised and subjugated pasts, it is hardly surprising that humanitarian intervention, whether military or otherwise, tends to be explained and evaluated not as an example of world historical progress nor as 'empire' but as imperialism or realpolitik, and not as the overcoming of sovereign power (for good or ill), but as the confirmation of the radical asymmetries of the sovereign power of states in the contemporary international system." Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, p. 166. The next section deals with the hierarchical nature of the international system in more depth.

³⁰⁴ See especially: Buzan, B. and Lawson G. *The Global Transformation*, chapter 6 Establishing a Core-Periphery International Order, pp. 171-196.

³⁰⁵ Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. *The Global Transformation*, pp. 44-45.

exactly what is needed to meet growing challenges like environmental degradation, but it is also important to be clear-eyed about the implications of critique and what things like re-organization mean for a discipline that is organized by sovereignty as orientation.³⁰⁶ The next section will look at work in which sovereignty is more central to the analysis of problems in IR, and which thus comes closer to understanding how much of a reckoning the discipline and the international would face if a disorientation from sovereignty takes place. The chapter will then consider whether critique from within the discipline will be enough to catalyze such a change.

Hierarchies of Sovereignty

The idea of sovereign equality among states is part and parcel of the Westphalian international that the 1648 shorthand is meant to serve as the foundation for in IR. There is no sovereign above states in the international system, thus it is a system characterized by anarchy in which no state is above another. Chapter one noted that two of the most sustained critiques of the centrality of sovereignty in IR are that 1) the reality is that states are not equal within the system and 2) certain groups and peoples are marginalized and disempowered as a result of the operations of sovereignty despite the promise of citizenship. This section will argue that there are indeed hierarchies of sovereignty or sovereign states that favor some states and populations within and across them at the expense of others. It will then argue that this is not a failure of the concept of sovereignty to describe the world as it is, but a function of sovereignty as an orientation at work in a Eurocentric discipline that that has not yet been forced by external events or challenges to disorient away from viewing sovereignty as the way that political order is thought through. IR has not yet been forced to reconstruct and reorient itself in a new way that might open up different possibilities for political settlements, though the challenges of environmental degradation may force such a reconstruction. Recent criticisms from within IR will help illuminate the sources and functions of

³⁰⁶ Hutchings, for example, is much more direct about the destabilizing or disorienting function that changing temporal frames or including more heterogeneous temporalities into IR would have and also makes a much stronger case for just such destabilizing in Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, especially Chapter 7 *Thinking the Present*, pp. 154-177, and Hutchings, K. 'Happy Anniversary! Time and Critique in International Relations Theory,' *Review of International Studies*, 33:S1 (2007) pp. 71–89.

hierarchies in IR, and the section will then consider both why sovereignty is still so central to the discipline and what that means for the international or the world that IR is meant to analyze, especially in light of the problems of environmental degradation.

The work of Hobson is particularly important in any discussion of the realities of hierarchies of sovereignty in IR as he has been at the forefront of the discipline in arguing that not only that there is a hierarchy of sovereign states both historically and in modernity, but also that IR often excludes historical realities about the history of modernity and sovereignty, or the development of the Westphalian international because it is a Eurocentric discipline that helps maintain a Eurocentric international order.³⁰⁷ In *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, Hobson traces both manifest and subliminal Eurocentrism in international theory to show how Eurocentric understandings of the international have helped to construct a global hierarchy and ‘graded sovereignty,’³⁰⁸ whether that Eurocentrism has been an expression of imperialism, racism and paternalism, or not. His work shows that despite repeated insistence on anarchy being the defining feature of the international system, the Eurocentrism of both international political practices and the discipline itself have always had gradations or hierarchies of sovereignty, with ‘civilized’ Western states at the top of or central to the international order.

[s]overeignty never has been understood as an objective and universal fixed attribute of all states, but has always been constructed through an *inequalitarian* discourse depending on the particular Eurocentric/racial conception of civilisation that underpins each theory. Moreover, these discourses focus principally on the domestic cultural/institutional or racial attributes of states at the domestic level, which is then carried over into the international realm to provide a picture of the social-civilisational or racial differences between Eastern and Western states...we need to go one step further by recognising that within international theory sovereignty has been grounded in various Eurocentric metanarratives that place the standard of civilisation centre-stage.³⁰⁹

This critique echoes those like Bartelson and Chakrabarty who argue that sovereignty is only granted on a contingent basis to states that have to demonstrate their adherence to European

³⁰⁷ Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*. See also: Hobson, J.M. ‘The Twin Self-delusions of IR: Why ‘Hierarchy’ and not ‘Anarchy’ is the Core Concept of IR,’ *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 42(3) (2014) pp. 557-575, and Hobson, J.M. and Sharman, J. ‘The Enduring Place of Hierarchy in World Politics,’ *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:1 (2005) pp. 63-98.

³⁰⁸ Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, p. 313.

³⁰⁹ Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, pp. 334-335.

standards of legitimacy and governance.³¹⁰ It is not then the case that sovereignty does not accurately reflect the reality of the international system or the experience of states as some critics maintain, but that equality has never been the reality of relations between states. The problem here is not that sovereignty does not describe the system, but that sovereignty plays more roles in organizing the international that many international theorists acknowledge:

Thus by arguing that Eurocentric international theory never has embraced a uniform equalitarian conception of sovereignty we necessarily confront the counter-intuitive and deeply paradoxical point that international theorists have failed to recognise why, in the end, it turns out that there is little or no gap between the theory of sovereignty/anarchy and the practice of gradated sovereignty/hierarchy. For this is precisely because all Eurocentric theories of sovereignty explicitly or implicitly invoke a hierarchical conception of world politics that entails the idea of gradated sovereignty.³¹¹

One of the key strengths of Hobson's analysis of sovereignty and Eurocentrism is that continuously draws attention to the fact that the issues he is raising are ongoing, contemporary problems, not just past transgressions. While Buzan and Lawson, in contrast, acknowledge the inequalities that shaped the international and IR in the nineteenth century, they also argue overall that those inequalities have been and continue to be eroded.³¹² For Hobson, however, favorably comparing the contemporary international and IR as a discipline with their nineteenth century antecedents is a form of the 'temporal othering'³¹³ discussed in the last chapter where an image of something, in this case nineteenth century IR, is constructed that justifies or elevates the modern or contemporary as being clearly better than what came before:

[t]he contemporary politics of Eurocentrism is whitewashed and consigned to history, removing it from the present and quarantining it alongside the racism of the nineteenth century...this very Eurocentric sleight of hand is performed through the construction of a temporal binary, where the nineteenth century is (re)presented as more racially intolerant and imperialist than it was so that the post-1989 era could be portrayed as more tolerant, culturally pluralist and anti-imperialist than it is. For the contemporary era, much of international theory is not less intolerant than was its nineteenth century ancestor and certainly no less imperialist. Indeed, one of the more striking developments...concerns the

³¹⁰ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, especially Chapter 3 and Chakrabarty, D. *Provincializing Europe*, p. 4.

³¹¹ Hobson, J. M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, p. 337. Jahn makes a very similar point in her discussion of the development and spread of liberalism. See: Jahn, B. *Liberal Internationalism*, pp. 56-57.

³¹² Buzan, B. and Lawson, G. *The Global Transformation*, especially chapter 7.

³¹³ This term originates from Prozorov, S. 'The Other as Past and Present: Beyond the Logic of 'Temporal Othering' in IR Theory,' *Review of International Studies*, 37:3 (2001) pp. 1273-1293.

way in which international theory after 1989 has returned almost directly to manifest 'Eurocentric' forms that it took in the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth. While the discursive *form* of scientific racism has not re-appeared in international theory, it is nevertheless striking how much of its *content* finds its contemporary voice in offensive and defensive Eurocentric institutionalism.³¹⁴

Like the medieval serving as modernity's temporal other that elevates it by comparison, the nineteenth century and past practices of overt imperialism and racism are sometimes used to make the contemporary international and IR seem far more innocent and evolved than the reality warrants.³¹⁵ While certain overt practices of racism and imperialism became unacceptable during the twentieth century because of things like anti-imperialist rhetoric from both the US and USSR in the cold war, that did not mean that racism and imperialism disappeared from the international and IR, or even became less significant. "In general, the upshot of the emergent Western racist-imperialist guilt complex was not so much a turn away from imperialism in practice, given that both the Western superpowers continued it in a variety of ways between 1945 and 1989-even if it reined in Europe's imperialist ambitions- but a desire to hide or obscure imperialism from view in the body of international theory."³¹⁶ Racism, imperialism and the general inequalities of the international became more sublimated than overt, but it is still the case for Hobson that IR theory as it is cannot claim to be a value-free or objective enterprise that merely describes and explains the world. The Eurocentric foundations of IR that defend and celebrate the 'ideal of the West' in the international world order have to be acknowledged in order for change and reconstruction of IR and the international to take place.³¹⁷

Conclusion: Disorienting from Sovereignty as Orientation: How Reconstruction Begins

³¹⁴ Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, p. 325.

³¹⁵ Hobson offers several examples of this 'whitewashing', particularly from Hedley Bull and Adam Watson from the English School. Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, pp. 320-321.

³¹⁶ Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, p. 320.

³¹⁷ Hobson, J.M. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, p. 344. Jahn has also recently re-iterated the point that IR is not a value-free, explanatory exercise. Jahn, B. 'Theorizing the Political Relevance of International Relations Theory,' pp. 64-77.

I have argued that the historical technique of periodization plays a fundamental role in producing the international system predicated on sovereignty, and that the temporal dimensions of sovereignty create a politics tied to the present. Therefore, re-periodizing the discipline, especially away from 1648 as a point of departure, would represent a much more fundamental and consequential re-organization of both IR as a discipline and international politics in practice than proponents of re-periodization seem to recognize. The so-called medieval/modern divide, marked in IR by the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, is produced through history as a technology that has consequences for people now in terms of their ability to engage politically in the modern world. This divide helps constitute what kinds of actors and ways of being in the world are and are not legitimate, what they are able to say, and what people are able to say and know about them.³¹⁸ Modern, sovereign subjects are theoretically afforded the political identity that allows them to count or to engage, whereas the medieval (or: backwards, indigenous etc.) are excluded or marginalized as the other against which the modern understand themselves. Periodization and re-periodization should not be viewed as intellectual exercises of convenience or that merely make it easier to analyze a certain span of history. This is especially important in IR because IR as a discipline helps to produce or create the international world that it studies and describes. The way that it puts the technology of history, particularly the technique of periodization, to use has political consequences because it uses history to construct the political world it deals with.

Hobson's analysis is well-taken and his work, along with those like Hutchings,³¹⁹ Barry Hindess,³²⁰ and Inayatullah and Blaney³²¹ who connect sovereignty, temporality and Eurocentrism in their critiques of IR are welcome and necessary for clarifying the stakes of IR theory and the international in the world and some of the changes in thinking that will be required to reconstruct the discipline so that it is not a Eurocentric enterprise oriented by sovereignty. What Hobson and

³¹⁸ Hutchings, K. 'What is Orientation in Thinking', p. 201.

³¹⁹ Hutchings, K. *Time in World Politics*.

³²⁰ Hindess, B. 'The Past is Another Culture,' *International Political Sociology*, 1:4 (2007) pp. 325–338, and Helliwell, C. and Hindess, B. 'The Past in the Present,' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (2011).

³²¹ Inayatullah, N. and Blaney, D. *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*.

Hutchings in particular seem to understand is that sovereignty, especially in light of the inequalities that are part of how it operates in the international, and the sovereign international system can never be coterminous with humanity. This is significant when it comes to trying to find the political will and ability to address a problem that affects all of humanity, like environmental degradation. However, these disciplinary critiques are insufficient in themselves to effect the change that they call for. As close as they come to grasping sovereignty as an orientation and the implications of that reality, the following chapters will further examine how the political orientation of sovereignty creates the conditions for environmental degradation. They will also help set up the argument of the conclusion that the destabilization or disorientation away from sovereignty as the way political relations in the world are ordered and understood, and how problems are solved, requires an external challenge- one that environmental degradation represents. To clarify and inculcate the understanding that problems within the sovereign system cannot be solved by simply improving sovereignty or doing sovereignty better, IR and the international needs an external problem that both makes it clear that sovereignty cannot bear the weight of a problem that affects all of humanity like environmental degradation, and thus should not be the way that the political is oriented to understand and solve problems, and that needs urgently to be addressed.

Chapter 4: Spatiality, Temporality, Nature and the We-I Balance of the the Political Orientation of Sovereignty

*The Anthropocene has reversed the temporal order of modernity: those at the margins are now the first to experience the future that awaits us all; it is they who confront most directly what Thoreau called 'vast, Titanic, inhuman nature.'*³²²

*The wall of separation between natural and human histories that was erected in early modernity and reinforced in the nineteenth century as the human sciences and their disciplines consolidated themselves has some serious and long-running cracks in it.*³²³

Introduction

The first three chapters of this thesis examined the contours of sovereignty as orientation, while the following chapter will explore some of the weaknesses of responses to environmental degradation from within this orientation in more detail. The task of this chapter is to further develop and clarify the significance of thinking of sovereignty as an orientation by connecting its temporal and spatial dimensions and exploring how sovereignty as a political orientation conditions perceptions of nature and a 'We-I' balance that contributes to the problem of environmental degradation. This chapter will help clarify the ways in which environmental degradation is associated with ideational problems with politics in modernity and argues that without addressing these ideational problems there is very little chance that existential and political challenges of environmental degradation can be met.

Chapters 2 and 3 developed the idea of sovereignty as an orientation that helps constitute subjects, communities and the system they exist within and that brings them into relations with each other. Chapter 3 in particular examined how IR as a discipline is both influenced by the political orientation of sovereignty and helps maintain that orientation in politics in the world. Using the work of Hobson and others, it demonstrated how the political orientation of sovereignty helps create a hierarchy between states and political subjects in the modern international order. This chapter will

³²² Ghosh, A. *The Great Derangement*, p. 63.

³²³ Chakrabarty, D. 'Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,' *New Literary History*, 43:1 (2012), p. 10.

further expand upon and take up that idea through an exploration of the interplay between spatial and temporal dimensions of sovereignty as an orientation. This in turn will help illuminate the problematic separation between nature and humanity that has been an integral part of political modernity. The work of Bruno Latour will be especially useful in understanding the divisions between humanity and nature that have developed in modernity and the consequences of those divisions. The integration of different dimensions of sovereignty as an orientation will also help clarify why some of the problems resulting from a division between humanity and nature, or the centrality of the human in political modernity that Latour and other critical and posthumanist scholars identify have been so intractable. In relation to this, the chapter sets up the argument that limiting attention to sovereignty as a set of practices or theoretical relations between states ignores fundamental aspects of the role of sovereignty in political modernity. It also limits the ability of a discipline like IR to think seriously about transnational political challenges, or to see clearly the role of academic practices in reproducing sovereignty as an orientation.

This chapter is in 4 sections and will extend the argument that understanding sovereignty as an orientation that shapes assumptions about and helps constitute political communities, individuals within them, and relations between them and towards ‘nature’ helps provide a better grasp of the problem of environmental degradation. The first section will examine spatial and temporal dimensions of sovereignty in tandem. The second section will build from this to provide a better understanding of how sovereignty as an orientation also helps constitute understandings of and relationships to nature in modernity and some of their consequences. The work of Latour on the politics of the idea of nature is important in this respect, as he has long been a leading critic of the mental landscapes of modernity, particularly of sovereignty, and the way the division between past and present (periodization), and the idea of nature are used to construct the concept of modernity.³²⁴ The third section will further explore how sovereignty as an orientation has enabled

³²⁴ Latour, B. *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour, B. *The Politics of Nature*, Latour, B. ‘‘Onus Orbus Terrarum’ About a Possible Shift in the Definition of Sovereignty,’ *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 44:S1 (2016), Latour, B. ‘Does the Body Politic Need a New Body?’ *Yusko War-Phillips Lecture*, University of Notre Dame, November 2016.

and shaped understandings of nature and a ‘We-I’ balance that are pre-conditions of environmental degradation. This section will also incorporate a discussion of how property and capital are situated in political modernity and how sovereignty as an orientation creates the conditions in which they become key elements in the problem of environmental degradation. The fourth section will examine different approaches to addressing environmental degradation outside of the mainstream, including arguments about harm and political community that have tried to challenge and re-shape political relations to address environmental issues as a matter of global justice, as well as Green Radical discourses. This section will then help explain why these alternative approaches and radical discourses have struggled to make an impact within the political order oriented by sovereignty.

A Sense of Time, a Sense of Place: Spatiality and Temporality

Chapter 2 of this thesis differentiates Bartelson’s understanding of sovereignty as a symbolic order from sovereignty as an orientation by arguing that Bartelson has a geometric understanding of sovereignty that pays insufficient attention to the temporal dimensions of sovereignty which help constitute the political communities of states and the subjects within them in time as well as space. Bartelson follows John Gerard Ruggie’s well known intervention that the introduction of linear or single-point perspective in Renaissance art altered European understandings of space and territory in ways that allowed people to imagine territorially demarcated sovereign states.³²⁵ Bartelson, however, adds to this by arguing that Ruggie’s argument about the significance of linear perspective does not provide an adequate account of the assumption of a connection between authority and territory in definitions of modern sovereignty because linear perspective concerns a two-dimensional imaginary rather than a three-dimensional imaginary implied by the idea of having authority over a spatially bounded territory.³²⁶ Instead, Bartelson argues that it was developments in cartography and geography in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century that made it possible

³²⁵ Ruggie, J.G. ‘Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,’ pp. 139-174

³²⁶ Bartleson, *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 26

to conceptualize the world as a globe that that could be divided “into distinct spatial portions by means of geometrical methods and for the subsequent subjection of these portions to exclusive sovereignty claims.”³²⁷ Globes and maps made it possible to imagine sovereign states, and the imagination of states as spatial containers over which power and authority are exercised is a foundational part of modern understandings and practices of sovereignty.³²⁸

The spatial dimensions of sovereignty are extremely important in terms of understanding how sovereignty acts a political orientation for political modernity. As John Agnew points out, “The total sovereignty of the state over its territorial space in a world fragmented into territorial states gives the state its most powerful justification,”³²⁹ and Walker rightly notes that understandings of space in modernity shape and constrain political imagination about where political communities are located and the kinds of political communities they can be, which means that “the spatial limits of the state become the limits of theoretical reconstruction.”³³⁰ For Schmitt, whose work on sovereignty and the centrality of the moment of decision or exception has been used in chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis to illuminate the present-centric temporality of sovereignty, there is also a fundamental relationship between political order and space. This is because, Schmitt argues in *Nomos of the Earth*, modern political order develops on the basis of how land is distributed between peoples after ‘appropriation’ or wars and conflicts over territory have been fought.³³¹ The reason, then, that this thesis focuses so heavily on the temporal dimensions of sovereignty is not for lack of recognition of the significance of spatial understandings of sovereignty and the state, but because

³²⁷ Bartleson, *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 26

³²⁸ Elden, S. ‘Missing the Point: Globalization: Derritorialization and the Space of the World.’ *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30:1 (2005) pp. 8-19; Agnew, J. ‘The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory.’ *Review of International Political Economy* 1:1 (1994) pp. 53–80; Walker, *Inside/ Outside*, pg. 125-140

³²⁹ Agnew, ‘The Territorial Trap,’ p. 60.

³³⁰ Walker, *Inside/Outside*, p. 140.

³³¹ Schmitt, C. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europeaum*, Translated by Ulmen, G. New York: Telos Press, 2006).

spatiality and territory are already understood as significant within IR and other social sciences.³³²

While a geographer like Stuart Elden might wish for IR to adopt a more complex understanding of spatiality, he still notes that “International Relations as a discipline recognizes the importance of territory to its fundamental concerns.”³³³ Time and temporality, however, are more difficult to visualize and imagine and the tools we have to ‘map’ time such as clocks and calendars do not capture the power and significance of time for politics in the same way as maps themselves have done for space. Temporality and the way people understand and relate to time are at least as important to the way that sovereignty orients understandings of political communities and political relations or how modern subjects and states are constituted, but it is harder to see temporality.

It is widely understood that sovereignty has spatial dimensions and that the exercise of authority over space or territory underpins modern understandings and practices of sovereignty, but by drawing attention to the temporal dimensions of sovereignty as well it is possible to more fully understand the power of sovereignty and the problems it helps create. Again, as Fasolt points out, modern states and subjects are sovereign over space as well as in time, and the freedom of states and modern individuals derives in great measure from their freedom in time from past constraints and future obligations.³³⁴ It is the interplay of the spatial *and* temporal dimensions of sovereignty that constitute modern states and subjects as free, autonomous actors through the temporal emphasis on the present or short-term, and a spatial emphasis on the division of territory into autonomous units with free, individual political subjects. Latour echoes this point in a recent critique of sovereignty in which he argues that modern sovereignty has served as the basis for a political order predicated on dividing a “chunk of space-time”³³⁵ into entities with borders that define both their spatial territory and temporal location. This political order, according to Latour, does not represent

³³² Malm, for example, notes that critical theory has moved towards space or a ‘spatial turn’ for decades. Malm, *Fossil Capital*, p. 6.

³³³ Elden, ‘Missing the Point,’ p. 10.

³³⁴ Fasolt, *The Limits of History*, p. 7. See also: Fasolt, ‘Breaking up Time-Escaping from Time,’ pp. 194-195

³³⁵ Latour, “Onus Orbis Terrarum,” p. 313.

the realities of the envelopment and interpenetration of entities, whether they are “empires, nation-states, lobbies, networks, international organisations, corporations, diasporas,” and that the ‘fictions’ of sovereignty have consequences, especially in relation to ecological or environmental issues. He uses the example of the Paris 2015 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change conference (COP21) to illustrate what he considers to be a major problem with the ‘unreality’ of sovereignty. “If there was one thing clear in such an assembly, it was the complete unrealism of their borrowed notion of sovereignty: sovereign states framed by sharp borders were discussing how to collectively bear something that crossed through all borders, and that over a few centuries had entangled them much more tightly than war or commerce had ever been able to do.”³³⁶ States, defined by their borders in space and time, a struggling to address environmental problems that cannot be bordered in space and time.

