CHAPTER 1

Moulding the Institutions of Governance

Theories of State Formation and the Contingency of Sovereignty in Fragile Polities

Why and how did polities outside the modern European states system come to organise themselves along the lines of the sovereign state by the mid twentieth century? After all, alternative state forms – such as colonial states, feudal states, and suzerain-vassal arrangements – were well-established in the global periphery going into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[1] Take Northeast and Southeast Asia. China had centuries of history as a continental empire. Parts of what is today Indonesia had been subject to colonial domination by various European powers since the sixteenth century.[2] Siam was suzerain over vassals such as Cambodia to the east, Vientiane and Luang Prabang to the northeast, and sultanates on the Malay Peninsula to the south since the eighteenth century.[3] State form in these instances did not have the strong emphasis on the high levels of political centralisation, territorial exclusivity, and external autonomy characteristic of the sovereign state.

At the same time, the experiences of imperialism, colonisation, and collaboration during World War II, the Cold War, and the War on Terror suggest that external agents may have tremendous influence over how governance and political authority develop. Moreover, events in Malaya and South Vietnam after World War II, as well as more recent examples in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Egypt, indicate that foreign intervention may demonstrate significant variation in how it can shape institutions of rule. Developments in these polities indicate that outside intervention into domestic politics may be responsible for everything from sovereign statehood to political fragmentation and subjugation.

However, the relationship between external intervention and state formation is one that both international relations and comparative politics scholarship underemphasise empirically and theoretically. This opens questions about how external actors can affect the direction and timing of shifts in state form, especially in fragile polities where institutions of governance may be less stable

[1] Tønnesson and Antlöv, 1996.
[2] Before European domination, several indigenous kingdoms divided the archipelago. Ricklefs, 1993, 3–147.
[3] Wyatt, 1984, 8, 36, 88, 126, 143–74.

and more malleable. Such issues may prove particularly significant given that foreign involvement in the development of institutions and governance in weak states appears to be an enduring phenomenon in world politics.

To address these tensions, I propose an explanation for state formation in weak polities that endogenises the role of foreign involvement. Such an approach allows for a systematic consideration of the interactions amongst local political groups, domestic institutions, external actors, and international systemic pressures. I contend that the institutional nature of governance and political authority in a weak state results from the collective effects of external competition over access. Conditioning such collective effects are the expectations each intervening government holds about the opportunity costs of interceding into the domestic politics of the locale in question. Shifts in the organisation of rule in fragile states come about from the machinations of outside actors trying to forward their interests under changing international systemic constraints.

Specifically, sovereign statehood develops in a weak polity when foreign actors uniformly expect high costs to intervention and settle on a next best alternative to their worst fear, domination of that state by a rival. Attempts at outside intervention thus move from the sponsorship of local proxies and collaborators to the abetment of a nationalist group that seems most able to guarantee equal access to all outside actors. Absent such considerations, foreign actors seek indigenous partners that can secure complete access denial or regulate access to a fragile polity instead. Depending on the configuration of foreign intervention efforts, the targeted state may turn into a vassal state, fracture, become a colonial state, or cease to exist. Simply, I argue that differing patterns of outside intervention in domestic politics, given variations in expected costs amongst intervening actors, foster the development of alternative state forms in weak polities.

At the heart of my argument is the view that intervening actors tend to seek full denial of access by external rivals through direct control of a targeted weak state. These same actors may, however, settle for less complete levels of access denial and more indirect forms of control if the opportunity costs of attaining their maximal goals seem too high to feasibly undertake. This position sees relative gains over access to peripheral areas to be of primary concern to intervening powers, but higher expected costs of intervention can force these actors to focus on absolute gains.[4] Such views guide an external power's approach toward competing and intervening in a weak polity.

