

UNIVERSAL NORMS IN A TIME OF SOVEREIGNTISM: INTRODUCTION

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The world today has arguably lived through the longest period of international peace and cooperation among a majority of nations. This order was made possible by the spread and acceptance of universal norms and practices across the world's national legal and political systems. However, the international order has recently entered a period in which national elites and popular movements have risen up against universalism and advocated for the supremacy of their individual state's and government's interests—a phenomenon referred to as sovereigntism. If in earlier years, the global order was challenged mainly by radical left and right groups that had little impact on the norms and principles of the global agenda, the primary challenge to universal norms of justice and human rights today comes from the ruling groups of some of the world's largest powers and economies. The COVID-19 pandemic has only increased the global controversy between universalist and sovereigntist political forces in 2020–2021.

This issue of the *Ideology and Politics Journal* (IPJ) is focused on a number of questions stemming from the ideological divide between universalism and sovereigntism. How did sovereigntists become so influential on the national and international stage? Can international peace and human rights norms survive in a world-system of national exceptionalism? What are the potential implications of continuing down the current path of divisions between universalism and sovereigntism?

These questions were first raised by an international group of scholars, all alumni of the Kennan Institute. The Institute had planned to organize an international alumni conference in May 2020. Organizers of the conference wanted to debate a set of fundamental questions, including: Do transnational human rights and national sovereignty necessarily contradict each other? How influential has universalism been in the world built after 1945? How new are the antiuniversalist tendencies? What were the causes of the Western nations' desolidarization? What are the specific features of Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian sovereigntist policies? Can the sovereigntist regimes coexist peacefully? Is "sovereign democracy" possible? Which actors might be able to limit and reverse the spread of sovereigntism? Are there international actors that could effectively advocate for universal norms and values and resist the sovereigntist influence? But the global pandemic changed the ways of communication and debate of international academia, and the conference was canceled.

The IPJ editorial team, the Kennan alumni interested in the above questions, and the Wilson Center's Kennan Institute instead agreed to initiate a special IPJ issue that would invite scholars from around the world to submit research papers. After a proper review process, thirteen papers were selected for publication.

The papers were divided into two thematic groups. The first part of the issue is dedicated to the conceptual issues of sovereignty, political and legal universalism, and sovereigntism. In the opening article, **Yurii Mielkov** contends that universal norms take precedence over a particularist ethos and provides a framework for any moral particularity that could serve to achieve more peaceful and just world universal goals. Moral particularism can only lead to a world of closed societies, with no space for national and international public sphere.

Emil Pain, however, argues against the assessment of sovereigntism as opposite to the notion of liberal values. In his conceptual and historical analysis, Pain demonstrates that there were historical periods when sovereigntism was closer to liberalism than universalism, and that today, liberal universalism is not collapsing, only changing in form to fit new global political and economic realities.

Ruslan Zaporozhchenko continues the discussion by stating that in times of globalism, sovereigntism consolidates the instruments and practices of populism, particularism, nationalism, or separatism, in varying combinations, to deconstruct the existing sovereign system of power nationally and internationally. Such a deconstruction may catalyze protest movements, revolutions, civil wars, or mass rallies, which in turn may lead to a further (re)production of divisions within the political systems and regional orders.

Oleksandr Fisun and **Nataliya Vinnykova** look at the controversy over universalism and sovereigntism as part of a wider theoretical debate over the fate of state sovereignty and democracy. The authors argue that sovereignty is going through a period of de-etatization: real policymaking is now being done in network formats, where the role of nonstate stakeholders causes the state to lose its sovereign monopoly on decision-making and undermines state legitimacy.

In the next article, I offer an analysis of the concept of sovereignty as promoted by contemporary sovereigntists. I argue that although the sovereigntist ideology varies from country to country, it is consolidated around a specific interpretation of the concept of sovereignty. Taking as examples Trumpism and Putinism, the sovereigntist ideologies in an old democracy and a new autocracy, I show that sovereigntists define sovereignty as the supremacy of the people as an imagined majority, a perspective that denies the sovereignty of the human person and the legitimacy of cosmopolitan norms of justice.

Gulnara Shaikhutdinova examines how international human rights law is experiencing a sovereigntist and nationalist turn in domestic legal systems, adducing the legal systems of the EU, Germany, Italy, the UK, and Russia as examples. The author argues that the sovereigntist trend in implementing international human rights law leads to the fragmentation of contemporary international law and the emergence of multiple legal values and practices that contradict each other and the international legal order.

The first part of the issue concludes with a paper by **Volodymyr Fadiiev**, who examines both legal universalism and political sovereigntism in terms of a clash between the cosmopolitan and the nationalist social imaginary. In this context, globalization is defined as a process by which humans gain the experience that made the cosmopolitan

imaginary a formative force in the life of most contemporary societies. However, in each society, the value-normative cosmopolitan force is in conflict with populist and nationalist forces.

The second part of the issue consists of six articles analyzing instances in which the contradiction between universalism and sovereigntism is manifest. **Boyka Stefanova** examines the sovereigntist clash with the key premises of the EU's political order, taking as examples Poland and Hungary, and concludes that sovereigntism has had a disproportionately high impact on the EU's normative unity and coherence as a regionalist project, preventing the EU from further geopolitical consolidation. **Maria Snegovaya** reports on the results of an experimental survey in which she measured changes in foreign policy preferences among respondents exposed to negative economic factors in Russia; she concludes that the continuing economic strain may limit the Kremlin's ability to divert public attention from internal problems through the use of assertive sovereigntist rhetoric. **Andreas Umland** analyzes how the ultra-right and ultra-nationalist activists have influenced the ideological context for understanding sovereignty in Ukraine in the past decade. **Oksana Dufeniuk** analyzes the case of the European Court of Human Rights and its influence on legislation in the formation of a universal and domestic paradigms of human rights in Ukraine. **Sergey Shenin** examines the evolution of NATO within the context of political competition in the US and the American pivot to Asia. Finally, **Viktor Koziuk** studies how sovereigntism expresses "popular discontent" with central bank independence and constitutes a threat to the universal principle of central bank independence. In all these cases, sovereigntism shows itself to be a phenomenon anchored in the contradictions of the multilevel political and economic structures of the contemporary world.

The current IPJ issue ends with six reviews of new books and database publications.

This IPJ issue was inspired by the discussions of scholars who have worked at or been affiliated with the Kennan Institute over the past twenty years. We appreciate their initiative in pursuing the important subject of sovereigntism, which led to this publication. Our editorial team appreciates the collegial solidarity and professionalism of the reviewers, who assessed several hundred submitted papers. We especially thank Marjorie Pannell, Kiley McCormick, Emily Couch, Christy Monet Brandy, and Tetyana Bezruk for editing and proofreading our multilingual publication. Last but not least, we are grateful for the support of the colleagues at the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, which made this special issue possible.