The division of space and time into sovereign states and other entities make it difficult for those entities in the modern political order to comprehend or address environmental degradation, but those divisions also contribute to the pre-conditions of environmental degradation. The divisions between the political community of the state, and the constitution of modern, free individual subjects in those communities contribute to the the development of an out of balance We-I’ balance where identification is stronger with the ‘I’ or individual at the expense of ‘We’ identifications or more collective relations, and one in which short-term understandings of self-interest make it more difficult to fully comprehend the problems of environmental degradation or sustain long-term and far-sighted cooperation to address those problems. The foundational divisions of the modern political order also construct ‘nature’ as a timeless backdrop humanity is separate

³³⁶ Latour, “Onus Orbus Terrarum,” p. 320. The problem of bounded states trying to cope with environmental problems that cannot be bounded in the same way is also noted by: Dalby, S. ‘Environmental Geopolitics in the Twenty-first Century.’ *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 39:1 (2014) p. 10; Harrington, C. ‘The Ends of the World: International Relations and the Anthropocene.’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44:3 (2016) pp. 478-498; Burke, A., Fishel, S., Mitchell, A., Dalby, S., and Levine, D. J. ‘Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR.’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44:3 (2016) p. 501; and Fagan, M. ‘Security in the Anthropocene: Environment, Ecology, Escape.’ *European Journal of International Relations* 23:2 (2017) pp. 292-314.

from and can exploit for its own advantages and over which it can exercise control. This in turn helps create the conditions for the rampant growth and expansion of capital and unsustainable consumption seen in the modern period that environmental literature identifies as a key part of the problem of environmental degradation.³³⁷ The next section will use the work of Latour in particular to explore the problematic role of ‘nature’ in modernity as a separate category from which politics and modern political subjects are divided as well as defined in opposition to nature and by their control over that nature. This will be followed by an examination of the idea of a ‘We-I’ balance that is skewed towards short-term understandings of self-interest that make it difficult to address environmental degradation, before moving on to a discussion of how sovereignty as an orientation helps create and secure the conditions for property and the expansion of capital.

Is Nature Natural? How Understandings of Nature Have Been Oriented by Sovereignty

The Cartesian division of nature from humanity is fundamental to the framework of modernity,³³⁸ and humanity’s control over nature is frequently identified as a defining feature of modernity.³³⁹ The idea that ‘[M]odernity promised control over nature through science,’³⁴⁰ is practically a commonplace belief, and understanding the role of nature in modernity is a starting point for analyses and critiques of modernity.³⁴¹ As concerns about ecological destruction and

³³⁷ See: Malm, *Fossil Capital*; Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*; Lohmann, L. ‘Capital and Climate Change,’ *Development and Change* 42:2 (2011) pp. 649-66; Paterson, M. *Understanding Global Environmental Politics* (New York: Macmillan Press, 2000)

³³⁸ Toulmin, S. *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990) p. 107.

³³⁹ This is central to Marx’s discussion of the labour process and there are a range of examples from those that provide a neutral recounting of the relationship between nature and modernity, to those that strongly critique or strongly defend modernity and the notion of mastery over nature. See: Marx, K. *Capital Volume I* (London: Penguin Books, 1990) especially Chapter 7: The Labour Process and Valorization Process, pp. 283-306, Elias, N. *The Civilizing Process*, revised edition, edited by Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), pp. 419-420; de Benoist, A. ‘A Brief History of the Idea of Progress,’ *The Occidental Quarterly*, 8:1 (2008) pp. 7-8, Gopnik, A. *Winter: Five Windows on the Season* (London: Quercus Editions, 2011) p. 3, Huntington, S. ‘The Change to Change: Modernization, Development and Politics,’ *Comparative Politics*, 3:3 (1971), pp. 283-322, Norgaard, R. *Development Betrayed: The End of Progress and a Co-Evolutionary Revisiting of the Future* (London: Routledge, 1994), Toulmin, S. *Cosmopolis*, pp. 107-113.

³⁴⁰ Norgaard, R. *Development Betrayed*, p. 1.

³⁴¹ See especially: Rengger, N.J. *Political Theory, Modernity and Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995). particularly chapter 3: An Ethico-Political Imperative, pp. 129-198.

environmental degradation have grown, the move to critique the role of nature in political modernity has been taken in a new direction by critical and posthumanist scholars who have argued that nature is an artificial or constructed category that is particular to Eurocentric understandings of the world. A key purpose of this critique is to question or de-centre the place of the human in the cosmology of political modernity because a human centric understanding of the world relies on the division of the human from the environments that they live in and denies or fails to recognize the entanglement of all life forms and the agency and significance of life forms beside the human.³⁴² Bruno Latour is a leading posthumanist scholar and much of his career has been built first on the interrogation and critique of modernity³⁴³ and more recently on clarifying how the division between humanity and nature operates to create intractable political problems. In his work, Latour argues not only that the division between nature and humanity in modernity, and the notion that humanity has mastered or is sovereign over nature is problematic, but also that the whole concept of nature that exists in political modernity is a category of modernity that needs to be challenged and dismantled if people are to address environmental challenges and prevent ecological collapse.³⁴⁴

Latour speaks of ‘two houses’ in modernity, the house of politics and the house of nature.³⁴⁵ The house of politics is a man-made or social world where people agree “by convention to create fictions devoid of any external reality.”³⁴⁶ One of the most important of these fictions for Latour is an understanding of sovereignty that assumes that entities, including but not limited to states, have clearly defined borders or boundaries in both time and space.³⁴⁷ This fiction creates serious

³⁴² See: Youatt, R. ‘Personhood and the Rights of Nature: The New Subjects of Contemporary Earth Politics.’ *International Political Sociology* 11 (2017) pp 39-54; Mitchell, A. ‘Is IR Going Extinct?’ *European Journal of International Relations* 23:1 (2017) pp. 3- 25; Chandler, D., Cudworth, E., and Hobden, S. ‘Anthropocene, Capitalocene and Liberal Cosmopolitan IR: A Response to Burke et al.’s ‘Planet Politics.’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 46:2 (2018) pp. 190-208; Cudworth, E. and Hobden, S. ‘Complexity, Ecologism and Posthuman Politics.’ *Review of International Studies* 39:4 (2012) pp. 643-664; Haraway, D. ‘Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin.’ *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015) pp. 159-165.

³⁴³ See: Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, etc

³⁴⁴ Latour, B. *The Politics of Nature* See also: Latour, B. *We Have Never Been Modern*.

³⁴⁵ Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, p. 13.

³⁴⁶ Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, p. 14.

³⁴⁷ Latour, ‘*Onus Orbis Terrarum*’, pp. 311-312.

problems in relation to ecological or environmental issues because those issues penetrate those boundaries or cannot be contained by them and those boundaries limit the ability to envision alternative forms of political communities and relations.³⁴⁸ The house of nature has the authority of timeless reality, although it cannot speak for itself.³⁴⁹ Nature is separate from politics and people are envisioned as separate from nature and its objects, entities and processes. In this two-house understanding of the world, nature ‘aborts’ politics because nature is the timeless, external reality and the multiplicity of things humans do and think are mere fictions, conventions, or constructs.³⁵⁰ This means, in turn, that those who can speak for nature or make nature speak wield the most power in the house of politics. Those who can make nature speak are those who have harnessed the power of Science, which Latour differentiates from the sciences. ‘Science’, as opposed to the sciences, is defined as “the politicization of the sciences through epistemology in order to render ordinary political life impotent through the threat of incontestable nature,”³⁵¹ meaning that the idea of ‘Nature’ can be used to undercut political contestations or struggles between people in the ‘house of politics’ if those who understand ‘Science’ appeal to the authority of ‘Nature’ to make the distinction between facts and values. Nature is an eternal, true backdrop that Science and those who understand Science (which is not coterminous with sciences and scientists) can use to impose control and hierarchies in the house of politics. Science and those who speak its language can arbitrate whose cosmologies or understandings of the world are legitimate, and what sets of behaviors, practices, and beliefs are rational because they speak for ‘reality’ or nature. “‘Nature’ is what makes it possible to recapitulate the hierarchy of beings in a single ordered series.”³⁵² The house or idea of nature is then a technique of control in modernity, another means of defining and excluding ‘others’ on the basis of their beliefs and relationships to ‘nature’ and its reality. This

³⁴⁸ Latour, ‘*Onus Orbis Terrarum*.’ See also Walker, Inside/ Outside, and Walker, R.B.J. *Out of Line: Essays on the Politics of Boundaries the Limits of Modern Politics* (New York: Routledge Press, 2016) Dalby, S. ‘Environmental Geopolitics in the Twenty-first Century.’

³⁴⁹ Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, pp. 13-14.

³⁵⁰ Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, pp. 18-19.

³⁵¹ Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, p. 10.

³⁵² Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, p. 25.

bears similarities to the idea of ‘temporal othering’ or temporal fragmentation discussed in previous chapters, because the idea of Nature can be used to label groups of people, like indigenous communities, as both being ‘closer to nature’ and so not really a part of the ‘house of politics’ in modernity, *and* as having less of an understanding of the realities or power of nature and how to control it through scientific knowledge.

Latour draws from comparative anthropology to demonstrate not so much that other cultures (often categorized as ‘non-modern’) have different understandings of nature from the West, but that they often have no conception of nature.³⁵³ The division between nature and humanity (or the political and social world) that is part and parcel of modernity is by no means natural. A common trope that other cultures are somehow closer to nature or more in harmony with it does not stand up to scrutiny, but rather reflects:

two symmetrical exoticisms: the one that makes Westerners believe that they are detached from nature because they have forgotten the lessons of other cultures and live in a world of pure, efficient, profitable and objective things; and the one that made other cultures believe that they had lived too long in the fusion between the natural order and the social order, and that they needed to finally, in order to accede to modernity, to take into account the nature of things ‘as they are’.³⁵⁴

Instead, comparative anthropologists with a more pluralist and less ethnocentric lens have found that “other cultures under consideration did not blend the social order and the natural order at all;

³⁵³ Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, p. 43. As noted, this viewpoint is commonly shared by anthropologists, and Andrew Bauer makes this point particularly well: “As a point of entry to this discussion, it is worth highlighting that a great deal of anthropological scholarship has shown that a clear division between society and nature is not a universal cultural categorization. If, as many have argued, the Anthropocene represents a period in which people no longer recognize a stark divide between nature and society in their environmental conceptualizations, then it is worth pointing out that many of earth’s human inhabitants were living in it long before Western scientists began documenting human-induced global warming and named the epoch... The Anthropocene as an analytical framing device that opposes humans and nature potentially fails to capture... alternative modes of categorizing human interactions with nonhuman environmental constituents. In this sense, it neglects the various ways that the materials that constitute the environment might be differentially conceptualized, perceived, and experienced, potentially limiting the range of political responses to climate change to those that conform to a high-modernist ideology of controlling natural forces. Furthermore, by reproducing the concept of nature, it also ushers in an implicit politics of knowledge production, creating a political epistemology that often gives Western scientists and technocrats a privileged position to define natural and desirable environmental conditions.” Bauer, A. ‘Questioning the Anthropocene and its Silences: Socioenvironmental History and the Climate Crisis,’ *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, 3: Environmental Humanities from Below (2016), pp. 415-4.16.

³⁵⁴ Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, p. 46.

they were unconcerned by the distinction. To be unaware of a dichotomy is not at all the same thing as combining two sets into one- still less ‘getting beyond’ the distinction between the two.’³⁵⁵ The concept of nature has developed in a particular Western or European context and has served to privilege a certain understanding of the human as distinct from the rest of the environment, and with the right and ability to exercise control over the environment. Furthermore, humans that relate with and understand the environment or their environments differently are non or less modern and thus less powerful or deserving of equal respect or recognition.

Previous chapters have examined the hierarchies of political modernity and the international system, as well as practices of colonization and exploitation. People that were designated as ‘savages’ in order to justify colonial expansion and land seizures felt the cutting edge of this division between man and nature. To naturalize something is to remove it from contestation; to categorize processes or things as natural, and to categorize some people as closer to nature, closer to a timeless background of incontestable realities and processes, is also to exclude those people and processes from political engagement or place them lower down in a hierarchy of political relations.³⁵⁶ Modern people are farther from nature; they are more objective and have more control over nature which makes them more powerful and justifies their position at the top of the hierarchies they create. The idea of nature makes it possible for the politically modern to understand themselves as better than others because they have sovereign power or mastery over ‘nature.’ Sovereignty enables and reinforces this division between the natural and political worlds, and the power that this division affords to those who think this dichotomy is real and natural. The orientation of sovereignty helps constitute an understanding of subjects as individuals in communities of territorial states that exercise dominion or control over land, water, and other resources.³⁵⁷ People and communities that do not share that understanding of control or dominion

³⁵⁵ Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, p. 45.

³⁵⁶ Jahn, B. *Liberal Internationalism*, especially pp. 48-60.

³⁵⁷ Steven Bernstein points out that “State sovereignty over resources is widely considered the foundational norm of international environmental law, existing in various forms in legal decisions and documents such as the UN charter, but stated explicitly beginning with UN General Assembly Resolution 1803/62 (1962) on Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources, and later Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration on the

over resources (or even the concept of resources itself) are on the outside of environmental, international and domestic laws; even while they are subject to the power of law, outsiders are not frequently afforded protections by it. For example, if indigenous peoples try to assert rights to access ancestral lands, they often have to do so through the courts systems of sovereign states whose very assertion of sovereignty is what has caused indigenous peoples displacement or exclusion.³⁵⁸ The standards for evaluating claims and evidence, including what constitutes ties or 'rights' to land, in such cases are then set by the modern, sovereign system that developed and enforced the hierarchical and exclusive practices in the first place. This rigged game problem is something that the Canadian courts system has been struggling with,³⁵⁹ as it attempts to balance acknowledging and redressing unjust practices towards indigenous peoples in asserting sovereignty over their ancestral lands without undermining or undoing the sovereign country of Canada that the courts are an arm and agent of.³⁶⁰

Nature, then, is a source of inequality in the modern international political system because it is constituted as a separate category that the powerful can assert control over, while those who are less powerful and less 'modern' are viewed as closer to nature and thus also subject to attempts to control or exploit them similar to the control and exploitation of nature. This separation between politics and nature, and modern people and nature enables the exploitation of resources and environmental destruction with limited consideration for the ways the life forms and processes are entangled and will therefore alter and degrade together. Sovereignty as a political orientation that

Human Environment and Principle 2 of the Rio Declaration, which expanded it to include a sovereign right to exploit resources pursuant to a state's own environment and development policies,' Bernstein, S. 'Liberal Environmentalism and Global Environmental Governance,' *Global Environmental Politics*, 2:3 (2002) p. 7.

³⁵⁸ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p. 7.

³⁵⁹ Canadian indigenous communities are, of course, not the only example of this. Andrew Linklater uses the example of the Yolngu people in Australia who faced difficulties in the Australian court system when they tried to advance land claims because their understanding of property differed from that of the Australian government and thus, of the court system where the Yolngu tried to make their case. See Linklater, A. 'Dialogic Politics and the Civilising Process,' p.149.

³⁶⁰ Valverde, M. 'The Crown in a Multicultural Age: The Changing Epistemology of (Post) Colonial Sovereignty,' *Social & Legal Studies*, 21:1, (2012) pp. 3-21. See also Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, pp. 4-9.

enacts spatial and temporal divisions between political communities, subjects and nature creates the conditions for environmental degradation because these divisions create hierarchies between states and the peoples that live within them and encourage deleterious environmental practices. The next section turns to the ‘We-I’ balance that develops within the political orientation of sovereignty to further clarify how these conditions for environmental degradation are constituted.

Sovereignty, Nature and the ‘We-I Balance: Enabling Conditions for Environmental Exploitation and Degradation

The idea of nature conditioned by the orientation of sovereignty in political modernity posits a division between nature and the social and political worlds. This division enables a hierarchical understanding of people in the political world side, where modern peoples are at the top of this hierarchy because of their separateness from and control over nature. This modern subject is a “conception of a morally autonomous human being taking control of his own fate by making politics and society conform to principles of nature” and the modern, sovereign subject is “the self that distinguishes itself from the rest of the world and is the source of all distinctions.”³⁶¹ This modern subject is a free individual that is understood in part through the subject’s distinction from nature, and often, domination over it.³⁶² The idea of a free individual distinct or separate from nature helps to explain the problematic or out of balance ‘We-I’ balance of modernity. The idea of a ‘We-I’ balance is drawn from Norbert Elias, who argues that in developed countries the balance shifts more towards the I or individual. This is because of the increased impermanence of we-relationships and the need for individuals to recalibrate how they stand in relation to others because of factors like increased mobility, less emphasis on kinship bonds and changing professional relationships.³⁶³ While ‘We’ relations never disappear, their diminishing significance in relation to the ‘I’ has serious implications for how people negotiate how to live in relation to each other. The

³⁶¹ Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, p. 9.

³⁶² See for example: Marx, K. *Capital Volume I*, Chapter 7: The Labour Process and Valorization Process, pp. 283-306.

³⁶³ Elias, N. *The Society of Individuals* Edited by Michael Schroter (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 1991) pp. 203-204.

autonomous, free 'I' conditioned by sovereignty is a stumbling block for the cooperative 'We' relations that environmental degradation demands.

The sovereign orientation that helps constitute the idea of nature and of free, individual or sovereign subjects separate from nature and located in the present creates the conditions for modern subjects to feel distant from the ecological communities that they are a part of and the ecological consequences of their behavior.³⁶⁴ The political orientation of sovereignty helped to develop a sense of modernity as both a sociopolitical form and as a period marked by a progressive understanding of time, separateness from nature, and a move away from a superstitious collective towards enlightened or civilized individual subjects. Time, temporality, and nature are mediated through sovereignty in political modernity, establishing a sense of past, present and future.³⁶⁵ These modern subjects and the states that they exist within have short-term perspectives of their self-interest as a result of this 'We-I' balance. A stronger identification with the 'I' or individual at the expense of the 'We' identifications happens in modernity both because of the idea of nature exists as a timeless spatial backdrop that power can be exercised over, and because the modern state and individual subject have a present-centric orientation to time in which they are free from past and future obligations. This matters not just because of the injustices associated with drawing boundaries in time that can serve as a pretext for excluding people because they are somehow outside of modernity, like members of indigenous communities, but also because the growth of transnational problems like environmental degradation that might demand new conceptualizations of political communities, subjects, and relations to each other and to nature, or stronger 'We' identifications.

Scholars inside and out of IR have recognized the hierarchy that exists within the modern international political order between both states and the subjects within them in terms of significant

³⁶⁴ Elias, *The Society of Individuals*, 203-204. See also: Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, pp. 414-424.

³⁶⁵ Zachary Schiffman, *The Birth of the Past* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011) 1-16. See also: Fasolt, *The Limits of History*, 7-8, Constantin Fasolt, 'Breaking up Time-Escaping from Time: Self-Assertion and Knowledge of the Past,' in *Breaking Up Time: Negotiating the Borders Between Present, Past, and Future*, edited by Chris Lorenz and Berber Bevernage (Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 194-195, and Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) especially 'Modernity and the Planes of Historicity,' 9-25.

differences in their consumption patterns.³⁶⁶ Powerful states and their secure modern subjects have stronger 'I' identifications and much greater patterns of consumption and exploitation. Their constitution as modern, free individuals has depended in part on the appropriation of land as property in which: "Private property constitutes individual freedom and individual freedom requires government by consent whose main task in turn is the protection of private property and thus that of individual freedom."³⁶⁷ The creation and defense of private property goes hand in hand with the exploitation and inequality that exists within the hierarchical modern system because it requires converting commonly held property into private property which necessarily involves excluding some who had held property in common and colonial expansion which excludes those who have been colonized- the less powerful or less modern- from the realization of this understanding of individual freedom. As Jahn explains, as the modern international system developed: "Communities based on private property were accorded political rights- sovereignty over their land- while communities based on common property were denied political rights and had to make due with individual subsistence rights."³⁶⁸ This means in practice that the realization of the modern understanding of individual freedom "required the expropriation of other peoples' land and this goal could only be realized through the systemic exploitation of power differentials."³⁶⁹ Although this describes historical practices of exploitation and appropriation, Jahn goes on to make it clear that for politically powerful states to maintain their position, they require means to generate continual economic growth. Formal political control through overt practices of colonization became untenable, especially after the events of the World Wars in which colonized populations made outsized contributions to the war effort and strengthened their demand for equal recognition and rights through decolonization. Political and economic control were then decoupled by powerful

³⁶⁶ Masco, J. 'Crisis in Crisis,' p. S65-76; Malm, A., *Fossil Capital*, p. 329-333; Urry, J. 'Consuming the Planet to Excess.' *Theory, Culture & Society* 27:2-3 (2010) pp. 191-212.

³⁶⁷ Jahn, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 43.

³⁶⁸ Jahn, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 56.

³⁶⁹ Jahn, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 57.

colonial states making decolonization conditional on economic reforms that would ensure that newly decolonized states would still provide favorable conditions for the maintenance of more powerful states. Jahn explains:

This prominently involved, of course, the political protection of private property in the domestic sphere and an incorporation of the economy into the liberal world economy, regulated through the Bretton Woods institutions. As a result of this separation of politics and economics the eventual transfer of political power did not seriously undermine liberal economic interests and principles; rather, it established unequal economic relations between the First and Third Worlds and thus allowed the former the continuing import of economic benefits from the international sphere and the export of its political fall-out to newly independent states. *The difference between the colonial and postcolonial periods thus simply pertain to the means by which inequality is established, not the fact of it.*³⁷⁰

As chapter 5 will address in more detail, there are clear economic dimensions to the problem of environmental degradation. Much of the development of those economic issues that contribute to environmental degradation stem from the way that political relations have been organized within the modern political orientation of sovereignty. States are essential for the markets that promote overconsumption,³⁷¹ and while “the ‘economic’ and ‘political’ cannot be divorced,”³⁷² in analyses of power in the modern international order, it is the political orientation of sovereignty that conditions the development of a problematic ‘We-I’ balance in the modern political system that lends itself to overconsumption, exploitation of people and resources, and short-term thinking that make it more difficult to understand the causes and scope of environmental degradation or pursue the changes needed to adapt to and address it. The modern ‘We-I’ balance conditioned by the orientation of sovereignty involves particular, modern understandings of freedom in space and time that discount environmental constraints such as limited or fragile resources and undermines the ability to engage in the long-term planning and cooperation on economic and political issues that environmental problems demand.

³⁷⁰ Jahn, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 69, emphasis mine.

³⁷¹ Urry, ‘Consuming the Planet to Excess,’ p. 203.

³⁷² Linklater, *Violence and Civilization*, p. 414.

The next section will examine how transnational problems like environmental degradation raise questions about ‘We’ relations in terms of political communities both because the problem of environmental degradation has the potential to affect all of humanity, and because the ‘We’ of territorially bounded political communities populated by atomized individuals is an obstacle to developing the more expansive ‘We’ relations necessary to meet the challenge. The next section will focus especially on cosmopolitan efforts to question the relevance of borders and boundaries, and to expand the scope of community identification, although I will ultimately argue that while these efforts are important, because of the shift towards the ‘I’ that sovereignty as an orientation conditions, work on this basis cannot provide adequate motivation for change on its own. It will also address more radical discourses and approaches to environmental degradation and argue that while they have important contributions to make, they have difficulty gaining purchase in the modern international political order because they are often undermined and coopted by discourses and practices that exist within the political orientation of sovereignty.