Expected intervention costs are the gains that leaders of a would-be intervening power anticipate to acquire from interceding into the politics of a targeted polity less the opportunities they anticipate to forgo from engaging in such action. Such expectations are effectively understandings about the opportunity costs of intervention. These assessments rest on an understanding of the material

[4] The logic that an actor can experience varying levels of acuteness over relative gains concerns parallels arguments put forward by Robert Powell and Joseph Grieco. Grieco, 1988a, 485–507, 1988b, 600–24, 1990, 27–50; Powell, 1991, 1303–20.

benefits of access to markets and resources, but are also susceptible to the influences of ideology, miscalculation, and misunderstanding.[5] After all, if no problems with information and knowledge exist, actors can realise optimal net gains without the trouble of jostling with each other on the ground. My analysis will look empirically at how leaders have weighed their available options. Developing theoretical explanations of the psychological, ideational, and other origins of such expectations may provide fruitful lines for enquiry, but lies beyond my current focus.

Expected costs need not closely track material reality and can diverge substantially from objective measures of cost. Government leaders, for example, may value symbolic or normative goals over material ones. I ascertain the expected costs of intervention for a particular government from relevant policy debates, discussions, and statements about intervening in a target polity before such action occurs. Specifically, I empirically highlight where intervention into a particular polity stood within the range of priorities policymakers faced. I acknowledge that such views may vary from exogenously derived measures of material cost, but evaluating how, and to what degree, actual and expected intervention costs differ are beyond this project's scope.

Local actors feature less prominently in my argument even though they clearly populate the localities where intervention takes place. The apparent absence of local agency comes from the fact that weak polities tend to contain many more-or-less evenly matched domestic rivals. Winning foreign assistance becomes a means to quickly become competitive vis-à-vis local adversaries. Since domestic actors usually outnumber foreign interveners, acquiring foreign help in these highly contentious environments usually means abiding by terms set by outside interveners lest the latter shift support to local opponents who are more cooperative. This commitment problem erodes the effects of local agency on state formation even if domestic groups are politically active, and may last until one local actor can dominate a polity enough to play interveners against each other.

The second-image reversed approach I advance augments an underdeveloped area of extant arguments on state formation.[6] Apart from drawing on the early modern European as well as, to some extent, African and Latin American experiences, attempts to understand state creation tend to view change agents as largely domestic.[7] Arguments that consider international politics generally see such dynamics as background structural conditions or one-off, exogenous shocks.[8] Theories that explore the role external actors play in shaping state

[5] For more about perceptions and the understanding of costs and policy, see Christensen, 1996; Friedberg, 1988; Khong, 1992; Kupchan, 1994; Wohlforth, 1993.

[6] A second-image reversed approach uses international system-level variables to explain domestic political phenomena. Gourevitch, 1978.

[7] Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson, 2001; Centeno, 2002; Herbst, 2000; Jackson, 1990; Philpott, 2001; Tilly, 1990.

[8] Ertman, 1997; Skocpol, 1979; Spruyt, 1994; Strayer, 1970; Tilly, 1990.

characteristics tend to concentrate on the entry and exit of various polities from the international system.[9] Analyses that insufficiently account for intervention risk overlooking a critical element of state formation in fragile polities that may speak to externally led attempts to bolster stability and instil order in places like Afghanistan and Iraq today.

SOVEREIGN STATEHOOD IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Sovereign statehood represents a departure from preexisting political arrangements in most parts of the world during the mid twentieth century. For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many polities in the global periphery existed as colonies, vassal states, and feudalised states to list a few examples. This is despite the fact that some of these places may have hosted states with sovereign attributes earlier in their histories.[10] Nonsovereign approaches to arranging the state over the past century and a half or so have institutional characteristics distinct from the sovereign state.

Colonial states may exclude outside actors from intervening within their spatial boundaries and centralise domestic governance, but are subordinate to an outside authority. Feudalised states may be free from higher external sources of authority, but they did not experience much centralisation of governance internally. Even if a vassal state was politically centralised, it was subject to an external suzerain that reserved the right to shape political, economic, and social developments. Empires and suzerain states tend not to recognise the limits imposed by territorial boundaries even if they are politically centralised and independent of any other political authority.

