

ONE

Introduction

The Sovereignty Wars

On the eve of March 19, 1919, 3,000 lucky ticket holders gathered in Boston's Symphony Hall for one of the most eagerly anticipated debates in American history. The question posed was whether the United States should approve the Covenant of the League of Nations and become one of its founding members. Arguing in the affirmative was A. Lawrence Lowell, president of Harvard University. In the negative was Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, the Senate majority leader.

Interest in the debate was intense, both in the United States and abroad. And rightfully so. A month earlier President Woodrow Wilson and fellow negotiators at the Paris Peace Conference had presented humanity with an ambitious scheme to safeguard international peace. In the wake of the Great War, the idea of the League had captured the world's imagination. More than 72,000 Americans had applied to attend what A. J. Philpott of the *Boston Evening Globe* called "the greatest debate staged in this country in 50 years." Below the event stage, telegraph operators prepared to dispatch the speakers' remarks instantaneously around the country and across the Atlantic.¹

For the United States, League membership would imply reversing its historical aversion to formal international commitments. Less than a month earlier Wilson had returned from France aboard the *George Washington*—christened for America's first president who, as irony would have it, had cautioned the United States to "steer clear of any permanent alliances." Wilson

himself had disembarked in Boston, promising throngs of well-wishers to seek speedy ratification of the Covenant. Four days later, Lodge had begun his own campaign to defeat it.

The Lodge-Lowell debate was but one engagement in what became a titanic battle over the League of Nations, still the most divisive, dramatic, and consequential controversy in nearly two and a half centuries of U.S. foreign policy. Many issues were at stake. But the core issue was national sovereignty—namely, the future of the United States as an independent republic, endowed with freedom of action and capable of shaping its own destiny. Three questions were front and center, and they can be summarized under the headings of authority, autonomy, and influence. First, was League membership consistent with the system of government established under the U.S. Constitution, including the liberties of the American people and the separation of powers? Second, would new commitments under the League expand or constrain America's traditional freedom of action, both abroad and at home? Third, as a practical matter, would League membership help or hinder U.S. efforts to remain master of its own fate? Lurking behind these three queries was a fourth: How should the United States balance these objectives of authority, autonomy, and influence?

One hundred years later the concerns and dilemmas that Lodge and Lowell confronted in 1919 have rarely been more topical. Americans are once again debating just what role the United States should play in a complex, shrinking, and unsettling world that brings dangers and risks, as well as opportunities, closer to its shores. For nearly three-quarters of a century, dating from World War II, the United States shouldered the mantle of global leadership, in effect managing world order. But today many Americans have wearied of this role and have endorsed a narrower, more self-interested posture that looks out for America and Americans first—even as transnational threats like climate change, terrorism, and infectious disease cry out for international cooperation. How should the United States navigate between the practical need to go it with others and its instincts for independence? What external commitments should it make, what constraints should it accept, to advance a rule-bound international order?

Revisiting the Lodge-Lowell encounter is compelling for another reason. In our own anxious century, debates over American sovereignty generate more noise than understanding, with the shrillest voices—typically exaggerating the costs of global integration—garnering the most attention. What has been missing is a thoughtful and ultimately more hopeful discussion about the real (as opposed to imaginary) trade-offs the nation needs to consider as it

seeks to reconcile its constitutional independence and desire for freedom of action with the practical requirements of influencing its destiny and advancing its interests in a global age. A closer look at the Lodge-Lowell contest not only illuminates what is at stake in these debates. It also shows that reasonable people can disagree about where to strike the balance among sovereign authority, autonomy, and influence.

Today the notion of a debate between a Republican senator and a university president conjures images of a folksy populist pitted against an effete academic. Not so in the case of Lodge and Lowell. Both were Republicans and Boston Brahmins, scions of prominent colonial families who had five Harvard degrees (including a Ph.D. for Lodge) between them. And their positions were not so far apart. Both favored some international league to enforce world peace and promote disarmament. Lowell, who had challenged Lodge to the debate, also found the Covenant “full of holes and full of defects.”² He hoped to stake out a moderate middle ground between Wilson’s unvarnished enthusiasm and the diehard opposition of League skeptics.