Transnational Problems and Political Community: Cosmopolitan Challenges and Radical Approaches

Transnational problems continually bring us back to the question of political community and how they might and must change to address a problem on the scale of environmental degradation. Cosmopolitan and other challenges to understandings of political community have been driven in part by concerns that the political community of the sovereign state is theoretically incapable, or at least dangerously ill equipped to address such a far-reaching, multifaceted problem. Because the emphasis and onus of political solutions to problems falls on a form of political community that is characterized by a focus on internal autonomy, separateness, and particularized interests, the practices and tools for cooperation and broad-scale thinking that a transnational problem such as environmental degradation requires are weak or lacking. If reform that would allow dedicated cooperation and attention to environmental degradation is possible, it would also need to be significant and far-reaching:

[w]hat is needed in order to save the world from self-destruction is not the limitation of the exercise of national sovereignty through international obligations and institutions, but the transference of the sovereignties of individual states to a world authority, which would be as sovereign over the individual nations as the individual nations are sovereign within their respective territories" ; that because "reforms within the international society have failed and were bound to fail," there must be a "radical transformation of the existing international society of sovereign nations into a supra- national community of individuals."³⁷³

Sovereignty undercuts the potential for the cooperative efforts necessary to confront transnational issues effectively because it orients the international towards political communities that are internally and territorially autonomous. Furthermore, the ever-present possibility of sovereign decision renders cooperative efforts unstable, such as when the US signaled its intent to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord because President Trump declared it a violation of US sovereignty that placed unfair burdens on the country.³⁷⁴

Transnational problems raise questions about transnational justice and harm. As a result of increasing trade, travel and information flows, interactions and interconnectedness between people have increased to the point that people have the ability to make significant impacts on others without regard to physical distance. This has led many theorists, particularly those with a cosmopolitan bent such as Onora O'Neill, Toni Erskine, Andrew Linklater and Bartelson to consider what changes might be made to help establish more just relations between political communities, as well as reconsidering what political community that is not territorially bounded might look like. Transnational problems like environmental degradation can galvanize people to reconsider or challenge understandings of political community because it has the ability to cause great harm to people and their communities across time and distance, to the point that the means and conditions required for life are comprised. Bartelson makes this point about how climate change might alter understanding of both the human relationship to nature and of community or lead to the configuration of some kind of world community:

³⁷³ Morgenthau in Speer, J. 'Hans Morgenthau and the World State,' *World Politics*, 20:2, (1968) pp. 207-227.

³⁷⁴ Halpern, E. and Zavis, A. 'Trump Quits the Paris Climate Accord, Denouncing it as a Violation of US Sovereignty,' *The Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 2017.

Today this leaves us with the task of reformulating our conceptions of community in light of our cosmological beliefs about the human habitat, rather than conversely. This is the philosophical import of problems of climate change in current cosmological beliefs about the role of mankind in the shaping of our habitat. If mankind is no longer separate from nature, we might as well reunite in the face of the Flood that threatens to diminish the habitability of our planet. But that very Flood is also what now promises to wash the maps of empire away for good.³⁷⁵

For many, because of the environmental problems we face, reconsidering the shape and character of political communities is no longer optional. If the consequences of environmental degradation are not addressed and become increasingly severe, they will also erode the basis for political relations. Politics, or our ability to negotiate how we live in relation to each other, cannot be conducted without the conditions necessary for life or survival. Even without complete devastation or the extinction of life, worsening conditions lead to worsening prospects for politics. Desperation and fear may become the basis for human interaction. The prospect of severe environmental degradation undermines the interests of all political communities, no matter the differences that might exist between them. The following subsection will consider cosmopolitan questions and challenges to understandings of political community. This work, particularly around the idea of harm, is an important resource for thinking through how and why transnational problems like environmental degradation need to be addressed. However, this subsection will also argue that this work is not enough on its own because it grows out of concerns with justice and injustice which have provided insufficient motivation for change.

Cosmopolitanism: Harm and Recognition Beyond Borders

In normative international theory, Charles Beitz was among the first and most prominent to bring forward the notion that “[i]f evidence of global economic and political interdependence shows the existence of a global scheme of social cooperation, we should not view national boundaries as having fundamental moral significance. Since boundaries are not coextensive with the scope of

³⁷⁵ Bartelson, J. *Visions of World Community*, pp. 181-182.

social cooperation, they do not mark the limits of social obligations.”³⁷⁶ Globalization and increasing awareness of the ability of people to harm each other across great distances regardless of the physical boundaries of their communities have raised persistent questions about the obligations that exist between people across physical distance in normative theory. Cosmopolitan perspectives and approaches have been developed within the field in response to questions and misgivings about political communities predicated on exclusions and autonomy, particularly in a world where people have an ever-increasing ability to affect each other across greater distances, regardless of borders and community boundaries.

For a theorist like O’Neill, our ability to harm each other and cause environmental damage across distance requires establishing more just relations between people as a practical matter, which might include extending recognition or equal moral standing to distant others. Investing physical borders with weighty moral significance needs to be questioned both because of the ability to impact others across distances, but also because O’Neill makes clear that the ability of people to conceive of themselves in relationship to others is more expansive than territorially bounded communities suggest. People have multiple overlapping identities and communities that they can belong to.³⁷⁷ People have the capacity to imagine themselves as part of communities through shared symbols, traditions and media with people they have never met and will never meet.³⁷⁸ It is not necessary that their identities be contained within the rigid or physical boundaries of a political community. People are capable of being more than one thing; they can understand themselves simultaneously as parents, children, siblings, friends, colleagues, and citizens. Therefore, people should have the ability to develop a We-I balance with stronger transnational dimensions. Part of questioning the moral relevance of the physical boundaries of political communities, then, is

³⁷⁶ Beitz, C. *Political Theory and International Relations*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) p. 151.

³⁷⁷ O’Neill, O. ‘Transnational Economic Justice,’ in *Bounds of Justice* by Onora O’Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 121.

³⁷⁸ See: Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities*.

questioning whether that moral relevance becomes a barrier or an obstacle to principles of transnational justice, or transnational communities.

That people are capable of thinking of themselves as more than one thing and acting in more than one role is an important basis for formulating or imagining what relations are and could be between people across distances. However, the impact that people can have on each other regardless of location provides the more urgent need to reconsider relations between people and their communities. Moral standing, or “[o]ur commitment to *who counts*,”³⁷⁹ is a frequent consideration. The moral standing that we grant to others is more than a matter of convenience, but it is also more than a matter of justice:

A practical approach to moral standing has strong implications for action for anyone who does not live the hermit life. We live with and by the complex interlock of agents which global trade, communications and densely connected institutions have produced... We do not and cannot coherently deny the agency of those whose nuclear weapons or debt repudiation or habits of pollution and environmental degradation we fear... We do not and cannot consistently deny the agency of those whose peaceful coexistence, economic sobriety and environmental responsibility we hope to rely upon... we begin to premise our actions, plans and policies on there being agents and subjects. When we do this... we are committed to ascribing to them the same moral standing that we ascribe to nearby and familiar others in whom we assume like capacities.³⁸⁰

Interconnectedness, economic or otherwise, brings us into relationships across distance whether we desire them to or not, and those relationships are not, or are not only, predicated on justice. The frequency, depth, and significance of interactions between people requires predictability in terms of the behavior and conditions that characterize those interactions in order to avoid instability and conflict. Granting moral standing or recognition to others in order to condition the relations between people in such a way as to avoid or diminish harm from those relations is a practical matter as much as a matter of justice.

³⁷⁹ Erskine, T. *Embedded Cosmopolitanism: Duties to Strangers and Enemies in a World of 'Dislocated Communities'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 15.

³⁸⁰ O'Neill, O. 'Distant Strangers, Moral Standing, and Porous Boundaries,' in *Bounds of Justice*, pp. 196-197.

Andrew Linklater is perhaps the most prominent theorist in IR on the subject of harm. All societies and communities must find a way to grapple with the problem of harm because it is a “[p]art of the universal grammar of social life,”³⁸¹ that constantly arises in relations between people. The issue of harm needs to be addressed because of increasing interactions between communities and across community boundaries.³⁸² People can and do harm each other in violent and non-violent ways, and all societies need to develop conventions on harm in order to mitigate the consequences of harm. For example, exploitative economic arrangements and environmental damage require greater means and resources to control or reduce them, or the “[m]oral and political resources with which to adapt to the increasing challenge of how to control global processes in ways that respect economic, cultural and political rights of every member of the human race.”³⁸³ Again, this is both for reasons of justice and for reasons of practicality, because unchecked harm may lead to conflict, instability, or in the case of environmental degradation, existential threats to the continuation of life.

For Linklater, harm conventions are both international and cosmopolitan. International harm conventions have developed around concepts and practices such as sovereignty and non-intervention in order to support international order. Because they prioritize international order and tend to focus on the unit level of states in the international system, international harm conventions are often silent on forms of harm that lead to individual or group suffering. Alternatively, cosmopolitan harm conventions would emphasize world order rather than simply international order. This means that the treatment of individuals and groups, and the harm inflicted upon them by states, structures, processes, and other groups of people should be a matter of primary concern.³⁸⁴ International harm conventions already have some force in terms of ordering relations between actors like states. This includes things like conventions on the treatment of prisoners, and rules about warfare and the use of force. International harm conventions, however, are insufficient and

³⁸¹ Linklater, A. *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, p. 6.

³⁸² Linklater, A. *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, pp. 221-222.

³⁸³ Linklater, A. ‘Cosmopolitan Citizenship,’ in *Critical Theory and World Politics: Citizenship, Sovereignty and Humanity* by Andrew Linklater (London: Routledge, 2007) p. 123.

³⁸⁴ Linklater, A. *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, p. 36-37.

may in fact create obstacles to establishing stronger harm conventions in relation to transnational issues. This is because international harms conventions limit the focus to the modern international order comprised of sovereign states that are both not equipped to deal with transnational issues and may even exacerbate them.

Cosmopolitan conventions are essential because of the negative consequences of unusually high levels of human interconnectedness, specifically the ability to project military power into the heartland of distant societies and the increased possibility of transnational harm in recent decades. Environmental degradation is a striking contemporary example of transnational harm that travels freely across borders, giving rise to a new moral and political vocabulary, and to limited global harm conventions, that are concerned not with 'national interests' or international order but with the well-being of the species and the fate of future generations.³⁸⁵

International harm conventions cannot meet the problems of transnational harm like environmental degradation. Cosmopolitan conventions against harm, by contrast, may help to redress the out of balance We-I balance that has contributed to environmental degradation by helping to establish stronger 'We' relations across physical borders

Cosmopolitans challenge the significance of territoriality for how we imagine ourselves as members of a community. People are connected through language and media which helps them to learn about and empathize with others, despite distance. Face-to-face interactions are not required to imagine oneself as part of a community. Globalized communication technologies have made it increasingly difficult to avoid awareness of transnational harms like environmental degradation, or global inequalities that cause distress and suffering to others.

Images of distant suffering bring the plight of distant strangers closer to the lives of the affluent; stark evidence of global inequalities makes it hard to deny that many can relieve distress with little cost to themselves; visual representations of suffering dramatize the ways in which the most powerful societies can harm the vulnerable, whether as a result of their stranglehold on global institutions that are biased towards their economic and political interests, or because of military operations in foreign places, and so forth.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁵ Linklater, A. *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, p. 37.

³⁸⁶ Linklater, A. *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, p. 226.

Media and images that call attention to harm from international structures or interactions between people across distance may make the need for cosmopolitan harm conventions obvious. However, Linklater also points out the problem of compassion fatigue and an *increased* sense of detachment because the patterns of modern life where in “individuated, relatively isolated people usually avoid more than minimum civil interaction.”³⁸⁷ Therefore, while establishing cosmopolitan harm conventions might be an important element to addressing the ‘We-I’ balance problem that contributes to environmental degradation, cosmopolitan conventions are unlikely to be established or become robust enough on their own without something else that catalyzes people to act or change their behavior in ways that might alter their conduct of ‘We’ relations or their sense of ‘I’. This speaks to a more general problem with cosmopolitan work that attempts to establish more just relations between people regardless of physical boundaries, namely that matters of justice and compassion are unlikely to be compelling enough on their own to change behavior, relations or practices. The question then becomes what might lead people to alter and reorient their understanding of communities, ‘We’ relations and the role and self-conception of individuals enough to address the problem of harm if justice on its own is not compelling.

Although a broadly cosmopolitan thinker might hold that there are “no compelling reasons for preferring the interests of co-nationals to the interests of foreigners,”³⁸⁸ there are practical limitations to caring for and about others across great distances. Some, like Erskine, have attempted to address this problem by combining the value of bounded communities with cosmopolitan thought in what she terms ‘embedded cosmopolitanism’, which accepts “[t]he strength and tenacity of particular ties, as well as the existence of separate communities, nations, and states, and to construct an ethical framework that recognizes value as constituted by, but not bounded within these associations.”³⁸⁹ This approach supposes that because identities overlap, it is possible to develop more inclusive relationships with others by finding commonalities with them beyond shared

³⁸⁷ Linklater, A. *The Problem of Harm in World Politics*, pp. 226-227.

³⁸⁸ Linklater, A. ‘Cosmopolitan Citizenship,’ in *Critical Theory and World Politics*, p. 116.

³⁸⁹ Erskine, T. *Embedded Cosmopolitanism*, p. 40.

physical territory. She argues that this overlap demonstrates the ability of people to grant equal moral standing regardless of distance of physical boundaries. “One’s sphere of equal moral standing, understood as informed by shared membership within multifarious and overlapping morally constitutive communities, has the *potential* to be inclusive in scope,”³⁹⁰ although some identities may be too different or incompatible to form inclusive bonds and overlap.³⁹¹ This approach might have some potential, but because it still relies on the premise that communities must be bounded, no matter how much they are able to overlap, it is still problematic in terms of imagining how community can be reoriented in new, non-territorial ways.³⁹² The question becomes how understandings of community can be reoriented towards new premises.

To unlock the potential of political communities to address transnational issues, it is necessary to re-think premises about what political community entails. Questioning the moral relevance of physical boundaries is an essential, though insufficient part of this.

But if our moral values do not derive from the particular communities we happen to inhabit, but rather from our ability to share meaningful experiences in common with other people, then such values would stand an equal chance of evolving irrespective of the existence of boundaries between the people doing the sharing...the seeds of human community are sown the moment human beings enter into intercourse with each other, not the moment they decide to settle down together within the same territory...boundaries are therefore arbitrary restrictions on such intercourse, and on those very practices of sharing that are constitutive of the possibility of human community.³⁹³

It is possible to re-think or reorient understandings of political community. However, as Bartelson goes on to point out, this will require recognizing and reconsidering deeply held assumptions about what it requires to form a community:

According to what has become a widespread assumption within the social sciences, the identity of a given political community requires it to be different from other communities of the same kind. Sameness presupposed otherness, and identity presupposes difference. Consequently, particular communities derive their identity from a game of recognition that takes place between them during their formative phases, in which case their ‘identities and

³⁹⁰ Erskine, T. *Embedded Cosmopolitanism*, p.175.

³⁹¹ Erskine, T. *Embedded Cosmopolitanism*, pp. 177-178.

³⁹² Bartelson, J. *Visions of World Community*, p. 19.

³⁹³ Bartelson, J. *Visions of World Community*, p. 178.

their corresponding interests are learned and then reinforced in response to how actors are treated by significant Others.’ But as long as we regard this logic of identity as a predominant source of human belonging and identification, the formation of a community of all mankind will look highly unlikely simply because there are no human Others left that would provide that sense of sameness.³⁹⁴

The way that identity is used to construct communities needs to be seriously interrogated. This connects to the arguments in this thesis that understanding the constitution of political communities and political subjects or individuals simultaneously is important; both ‘I’ and ‘We’ become clearer in relation to each other. Thinking of sovereignty as an orientation helps in this because sovereignty helps constitute and make sense of both individuals and the communities that they exist within, as well as the relations between them within the sovereign international system. Cosmopolitan positions that already accept the idea of common humanity as basis enough for the formation of communities and just relations between them lack the persuasive power to compel enough people to identify and reconsider their assumptions about how political communities form and how political relations between them should be conducted. This lack of persuasive power has been identified by theorists like Andrew Dobson, who argues that cosmopolitan positions that call for extending recognition or equal moral standing to all persons by virtue of their sameness and regardless of their differences lack motivational capacity.³⁹⁵ Cosmopolitan arguments that center justice and emphasize commonalities between people rather than their differences do not move most people to act or change their behavior and perceptions. Again, questions of justice raised by the problem of harm are not enough, although they are important in terms of trying to establish the moral underpinnings of processes that might change the ‘We-I’ balance.

The next subsection will briefly examine more radical discourses and approaches to the problem of environmental degradation. It will argue that while more radical approaches provide important insights into the problem of environmental degradation they have had difficulty making an impact on the more mainstream practices and institutions that they critique because the political

³⁹⁴ Bartelson, J. *Visions of World Community*, p. 43.

³⁹⁵ Dobson, A. ‘Thick Cosmopolitanism,’ p. 165.

orientation of sovereignty organizes political relations in a hierarchical way that relies on divisions and exclusions that are precisely what radical approaches identify as problems that need to be changed.

Green radicalism: Ecofeminism, Radical Decentralisation, New Globalism and the Problem of Engagement without Cooptation

There are a range of discourses and approaches relating to environmental degradation and climate change. More mainstream approaches emphasize sustainability without challenging the economic or political order in which these problems have developed.³⁹⁶ Some mainstream positions do not recognize that the current political and economic order are problematic in relation to the environment, while others sometimes categorized as those with an Expansive Sustainability approach believe that the modern political and economic order should pursue greater equality and less injustice as a means of combatting climate change, but assume that the tools to do so exist within the order or system as it is.³⁹⁷ More radical approaches question the very premises of the modern political and economic order and identify the structures and practices of the current international political order as problematic.³⁹⁸

As Hayley Stevenson and John Dryzek explain: “Green Radicalism is defined by the assumption that unconstrained material growth cannot be reconciled with a safe climate and sustainability: a fundamental reorientation of economic development is required. Such changes demand redistribution of power. Concerns relating to human rights, justice, and equity are prioritised over short-term economic values.”³⁹⁹ There are different variants of green radicalism. Ecofeminists

³⁹⁶ Stevenson, H. ‘Representing Green Radicalism: The Limits of State-based Representation in Global Climate Governance.’ *Review of International Studies* 40 (2014) p. 182.

³⁹⁷ Stevenson, H. and Dryzek, J. ‘The Discursive Democratisation of Global Climate Governance,’ *Environmental Politics* 21:2 (2012), p. 195.

³⁹⁸ Stevenson and Dryzek, ‘The Discursive Democratisation Global Climate Governance,’ p.197. See also: Dalby, S. ‘Rethinking Geopolitics,’ pp. 1-9.

³⁹⁹ Stevenson and Dryzek, ‘The Discursive Democratisation Global Climate Governance,’ p.197.

such as Mary Mellor and Val Plumwood do not believe that effective responses to climate change can be developed in the context of existing institutions, and they emphasize that the problems of gender inequality and environmental degradation are connected and should be dealt with in tandem.⁴⁰⁰ Ecofeminist argue that current governance arrangements and political ordering marginalize women and make them more vulnerable to the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation.⁴⁰¹ A related by distinct radical green discourse is radical decentralization that emphasizes the structural causes of climate change and argues that industrial models of development drive the problem of climate change and to mitigate and adapt it is necessary to focus community and localized development that is concerned with ensuring the welfare of community members rather than generating wealth and profits.⁴⁰² This radical approach also emphasizes the importance of understanding and engaging with local and indigenous knowledges to inform changing approaches to environmental issues.⁴⁰³ There are some obvious overlaps with this and ecofeminism as both are concerned with challenging or rejecting practices and structures that do not respond to the needs to vulnerable people and may in fact make their situation worse. A third green radical approach, new globalism, insists that the present international system must be transformed to develop effective and just responses to environmental degradation.⁴⁰⁴ Human needs must be prioritized over excessive consumption and generating wealth, and an equitable global community needs to foster understanding and cooperation between different communities and cultures. Posthumanist discourses, in turn, argue

⁴⁰⁰ Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' p. 183. See also: Mellor, M. *Breaking the Boundaries: Towards a Feminist Green Socialism* (London: Virago, 1992); Plumwood, V. *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993); Cudworth, E. *Developing Ecofeminist Theory: The Complexity of Difference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005).

⁴⁰¹ Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' p. 18. See also: MacGregor, S. 'A Stranger Silence Still: The Need for Feminist Social Research on Climate Change', *The Sociological Review*, 57:s2 (2010), pp. 124–40.

⁴⁰² Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' p. 183.

⁴⁰³ Stevenson and Dryzek, 'The Discursive Democratisation of Global Climate Governance,' and Stevenson, H. and Dryzek, J. 'Enhancing the Legitimacy of Multilateral Climate Governance: A Deliberative Democratic Approach', *Critical Policy Studies* 6:1 (2012), pp. 1–18.

⁴⁰⁴ Stevenson, "Representing Green Radicalism," p. 183.

that it is important to de-center the human and to provide political recognition and standing for non-human actors and objects because the inescapable entanglement of life forms.⁴⁰⁵

Green radical discourses and approaches center issues of inequality and exclusion that leave some groups of people more vulnerable to changing environmental conditions that they also lack the power to address. This thesis is broadly sympathetic with these approaches and recognizes the need to address inequalities and injustices within the modern political order in order to develop effective responses to environmental degradation. However, these approaches have had limited impact on the very mainstream institutions, actors and practices that they identify as problems that need to be changed or rejected, especially in light of increasing environmental degradation. States in particular have proven to be a poor conduit for radical approaches even where those advocating radical positions are invited to actively participate.⁴⁰⁶ Stevenson, for example, has analyzed the failure of states that claim to have engaged with and embraced green radical positions to maintain or represent those positions in the context of international, multi-lateral climate negotiations.⁴⁰⁷

During the 2009 Copenhagen climate change summit, an alliance of 8 Latin American countries, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America or ALBA drew attention as a bloc of states attempting to incorporate and represent green radical discourses in the negotiations, and for forcefully denouncing the accords that were promulgated during the summit as illegitimate because they were imposed by a small group of powerful states whose stated target of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius would still endanger food and water security for millions and threaten or overwhelm coastal cities and island nations.⁴⁰⁸ The ALBA states of Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba,

⁴⁰⁵ See: Haraway, D. 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin.' *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015) pp. 159-165; Lature, *Politics of Nature*; Cudworth, E. and Hobden, S. 'Complexity, Ecologism and Posthuman Politics.' *Review of International Studies* 39:4 (2012) pp. 643-664.