Simply, the simultaneous possession of high degrees of political centralisation, territorial exclusivity, and external autonomy that typifies the sovereign state is vastly different from other state forms. In fact, the institution of the sovereign state was, for the most part, relatively rare outside much of Europe before the end of World War II.[11] Nevertheless, most of the world enthusiastically embraced the transplantation of sovereign statehood shortly after World War II, and was often ready to spill blood to do so.

Amongst common understandings about the institutional and organisational changes behind the export of sovereign statehood from Europe during the mid twentieth century are those that stress nationalism and self-determination. Specifically, as nationalist and self-determination beliefs took hold amongst both colonisers and the colonised, this brought a convergence of efforts to create sovereign states where they did not exist. Such forces saw revolution and decolonisation from Africa to Asia and the Americas.

Nationalist movements agitating for sovereign state creation were, however, highly active across much of the non-European world since the late nineteenth

[9] Fazal, 2004; Krasner, 1999, 2001.
[10] Hui, 2005.
[11] Huang, 1993; Tilly, 1990, 192–227; Wong, 1997.

century if not earlier. Chinese nationalists were active since the last decade of the nineteenth century, well before the overthrow of the Manchu regime in 1911. Likewise, Filipino nationalists helped bring about the end of Spanish colonial control in 1898. In fact, Filipinos had revolted against Spanish rule thirty-four times by 1872.[12] Filipino nationalist armies were even able to stall American colonial designs for almost a decade and a half after the end of Spanish rule.

Proto-nationalists under Diponegoro were similarly able to fight the Dutch to a standstill in the Java War during the 1820s.[13] Yet, from the Philippines to Indonesia and China, sovereign statehood did not emerge until the mid-twentieth century. In contrast, Siam was well on its way toward sovereign statehood by the early twentieth century despite not having a coherent nationalist movement until the 1910s. Moreover, international support for national self-determination enjoyed prominence since the early twentieth century as an enduring legacy of the Versailles Conference.

Even as those arguing for the self-determination of peoples gained the upper hand in intellectual and diplomatic circles after World War I, substantive change in many areas under foreign domination was often slow and limited. Forceful domestic and external calls for the establishment of sovereign statehood in India aside, the subcontinent stayed a British colony until 1947. On top of running governmental institutions such as the Customs Service, external powers likewise maintained spheres of influence, special economic and political privileges, extra-territorial rights, and colonies in China. Despite promises of self-determination and independence, Burma, the East Indies, Malaya, the Philippines, and areas of Africa remained under their respective colonial yokes through World War II. Even post–World War II de-colonisation in most places occurred over several decades, extending into the 1960s and 1970s for much of Asia and Africa – and arguably into the 1990s in parts of Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia.[14]

The lag between the rise of nationalism and self-determination and the establishment of national states suggests that these dynamics alone were unable to establish sovereign statehood. Likewise, explanations highlighting the importance of nationalism and self-determination norms are at pains to show why the institutionalisation of sovereign statehood can sometimes occur prior to, or in the absence of, these factors. This phenomenon is especially evident when thinking about areas like Singapore, Malaysia, or Thailand, where sovereign statehood did not result directly from protracted struggles against foreign overlordship. Accounts about nationalist mobilisation and the spread of sovereignty-supporting norms may therefore be underestimating the influence of other dynamics.

[12] Schoonover, 2003, 84.
[13] Ali, 1994, 247–338; Ricklefs, 1993, 111–18; SarDesai, 1997, 93–95; Williams, 1976, 97–98.
[14] Beissinger and Young, 2002.

Some nationalist accounts of sovereign state creation underscore the critical importance of long-standing indigenous identity and cultural traditions. However, if such forces are fundamental to nationalist movements, then it is curious that most nationalist groups explicitly shunned reversion to more traditional institutional approaches to organising the state, be it an empire, suzerain, vassal, or feudalised state. Instead, nationalists largely adhered to an approach to organising the state that approximated a nineteenth and early-twentieth-century European ideal, and often saw traditionalists as enemies of progress.[15] Unless they are self-contradictory, incoherent, or both, it is not easy to see how culture and identity can be simultaneously sticky and pliable whenever convenient. Moreover, established identity and traditions are not a prerequisite for sovereignty – Tatars, Tamils, and Xhosa being examples of such groups that do not have an attendant sovereign state.