⁴⁰⁶ Bernstein, S. 'Liberal Environmentalism and Global Environmental Governance,' *Global Environmental Politics*, 2:3 (2002) pp. 1-16; Stevenson, H. 'Representing Green Radicalism: The Limits of State-based Representation in Global Climate Governance.' *Review of International Studies* 40 (2014) pp. 177-201.

⁴⁰⁷ Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' pp. 177-201.

⁴⁰⁸ Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' p. 178.

Ecuador, Nicaragua, Dominica, Saint Vincente and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda were active at both the Copenhagen summit and the concurrent Klimaforum09 or People's Climate Summit in Copenhagen which was organized as an alternative climate conference that focused on addressing systemic problems in the international system that contribute to the problem of climate change and presented a much stronger interrogation of economic and political structures than the Copenhagen summit. ALBA member states were one of the few points of translation between the two conferences, which could be characterized as separate enclaves that tended only to engage with the discourses, practices and policies they were already familiar with given their relative positions. Klimaforum09 participants represented concerns with international equity and justice relating to climate change and provided a more robust forum for considering social and political causes and consequences of climate, especially for vulnerable populations, whereas the Copenhagen summit, as some ALBA members objected, primarily entertained policies and practices that would ensure the maintenance and continuation of the international political order that benefited mainstream actors and institutions, particularly more powerful states.⁴⁰⁹ After the Copenhagen summit, widely regarded at the time as a failure, ALBA member Bolivia led by Evo Morales called for a People's Conference on Climate change and the Rights of Mother Earth in the Bolivian City of Cochabamba that would, in effect, consider and advocate policies and proposals that generally aligned with green radical positions, especially those that questioned the capitalist system.⁴¹⁰ Approximately 35,000 people attended this summit, which was notable for its inclusions and promotion of indigenous groups and knowledge, and addressed the roughly the same themes discussed at the Copenhagen summit from a green radical position.⁴¹¹

The initiative of the ALBA members is one of the strongest, if not the strongest, representation of green radical positions by states in international climate negotiations. This is important because

⁴⁰⁹ Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' p. 177-181. See also: Dalby, 'Anthropocene Formations,' p. 249.

⁴¹⁰ Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' p. 186-187.

⁴¹¹ Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' p. 187-188.

“Despite extensive civil society presence, state-based representation remains the norm in international climate negotiations,” which is cause for concern because “this is a weak form of capturing the interests and preferences of all potentially affected persons, which may differ from the national interests of the states in which they find themselves.”⁴¹² However, although the ALBA members have claimed to represent stronger green radical positions in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other global fora, the policies that they pursue and adopt in their own states have failed to reflect the green radical positions they articulate in international negotiations. Stevenson argues that this is because these states, despite their advocacy for radical positions, are still tied to development models which encourage structural dependence on exploiting and exporting natural resources such as fossil fuels.⁴¹³ She concludes that:

The structural constraints imposed on states by the international system clearly undermine their capacity to consistently represent an economically radical and politically progressive discourse... Irrespective of whether state actors genuinely subscribe to Green Radical discourses, their political position dictates working within the confines of the status quo, while potentially making incremental reforms. Bolivia’s Morales Government, for example, has inherited a set of historical and contemporary conditions from which it cannot immediately disentangle the country: Bolivia is a poor, landlocked country dependent on the extraction and export of natural resources for its survival within a capitalist global economy. The critical voice of Green Radicalism is crucial, yet it seems unlikely that it can consistently be echoed by state actors who are unavoidably attached to the status quo.⁴¹⁴

This echoes observations by Steven Bernstein that even the most radical approaches to climate change become enclosed in discourses that support the norms of the sovereign international system,⁴¹⁵ and indicates even where green radical positions are articulated, mainstream institutions and actors fail to support these positions through action, not least because even states who recognize the structural inequalities that affect them in the hierarchical international system still have a short-term understanding of their self-interest that accepts the practices, assumptions, and priorities of more powerful states. The political orientation of sovereignty has helped constitute and organize an international political system in which states are still the most important actors, not least because they

⁴¹² Stevenson, ‘Representing Green Radicalism,’ p. 181.

⁴¹³ Stevenson, ‘Representing Green Radicalism,’ p. 197.

⁴¹⁴ Stevenson, ‘Representing Green Radicalism,’ p. 201.

⁴¹⁵ Bernstein, S. ‘Liberal Environmentalism and Global Environmental Governance,’ pp. 9-10.

are essential for securing the markets for the global capitalist system, such that to gain any kind of mainstream purchase, radical discourses are communicated through (usually less powerful) states. However, in being co-opted by states, radical approaches are ultimately not substantially engaged with or adopted because they do not support the international political system organized by sovereignty and even less powerful states that are sometimes actively harmed by the organization and structures of the international system work to maintain it.

The next chapter will focus more on mainstream institutions and actors and the work in international relations and political theory that attempts to work within their frameworks and assumptions to develop responses to environmental degradation and climate change. This will help provide a clearer sense of the limitations of working with these mainstream institutions and frameworks, particularly because of the problematic role of more powerful states in undermining effective responses, and clarify why and how understanding sovereignty as a political orientation helps provide a better grasp of the barriers to developing and implementing radical approaches to reform or reconstitute the international system in ways that effectively address climate change in a just manner.

Conclusion: Environmental Consequences of the Political Orientation of Sovereignty

This chapter has interrogated the problematic division between humanity and nature in modernity and how that contributes to environmental degradation. It has further explored the role that sovereignty plays in creating an out of balance 'We-I' balance that both makes the problem of environmental degradation worse and more difficult to address, and examined cosmopolitan and other radical approaches to the problem of environmental degradation before arguing that they have difficulty making a significant impact on the practices and political and economic relations that drive environmental degradation because of the conditions that sovereignty as a political orientation creates in the modern international system. Chapter 5 will examine those conditions, which contribute to the out of balance 'We-I' balance that leads to exploitation, overconsumption and short-term understandings of self-interest, by focusing on more mainstream approaches to dealing with climate

change and environmental degradation. This chapter will in turn lay the foundation for the argument of the conclusion to the thesis that it is the political orientation of sovereignty that needs to be recognized as a problem and reconsidered, which may be enabled by the consequences of climate change.

Chapter 5: Sovereignty as Orientation and its Role in the Development of Environmental Degradation

There is no denying the urgency that many scholars—and many citizens—feel in relation to climate change. There is little question about the pressing realities of climate change, the sixth great extinction of biodiversity, ocean acidification, and a long list of very, very serious problems. But does the urgency to communicate the realities of biospheric change override the need for an adequate historical interpretation of the problem? Conceptualizations of a problem and efforts to resolve that problem are always tightly connected. So, too, are the ways we think about the origins of a problem and how we think through possible solutions.⁴¹⁶

Introduction

In this chapter, the problem of environmental degradation will help to further illuminate the problematic nature of sovereignty as an orientation that brings individuals, communities and the system that they exist within into hierarchical relations with each other. The previous four chapters have focused on how these elements of sovereignty as an orientation are brought together, particularly through the technology of history, and on how sovereignty as an orientation shapes understandings and practices of politics in IR as a discipline and in the world. The multi-faceted and increasingly urgent problem of environmental degradation is revealing in terms of thinking about sovereignty as orientation because it helps make plain important limitations of political relations and solutions being shaped by that orientation. More importantly, environmental degradation can help us understand how sovereignty as an orientation contributes to the creation of far reaching problems that are made more difficult to solve by the political relations and settlements that modern sovereignty shapes and enables.

This chapter examines approaches to environmental degradation in IR and political theory. It focuses particularly on the work of Andrew Dobson and Robyn Eckersley, both to outline the state of thinking about environmental degradation within the international political system and to explore the limitations of trying to address the problem from within

⁴¹⁶ Moore, J. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (London: Verso, 2015).

the modern international system. After a brief introductory section that canvasses some responses to the problems of environmental degradation and climate change, this chapter is divided into two main sections. The first major section focuses on the work of Dobson, and the second on Eckersley. The chapter will show how thinking of sovereignty as an orientation would facilitate research that attempts to understand and cope with environmental degradation within the system as they find it. It will also use their work to demonstrate that there is a need to problematize that system as a whole and the role of more powerful states in developing responses to climate change in order to effectively meet the challenge associated with environmental degradation. This chapter will also extend arguments about the problematic 'We-I' balance that has developed in political modernity as a result of the sovereign orientation of political communities and individuals towards each other and the concept of nature, though this was explored in more detail in Chapter 4. This chapter will help illuminate why problematizing the orientation towards political community, political subjects, and the relations between them and to time and nature that sovereignty has enabled in political modernity is an essential part of learning how to make the changes necessary to alleviate the problems of environmental degradation.

Environmental Degradation and its Discontents

Environmental degradation calls into question the continued existence of the human species, among others, and as such it presents a substantive challenge to the political. The consensus amongst the world's climate change scientists, captured by the reports and efforts of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and governments is that climate change and environmental degradation is an urgent, multi-faceted, globalized problem.⁴¹⁷ Air and water pollution, catastrophic weather, the spread of vector borne diseases,

⁴¹⁷ IPCC. *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II, and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Geneva: IPCC, 2014). See Also: Garner, R. *Environmental Politics: The Age of Climate Change*, 3rd edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp. 26-27.

diminished biodiversity, resource scarcity, and rising sea levels are just some of the problems associated with environmental degradation, the impacts of which are felt in different ways in different places, but have interconnected causes, where local manifestations cannot be disentangled from global factors.⁴¹⁸ Environmental degradation poses risks and challenges to health and sustainability, and authors such as Simon Dalby⁴¹⁹ and Jon Barnett⁴²⁰ have assessed the problem as a security challenge, with the potential for generating conflicts over resources. However, they, and others, particularly Daniel Deudney,⁴²¹ have argued strongly against approaching or thinking about environmental degradation as a security threat and against militarized solutions as they do not address the underlying causes of environmental degradation and in fact may make the problem(s) of environmental degradation worse because of the adverse ecological impacts associated with both military operations and the development and maintenance of military capabilities.⁴²² To think through the political challenges raised by environmental degradation and develop solutions in terms of security and militarization, then, leaves us no better off. Part of the appeal of thinking about environmental degradation through a security lens is that it appears to be an approach that recognizes the seriousness of the problem, as well as the realities of the international political system that we have to work with and within. Theorists who situate themselves in green political thinking tied to democracy and citizenship, particularly Andrew Dobson and Robyn Eckersley, provide richer resources for thinking about environmental challenges while still conceptualizing approaches to the problem that fundamentally recognize and work with the same political entities, concepts and realities as

⁴¹⁸ Garner, R. *Environmental Politics*, p. 3

⁴¹⁹ Dalby, S. *Security and Environmental Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

⁴²⁰ Barnett, J. *The Meaning of Environmental Security: Ecological Politics and Policy in the New Security Era* (London: Zed Books, 2001).

⁴²¹ See especially: Deudney, D. 'The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation to National Security,' *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 19:3 (1990), pp. 461-76.

⁴²² Finger, M. 'Global Environmental Degradation and the Military,' in *Green Security or Militarized Environment*, edited by Jyrki Kakonen (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1994) pp 169-91. See also: Mayer, M. 'Chaotic Climate Change and Security.' *International Political Sociology* 6 (2012) pp. 165-185.

those who favor an environmental security approach. There is interesting and important work in less ‘mainstream’ approaches to the environment within IR and outside of it by ecofeminists,⁴²³ postcolonial critics,⁴²⁴ and other social scientists,⁴²⁵ that argue that we need to alter our perceptions of nature, better understand how practices of domination and power relations influence environmental degradation and expand our capacity to contemplate problems of the scale of environmental degradation. One of the primary arguments of this chapter is that in order to make changes envisioned in those different literatures possible, it is necessary to focus on the mainstream or *status quo* modern, sovereign international system as a problem in itself. To do this, I focus here on works that, however critically, target, engage and work with *status quo* actors and conditions like states, the international states system and inter-governmental organizations. This is because I argue that environmental degradation is a problem driven by the frameworks and orientation towards political problems and solutions that sovereignty provides. Attention should be fixed on the actors and conditions constituted by the modern, sovereign international system as a problem in themselves because, despite the strengths of work like that of Dobson and Eckersley, IR and political theorists are still not grasping the extent of the

⁴²³ See especially: Plumwood, V. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), and Mellor, M. *Feminism and Ecology* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Mies, M. *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (London: Zed Books, 1986); and Cudworth, E. *Developing Ecofeminist Theory: The Complexity of Difference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005).

⁴²⁴ See especially: Ghosh, A. *The Great Derangement*, Chakrabarty, D. ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses,’ *Critical Inquiry* 35: 2 (2009) pp.197-222, Chakrabarty, D. ‘Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,’ *New Literary History*, 43:1 (2012) pp. 1-18, and Chakrabarty, D. ‘Climate and Capital,’ pp. 1-23, and Chakrabarty, D. ‘The Politics of Climate Change is More than the Politics of Capitalism,’ *Theory, Culture & Society*, 34:2 (2017) pp. 23-37.

⁴²⁵ Anthropologists, sociologists, and human ecologists/geographers have advanced interesting and compelling work on the problems surrounding climate change. See especially: Beck, U. *Metamorphosis of the World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), Latour, B. *Politics of Nature*, Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, and Masco, J. ‘Crisis in Crisis,’ pp. S65-S76, and Bauer, A. “Questioning the Anthropocene and its silences: Socioenvironmental history and the climate crisis,” *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, 3: Environmental Humanities from Below (2016), pp. 403-426

interconnectedness of the problems of environmental degradation and political modernity without engaging with sovereignty as orientation.⁴²⁶

Dobson and Eckersley are sophisticated and important voices in discussions about political challenges in addressing environmental degradation, and both are very much interested in critically engaging and working with the political conditions and actors that they recognize as influential rather than those they wish were influential. At their core, authors like these recognize that we must reorient ourselves politically to be able to meet the challenges of environmental degradation to the continuation of human life and politics. The arguments these authors make are important in framing both the scope and the stakes of environmental degradation within political theory and IR, including its relationship to globalization, democracy, political community (particularly the state) and citizenship. However, while Dobson, Eckersley and others like John Dryzek⁴²⁷ have important contributions to make when considering environmental degradation and the political in IR, I argue that they fall short in their solutions and recommendations because the concept and practices of sovereignty associated with the modern state is a far more substantial barrier to political reorientation than they have recognized. Viewing sovereignty as an orientation that brings subjects, communities and the international states system into relation with each other

⁴²⁶ For work on IR's difficulty in conceptualizing or addressing climate change and environmental degradation see: Burke, A., Fishel, S., Mitchell, A., Dalby, S., and Levine, D. J. 'Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR.' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44:3 (2016) pp. 499-523; Chandler, D., Cudworth, E., and Hobden, S. 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene and Liberal Cosmopolitan IR: A Response to Burke et al.'s 'Planet Politics'.' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 46:2 (2018) pp. 190-208; Mitchell, A. 'Is IR Going Extinct?' *European Journal of International Relations* 23:1 (2017) pp. 3- 25; Methmann, C. and Rothe, D. 'Politics for the Day After Tomorrow: The Logic of Apocalypse in Global Climate Politics.' *Security Dialogue* 43:4 (2012) pp. 323-344; and Harrington, C. 'The Ends of the World: International Relations and the Anthropocene.' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44:3 (2016) pp. 478-498.

⁴²⁷ Dryzek, J. *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Dryzek J. *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

would strengthen their work because it would then provide a fuller picture of the political challenges and changes that need to be made.

Dobson: Inequality, Citizenship, and the Problem of Individuals Out of Context

Environmental degradation is the problem that Dobson ultimately applies nearly every aspect of his work to, whether it is understandings of citizenship, cosmopolitanism, democracy, globalization, or, most recently, listening.⁴²⁸ Furthermore, environmental degradation and the problems associated with it are treated as a problem of justice, implicitly or (more often) explicitly. He is consistently critical of arguments that claim addressing the effects of climate change can be treated as a matter of aid or charity, and he frequently exposes the inadequacy, hypocrisy or dishonesty of suggesting that the international response to a (poor) country's experience of an environmental disaster should or can be viewed in that way. "[b]y systematically turning Samaritan relations between strangers into relations of justice between individuals and communities tied into material relations of cause and effect, globalization makes a fundamental difference to how we react to our relations with distant others. We can no longer regard them as we would regard invitations to be charitable; we must regard them as demands founded in justice."⁴²⁹ For example, in a 2006 piece Dobson uses the example of intense flooding in Mozambique in early 2000 to question and criticize the idea that the assistance provided by a country like the UK should be considered or referred to as 'aid.' If the flooding in Mozambique was the result of practices that lead to climate change or increase catastrophic weather events and their impacts (such as deforestation) then 'aid' is not the appropriate language because there

⁴²⁸ See: Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Dobson, A. 'Globalisation, Cosmopolitanism and the Environment,' *International Relations*, 19:3 (2005) pp. 259-273, Dobson, A. 'Thick Cosmopolitanism,' *Political Studies*, 54:1 (2006) pp.165-184, Dobson, A. *Green Political Thought*, 4th edition (London: Routledge, 2007), Dobson, A. *Listening for Democracy: Recognition, Representation, Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁴²⁹ Dobson, A. 'Thick Cosmopolitanism,' p. 180.

are global connections of responsibility in play.⁴³⁰ Dobson ties that global phenomena of environmental degradation to globalization throughout his work, and the connections often turn on inequality and mistaking matters of justice for matters of charity or compassion, as with Mozambique.

Much of Dobson's work is concerned with the role that citizenship plays or may be able to play in addressing environmental degradation. He provides a careful analysis of different types or ideas of citizenship such as liberal citizenship and civic republicanism on his way to articulating his own conception of post-cosmopolitan citizenship with an ecological focus.⁴³¹ Dobson is critical of notions of cosmopolitan citizenship offered by people such as David Held because while Held's cosmopolitan citizenship may be global in scope, it fails to account for the asymmetries, inequalities and injustices of globalization.⁴³² He builds on the analysis of Vandana Shiva to argue that globalization, rather than being a matter of mere interconnectedness and interdependence, instantiates and perpetuates inequality and injustice because the direction of movement in globalization is from a wealthy global North imposing itself upon the poorer and less powerful global South.⁴³³ Though they may be interconnected, to leave out or gloss over the unequal nature and unjust impositions of those interconnections in an analysis of globalization is to ignore a fundamental dimension of the phenomena.

The view of globalization that I think we should reject is couched in terms of interdependence and interconnectedness in the post-Westphalian, globalizing world. The language of 'interdependence' implies a rough parity of cause and effect as states make their way through a globalizing world, 'negotiating' for advantages where possible, but with such negotiations undergirded by the recognition that no state can expect to isolate itself from the more or less reciprocal effects of other states. Some will object that 'interdependence' does not imply a rough parity at all and that it simply denotes a relationship. I am prepared to concede that the

⁴³⁰ Dobson, A. 'Thick Cosmopolitanism,' p. 174.

⁴³¹ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, Dobson, A. *Green Political Thought*.

⁴³² Held, D. 'Globalization, Corporate Practice and Cosmopolitan Social Standards,' *Contemporary Political Theory*, 1, (2002) pp. 59-78.

⁴³³ Shiva, V. 'The Greening of Global Reach' in *The Geopolitics Reader* edited by Gearoid Thuatail, Simon Dalby, and Paul Routledge (London: Routledge, 1998.)

relationship between a master and slave, for example, can be described as one of ‘interdependence,’ but I hope that it will be conceded in return that this description completely misses the characteristic that best enables us to understand the nature of the relationship-inequality.⁴³⁴

The significance of unequal power relations runs throughout Dobson’s work, especially in *Citizenship and the Environment*, as he is making a case for a new understanding of citizenship in which injustices and inequalities, particularly in the environmental sphere, create obligations. These obligations in turn create the political space for post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship, according to Dobson, as they allow citizenship to transcend territorial, national boundaries and demand redress of unjust practices and effects. His post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship is a “thickly material account of the ties that bind, created not by mental activity, but by the material production and reproduction of daily life in an unequal and asymmetrically globalizing world.”⁴³⁵ He provides a thorough and compelling argument that the ‘ecological footprint’⁴³⁶ of different people in different parts of the world should be considered as a basis for the obligations that undergird his concept of citizenship (although this does not mean his concept of citizenship itself is a compelling solution to the problem of environmental degradation- a problem to which I will return). As noted above, Dobson argues that globalization’s interconnections and interdependencies tend to involve the more wealthy and powerful global North developing and exploiting institutions and structures to accrue benefits to itself, even while its behavior and practices in general have serious negative environmental consequences for the global South.

Dobson is insistent in his work that globalization is not the same for everyone, and that some are globalizers while others are globalized. In terms of environmental issues this often means that industrial or post-industrial states that have contributed the most global carbon emissions- and continue to have an outsized ecological impact in terms of their current consumption and emissions patterns- also continue to set the agenda for how

⁴³⁴ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, pp. 9-10.

⁴³⁵ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 30.

⁴³⁶ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, pp. 99-100.

environmental degradation should be dealt with. Less powerful and more vulnerable states and communities have limited influence in comparison, and high historical emitters with unsustainable consumption patterns like the US and western European countries continue to pursue solutions to environmental problems that are more favorable to themselves.⁴³⁷ In this sense, Dobson's work clearly aligns with the argument of this thesis that the states system is hierarchical and that the states with the greatest capacity to act in the system are driving the problem of environmental degradation and therefore the system and hierarchy of states within it should be approached as problems rather than as sites from which to develop solutions.

Dobson's language is forceful, and he is very effective in drawing attention to unjust global relations, particularly as they relate to environmental impacts, but his argument for post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship is plagued by a variety of problems. The two most notable of these problems are his focus on individuals and that his conception of citizenship only accounts for obligations rather than affectedness or membership in political community, both of which would be helped by using the idea of sovereignty as orientation because it would provide more clarity about these problems by bringing them together.

Throughout his discussion of the problems associated with climate change, Dobson makes use of examples about states, institutions or structural forces acting in ways that create significant environmental harms. For example, above he refers to the problem of 'interdependence' language, and he argues that not only do all states in a globalized world not act in the same way, but also that not all states are subject to the same impacts and consequences. This is especially the case in terms of both the consequences and causes of climate change, where states that have contributed most to the problem are less vulnerable

⁴³⁷ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, pp. 12-22. See also: Masco, J. 'Crisis of Crises,' pp. S65-S76 and Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, pp. 329-333 who argue that although developed Western countries often portray themselves as leading the way on environmental initiatives, their patterns of consumption make a hugely outsized contribution to global emissions.

its consequences.⁴³⁸ However, his proposal for post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship provides no account of the roles of states, institutions or structural forces, and indeed these actors and forces are so conspicuously absent as to suggest that the problem of environmental degradation is primarily caused by, and could therefore be solved by changes in, individual behavior. Dobson continuously draws attention to the outsize ‘ecological footprint’ of people, usually in the wealthier global North, and makes this the basis of the obligations that ground his post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship. He argues that the ecological demands an individual makes or the resources one uses to support a lifestyle should determine the responsibilities or obligations that a person has as a citizen. In his conception, anyone who is taking up more than their fair share of ecological space (however that is determined) has a duty to reduce their ecological footprint until they redress that imbalance, and someone who is taking up only their fair share or less than that of ecological space has no duties or obligations. “Obligations of ecological citizenship...are due to anyone who is owed ecological space...Only those who occupy ecological space in such a way as to compromise or foreclose the ability of others in present and future generations to pursue options important to them owe obligations of ecological citizenship.”⁴³⁹ His idea of citizenship, therefore, focuses on responsibilities rather than rights. It is also not territorially based and not reciprocal because anyone, anywhere owes obligations of ecological citizenship whenever they exceed their fair amount of ecological space, regardless of if that impact is on someone within the same territory or those far outside it.

While solutions to environmental degradation that are not territorially based may be important to finding means to cope with the problem, an idea of citizenship in which only the role of those who are contributing to negative outcomes for others is conceptualized is insufficiently political. This is because it provides no guidance on how this form of

⁴³⁸ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 10.

⁴³⁹ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 120.

citizenship can help people negotiate how to live in relation to each other beyond keeping their ecological footprints in check. It lacks a positive understanding or affirmation of the ties that bind citizens to each other and the communities that they understand themselves to be a part of. Dobson shies away from explaining how or why such obligations will be met, which is problematic in itself, but he also fails to situate his citizens that do not owe obligations as a result of an over-sized ecological footprint anywhere. In effect, only those who are already powerful enough to be taking up more than their fair share of space in the world have a role that needs to be fulfilled in his conception of ecological citizenship. This is an area in which a significant, and to my mind compelling argument that Dobson alludes to in *Citizenship and the Environment* and makes explicitly elsewhere, works against him.⁴⁴⁰ Dobson is critical of cosmopolitanism, particularly dialogic cosmopolitanism, whose understanding of what brings and holds people together is too thin.⁴⁴¹ Too thin a conception of the ties that bind lacks motivational capacity, according to Dobson himself,⁴⁴² and an understanding of citizenship in which only a role for the already powerful or privileged is articulated or considered important is very thin. While I take Dobson's point that dialogic cosmopolitanism in particular needs "Less dialogue, more justice,"⁴⁴³ a consideration of only material ties that bind seems unlikely to produce justice because it would not account for relational bonds between people. There are points at which he actively rejects a role for 'mental' ties that might bring people together, and suggests that we can create a sense of 'nearness' that seems necessary to lead people to act by exposing causal chains of responsibility:

The globalization of trade converts us ineluctably into participating in the lives of people we have never met and are never likely to meet. We are as complicit in their lives as if they sold us their produce over the garden fence. I do not need to exercise 'empathy' to see this, and nor do I need to construct them as surrogate neighbors as Thomas Pogge would seem to wish us to do. The relationships of which I speak are material rather than mental. As we make our

⁴⁴⁰ Dobson, A. 'Thick Cosmopolitanism,' pp. 165-184.

⁴⁴¹ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 29.

⁴⁴² Dobson, A. 'Thick Cosmopolitanism,' p. 165.

⁴⁴³ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 22.

way through the world, we ‘produce’ political space, in the sense of space where strict, as opposed to supererogatory, humanitarian, obligations come into play. The ties that bind are not, therefore, best conceived in terms of the thin skein of common humanity, but of chains of cause and effect that prompt obligations of justice rather than sympathy, pity, or beneficence.⁴⁴⁴

While, again, his insistence on justice is important, he goes too far in dismissing the role of empathy, or making us human to each other, plays in motivating action. It is material *and* mental ties together that can address his concerns with motivation. This speaks also to the issue of subjecthood or subjectivity; choosing the material over the mental here instead of recognizing the potential of integrating them constrains the possibilities for becoming the kinds of individuals, separately and together, that can relate to each other and the environment in new ways that are necessary to making long-term and fundamental changes to the political that may allow us to do more than merely survive environmental changes, if survival itself is even possible. It is puzzling that work with so evident a normative commitment, that begins, at least in *Citizenship and the Environment*, with a clear argument that people sometimes act in ways because they want to ‘do good’, and that it is important that they do so,⁴⁴⁵ would have so little to say about ties that are not just material. Dobson is largely silent on the matter of political community, perhaps because he wants to avoid being entrapped by notions of territorially based community, but community does not have to be merely territorially based, and I would follow those such as Benedict Anderson in arguing that political communities fill a need to help people make sense of the lives they lead and the world that they live in,⁴⁴⁶ and that people are unlikely to be committed to the idea of being citizens of any kind of community where only negative aspects of their behavior count. How and why people relate to each other as citizens or members of communities, whether those are territorial states or otherwise, is important to understand if new relationships of obligation and citizenship are to be formed.

⁴⁴⁴ Dobson, A. ‘Thick Cosmopolitanism,’ p. 176.

⁴⁴⁵ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 4.

⁴⁴⁶ Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983/2006) p. 10.

Dobson also makes this move because he wants to incorporate the important analysis of feminists and others that the personal is political because “ private acts have public implications, and that it is therefore unwise to make the strict public/private distinctions that drive the ‘public’ view common to both liberal and civic republican citizenship.”⁴⁴⁷ However, expanding our understanding of what constitutes the political to include our behavior in our daily lives, something I agree is necessary to address environmental degradation, should not come at the cost of contracting our understanding of the political at more abstract levels. Dobson’s analysis is tied to democratic and liberal societies because of the centrality of justice to his understanding of ecological citizenship, yet this requires him to analyze and acknowledge the problematic relationship between liberalism and liberal democracies (and the notions of citizenship associated with them) and environmental degradation, because although “liberal democracies may be in the minority as far as political systems across the world are concerned, they are responsible for by far the most environmental damage...This is especially true of global environmental problems, such as global warming, ozone layer depletion, and the decline of major oceanic fish stocks.”⁴⁴⁸ Dobson obviously acknowledges that liberal democratic societies, concentrated in the global North, tend to outstrip others in causing environmental damage, but his solution is to emphasize the role of individuals rather than to explore how these societies (or the states that they compose) might be held to better account. On the one hand, this makes sense because he is focused on the narrative of liberalism as providing the ability for individuals to choose and pursue their own conception of the good life, but on the other hand it is a problem because Dobson is ultimately seeking substantive rather than procedural outcomes that require us to become different kinds of people, with different orientations to the environment, and each other. He argues that focusing on educating environmental citizens

⁴⁴⁷ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 56.

⁴⁴⁸ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 142.

can help achieve this, but while education may be an important tool, it is not enough given his thin understanding of citizenship examined above. It is also not enough because while individuals make up institutions and structures and can change them over time, those institutions and structures are far too powerful, far reaching and opaque for him to convincingly argue that changing individual behavior and mindsets without a deeper understanding of how those are shaped through an interplay with structures, institutions and political communities would be adequate. Because Dobson's understanding of citizenship here does not examine how citizens are situated in relation to what kinds of communities and structures, some of the most substantial obstacles to addressing environmental degradation are left out. Even if all individuals acted as ecologically responsibly as they were able, the problem would not be solved, in part because structures and institutions limit how ecologically responsible individuals are able to be. While changes in individual behaviour, like eating less meat or having fewer children, have a mitigating impact on climate change, Dobson's focus on individuals provides a distorted picture of the problem. A recent study found that just 100 companies are responsible for 71% of greenhouse gas emissions world-wide. While changing individual consumption patterns is an important part of changing this, lowering emissions to a sustainable level requires dealing with large entities and structural problems. Individuals may not have the information that they need to consume responsibly under present conditions, and tackling emissions demands corporate reform and governance on a large scale,⁴⁴⁹ and more powerful states and actors have a short-term perspective of their self-interest that limits the responses to those that maintain the modern political and economic order they currently benefit from. Dobson's ecological citizens who owe obligations to others because of their outsized ecological footprint need to redress that inequality, but their options and strategies for doing so are limited by the world

⁴⁴⁹ Griffin, P. 'CDP Carbon Majors Report 2017: 100 fossil fuel producers and nearly 1 trillion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions' *The Carbon Majors Database*, accessed at: <https://b8f65cb373b1b7b15feb-c70d8ead6ced550b4d987d7c03fcdd1d.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/cms/reports/documents/000/002/327/original/Carbon-Majors-Report-2017.pdf?1499691240>.

that they operate in. If environmentally sustainable choices and solutions are not readily and transparently available, what individuals *can* do is unlikely to close the gap required to reach what *must* be done. Here there are countless examples, such as the 2015 Volkswagen Scandal in which devices were fitted to millions of automobiles to enable them to cheat emissions tests without the knowledge of consumers, leading to an estimated 1 million tons of extra atmospheric pollution.⁴⁵⁰ In this case, Dobson's citizens would not know the extent of their contribution to environmental damage. In other cases, such as the recent decision by the UK government to end subsidies for solar energy⁴⁵¹ and more general move to scale back climate change reduction efforts to help ease post-Brexit trade deals,⁴⁵² the options for citizens to make ecologically beneficial choices are limited in ways that they have no immediate means to redress. Individual responsibility and action is important, but it is insufficient, and emphasizing the responsibility of individuals to the extent that Dobson does in his conceptualization of post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship at the expense of conceptualizing the institutions, structures and communities that citizens are located in is indicative of an insufficiently interrogated understanding of the possibilities for political engagement and what kinds of political actors we can be. This point will be examined more closely below, but thinking of sovereignty as an orientation that shapes individuals, communities, and the system they are located in together could help address the shortcomings here as it provides a better understanding of why individuals act as they do, relate to each other, and how they are enabled or constrained by their wider communities.

⁴⁵⁰ Mathiesen, K. and Neslen, A. 'VW scandal caused nearly 1m tonnes of extra pollution, analysis shows,' in *The Guardian*, September 23, 2015. In this scandal, VW vehicles were designed to cheat emissions tests by being programmed to recognize test conditions and emit less under those conditions, but not during actual driving conditions. Scientists have translated the extra pollution emitted from the scandal as leading to an estimated 1,200 premature deaths in Europe, especially because diesel produces more nitrogenous oxide emissions than petrol, which has more severe health effects. Chu, J. 'Study: Volkswagen's Excess Emissions Will Lead to 1,200 Premature Deaths in Europe,' *MIT News*, March 3, 2017.

⁴⁵¹ *BBC*. 'Small Scale Solar Panel Subsidies Set to End,' July 22, 2015.

⁴⁵² Revesz, R., 'UK to 'Scale Down' Climate Change and Illegal Wildlife Measures to Bring in post-Brexit Trade, Secret Documents Reveal,' *The Independent*, April 9, 2017.

The situatedness or embeddedness of individuals in their overlapping communities in relation to the structures, institutions and practices that comprise those communities need to be accounted for and reconsidered or reoriented together. Environmental degradation is a pervasive, totalizing problem. Dobson recognizes this in terms of viewing environmental degradation as an erosion of liberalism because it will limit the options of present and future individuals to pursue their version of the good life,⁴⁵³ but the bigger issue is how people conceive of what constitutes the good life. He tries to address this by advocating environmental citizenship education that would theoretically inculcate people with a sense of the importance of their behavior and its effect on the environment, and by extension, others living in it. However, individuals may have outsized ecological footprints and commit ecological damage not merely because they lack the knowledge to do better, but because they live situated in relation to structures and institutions that limit their means to do better, and within cultures whose values or practices (e.g. mass consumption) militate against it. Related to this is the issue that the ecological footprint of some communities or states may be growing significantly for reasons that have little to do with the behavior of the individuals within those states. For example, China has surpassed the US as the country with the highest carbon emissions at present, however, China has a population of 1.34 billion people, whereas the US has a population of 311 million. *Per capita*, US citizens emit 17.62 metric tons of carbon dioxide, whereas Chinese citizens emit 6.52 metric tons *per capita*. India, the world's second most populous country behind China currently ranks 4th in overall carbon emissions, but Indian citizens only produce 1.45 metric tons *per capita*. Furthermore, the explosion in Chinese emissions that led it to finally surpass the US as the largest emitter is due to increased production of goods that are ultimately consumed by countries like the US and those in the EU. The carbon footprint of a Chinese citizen has not changed

⁴⁵³ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, pp. 162-163.

markedly.⁴⁵⁴ Furthermore, individuals that do *not* have an outsized ecological footprint (and thus, no obligations or role in Dobson's conception of post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship) may have a sustainable ecological footprint because they live somewhere and in ways where they are forcibly limited by circumstances from doing otherwise. If options were available to them that would increase their ecological footprint beyond sustainability Dobson's work here does little to address that problem. Presumably, given the strength of his indictment of inequality, trying to maintain people in conditions of inequality that do not allow their ecological footprint to grow would not be his solution. Educating individuals is important, but that education would have to encompass much more than the direct environmental impacts of individual actions. People, especially those whose patterns of consumption are making outsized contributions to the problem of continuing carbon emissions,⁴⁵⁵ need to learn to want different things and different ways of being. This would require a much richer articulation of citizenship, at least, than what Dobson's provides. This is an important point of contention. Chakrabarty, for example, has repeatedly argued that climate change is a problem for humanity and that we should therefore avoid focusing too much on differentiated responsibility for the problem, but in a direct rebuttal, Malm forcefully points out that it is a relatively small sub-set of the world's population that contributes most to the conditions of environmental degradation and that as it is inequality that ultimately drives this, the problem of inequality must be addressed. "Chakrabarty draws the conclusion that 'the climate crisis is not *inherently* a result of economic inequalities,' when in fact it only reminds us of a stark reality: climate change has come about because a fortunate few have appropriated the bulk of atmospheric carbon sink through massive emissions *which by definition cannot be extended to humanity as whole*. If everyone lived

⁴⁵⁴ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, pp. 330-332, and Union of Concerned Scientist. 'Each Country's Share of CO2 Emissions,' November 18, 2014. Accessed at: http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science_and_impacts/science/each-countrys-share-of-co2.html#.Wabx0Ioo_eQ.

⁴⁵⁵ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, p. 390. Emphasis in the original. See also: Chakrabarty, D. 'The Climate of History,' pp. 197-222. See also Bauer, Masco.

like a rich American, guzzling cheap fossil energy, we would be at 6 degrees tomorrow and then no one would live. Logically *and* historically, in the actually existing world, from the rays of steam to the twilight of globalisation, the crisis is inherently a result of some having more than- nay, taking from-others, the accumulation of fossil capital a very negation of universal species-being.” This thesis strongly agrees with Malm (and Dobson) that inequality goes to the heart of the problem of environmental degradation. However, Malm’s focus is on capitalism as a problem, whereas the thesis is arguing that environmental degradation is a political problem, and that we must therefore understand the political concepts, practices and structures that have led to it. That is also why I focus here on those like Dobson and Eckersley who are concerned with mainstream political institutions and practices.

The role of inequality in addressing environmental problems has driven Dobson to articulate the importance of focusing on justice and obligation, rather than compassion or charity, because he believes that justice and obligations have greater motivational capacity. To that end, he has developed new conceptualizations or understandings of both citizenship and cosmopolitanism that are meant to have more force and generate more action politically. These moves are interesting and have some potential to shift how people might think about how justice relates to environmental problems. However, Dobson has minimal concern for how individuals relate to communities and structures, or, by extension, political organization and collective action. This is a weakness; there is a difference between when something ‘should’ be enough to change behavior or shape action and when it *is* enough. By over focusing on the individual, Dobson misses out on an important dimension of the political—we are not human by ourselves or in isolation, but through our interactions and communications with each other and the communities and structures that we create and live within. Changing individuals *en masse* requires understanding and changing their relations to each other. In his most recent work on listening, Dobson seems to recognize that his work on citizenship and cosmopolitanism has been missing a catalytic element, and reaches for the idea of

expanding subjecthood to include non-humans and nature itself,⁴⁵⁶ but he may be better served by at least first considering the intermediate issue of (human) subjectivity constituted by sovereignty and how it might relate to the form(s) of political organization that sovereignty enables and disables. The role(s) of sovereignty in shaping the conditions of inequality that Dobson is so critical of should also be connected to the problem of environmental degradation.

Dobson's criticisms of the inequalities inherent in globalization echo the critiques of sovereignty that 1) the reality is that states are not equal within the system, and 2) certain groups and peoples are marginalized and disempowered as a result of the operations of sovereignty despite the promise of citizenship. In terms of the first critique, although the international system is composed of states that are meant to have juridical equality, some states are clearly more powerful than others in part because particular understandings of subjects and political communities, and the relationships that exist between them, were universalized. As a result, states that more closely model those particular understandings of what a state 'should' look like are treated as more legitimate and desirable, and are therefore more powerful. This mirrors Dobson's insistence that globalization operates unequally in the world, with the direction of movement being from a global North to South, and where wealthier and more powerful actors create the terms and conditions that govern the lives of the poorer and more vulnerable, or where "[s]pecific local languages are turned into global grammars."⁴⁵⁷ The modern sovereign subject, who is a citizen of a sovereign political community (state) is one that exists far along a line of progression, able to move forward by virtue of existing within historical time, rather than 'others' who are designated as backwards or less advanced because they have different understandings of property and possession, relate to time differently because of different cosmologies, or do not understand 'nature' in the same way.⁴⁵⁸ For example, Linklater and Jahn both make the point that different people, the indigenous or 'non-

⁴⁵⁶ Dobson, A. *Listening for Democracy*, pp. 167.

⁴⁵⁷ Dobson, A. 'Globalisation, Cosmopolitanism and the Environment,' pp. 259.

⁴⁵⁸ Latour makes the point that the concept of 'nature' is specific to Western modernity, particularly in his *The Politics of Nature* which was addressed in more detail in Chapter 4.. See: and

modern' sometimes have different understandings of property or the use of land. Linklater provides the example of the Yolgnu people in Australia to demonstrate this:

the Yolgnu do not regard land as a commodity which can be bought and sold in property markets; they believe their land was created, and is inhabited by, ancestral beings. The community may be said to own the land but it also owned by it, and its members are responsible for caring for sacred sites. The Australian legal system was unresponsive to aboriginal beliefs that land is the inalienable possession of communities rather than the alienable possession of separate individuals bound by contractual relations.⁴⁵⁹ J

An understanding of ownership over land or property such as this indicates different forms of relationality to space and time and a 'We-I' balance that with stronger 'We' identifications with past, present, and future community members. Jahn makes the larger point that colonial expansion has been historically justified on the basis of what property rights and should be, and that people displaced or subjugated as a result of colonial expansion were constructed as having 'savage' or primitive views of land and property that in turn legitimized the seizure and exploitation of the lands on which they lived.⁴⁶⁰ In the political orientation of sovereignty, while there may be other forms of political community or organization that exist, they are less important, or rather, less advanced in their progress towards being legitimate political communities (sovereign states), just as, for Dobson, there may be other localities or forms of life, but the movement of localities is in only one direction—from wealthy North to poor South. Political communities that did not develop in the particular context sovereignty imagined and constructed struggle to grasp the same recognition, which is similar to Dobson's argument about the unequal nature of globalization for the global North versus the global South.

The second critique that sovereignty excludes, marginalizes and disempowers certain groups and types of peoples is very clearly an operation of sovereignty, not an inadequacy. If people live in a way that does not assume the understandings of space and time enabled by sovereignty, they are not even on this line of progression and may therefore legitimately be subject to the exclusionary

⁴⁵⁹ Linklater, A. 'Dialogic Politics and the Civilising Process,' *Review of International Studies*, 31:1 (2005) p. 149,

⁴⁶⁰ Jahn, B. *Liberal Internationalism*, 2013, pp. 46-53.

violences of sovereignty. Sovereignty establishes what is legitimate in terms of identity. This identity leads to certain ways of acting in the world, including the proper relationship to land or territory, and those that do not act this way can be excluded by whatever means.⁴⁶¹ The exclusion of the vulnerable, and living at the mercy of the privileged that Dobson identifies in terms of the lack of equal opportunity to participate in the political and economic grounds that globalization engenders corresponds to how sovereignty establishes legitimate identities and excludes others. Dobson's critique of the inequality that attends globalization and that drives environmental degradation would therefore be more powerful if he engaged with the orientation of sovereignty.

As noted above, Dobson's most recent work is concerned in part with the possibilities for expanding subjecthood. His preoccupation with environmental degradation present throughout all of his work has led him to explore how different types and ways of listening might expand subjecthood and lead to "[a] new politics, characterized by publics coalescing around other-than-human materialities."⁴⁶² Again, the intermediate step of engaging with sovereignty and sovereign subjectivity would be useful here. How and what people can know about each other, themselves and where they are situated in the world serves to establish the conditions for sovereignty, which will become the conditions for the political. Claims to authority are enabled by an epistemological system that is based on the production of an identity that relies on exclusion (of distant others, or savages) and on assumptions about the desires, motivations, and ways of understanding that can exist between people as a result. A key element of the construction of modern sovereignty is naturalizing and universalizing assumptions about people, human nature, and what are the legitimate ways of being.⁴⁶³ Once these assumptions about identity and difference are accepted, sovereignty becomes the obvious solution to the problems that they pose and sovereignty itself is insulated from political contestation because it has become the inevitable and necessary

⁴⁶¹ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p. 40.

⁴⁶² Dobson, A. *Listening for Democracy*, p. 169.

⁴⁶³ ⁴⁶³ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p. 39. See also: Davis, K. *Periodization and Sovereignty*, and Fasolt, C. *The Limits of History*, particularly the Introduction and Chapter 1: A Dangerous Form of Knowledge, pp. 1-45.

precondition for political community.⁴⁶⁴ This sense of inevitability has a significant impact on IR and political possibilities related to a problem like environmental degradation because even when people are critical of sovereignty in relation to the state, they accept the ontological grounds for politics it provides, which shapes individuals, communities (especially in the form of states) and the system together. In a political world predicated on and enabled by the orientation of sovereignty agreements, conventions, and laws are perpetually contingent on the sovereign never exercising the power of decision. This contingency makes it impossible to rely on promises of responsibility, cooperation and the acceptance of embedded norms, which is apparent in discussions about agreements regarding mitigating climate change, such as Dobson's analysis of Kyoto protocols and the battle over the Paris agreements.