This discussion does not aim to suggest anything uniquely twentieth-century, contemporary, or European about sovereign statehood as an institutional form. Polities approximating the sovereign state existed in Warring States China (475 BC–221 BC) and showed signs of emerging in parts of precolonial Africa.[16] It is also possible to locate the roots of the sovereign state in Europe's mediaeval past, well before the supposed modern heyday of sovereignty.[17] In Europe, alternatives to the sovereign state such as empires, city leagues, and even chartered trading companies controlling vast territory lasted into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[18] The pervasiveness of European-inspired sovereign state-making projects in the periphery during the mid twentieth century is a phenomenon worth rethinking since sovereignty-supporting conditions long existed in many of these areas.

Given the large theoretical and empirical questions that popular perspectives about the most recent wave of sovereign state creation leave open, rethinking the dynamics surrounding this process remains important to academic and policy-related studies. To better appreciate how an essentially foreign institutional form came to take root in fragile polities at a specific historical moment, it may be necessary to reconsider the dynamics behind sovereign state creation in such instances. To do so, I focus on the processes of state formation in China, Indonesia, and Thailand from the late nineteenth century until the mid twentieth. These are "least likely" cases with different, but individually well-established, accounts of sovereign state formation that run counter to my hypothesis.

[15] In the Chinese case, those in support of nationalist causes tended to treat those calling for a reinstitution of the empire – such as Gu Hongming, Kang Youwei, Zhang Xun, and former members of the Qing Court – as outcasts and opponents. Nationalist groups even viewed moderates like Liang Qichao, who supported a constitutional monarchy, with disdain.
[16] Hui, 2005; Kiser and Cai, 2003; Young, 1994.
[17] Anderson, 1974a, 1974b; Strayer, 1970.
[18] Adams, 2005; Doyle, 1986; Spruyt, 1994; Watson, 1992.

EAST ASIA AND THE CONTINGENCY OF SOVEREIGN STATEHOOD IN THE PERIPHERY

There is nothing necessary about the establishment of sovereign statehood amongst peripheral polities across East Asia. Sovereign states are simply one institutional option for organising governance. As late as the 1930s, it was not even clear that sovereign statehood would be the fate for most polities in both Northeast and Southeast Asia. Moreover, sovereign statehood does not guarantee wealth or power, as the unhappy recent histories of many postcolonial African and Asian states readily show.[19] It does not even necessarily ensure security for the life and property of those living under its control. How this approach to organising the institutions of state came to dominate East Asia and elsewhere, and why this development took place at a particular historical juncture warrants further examination.

The conditions just mentioned make examining the polities of East Asia highly informative for attempts to understand the processes of state formation in weak states more widely. Sovereign statehood developed during the mid twentieth century for most fragile polities around the global periphery, replacing various forms of the state that previously existed in these areas. These included indigenous, traditional approaches to organising governance and political authority as well as foreign colonial arrangements. Like so many regions in the world, East Asia felt the force of nationalist mobilisation, external intrusion into domestic politics, and the consequences of major power competition between the end of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth. In this regard, state formation experiences in East Asia between the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries may be broadly representative of dynamics at work in weak polities elsewhere.

Apart from its wider theoretical relevance, a study of sovereign state creation has particular salience for East Asia. This is one region where issues of sovereignty remain contentious. Unlike Europe and North America, disputes over borders, the integrity of singular, centralised polities, and the ability of a polity to exercise agency internationally continue to be likely sources of unrest and armed conflict. These include differences over the political status of Takeshima/Dokdo, the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands, Taiwan, the South China Sea, Ambalat, and Preah Vihear amongst many others. In this sense, the dynamics of sovereignty and consequences of state formation continue to have real and direct consequences for international politics in the region. Ironically, conceptions of state form – the structure of a state's internal politics and external relations – that inform these issues come most recently from "Western" traditions of politics and governance that societies in East Asia tried to resist over the past two centuries.