Because sovereignty lays claim to issues of power, authority, answerability and responsibility it is where actors like individuals or citizens, or groups smaller than that of a state might look to for recourse and responsiveness to conditions that affect them, but especially in the case of issues related to environmental degradation, the conditions that are affecting people may not be those that the sovereign state is equipped to deal with.⁴⁶⁵ Some states may not have the capacity to address the environmental concerns of individuals or communities, and those that do often limit their responsibilities to their own citizens. More significantly, part of the processes of negotiation that sovereign states have enabled is predicated on not recognizing or being bound by higher forms of authority or different locations for collective action, or recognition. Sovereignty then disables us from thinking collective action and recognition at a higher level because the processes it has enabled have also enabled the establishment of the sovereign state, which wields the power of decision as to when and what it will recognize or be responsive to and bound by. Dobson recognizes

⁴⁶⁴ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p. 39.

⁴⁶⁵ Walker makes this point in terms of the idea that politics are not where they are supposed to be. See for example: Walker, R.B.J. 'Europe is Not Where it is Supposed to Be,' in *Out of Line: Essays on the Politics of Boundaries and the Limits of Modern Politics* by R.B.J. Walker (London: Routledge, 2016) pp. 150-151 and 'They Seek it Here, They Seek it There: Locating the Political in Clayoquot Sounds,' in *Out of Line*, pp.161-181.

this problem through the language of inequalities in globalization that mean the wealthy and more powerful set the terms of solving the problems of environmental degradation despite being major contributors to the causes, but the operations and impacts of globalization cannot (and should not) be disentangled from sovereignty as orientation.

The Framework We Have for Understanding Political Solutions is the Problem: Eckersley and the Problems of Working Within the System

Robyn Eckersley's work provides a certain corrective to Dobson's focus on individuals. While an individual or citizen's choices are important, Eckersley is much more clearly concerned with the collective action that dealing with environmental degradation requires. In *The Green State* she examines the possibility of the evolution of sovereignty and the state into a green, democratic actor or steward as the best means of stemming environmental degradation.⁴⁶⁶ While her position on the possibilities for the state to evolve into a green, democratic actor are not necessarily persuasive, her broader understanding of the importance of the situatedness of individuals is a point worth taking, especially when considering the merits or difficulties of a cosmopolitan ethic such as Dobson's. Dobson calls for a new citizenship based on the justice obligations generated by outsized ecological footprints, but Eckersley recognizes that these obligations based on justice, or the recognition of harm to others, are insufficient:

Harm is important, but it is not enough when respect for the other is absent...even where respect for others is present, it is still unclear whether those who can be shown to indirectly cause harm at a distance will feel compelled to take steps to change their own behavior to prevent future harms, and/or to compensate for past harm. The huge difficulties in tracking chains of causation and apportioning blame and responsibility are likely to mean that the situation is typically muddy rather than clear, and that people will not take responsibility in the absence of a clear line of causation that can be tracked back to their own behavior...the collective action problem here will inevitably undermine the crucial motivation issue.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*.

⁴⁶⁷ Eckersley, R. 'Communitarianism,' in *Political Theory and the Ecological Challenge* edited by Andrew Dobson and Robyn Eckersley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp. 102-103.

Dobson under-theorizes the role of social bonds and affectedness in his conceptualization of citizenship, making it difficult to understand why people will meet their obligations, as well as how. Eckersley, in contrast, still makes an argument for ecological citizenship, but it is one that emphasizes the importance of affectedness, and by extension, motivations for solidarity and action.⁴⁶⁸ While Dobson makes a good point that there are people that do good because it is the right thing to do,⁴⁶⁹ relying on people's 'goodness' is not enough, especially when the contexts that they operate within are not addressed. Social bonds are important to people, which is why, as Eckersley points out "It is precisely because social bonds are weak or missing at the global level that cosmopolitans reach for the harm principle or notions of affectedness, rather than the idea of our common humanity or our common planet, as the basis for moral obligations... We humans belong to many different kinds of community, and the ethical obligations that we owe to others derive from the different relationships that constitute those communities."⁴⁷⁰ To focus only on negative behaviors or harm without either articulating the role of those who are not committing harm, or the structures, institutions and practices that enable or increase the likelihood of harm being committed is not enough.

Part of what is missing in Dobson, then, is supplied by Eckersley's work. However, her approach to addressing or ameliorating environmental degradation becomes more problematic as it relates to democracy, sovereignty, and the state, and there are points at which some of the most powerful arguments made by Dobson about the injustice and inequality that contribute to climate change and variegated environmental impacts are underplayed or absent. Eckersley is right to insist that we need to take both the idea of political community and the political form of the state seriously in *The Green State*, but her argument that 'evolutions in sovereignty' are our best hope for politically addressing

⁴⁶⁸ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, pp.111, 173.

⁴⁶⁹ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁰ Eckersley, R. 'Communitarianism,' p. 103.

environmental degradation does not sufficiently consider some important elements of the sovereign subject, state and system.⁴⁷¹ The hierarchy or power differentials between states and the relationship sovereignty has orientated states and humans towards nature are particularly significant issues that she does not fully grapple with, and there is an overarching assumption throughout her work that solutions to the problems of environmental degradation must come out of the evolution of the political frameworks that exist now.⁴⁷² While that assumption is perfectly understandable if one wants to make serious progress towards ameliorating environmental degradation, I want to suggest that this assumption, and the statist framework more generally needs to be more seriously questioned, especially as it becomes clear that powerful states often act not just as a barrier to addressing environmental degradation, but as a primary driver of the problem.

Because of what she refers to as the “protean character of the norms associated with state sovereignty,”⁴⁷³ Eckersley suggests and seems convinced that sovereignty in relation to the modern state is mutable enough to allow not just a transformation to ecologically responsible ‘green’ states, but a democratic transformation. She takes the position that multilateral negotiations and treaties point to a greening (and by extension, evolution) of sovereignty⁴⁷⁴ will eventually lead to transnational states that facilitate ecological citizenship.⁴⁷⁵ One problem here is that there are, in fact, no shortage of agreements and targets related to climate change that states have signed on to as a result of multilateral negotiations, but that does not mean that they are being met. A recent example is the failure of rich countries to meet their pledge made in 2009 to mobilize \$100 billion a year by 2020

⁴⁷¹ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p. 239.

⁴⁷² See: Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, Eckersley, R. ‘Moving Forward in the Climate Negotiations: Multilateralism or Minilateralism,’ *Global Environmental Politics*, 12 (2012) pp. 24-42, Christoff, P. and Eckersley, R. *Globalization and the Environment* (Lanham, MC: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), particularly 164-165.

⁴⁷³ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p. 203.

⁴⁷⁴ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p. 217.

⁴⁷⁵ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p. 90.

for climate finance to help developing countries prepare for the impacts of climate change such as rising sea levels and extreme weather, and to reduce carbon emissions through technological development.⁴⁷⁶ Wealthier countries had pledged the money to help developing countries prepare for climate change impacts like rising sea levels and with technological modernization to lower their greenhouse gas emissions. This is representative of a wider problem in which wealthier states have lowered their in-country emissions by both pursuing technological modernization and off-shoring emissions by encouraging the goods they consume to be produced elsewhere, but have then not shared the technology that might help curb emissions in those places. This increases the health effects felt in already disadvantaged countries as pollution in them soars, and contributes to the overall problem of greenhouse gas emissions without differentiating where responsibility for the problem should be located.⁴⁷⁷ The failure to meet this pledge threatened to undermine the 2015 Paris climate negotiations and continues to be a problem in terms of the disparity between states that have contributed and are contributing the most to climate change, and those suffering the most from it. There are huge disparities both in terms of global emissions and the experience of negative impacts from climate change between the Global North or the wealthiest parts of the world, and the Global South, or the world's poorer areas.⁴⁷⁸ If a promise is made and not kept, the environmental situation does not change. When it comes to environmental action, promises are repeatedly unkept, and there seems to be no mechanisms or motivations powerful enough to keep them. Part of the reason that agreements are not honored and goals are not met by states is because they are sovereign and they operate within a system in which there is no overarching authority to ensure

⁴⁷⁶Goldenberg, S. 'Rich Countries' \$100bn Promise to Fight Climate Change 'Not Delivered' in *The Guardian*, June 29, 2015.

⁴⁷⁷ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, pp. 329-333.

⁴⁷⁸ See for example: Costello, A., Abbas, M., Allen, A., Ball, S., Bell, S., Bellamy, R., Friel, S. et al. 'Managing the Health Effects of Climate Change,' *Lancet* 373:9676 (2009) pp.1693–1733, which breaks down the disparities between the places in the world that produce the greatest carbon emissions and the places that experience the greatest health consequences as a result.

compliance. Even though there are other factors in play,⁴⁷⁹ (some) states are permitted to renege on (or fail to make) promises that jeopardize the environmental conditions people require to live, let alone live well because of norms and practices associated with the sovereign state system that undergirds our understanding of the international. Furthermore, Eckersley stakes her claim on the greening of sovereignty on the idea of building on “promising multilateral developments that engage with existing democratic structures of like-minded nation-states, in ways that produce more outward-looking state governance structures.”⁴⁸⁰ However, the ‘like-minded’ states she has in mind here are the developed liberal democracies that have been, and largely continue to be some of the biggest generators and contributors to the problem of environmental degradation. Generally speaking, the ecological footprint of someone from the global North is far outsized to someone from the global South, and the size of ecological footprint is almost always related to wealth; the wealthiest 10% of the world’s population are responsible for approximately 50% of the global carbon emissions, while the poorest 50% of the population are responsible for approximately 10% of emissions.⁴⁸¹ This is an important reality when it comes to discussions of prospects for mitigating global climate change and the importance of capitalism and economic considerations more generally cannot be left out of serious discussions about environmental degradation. Again, however, the thesis connects these concerns to sovereignty as an orientation both because the sovereign system provides the conditions that enable capitalism and because the political subjectivity that sovereignty as an orientation helps constitute is one where ‘free’ and ‘individual’ subjects are oriented towards consumption and above nature, creating an out of balance ‘We-I’ balance. How the

⁴⁷⁹ See for example: Paterson, M. *Understanding Global Environmental Politics* (New York: Macmillan Press, 2000) and Paterson, M. ‘Legitimation and Accumulation in Climate Change Governance,’ *New Political Economy*, 15 (2010) pp. 345-368.

⁴⁸⁰ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, pp. 200-201.

⁴⁸¹ Oxfam Media Briefing. ‘Extreme Carbon Inequality: Why the Paris Climate Deal Must Put the Poorest, Lowest Emitting and Most Vulnerable People First,’ December 2, 2015. Access at: https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/mb-extreme-carbon-inequality-021215-en.pdf.

democratic greening of sovereignty will be exported to states that are not a part of the democratic clusters that she identifies is problematic. To avoid charges of ‘green imperialism’ she insists that “Those who happen to belong to and embrace an emergent green Kantian or green post-Westphalian community must recognize that other communities might not necessarily wish to become part of such a cooperative framework” and “that only where zones of affinity emerge among particular groupings of states-such as the European Union- that a genuine transnational democracy becomes possible. However, it would not be global. The extent to which such green clusters grow or are copied elsewhere, it ought to be by respectful persuasion or example (*possibly hastened by the unwelcome assistance of ecological collapse*).”⁴⁸² The ecological collapse she refers to here is as much a manifestation of imperialism as any overt attempts to coerce states into whatever cooperative frameworks that she envisions. The ‘zones of affinity’ and ‘particular groupings of states’ that she refers to consist largely of the states that have driven poorer and less powerful states to the point of ecological collapse, both through their historical contributions to environmental degradation, and through the practice of off-shoring emissions, where the goods that wealthier people consume are produced in poorer countries who then suffer greater health consequences in terms of pollution *and* are held responsible in climate negotiations for carbon emissions produced making goods for others.⁴⁸³ That they may not want to be a part of the ‘cooperative frameworks’ of these states is arguably due in part to having never experienced them as cooperative since these states are also the ones driving the problem.

In the case of CO₂, most emissions associated with a commodity originate in the process of production, not final consumption: a Swede does not emit CO₂ by wearing a T-shirt from Bangladesh. It has already been emitted from the factory where the T-shirt was sewn and the power plant providing the electricity by the builders and machine-makers and those further back in the supply chain, forming a sequence of emissions- an invisible legacy of the burn accessories- *embodied* in the

⁴⁸² Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, pp. 201. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁸³ Hertwich, E., and Peters, G. ‘Carbon Footprints of Nations: A Global, Trade-Linked Analysis,’ *Environmental Science & Technology*, 43 (2009) pp. 6414-6420.

commodity. The actual volumes of CO₂ caused by the importing consumer may thus stretch far beyond the borders of their homeland. Indeed, the tendency of late has been for more CO₂ to be discharged in the production of commodities ultimately consumed in a different country: in 1990, 20 percent of all emissions; by 2008, the share had grown to 26 percent. Official statistics, on whose basis climate negotiations are conducted, still allocate emissions to the territorial states where the smoke actually leaves the ground. But why should Bangladesh be held accountable for CO₂ released for the benefit of a Swedish T-shirt wearer?⁴⁸⁴

The inequalities of the relationship at play here have to be kept in focus. The real ‘green imperialism’ may well be that poorer, less developed states are suffering the consequences of choices made by more powerful states, and that they are being forced to beg for help from those who have caused their difficulties and suffering, and often not getting that help.

Eckersley’s view of the power differentials between different states is more nuanced than someone like Held’s, but she still does not acknowledge the extent of the inequalities involved in the multilateral negotiations and treaties that she places much of her faith in. Weaker, poorer states who also tend to be the most significantly affected by environmental degradation at present, are not in a position to set the terms of debate and negotiations, or their outcomes, and their ability to enforce compliance from more powerful states is limited. They also have fewer resources to devote to the ecological modernizations that is another key element of Eckersley’s green states (and, as noted above, the wealthier, more powerful countries that have pledged to help them with ecological modernization have not met their pledges). Eckersley argues that ecological modernization must be accompanied by a deeper commitment to green democracy because mere technical fixes are insufficient. She identifies the most ecologically modernized states as also being the best international environmental citizens, taking the lead and the strongest stances in climate change negotiations and initiatives, and most of these states are in Northern Europe.⁴⁸⁵ There is an important disconnect here. On her terms, Northern European states are the best international environmental citizens and some of the most ecologically modernized, but the emissions *per capita* of people in wealthy, Northern European states is still much greater than the *per capita* emissions of

⁴⁸⁴ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, pp. 330-331.

⁴⁸⁵ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p.252.

poorer countries, sometimes by an order of magnitude in the case of Denmark.⁴⁸⁶ While their ecological modernization is laudable and important, the way that people in wealthier countries live is still unsustainable, especially given that many wealthier countries, such as the US are much bigger *per capita* emitters than Eckersley's prize international environmental citizens, and she acknowledges that there are "no encouraging signs"⁴⁸⁷ that powerful states like the US are moving in the direction of becoming responsible, ecologically modernized international citizens.⁴⁸⁸ This was recently underscored not just by the Trump administration pledging to pull out of the climate accords, but also by the repeated insistence that the Paris accords were a 'bad deal' or unfair to the US. Former US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in an interview that the US is "willing to work with partners in the Paris climate accord if we can construct a set of terms that we believe is fair and balanced for the American people and recognizes our economy, our economic interests, relative to others, in particular the second-largest economy in the world, China. If you look at those targets in terms of the Paris climate accord, they were just really out of balance for the two largest economies."⁴⁸⁹ This position fails to account for both the historical contribution of the US to climate change, but also to the outsized emissions of US citizens compared to the Chinese, and that the explosion in Chinese emissions has come from producing goods for countries like the US, rather than from increased consumption on the part of the Chinese.⁴⁹⁰ Eckersley remains hopeful that countries like the US will move in the right direction over time because of the interconnectedness and interdependencies present in the world today,⁴⁹¹ but the operations of that interdependency and interconnection often increases inequalities, instead of diminishing them. While ecological modernization is fundamental to developing states that may emit more as they develop without it,

⁴⁸⁶ World Resources Institute. 'Total GHG Emissions Including Land-Use Change and Forestry Per Capita-2012,' 2012 accessed at: <http://cait.wri.org>

⁴⁸⁷ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p. 253.

⁴⁸⁸ Gearan, A. 'McMaster Says No Redo on Paris Climate Deal Decision,' *The Washington Post*, September 17, 2017.

⁴⁸⁹ Gearan, A. 'McMaster Says No Redo on Paris Climate Deal Decision,' *The Washington Post*, September 17, 2017.

⁴⁹⁰ Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, 327-333.

⁴⁹¹ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p. 252.

that will not be enough without changes within the most powerful, wealthy countries. As Masco points out:

The everyday consumption patterns of each person on the planet, unremarkable in their singularity, have become cumulatively destructive in their species totality. This makes the basic requirements for human life (including food, transportation, heating, and clothing) fundamentally dangerous to the future stability of the climate if they remain embedded in the current petrochemical- based global economy... The implications as well as consequences of this “great acceleration” are profound. First, it means that everyday American consumption (a global standard for middle-class living) has been a planetary force since the mid-twentieth century, indexing the greatest historical contribution to carbon emissions. Second, it makes the American middle-class consumer economy a spectacular force of violence in the world, one in which planned obsolescence, plastics, and petrochemical innovation have raised standards of living in North America at the expense of the collective environment as well as public health in the global south.⁴⁹²

Time is short, and those changes need to be much farther-reaching than those that Eckersley envisions in her green states and Climate Council which attempts to address the inequalities between powerful states that are large emitters and others by bringing together to work on climate initiatives together.⁴⁹³ This is especially true when the states with the most capacity to address the problem have the largest ecological footprints and are either trying to derail cooperative agreements, or backing away from environmental commitments. The US under the Trump administration, of course, has received a lot of attention in this regard because of pledging to back out of the Paris Accords, but countries like the UK and Canada are either walking back commitments to environmental sustainability or are pursuing policies and projects like the development of the Alberta tar sands that actively undermine any environmental pledges they make. Even before Brexit, the UK was undermining its ability to meet climate change targets by ending investment in carbon capture technology and cutting subsidies for solar energy in an effort to ‘stabilize’ its financial situation.

Furthermore, the UK has reportedly been campaigning to weaken EU climate change efforts despite the fact that the targets it is lobbying against will not go into effect until after the UK

⁴⁹² Masco, J. ‘The Crisis in Crisis’ p. S72.

⁴⁹³ Eckersley, R. ‘Moving Forward in the Climate Negotiations: Multilateralism or Minilateralism,’ pp. 24-42.

leaves the EU.⁴⁹⁴ The Canadian government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has approved the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline project that is meant to carry 890,000 barrels of oil per day from Canada's tar sands to the West coast, which represents about 17 million tons of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere each year. The tar sands are amongst the dirtiest forms of oil, creating 14 percent more emissions than average oil used on North America. Climate scientists have warned that the development of the tar sands would be a disaster for the climate, and possibly a major tipping point. Approving the pipeline has also been characterized as a bet on the part of the Trudeau government that despite their official commitment to the Paris Accords, they expect them to fail and the oil industry to continue to grow.⁴⁹⁵ Although Trudeau has tried to create a climate conscious image and distance himself from the Trump administration on their approaches to environmental issues, he has also aggressively pursued the development of the Alberta tar sands, stating at a petroleum industry gathering "No country would find 173 billion barrels of oil in the ground and just leave them there."⁴⁹⁶T

Eckersley's transition to green states is meant to be democratically and peacefully achieved through the 'demonstration effect,' the force of the better argument or better example,⁴⁹⁷ but when it comes to environmental degradation, privileged, Western, democratic states often do not provide a better example. Dobson makes this point clearly and forcefully in relation to the Kyoto protocol:

⁴⁹⁴ Swinford, S. 'Britain Preparing to Scrap EU Green Energy Targets as Part of a Bonfire of Red Tape after Brexit,' *The Telegraph*, April 14, 2017.; Harvey, F. 'Scrapping Carbon Capture Support 'Threatens UK Climate Targets: MPs Warn that Without CCS Technology it Will be Much More Expensive to Meet National and Internationally Agreed Targets on Reducing Emissions,' *The Guardian*, February 10, 2016 and Harrabin, R. 'UK Announces Cut in Solar Subsidies,' *BBC*, December 17, 2015. See: Vaughan, A. 'UK Lobbies Europe to Dilute Flagship Energy Efficiency Law: Green Campaigners Warn Conservative Efforts to Undermine Energy Targets Will Lead to Weaker Climate Policies after Brexit,' *The Guardian*, May 28, 2017.

⁴⁹⁵ See: Adler, B., 'The Next Standing Rock: A New Canadian Pipeline Could be 'Game Over' for the Climate-and Activists are Lining up to Fight it,' *New Republic*, September 8, 2017.

⁴⁹⁶ McKibben, B., 'Stop Swooning over Justin Trudeau. The Man is a Disaster for the Planet,' *The Guardian*, April 17, 2017.

⁴⁹⁷ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, pp. 201.

Despite the relatively feeble nature of the agreement, of the thirty-nine countries that started out on the long road from Kyoto in 1997, only thirty-eight reached Marrakech in 2001. The one that dropped out was the United States. Despite the fact that the United States with just 5 percent of the world's population produces a quarter of the world's greenhouse gases, 11 times as much per head of population as China, and 20 times more than India, and 300 times more than Mozambique, despite all this, the United States claims that the Kyoto protocol is 'unfair,' since it exempts developing countries and is against the United States' best economic interests.⁴⁹⁸

The Kyoto protocols would not even make a particularly pronounced effect on reducing global emissions to the levels necessary to arrest (not stop or even improve) the rise of problems associated with climate change, yet the United States would not ratify the treaty, and is not the only original signatory to drop out or fail to enforce the terms of the protocols. Even if it were the only one: "We now know that the unilateral decision of the United States to withdraw from the Kyoto agreement on greenhouse gas emissions is far more significant for the global climate than the multilateral negotiations that led to the agreement in the first place."⁴⁹⁹ Again, Eckersley has tried to address the power imbalances that exist in climate negotiations by proposing a 'minilateral' Climate Council that would include major Green House Gas (GHG) emitters and representatives from low emissions countries that are being disproportionately impacted.⁵⁰⁰ This might be a way to make the process of negotiating agreements more fair and efficient, however, the question of whether major emitters will commit to the necessary changes, and what can be done if they do not, remains. Eckersley acknowledges this, and argues that the Climate Council she envisions would be similar to the UN Security Council but have greater legitimacy because it better reflects power in the present system, whilst representing less powerful states, and that because major emitters would have veto power over any decisions, they would be more likely to embrace such a Council.⁵⁰¹ This is the point where Eckersley's work stumbles over the need for deeper theoretical reflection about whether or not sovereign states and the system in which they are

⁴⁹⁸ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 19.

⁴⁹⁹ Dobson, *Citizenship and the Environment*, p. 20.

⁵⁰⁰ Eckersley, R. 'Moving Forward in the Climate Negotiations: Multilateralism or Minilateralism,' pp. 24-42.

⁵⁰¹ Eckersley, R. 'Moving Forward in the Climate Negotiations: Multilateralism or Minilateralism,' pp. 38.

situated are not greater obstacles even than she recognizes. The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement is an illustrative example here. The most successful aspect of the Paris talks is in some way that they maintain the ground for the possibility of avoiding environmental catastrophe to which it would be unlikely, if not impossible to adapt. They were the last hope of sustaining hope after decades of failures to reach or enforce agreements, and on those terms they have thus far succeeded. However, the provisions of the agreement meant to halt temperature rises at 2 degrees Celsius, and aim for the preferable goal of 1.5 degrees, actually equate to something closer to a 3 degree rise. This is better than the projected 5 degree rise if absolutely nothing is done,⁵⁰² but the success of the agreements in terms of actually reducing emissions is in the hands of the actors who hold the power (and have contributed the most to the problem). There was an ongoing domestic battle within the US over complying with key provisions of the agreement even before the election of Donald Trump⁵⁰³ illustrating the point that the capacity to act in the world is unequally distributed and that the inequalities of that power can have devastating environmental impacts for those least able to act.⁵⁰⁴ Multilateral agreements and negotiations cannot be the solution to this problem if there is nothing to stop actors, particularly those contributing the most to environmental degradation from refusing to adopt or enforce them, which is currently the case in which solutions to the problems of environmental degradation are pursued through the actors and structures that sovereignty as an orientation enables. Recognizing the interplay with the system, states and subjects that thinking about sovereignty as an orientation brings together may help make it clearer the depth and scope of the reorientations needed, as well as why focusing on states as the site for solutions, rather than focusing on them as the problem, has not been working. Modern, sovereign states developed

⁵⁰² Harvey, F. 'Paris Climate Change Agreement: The World's Great Diplomatic Success,' *The Guardian*, December 14, 2015.

⁵⁰³ Goldenberg, S. 'Supreme Court to Block Obama's Sweeping Climate Change Plan,' *The Guardian*, February 10, 2016.

⁵⁰⁴ Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, pp. 17-20.

out of efforts to establish bounded political communities “based on the protection of private property and the rule of law.”⁵⁰⁵ The liberal, democratic states that Eckersley thinks are the good environmental citizens that can lead the way towards effective cooperative agreements to alleviate environmental degradation are precisely the problem both because they emerged out of and are predicated on a logic of continuous economic expansion through exploitation and consumption, and because they constructed alternative approaches to political community, property or the environment as backwards or ‘savage’ in order to justify that economic expansion.⁵⁰⁶

Eckersley wants to hold on to a democratic and transnational state to facilitate ecological citizenship,⁵⁰⁷ and Dobson’s post-cosmopolitan ecological citizenship is also grounded in understandings of democracy, despite his recognition that developed liberal democracies have been a major part of the environmental degradation problem(s), but there is a great deal of tension between ‘green’ outcomes or solutions and many, if not all, visions of democracy. A liberal democracy in which the state is a sort of neutral facilitator of individuals pursuing their own particular conception of the good is very obviously problematic if those conceptions are contrary to positive environmental outcomes. Dobson and Eckersley largely reject procedural understandings of democracy in favor of the desire for substantive environmental achievements, but a stronger critique of democracy should be on the table. Substantive environmental outcomes require strong, authoritative regulations in Eckersley’s work, hence the need for the state, but that raises the question of how democracy operates both within traditional territorial boundaries, and in her green transnational states. This leads to the larger problem, which is that environmental degradation is a crisis, or series of crises, albeit (sometimes, in some places) slow burning, and crises are undemocratic. Or, to frame the problem differently, our understandings and

⁵⁰⁵ Jahn, B. *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 67.

⁵⁰⁶ Jahn B. *Liberal Internationalism*, especially p. 68.

⁵⁰⁷ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p.190.

practices of democracy are underwritten by sovereignty, which is the condition of possibility for the political in modernity, and sovereignty is undemocratic. Again, Eckersley refers to the ‘protean’ norms and practices associated with sovereignty,⁵⁰⁸ suggesting that this makes sovereignty endlessly mutable, and that this mutability means that it should not be too difficult a task to move beyond the conditions it has imposed upon engagement with or in the political. As argued in chapter 1, sovereignty is an enabling concept in that provides parameters for political engagement inside and outside states, and those parameters appear mutable enough to allow us to shift and alter how we live in relation to each other over time. However, the reason for this apparent mutability is the contingency at the core of sovereignty, which is what Schmitt identified as the decision or exception. We are able to carry on as needed, as it were, until and unless a sovereign actor decides that an exception to whatever order (democratic or otherwise) is exigent to secure the continued existence or interests of the sovereign actor (the state in modernity). Moments of decision are moments of crisis. States are only ever as democratic as that sovereign power is dormant, and in the modern sovereign state system, that power can only ever be dormant rather than gone, as it is the basis for the system. That is also why sovereignty is disabling as well as enabling; there is no means to control how or what sovereign decisions are made in crisis, or when or what crises will be perceived. Sovereignty as an orientation has helped create a sense of politics and crisis tethered to the present or short-term thinking. The significance of the moment of decision or exception to sovereignty as well as the constitution of political subjects and communities that emphasize more self-interested perspectives or the exclusion of others contributes to immediate or short-term calculations of interest and understandings of what constitutes a crisis at the expense of long-term perspective and planning. The temporal orientations of sovereignty enable powerful sovereign states to shape, if not create, the present through declarations of crisis, or moments of decision or exception. Conversely,

⁵⁰⁸ Eckersley, R. *The Green State*, p. 203.

when powerful sovereign actors do not recognize or declare events or phenomena as crises this creates a barrier to developing political solutions to problems, something illustrated by limited and ineffective efforts at the international level to address climate change. Granted, It is perfectly possible that present generations have calculated that the advantages of deferring significant action to mitigate climate change outweigh the disadvantages of leaving the problem more or less unchecked at present or claims to responsibility for the future. However, I am seeking to emphasize that the disposition towards self-interest and short-term calculations is part of the orientation of sovereignty and that the unpredictable temporal dimensions of climate change raise questions about the rationality of such short-term calculations.⁵⁰⁹

Practically speaking, not all states may be able to exert the power of decision because the sovereign system is oriented towards hierarchies of states, but it is damaging enough when one is powerful enough to be able to, as in the example of the United States refusing to comply with the Kyoto Protocols, and its subsequent threats to pull out of the Paris agreement and back away from climate change reduction policies.⁵¹⁰ Dobson argues that it is the wealthier and more powerful states that set the terms of globalization and are able to use its institutions and frameworks to their advantage, so that globalization moves, essentially, from global North, to the poorer global South. This direction of movement in unequal globalization can be read as a product of what sovereignty enables, because “History begins and ends with modern sovereign states: states as spatial containers discipline Time into History, and within the bounds of state sovereignty History continues its one-way path of Progress,”⁵¹¹ and the more powerful states are those farther along the

⁵⁰⁹ See: Stephen Gardiner, ‘A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption’ *Environmental Values* 15 (2006), 397-413 and Gardiner, ‘The Real Tragedy of the Commons.’

⁵¹⁰ See: Davenport, C. and Rubin, A. ‘Trump Signs Executive Order Unwinding Obama Climate Policies,’ *The New York Times*, March 28, 2017, and Trump, D., ‘Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord.’

⁵¹¹ Shaw, K. *Indigeneity and Political Theory*, p. 83.

historical, linear pathway of Progress. Dobson is using the language of globalization, but the United States' decision regarding the Kyoto protocols is a matter of sovereignty in those terms.

In explaining his rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, George W. Bush said that 'a growing population requires more energy to heat and cool our homes, more gas to drive our cars'. Bush would like to present this as a statement of fact, but it is, rather, a prospectus for a way of life... This local prospectus, in turn, has immediate global effects in its contribution to global warming... This is an example... of the way in which asymmetrical globalization operates, and the manifestations by each and every agent with globalizing capacity.⁵¹²

The primary agents with this globalizing capacity are sovereign states and the institutions, organizations, and forces that they enable to operate, such as corporations, or capital more generally. This is also why I argue that neither Dobson nor Eckersley are grappling with sovereignty and the sovereign state adequately when it comes to the problem of environmental degradation because sovereignty is the condition of possibility for the political, and that means that our possibilities are severely limited until sovereignty is thoroughly confronted and reconsidered, beyond just hoping and assuming that its mutability will allow us to set it aside in envisioning a world able to halt and turn back climate change.

Conclusion: Connecting the Political Orientation of Sovereignty to the Problems of Environmental Degradation

This chapter has argued that environmental degradation is a problem that cannot be understood or effectively addressed without also engaging with sovereignty as a form of political orientation. The chapter used the work of Dobson to show that work focused on the political dimensions of environmental degradation is incomplete without considering the ways that sovereignty establishes the conditions of inequality and the relations between individuals and larger communities or

⁵¹² Dobson, A. *Citizenship and the Environment*, pp. 18-19.

structures that drive the problem. This has also helped provide a sense of the problematic ‘We-I’ balance that modern sovereignty contributes to by inscribing relationships of inequality between different people and political communities. Eckersley’s work was then critiqued to show some of the problems and limitations of assuming that the international system predicated on sovereignty can effectively address the problem through enhanced cooperative efforts. Instead, I argue that modern sovereignty orients political relations between people, nature, and time in ways that drive the problems associated with environmental degradation and climate change, and thus require more radical reorientations than Eckersley’s evolutionary arguments suggest. The conclusion of the thesis will argue that powerful states and modern subjects situated higher within the hierarchy that the political orientation of sovereignty constitutes would be more likely to develop just and effective responses to environmental degradation rather than reproducing and maintaining the political order and economic structures that have created the conditions of environmental degradation if they experience exogenous shocks from environmental problems. This is in part because while more radical approaches and critiques may offer an important resource for developing effective responses to environmental degradation, mainstream and more powerful actors have not been forced to engage with or pursue alternatives.

Conclusion

Climate change poses a powerful challenge to what is perhaps the single most important political conception of the modern era: the idea of freedom...Since the Enlightenment...philosophers of freedom were “mainly, and understandably, concerned with how humans would escape injustice, oppression, inequality, or even uniformity foisted on them by other humans or human-made systems.” Nonhuman forces and systems had no place in this calculus of liberty: indeed being independent of Nature was considered one of the defining characteristics of freedom itself. Only those people who had thrown off the shackles of their environment were thought to be endowed with historical agency; they alone were believed to merit the attention of historians- other peoples might have had a past but they were thought to lack history, which realizes itself through human agency. Now that the stirrings of the earth have forced us to recognize that we have never been free of nonhuman constraints how are we to rethink those conceptions of history and agency?⁵¹³

Over the course of four days in May of 2016 a large river in Canada disappeared.

Geologists, glaciologists, and other geoscientists who had been monitoring the retreat, or melting, of the Kaskawulsh glacier in the Yukon territory of Canada returned to an area they had previously sailed on a boat and found a virtually dry riverbed.⁵¹⁴ Using hydrological measurements and images from drones, the scientists determined that the Slims River, which was up to 150 meters at its widest points and flowed towards the Bering Sea, had been rapidly re-routed into the Alsek river, which flows thousands of miles in a different direction to the Gulf of Alaska. The disappearance of the Slims River is the first modern case of ‘river piracy,’ a phenomenon in which changes in meltwater from glaciers swiftly re-directs water into different channels and radically alters riverine landscapes.⁵¹⁵ There is evidence of ‘river piracy’ occurring thousands or millions of years ago in the geological record due to glacial growth or retreat, but this is the first observed and recorded contemporary case,⁵¹⁶ and scientists have determined that it is the result of post-industrial climate

⁵¹³ Ghosh, A. *The Great Derangement*, p. 119. The internal quote on human made systems is from: Chakarabarty, D. ‘The Climate of History,’ p. 208.

⁵¹⁴ Devlin, H. ‘Receding Glacier Causes Immense Canadian River to Vanish in Four Days,’ *The Guardian*, April 17, 2017.

⁵¹⁵ Shugar, D., Clague, J., Best, J., Schoof, C., Willis, M., Copland, L., and Roe, G. ‘River Piracy and Drainage Basin Reorganisation Led by Climate-driven Glacier Retreat,’ *Nature Geoscience*, 10 (2017) pp. 370-375.

⁵¹⁶ Devlin, H. ‘Receding Glacier Causes Immense Canadian River to Vanish in Four Days,’ *The Guardian*, April 17, 2017. Geologist Dan Shugar is quoted in the article saying: “People had looked at the geological record, thousands or millions of years ago, not the 21st century, where it’s happening under our noses.”

change.⁵¹⁷ Rapid, radical changes on a large scale like the disappearance of the Slims River are made ever more likely by the unpredictable consequences of environmental degradation. Reactions and responses to these alterations are conditioned by how people understand and orient themselves to the world. The orientation of sovereignty is a powerful and deeply problematic frame whose role in precipitating environmental degradation *and* limiting or undermining the efficacy of responses to it needs to be recognized.

Thus far, the thesis has avoided offering solutions to the problems of environmental degradation beyond arguing that it is necessary to see sovereignty as an orientation in order to understand the scope of the problem and how much disorientation and reorientation it requires. The orientation of sovereignty has helped constitute and shape understandings of what solutions look like and can be, particularly in IR and political theory. As chapter 1 discussed, even attempts to critique sovereignty lead to entrapment, and Steven Bernstein points out that even radical proposals to address climate change become nested within the international norms associated with sovereignty. Responses often begin by challenging the nation-state system but “actual responses have been mostly consistent with sovereign authority and in opposition to global management (except by sovereign states), even if entering into agreements by definition relinquishes state autonomy to varying degrees. In addition, most of the institution-building in response to global environmental concerns has occurred within the confines of traditional sovereign-state diplomacy.”⁵¹⁸ The question then becomes not how do we address environmental degradation, but how do we disorient from sovereignty enough to open up new political possibilities? In that case, the consequences of environmental degradation may themselves provide the conditions that enable that disorientation.

Perhaps the most obvious reason that environmental degradation might enable disorientation is that it will call into question the category of nature as separate from humanity and humanity’s

⁵¹⁷ Shugar, D., Clague, J., Best, J., Schoof, C., Willis, M., Copland, L., and Roe, G. ‘River Piracy and Drainage Basin Reorganisation Led by Climate-driven Glacier Retreat.’

⁵¹⁸ Bernstein, S. ‘Liberal Environmentalism and Global Environmental Governance,’ pp. 9-10.

ability to exercise control over the environment that was discussed in chapter 4. The consequences of environmental degradation are complex, far-reaching and may be frequently unpredictable. In some cases, like that instance of river piracy mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, they may also be sudden and shocking. Examples abound here besides river piracy. If nothing is done, we are on track for warming of 4 degrees or higher, and the last time that the earth's climate was 4 degrees higher, sea levels were hundreds of feet higher, with no ice at the poles.⁵¹⁹ The climate has warmed slightly less than 1 degree thus far, which has already caused increasing problems with catastrophic weather and ecological distress, but the perception that we know how and when environmental degradation may unfold is suspect. In January of 2016 a strong El Nino event caused a surface melt in Antarctica of over 300,000 square miles over a short period of time, and because of a warming climate, El Nino events are expected to become more frequent. Rapid surface melts as a result could cause a cascade of fast moving consequences, and sea levels may rise at faster than anticipated rates.⁵²⁰ As permafrost melts, viruses and bacteria that had been previously trapped in ice are 'waking up,' some of which human populations may never have been exposed to, or that we have limited defense against, particularly as antibiotic resistance grows. In August of 2016, anthrax that had been trapped in permafrost was released into water and soil which infected more than 2,000 reindeer and led the hospitalization of at least 20 people and the death of a 12 year old boy.⁵²¹ There is increasing concern that climate change will lead to the spread of dangerous diseases, and global pandemics. As warming increases, disease carrying mosquitoes and ticks will spread over greater areas, bringing more diseases.⁵²² As people and animals struggle with diminishing resources, humans and animals may be brought into closer contact in ways that can spread disease.

⁵¹⁹ Brannen, P. 'Is it So Bad if the World Gets a Little Hotter?' *Wired*, Science, June 16, 2017.

⁵²⁰ Nicolas, J., Vogelmann, A., Scott, R., Wilson, A., Cadeddu, M., Bromwich, D., Verlinde, J., Lubin, D., Russell, L., Jenkinson, C., Powers, H., Ryczek, M., Stone, G., and Wille, J. 'January 2016 Extensive Summer Melt in West Antarctica Favoured by Strong El Nino,' *Nature Communications*, 8: 15799 (2017), pp. 1-10.

⁵²¹ Fox-Skelly, J. 'There are Diseases Hidden in Ice, and They are Waking up; Long-dormant Bacteria and Viruses, Trapped in Ice and Permafrost for Centuries, are Reviving as Earth's Climate Warms,' *BBC Earth*, May 4, 2017.

⁵²² Deese, B. and Klain, R. 'Another Deadly Consequence of Climate Change: The Spread of Dangerous Diseases,' *The Washington Post*, May 30, 2017.

Bats hunting closer to humans in West Africa, for example, were the source of the Ebola outbreak in 2014, and such incidents may occur with greater frequency in the future.⁵²³

These are not problems that can be solved by moving to higher ground, or engineering drought resistant crops. They *are* problems that might have a disorienting effect on perceptions of nature, and how people relate to their environment and each other. In psychology, there is a ‘Meaning Maintenance Model’ that proposes that “people have a need for meaning; that is, a need to perceive events through a prism of mental representations of expected relations that organizes their perceptions of the world.”⁵²⁴ In essence, a ‘Meaning Maintenance Model’ is orientation. ‘Meaning threats,’ when exercises or experiences call into question understanding of the self and the world the self is situated in, “provoke comparable motivations to perceive unrelated patterns in the environment, and similarly enhance the ability to learn unrelated patterns that are present.”⁵²⁵ What this suggests is that as consequences of environmental degradation present a ‘meaning threat’ to peoples’ understandings of themselves and ‘nature’ or the environment that they live in, they may be driven to find new ways to make sense of the world and their place in it, and have the capacity to be more imaginative in how they do so. The reorganization of landscapes by river piracy or sea level rises may lead to the reorganization of mental landscapes as communities find themselves missing rivers, or underwater. There is no guarantee that this will be the case. However, peoples’ perception of the world and their position within it have radically altered based on changing conditions in the past, which suggests that they can do so again. Chapter 2 considered alterations in peoples’ perception of and relationship to time, and how this informed the development of political modernity and the development of a ‘We-I’ balance, particularly for more powerful states and modern individual subjects, that emphasizes a short-term understanding of self-interest.

⁵²³ Deese, B. and Klain, R. ‘Another Deadly Consequence of Climate Change.’

⁵²⁴ Heine, S., Proulx, T., Vohs, K. ‘The Meaning Maintenance Model: On the Coherence of Social Motivations,’ *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10:2 (2006) p. 88.

⁵²⁵ Proulx, T. and Heine, S. ‘Connections from Kafka: Exposure to Meaning Threats Improves Implicit Learning of an Artificial Grammar,’ *Psychological Science*, 20:9 (2009) p. 1130.

Understandings of geometry,⁵²⁶ the introduction of linear perspective,⁵²⁷ and new ideas about the division of space that resulted from developments in cartography, influenced the way people understand and organize political space.⁵²⁸ What it means to be ‘I’ and ‘We’ and how they relate to each other change as a result of processes over time. It may not be possible to direct these processes or to predict exactly how they will change but recognizing that the current balance between them in the modern international political order contributes to a problem with existential consequences like environmental degradation is one process that is likely to alter that balance in some way.

There are some critical scholars in IR and cognate disciplines who have recognized the potential for climate change or environmental degradation to act as a catalyst for reorienting and reconstructing political relations and structures. Madeline Fagan writes:

Climate change not only calls for responsive engagement, it also potentially offers a catalyst by which openings to such engagement might be realised. Through revitalising questions of the nature and time of human, and other, being, the global historical context of climate change, the political effects and usages of the ‘natural’, and the scales of political community at which the effects of climate change are felt and responded to, for example, many of the sedimented coordinates which determine the ground for engagement are potentially put into question. Climate change then offers an opportunity to reimagine the potential and limitations of the subject.⁵²⁹

The consequences of climate change may unsettle assumptions about the human in relation to nature, the timescale on which political communities understand problems and develop responses to them, and the constitution of political communities and subjects that have contributed to creating

⁵²⁶ Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, pp. 22-25.

⁵²⁷ See: Ruggie, J.G. ‘Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,’ pp. 139-174 and Walker, R.B.J. *Inside/Outside*, and Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, pp. 59-60.

⁵²⁸ See: Bartelson, J. *Sovereignty as Symbolic Form*, p. 28, Walker, R.B.J. *After the Globe, Before the World*, pp. 154-155, and de Vries, B. and Goudsblom, J. *Mappae Mundi: Humans and their Habitats in a Long-Term Socio-Ecological Perspective; Myths, Maps and Models* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002).

⁵²⁹ Fagan, M. ‘Who’s Afraid of the Ecological Apocalypse? Climate Change and the Production of the Ethical Subject.’ *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 19:2 (2017) pp. 240.

the conditions of environmental degradation and climate change.⁵³⁰ Green radical approaches as well as posthumanist scholars have developed critiques that challenge or reject structures and assumptions that they have identified as causing or contributing to ecological destruction and environmental degradation, including the structure of the global economy, the assumption of the possibility for continuous economic growth without regard for ecological limits, the assumption of humanity's separation from and control over nature, and the constitution of modern, free individuals realized through practices and phenomena such as that power over nature and the appropriation of land into private property.⁵³¹ This thesis is in broad agreement with these critiques and the problems they identify, however, as Chapter 4 and 5 discussed, these critiques have had limited impact on the mainstream actors and institutions that would need to alter their behavior and perceptions of the world they have constructed and the ways in which they contribute to environmental degradation. These mainstream actors and institutions tend not to engage with or recognize the validity of these radical critiques apart from coopting the language of some radical critiques and domesticating them into mainstream discourses.⁵³² The more that mainstream actors and institutions in the modern political order know about the causes and consequences of climate change, the less they seem to act to develop effective and just political responses.⁵³³

⁵³⁰ Fagan, M. 'Who's Afraid of the Ecological Apocalypse?' pp. 225-244. See also: Weber, E. 'Experience-Based and Description-Based Perceptions of Long-Term Risk: Why Global Warming Does Not Scare Us (Yet).' *Climate Change* 77 (2006) pp. 103-120.