What many see as European notions of the sovereign state are so deeply internalised that alternative, indigenous approaches to organising the state

[19] Centeno, 2002; Herbst, 2000; Jackson, 1990; Kohli, 2004.

such as the suzerain-vassal system no longer feature prominently in the politics of East Asia, except rhetorically.[20] It seems that institutional approaches to organising the state in East Asia represent a reversal of the old Chinese adage, "*zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*".[21] Rather, "Western" learning now provides the fundamentals for state organisation, and "Eastern" learning the mere instruments of everyday politics.[22] Such features are apparent in the polities that form the empirical focus of this study – China, Indonesia, and Thailand.

One of the distinguishing features of Chinese politics from the mid nineteenth century on is an embrace of modernist notions of sovereignty. Nowhere is this more apparent than when considering Chinese attempts to organise relations with the outside world. From discussions about China's role in the world to relations with foreign powers and the duties of government, matters of sovereignty appear to play a key role in major Chinese political debates between the Self-Strengthening Movement of the mid 1800s and the founding of the People's Republic. In fact, popular accounts often see the clamour for "sovereignty" as central to the popularity of the Chinese nationalist and communist movements that saw the rise of the contemporary Chinese state.[23] Today, sovereignty issues remain central to Chinese politics – if contention over jurisdiction by international organisations, Taiwan's political status, and territorial boundaries are any indication.[24]

Nonetheless, as the most recent formula for drawing borders and forming political relationships, sovereign statehood is a fresh feature of modern Chinese politics that draws heavily from foreign influences.[25] This is despite the fact that discussions of sovereignty share close associations with treatments of nationalism, identity, and modernity in contemporary China.[26] Until the early twentieth century, ideas of nonintervention, self-determination, and external juridical equality that help define modern notions of sovereignty had yet to definitively take root in Chinese politics. Even more striking is the fact that, except in retrospect, it was not entirely clear that China was heading down the path towards sovereign statehood. As late as the 1930s, communist internationalism, acceptance of foreign supremacy, and even anarchism remained potential substitutes to sovereign statehood.

Questions about modern conceptions of sovereignty are just as important for politics in present-day Indonesia. From the Moluccas and Irian Jaya to Aceh and Timor, the national government based in Jakarta expended much blood and treasure to hold the archipelago together. The ability of the Indonesian

[20] Acharya, 2004; Kang, 2004, 2005a, 2005b.
[21] The term means "Chinese learning for the fundamentals, Western learning for the instrumentals".
[22] This reformulation of the old line reads, "*Xixue wei ti, Zhongxue wei yong*". I take this reformulation from Ray Huang's argument about contemporary Chinese historiography. Huang, 1998.
[23] Johnson, 1962, 1969; Perry, 1980.
[24] Carlson, 2005; Fravel, 2005.
[25] On older approximations of sovereign statehood in China, see Hui, 2005.
[26] Leifer, 2000a, 1–125, 273–325, 361–401; Zheng, 1999.

government to maintain centralised political control and territorial exclusivity over a vast area affects the security of vital sea-lanes of communication such as the Malacca and Sunda Straits, as well as energy-rich areas like the Natunas and Aceh. A breakdown of the sovereign Indonesian state may cause significant disruptions to trade and energy supplies across East Asia, potentially causing economic, political, and social unrest.

For all of its present concerns over sovereignty, many observers attribute a pan-archipelagic movement that agitated for centralised political control, territorial exclusivity, and external autonomy against Dutch colonial rule for creating what is now Indonesia. This is despite the fact that a centralised system of governance covering the Netherlands Indies only emerged late into Dutch rule. Moreover, Dutch, British, and even Japanese control over the East Indies rested on cooperation between disparate local elite groups and the intervening external power. Such arrangements for political division, collaboration, and rule had precedents extending to early-seventeenth-century Dutch colonialism in the East Indies.