⁵³¹ Chandler, D. 'The World of Attachment? The Post-humanist Challenge to Freedom and Necessity.' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 41:3 (2013) pp. 516-534; Fagan, 'Who's afraid of the Ecological Apocalypse?' pp. 225-24; Youatt, R. 'Personhood and the Rights of Nature: The New Subjects of Contemporary Earth Politics.' *International Political Sociology* 11 (2017) pp 39-54; Cudworth, E. and Hobden, S. 'Complexity, Ecologism and Posthuman Politics.' *Review of International Studies* 39:4 (2012) pp. 643-664; Clark, B. 'Rethinking Gaia: Stengers, Latour, Margulis,' *Theory, Culture & Society* 34:4 (2017) pp. 3-26. See also: Jahn, *Liberal Internationalism*, on the importance of the concept of private property for the constitution of modern, free individuals.

⁵³² Stevenson, 'Representing Green Radicalism,' 177-201; Bernstein, 'Bernstein, S. 'Liberal Environmentalism and Global Environmental Governance,' pp. 9-10.

⁵³³ Hamilton, S. 'Action, Technology, and Homogenisation of Place: Why Climate Change is Antithetical to Political Action.' *Globalizations* 13:1 (2016) pp. 62-77. See also: Methmann, C. and Rothe, D. 'Politics for the Day After Tomorrow: The Logic of Apocalypse in Global Climate Politics.' *Security Dialogue* 43:4 (2012) pp. 323-344.

One of the main contributions of this thesis, then, is provide a better understanding of why more radical critiques have difficulty gaining purchase with mainstream actors and institutions that are at the root of the problem of environmental degradation. Approaching sovereignty as a political orientation that helps constitute and organize political relations, communities, and subjects in modernity makes it easier to understand how a ‘We-I’ balance that emphasizes short-term self-interest and contributes to practices of unsustainable, excessive consumption has developed, as well as how a hierarchical modern political order that favors more powerful states and subjects at the expense and exclusion of less powerful or ‘modern’ subjects and communities has been constituted and maintained. The constitution and maintenance of this hierarchy or inequality based on exclusion through historical technologies such as periodization and the separation of humanity from nature make it easier to understand why more radical critiques that draw from marginalized voices or communities or that want to de-center the human in political cosmologies and responses to environmental degradation have not made significant headway.⁵³⁴ Even where more radical approaches and critiques are engaged with or included the policies and practices of mainstream actors and institutions are ultimately designed to maintain existing geopolitical order and economic structures, as with the Paris Accords or geoengineering initiatives.⁵³⁵

The reason, then, that the consequences of environmental degradation and climate change might create the conditions for more radical discourses and approaches to develop and have an impact on mainstream actors and institutions is that those institutions may be confronted with the

⁵³⁴ In addition, the focus on the hierarchies and inequalities enabled by the political orientation of sovereignty in this thesis helps avoid the problem of collapsing ‘the human’ into a single category that some critical and posthumanist literature falls into, because it emphasizes how differences in power and wealth lead to differences in contributing to climate change through excessive consumption and unsustainable practices. Climate change and environmental degradation are problems for all humans, but they have not been created by all humans. See: Masco, ‘The Crisis in Crisis,’ S65-S76; Urry, ‘Consuming the Planet to Excess,’ pp. 191-212; and Malm, *Fossil Capital*, esp. p. 390.

⁵³⁵ Dalby, ‘Framing the Anthropocene,’ pp.38-39; Chandler, D., Cudworth, E., and Hobden, S. ‘Anthropocene, Capitalocene and Liberal Cosmopolitan IR: A Response to Burke et al.’s ‘Planet Politics’.’ *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 46:2 (2018) p. 195; Corry, O. ‘The International Politics of Geoengineering: The Feasibility of Plan B for Tackling Climate Change.’ *Security Dialogue* 48:4 (2017) pp. 297-315; Fagan, ‘Whos Afraid of the Ecological Apocalyspe?’ pp-236-237; Hamilton. C., *Earthmasters: The Dawn of the Age of Climate Engineering*. (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2013)

limits of the political order and system that has developed out of the political orientation of sovereignty in ways that are dangerous and disorienting for more powerful states and political subjects. While the negative effects of climate change are being experienced more intensely by those that are already the most vulnerable, the unpredictability of environmental degradation may lead to exogenous shocks that are difficult to respond to from within the frameworks of mainstream and more powerful institutions and actors. This could cause them to question, challenge and reconsider their practices and assumptions in ways that radical and alternative approaches have not because those practices and assumptions are built on the exclusion and marginalization of political alternatives and other ways of being and relating in the world.

What Understanding Sovereignty as a Political Orientation Connects and Clarifies

This thesis has examined how environmental degradation clarifies and makes urgent some of the problems that have always been a part of modernity. The most significant of these problems are inequality, practices of domination over others and nature, and an out of balance ‘We-I’ balance that makes large scale political cooperation more difficult. The thesis makes several closely related contributions. First, it has further illuminated the temporal dimensions of sovereignty and how sovereignty as an orientation helps establish a sense of politics bound to the present. The temporal dimensions of sovereignty as a political orientation that creates the present, or understandings of the present, make it more difficult to develop political solutions and responses to the problem of climate change, which has a much larger time horizon than the present based politics of the state and the modern international system. As the consequences of climate change grow and intensify, they may challenge or expose the limitations of the political orientation of sovereignty to provide a means of organizing political relations or perceptions of time, nature, and crisis. The problem of environmental degradation has temporal components, including when different manifestations of environmental degradation will develop and expand, which generations will be effected by which problems, and how much (and what kinds of) time there may be to avoid or ameliorate different

issues.⁵³⁶ This is also significant in relation to questions of intergenerational responsibility and justice because even within generations the consequences of climate change are felt differently and more heterogeneous temporal perspectives that do not assume and help create a single political time need to be developed in order to effectively address climate change in the near and long term. A territorial or spatial understanding of sovereignty will always be insufficient on its own when it comes to explaining the division of territory into the bounded communities of states, the constitution of the subjects within them, or the relation between subjects, communities and system. Furthermore, paying attention to the temporal aspects of sovereignty makes it easier to understand inequalities and exclusions in the modern international system not as failures of the system or as a failure of principles of sovereignty to reflect the realities of the international system, but as a major part of its constitution. Continuing efforts to develop long-term historical perspectives are also an important part of efforts to shift orientations towards political relations, crisis, time, and nature.

The thesis has argued that sovereignty should be thought of as an orientation that brings people, communities and the system that they exist within into relation with each other and with the environment. The thesis has also emphasized the temporal dimensions of this orientation to show how the sovereign orientation is a barrier to developing the political imagination necessary to deal with climate change. The thesis then suggested that the consequences of environmental degradation may help create conditions that promote enhanced imaginary capacity because they will undermine or destabilize understandings of political relations, as well as conceptualizations of nature and humanity that are part of Western political modernity. This is because political imagination may grow in such a way that political alternatives and other ways of being are not automatically excluded, dismissed as backwards, or treated as inferior. In this way, the thesis has tried to move political critique of inequality and injustice forward by demonstrating that environmental

⁵³⁶ For example, according to different models even if carbon emissions into the atmosphere were ended today, the effects of the carbon that has already been released would create worsening conditions in terms of climate change for up to another 40 years because of the dynamics of the carbon cycle. See: Gerald Meehl, Warren Washington, et al., 'How Much More Global Warming and Sea Level Rise,' *Science*, 307:5716 (2005), pp. 1769-1772.

degradation is a manifestation of problems with political modernity and that its challenges cannot be met without also challenging practices of domination and exploitation or conditions of inequality.

Environmental degradation is intensified and accelerated by the inequalities that are imbricated in political modernity because of the hierarchies among political communities it helps produce and sustain, the constitution of individual, free political subjects whose freedom is predicated on and expressed through consumption,⁵³⁷ and the ways in which difference is rendered as negative and alternative ways of being or conceiving of politics are designated as backwards, uncivilized, or ignorant.⁵³⁸ Environmental degradation poses a further challenge to the persistent argument that the modern international system, which developed and expanded in tandem with colonialism, has been a net benefit for the world, and that therefore the power imbalances that attend the system were and are justifiable, despite critiques by post-structural and postcolonial critics that question or impugn them.⁵³⁹ As more work is done on the history of industrially driven climate change, it becomes clear that Western modernity and the spread of empire underwritten by growing use of fossil fuels has much to answer for in terms of both the dangerous concentrations of carbon in the atmosphere now, as well as a global economy predicated on continued fossil fuel consumption.⁵⁴⁰

In addition, the thesis has used the work of Latour in particular to demonstrate that the perception of a division between man and nature in modernity is problematic, not least because this supposed division makes the domination and control of nature seem possible and justified. This in

⁵³⁷ On the energy intensity of modern freedom see for example: Paterson, M. 'Legitimation and Accumulation in Climate Change Governance,' pp. 345-368.

⁵³⁸ Inayatullah, N. and Blaney, D. *The Problem of Difference*.

⁵³⁹ John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 214-233. For contemporary examples of explicit apologies for imperialism and colonialism see, if you must, Bruce Gilley 'Chinua Achebe of the Positive Legacies of Colonialism,' *African Affairs*, 115:461 (2016) 646-663, and Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York, Penguin Books, 2011).

⁵⁴⁰ See: Matthew Paterson and Peter Newell, *Climate Capitalism: Global Warming and the Transformations of the Global Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Malm, *Fossil Capital*, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Climate and Capital: On Conjoined Histories,' *Critical Inquiry*, 41:1 (2014) 1-23.

turn contributes to environmental degradation because it drives behavior such as the exploitation of resources, the pollution of the environment, and geoengineering practices with unintended consequences.⁵⁴¹ The thesis has therefore questioned the notion that we can look to the modern, sovereign international system and sovereign states as a source of solutions to the problems of environmental degradation and climate change. Instead, the thesis has argued that political modernity, with sovereignty as its condition of possibility or means of orientation, needs to be problematized both because the political communities, relations and ways of being that sovereignty enables in political modernity generate the conditions for environmental degradation, and because it constrains the political imagination necessary to develop alternative modes of relations and ways of being by designating them inferior. That is to say, there are of course other ways of understanding political relations, community and subjectivity, and there are other ways of relating to and understanding the environment that might be more sustainable, but without first treating Western political modernity as a problem it is difficult to develop alternatives or give them full consideration.

One of the main contributions of the thesis has been to draw more attention to the constitution of the sovereign orientation and how it has created and shaped political modernity through history by using the work of historians and Medieval Studies scholars such as Fasolt and Davis. This work is an important resource for understanding the relationship between time, history and modernity because medievalists have long understood and been familiar with the ways that the discipline of history relies on the constitution and marginalization of the medieval to justify and shape modernity. The aim has also been to help theorists to grasp the problems of modernity and environmental degradation more clearly so that they can begin to develop that imaginary capacity. The thesis has focused on the use and role of history and how it came to mediate

⁵⁴¹ For example, land reclamation and building projects in flood zones and areas vulnerable to natural disasters like hurricanes exacerbate floods, sometimes catastrophically as we are currently witnessing in Texas in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. See: Boburg, S. and Reinhard, B. 'Houston's 'Wild West' growth: How the City's Development May have Contributed to Devastating Flooding,' *Washington Post*, August 29, 2017.

experiences of time and nature in modernity. Historical writing and techniques have helped construct categories like nature and time periods such as modernity, as well as divisions between the history of humanity and the history or temporality of nature which inscribe the assumption that 'nature' is something separate from humanity, that humanity can control, and that exists as a sort of timeless backdrop. This way of thinking has enabled destructive environmental practices such as resource exploitation, mass consumption that relies on the use of fossil fuels, pollution, and land development and building practices that compound catastrophic events like major floods.

Critiques of political modernity and sovereignty tend to point out problems with the world political time of Western modernity⁵⁴² and with hierarchies between states⁵⁴³ in terms of the inequalities amongst groups of people and states. The thesis has used the work on Hutchings and Hobson in particular to illuminate these inequalities and hierarchies. This work is important, but part of the argument of this thesis is that concerns about justice and inequality as a result of Eurocentrism in Western political modernity have so far been limited in terms of their ability to change these conditions. To that end, this thesis has examined the construction of the temporality of political modernity and ways of relating that center around sovereignty, agreeing that they are problematic as a matter of justice, but that we are unlikely to change them without some sort of powerful catalyst, which environmental degradation may provide. This is because environmental degradation is powerfully disorienting and unpredictable, and because it is driven in part by the temporality and relationality, or 'We-I' balance, to others and to nature, that sovereignty enables in politics.

Disorientation and the Possibility of Reorientation

⁵⁴² Hutchings, K. *Time and World Politics*, 2008; Hutchings, K. 'What is Orientation in Thinking?'

⁵⁴³ Hobson, J. *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics*, 2012; Hobson, J. M. 'The Twin Self-Delusions of IR,' pp. 557-575.

Environmental degradation is disorientating in several ways. The variety of impacts, from intensified catastrophic weather events and natural disasters like wildfires and droughts to changing patterns of disease outbreaks, are occurring and will occur at different points all over the world. What one region has to prepare for and cope with may be fundamentally different from the experience of other regions, and effects have thus far not been distributed evenly, for reasons environmental but also economic and political. The time frame associated with the manifestations of environmental degradation is also extremely unpredictable. There are some environmental processes that may be slow moving up to a point and then change suddenly and radically, such as the alteration of marine ecosystems in warming oceans⁵⁴⁴ or the melting of glaciers and ice caps.⁵⁴⁵ One result of this is the emergence of the concept of ‘post-normal science’ which describes some scientific areas or problems, especially climate change, where conditions and effects are uncertain but high stakes and demand urgent action.⁵⁴⁶ The science of environmental degradation raises as many questions about what the future will look like in different parts of the world as it is able to answer. The one question that environmental science does not raise is whether or not change is happening, despite the behavior of major actors like the US, where political debates rage over settled science, and officials frequently deny or downplay the reality or significance of the problem.⁵⁴⁷ Climate change, and the environmental degradation that accompanies it, is happening. However, the ability of people to imagine the scope, scale, or implications of environmental change

⁵⁴⁴ Ashton, G., Morley, S., Barnes, D., Clark, M., and Peck, L. ‘Warming by 1C Drives Species Assemblage Level Responses in Antarctica’s Marine Shallows,’ *Current Biology* (2017). What this study shows is that even 1 degree of warming nearly doubles the growth of Antarctic ice seabed life, which is much more than expected and can lead to unpredictable knock on effects for the ecosystem.

⁵⁴⁵ Fox, D. ‘The Larsen C Ice Shelf Collapse is Just the Beginning- Antarctica is Melting,’ *National Geographic*, July 2017. This article details both the recent collapse of a large ice shelf in Antarctica, as well as the unexpected acceleration of ice melt in Antarctica due to a combination of warming water underneath the ice, lower albedo (‘whiteness’ or reflecting power of the surface) on top which contributes to greater solar absorption and thus melting, and warming temperatures overall.

⁵⁴⁶ Turnpenny, J. ‘Lessons from Post-Normal Science for Climate Science-sceptic Debates,’ pp. 397–407. The term post-normal science originates from: Funtowicz, S. and Ravetz, J. ‘Science for the Post-Normal Age,’ *Futures*, 31:7 (1993) pp. 735-755.

⁵⁴⁷ Davenport, C. ‘Climate Change Denialists in Charge,’ *The New York Times*, March 27, 2017. The article details the climate change denial of EPA administrator Scott Pruitt, President Trump, Vice President Pence and other key US officials. The problem is not unique to the Trump administration, see: UCSUSA, “Climate change research distorted and suppressed” 2004 report on Bush administration.

and degradation, whether they are scientists, politicians, journalists, novelists, and theorists has thus far been limited.⁵⁴⁸ For some, this is because they either do not expect to suffer significant consequences as a result of environmental degradation and climate change because of their resources and ability to relocate to avoid them. Some also may believe that some solution will be found through technological advances or fixes like geo-engineering, which may prove correct or turn out to be delusional, not least because the consequences of some technological fixes could themselves be disastrous.⁵⁴⁹ Perhaps those living on the front lines of change and suffering the effects of rising sea levels and temperatures and intensified weather are developing the capacity to imagine both the changes they will be experiencing, as well as the changes that they need to make in order to cope with them more quickly, but one of the points this thesis has emphasized is that the most vulnerable to the consequences of environmental degradation are those least able change the practices and assumptions that have created deteriorating ecological conditions. In any case, if people wait until they are overwhelmed by the proverbial, and sometimes literal, flood to grasp the problem and try to change to meet its challenges, they may simply be overwhelmed. Part of what

⁵⁴⁸ This point is similar to Amitav Ghosh's recent work critiquing the humanities in particular for seeming unable to fathom the scale or implications of climate change, and thus unable to render it intelligible in works of literature or other cultural forms. Ghosh, A. *The Great Derangement*.

⁵⁴⁹ According to Malm, serious research is being done on the possibility of releasing sulphate aerosols to block incoming solar radiation, which would mimic, on an enhanced scale, the effects of volcanic eruptions. The idea has garnered increasing support after being muted by the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen, who coined the term Anthropocene. It has been promoted by physicist David Keith and Bill Gates is funding research in geoengineering initiatives. In some ways, releasing sulphates would be a cheap and effective way of keeping warming from greenhouse gases in check. However, there are serious consequences associated with such action: "Solar radiation management through sulphate aerosol injection is likely to deplete the ozone layer, upset precipitation patterns, possibly shut down the Asian monsoon, disrupt photosynthetic productivity, whiten the sky, tinker with the balance between day and night as well as winter and summer, 'contribute to thousands of air pollution deaths a year' ... as soot comes drizzling down... But let us focus on just one detail... Known as the 'termination problem,' [if the technology breaks down or is disrupted-which can be done] the result would be an extreme pulse of sudden warming. As the lid is removed, the radiative forcing out of all the accumulated CO₂ would boil over violently: according to the latest research, average temperatures on land surface might increase by 3 degrees *per decade*... Now it is well known that the ability of the ecosystems to adapt is conditioned not only by the magnitude, but also by the *rate* of warming. At this rate, without precedent in geological history, they would all fry." Malm, A. *Fossil Capital*, p. 387. For the case for geoengineering (which also acknowledges the problem of increased pollution deaths, among others) See: Keith, D. *A Case for Climate Engineering* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013).

climate change and environmental degradation demand is imagination- the ability to imagine it and imagine how to alter behavior in the face of it. Chakrabarty captures this issue well, writing:

Climate scientists raise a problem of scale for the human imagination, though they do not usually think through the humanistic implications of their own claim that, unlike the changes in climate this planet has seen in the past, the current warming is anthropogenic in nature. Humans, collectively, now have an agency in determining the climate of the planet as a whole, a privilege reserved in the past only for very large- scale geophysical forces. This is where this crisis represents something different from what environmentalists have written about so far: the impact of humans on their immediate or regional environments. The idea of humans representing a force on a very large geological scale that impacts the whole planet is new.⁵⁵⁰

In part because it means that we now must understand humans as a geologic force that is significantly altering or remaking the environment, climate change and environmental degradation stretch the imaginary capacity of people. Up until recently, the sense in both political modernity and the natural sciences has been that the human time scale exists against the backdrop of a much larger geologic time scale, and that therefore human activity could have little impact on long running geologic, or climatologic forces and phenomena.⁵⁵¹ The fact that human industrial activity and consumption patterns over less than 300 years have exerted enough force to alter geologic and climatologic conditions is both an urgent problem, and one that is made more difficult to solve precisely because it is so difficult to conceive of.⁵⁵² Furthermore, this problem has greatly accelerated in the past 60 years as human greenhouse gas emissions have accelerated, and that acceleration has been uneven, reflecting patterns of wealth and consumption that more or less align with concentrations of political power, suggesting that environmental degradation is a political problem.⁵⁵³ While environmental degradation is a problem that will impact all of humanity, all of humanity does not contribute in the same way.

⁵⁵⁰ Chakrabarty, D. 'Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,' p. 9.

⁵⁵¹ Chakrabarty, D. 'Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,' pp. 1-18, Chakrabarty, D. 'The Climate of History,' pp. 197-222, Latour, *Politics of Nature*, Archer, D. *The Long Thaw: How Humans are Changing the Climate of the Planet for the Next 100,000 Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) and Oreskes, N. 'The Scientific Consensus,' *Science* 306 (2004), p. 1686.

⁵⁵² Chakrabarty, D. 'The Climate of History,' pp.197-222, Ghosh, A. *The Great Derangement*, pp. 7-9 Chakrabarty, D. 'Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,' pp. 1-18 etc.

⁵⁵³ Chakrabarty, D. 'The Politics of Climate Change is More than the Politics of Capitalism,' pp. 23-37. See also: Chakrabarty, D. 'The Climate of History,' pp.197-222, Conway, E. and Oreskes, N. *The Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*

While there are several dimensions to imagination or imaginary capacity, this thesis has focused on political imagination, specifically political imagination as it is enabled and constrained by sovereignty in political modernity. The thesis has argued that sovereignty is an orientation that has constituted and shaped political subjects and communities in such a way that they are focused on bounded territorial issues rather than the human scale. Furthermore, this orientation has shaped their relations with each other and towards the concept of nature and time in modernity. Because environmental degradation should be viewed as a political problem, it is important to consider not just what political solutions to the challenges of environmental degradation might be, but also political causes of the problem and barriers to addressing it effectively. The thesis used the work of Dobson and Eckersley to show the importance of engaging with sovereignty as an orientation that organizes understandings of political relations and communities, as well as political problems and solutions. The thesis has thus argued that sovereignty is a form of politics that has made an outsized contribution to the problem of environmental degradation. Furthermore, this political form continues to constrain political imagination, particularly in the West, making it more difficult to imagine the problem of environmental degradation and political alternatives that might help ameliorate it.

The surprising and unpredictable nature of environmental degradation and climate change may in themselves create the conditions that would allow people to reconsider and reimagine political relations and understandings in ways that are more sustainable, or less environmentally deleterious and unjust. Relying on the consequences of environmental degradation to provide the catalyst for imagining political solutions that may be able to effectively address environmental degradation is far from a safe bet. However, what the thesis as a whole has attempted to demonstrate is that without a powerful source of disorientation which may come from exogenous environmental shocks to more powerful actors in particular, sovereignty and the subjects,

(London: Bloomsbury, 2012), Chakrabarty, D. 'Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,' pp. 15, Ghosh, A. *The Great Derangement*, pp. 119-132.

communities, and system it helps constitute and bring into relation with each other is likely to continue to be a trap. Environmental degradation is a manifestation of ideational problems with what sovereignty enables in political modernity. Without addressing those ideational problems that contribute to an out of balance 'We-I' balance, it will be difficult if not impossible to effectively address environmental degradation.

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