In contrast, Siam avoided formal colonisation and never experienced the sorts of external domination prevalent in the former Dutch East Indies and China. Between the late seventeenth and mid nineteenth centuries, the Siamese monarchy based in Bangkok even held suzerainty over Cambodia, parts of current-day Laos, and sultanates on the Malay Peninsula. Thailand even displayed the high degrees of territorial exclusivity, external autonomy, and political centralisation typical of a sovereign state arguably by around the turn of the twentieth century.

Siam clearly did not experience the same anti-imperialist, nationalist struggles prevalent elsewhere. Thai nationalism is in many respects an outgrowth, rather than a cause, of successful sovereign state-making. Popular accounts see the Siamese government's ability to manoeuvre foreign powers against each other and compromise where necessary as key to its early adoption and sustenance of sovereign statehood. Nonetheless, Siam renounced claims over most former vassals – with the notable exception of the former Malay kingdom of Pattani in the south, now part of a centralised Thai state. Such conditions raise questions about how Thailand accepted reduced territorial jurisdiction for a clearer demarcation of physical boundaries and a deeper penetration of political authority internally.

This book attempts to better appreciate the processes behind the empirical developments discussed so far. The aim is to understand how sovereign statehood, as an organisational form, came to take hold across East Asia and elsewhere despite vastly divergent situations. Such less-developed areas of the world are, in the end, replete with examples of polities where sovereign statehood took a firm hold despite largely dissimilar initial conditions. Experiences with organising the state varied tremendously for polities on the Malay Peninsula, Indochina, Borneo, the Philippines, the Ryukyus, Korea, and Japan in periods leading up to sovereign statehood. Incidentally, the wide range of nonsovereign

state forms in East Asia historically is particularly permissive of an extension of my findings about state formation to other areas.

Through its focus on Northeast and Southeast Asia, this study also represents an effort at advancing understandings about the circumstances that led nationalism and political identity in polities along the global periphery to find expression in the sovereign state. Such an approach may be especially useful since the long, tumultuous history of nationalist movements in the region suggests that long-term agitation and widespread mobilisation do not necessarily imply the success, or even attractiveness, of the sovereign option. Yet, differences over sovereign claims are now amongst the few enduring issues that have the potential to affect security, stability, and prosperity throughout East Asia and elsewhere outside Europe and North America. By exploring the origins of this phenomenon, I hope to appreciate how one organisational concept was not only adopted, but also gained lasting importance, in vastly different material and social contexts.

STATE FORM AND SOVEREIGN STATEHOOD

Before proceeding further, I wish to clarify several key concepts. First, state form is the institutional configuration that defines a state's internal political structure, as well as its relationship to the external world. These arrangements establish the degree to which governmental powers are centralised hierarchically within the polity, the extent to which internal political structures are subject to external authority, and the degree of autonomy a state enjoys as an actor in world politics. Looking at state form institutionally allows for the possibility that sovereign statehood is not the only means for arranging political order, governance, authority, and power.[27] This is analytically useful for considering changes in the institutional configurations of a polity.

An attempt to explore state form necessarily implicates the relationship between internal and external politics. It entails the existence of a "domestic" sphere where some system of authority, hierarchy, and centralisation, however minimal, exists in contrast to an anarchical "external" world.[28] The concept of state form I present aims to allow for an examination of the different possible institutional means of arranging the political relationship between the external and internal. Nonetheless, I recognise that state form may constitute only one element of sovereignty and acknowledge that this project does not explicitly examine such aspects as changes to the meaning of sovereignty over time and relational dimensions of sovereignty.[29]

[27] Hall, 1986; Van Creveld, 1999.
[28] Anarchy here means the absence of centralised source of authority, what Alexander Wendt terms "Lockean" anarchy and Hedley Bull calls the absence of government. Bull 1977, 44–49; Buzan, Jones, and Little, 1993; Spruyt, 1994, 13; Wendt, 1999, 279–97.
[29] For perspectives on other components of sovereignty, see Bartelson, 1995, 2001; Philpott, 2001; Walker, 1992.