Lodge spoke first, on a stage backed by an enormous American flag. “It has been said that I am against any league of nations,” the senator observed. “I am not.” But the proposed Covenant was fatally flawed in its vaulting ambitions and infringements on U.S. sovereignty. The closer he examined the document, “the more it became very clear to me that in trying to do too much we might lose all.”³

The Covenant’s biggest defect was Article 10, which pledged League members “to respect and preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence” of “every nation.” This was “a tremendous promise to make,” the senator warned. Were America’s “fathers and mothers, the sisters and the wives and sweethearts” actually prepared, he wondered, “to send the hope of their families, the hope of the nation, the best of our youth, forth into the world on that errand?” But the faults of the Covenant went further. It would undercut U.S. freedom of action, embroil the United States in distant disputes, aggravate global tensions, grant foreigners a say over U.S. domestic policies, and endanger U.S. constitutional democracy.

Wilson’s scheme would have the United States abandon the sound advice of Presidents Washington and Jefferson, who had admonished the nation to steer clear of (respectively) “permanent” and “entangling” alliances. Article 10 would deprive America of its free hand. Had it existed in the eighteenth century, Lodge averred, “France could not have assisted this country to win the Revolution.” Neither could the United States have “rescued Cuba from the clutches of Spain” in 1898. And unlike previous treaties the United States

had signed, the Covenant contained “no provisions for withdrawal or termination.”

Worse, the Covenant would effectively repudiate the Monroe Doctrine, that “invisible line we drew around the American hemisphere . . . to exclude other nations from meddling in American affairs.” The Covenant’s defenders claimed “that we preserve the Monroe Doctrine by extending it” globally. Such logic was lost on Lodge. “I have never been able to get it through my head how you can preserve a fence by taking it down.” Beyond opening the Americas to foreign powers, the League risked embroiling the United States “in every obscure quarrel that may spring up in the Balkans.”

The Covenant also threatened America’s internal autonomy by granting the League license to interfere with U.S. immigration policy, which “defends this country from a flood of Japanese, Chinese and Hindu labor.” This Lodge could not accept. The power “to say who shall come into the United States . . . lies at the foundation of national character and national well being.” Nor would he countenance that “other nations meddle with our tariff”—as the Covenant’s provisions for economic boycotts would allow. Such a possibility “runs up against a provision of the Constitution,” namely Congress’s role in raising national revenue. “I think we ought to set our own import duties.”

Lowell offered a polite but spirited riposte. He depicted the League as an imperative step toward world peace that posed no threat to American sovereignty, the Constitution, or the Monroe Doctrine. Yes, Lowell acknowledged, it implied new U.S. commitments. But “I think it is safe to say that most Americans believe that a League to prevent war would be worth some inconvenience to ourselves.” And in truth the Covenant’s obligations were modest. First, it insisted that nations, before resorting to force of arms, “be obliged to submit their differences to arbitration.” Second, it required “severe penalties” for aggression, so that any transgressor would “find itself automatically at war with the rest of the League.” Contrary to what Lodge had implied, however, it did *not* include any “automatic” provision to go to war against aggressors (something that Lowell himself would actually have favored as a surefire way to enforce the peace). Overall, Lowell considered the Covenant “the minimum . . . the smallest amount of obligations that could be undertaken if you are really to have a League to prevent war at all.”

What about claims that the treaty was unconstitutional? After all, did it not require disarmament, violating congressional prerogatives to raise and equip armies? Did it not define and limit conditions under which states could resort to force, usurping Congress’s authority to declare war? And did it not oblige the United States to suspend trade with aggressors, heedless of U.S.

legislative authority to regulate commerce and levy and collect duties? Lowell dismissed these complaints by reminding the audience that the Covenant, like all treaties, could be ratified only upon the Senate's explicit and voluntary advice and consent. "When it comes to treaties, the constitutional powers [of Congress] are unaffected," he explained. "If it were not so every treaty that we have made would be always null and void, because practically every treaty you make does to some extent limit or inhibit the power which Congress might otherwise exercise."

What about the Covenant's limits on U.S. freedom of action? Would not the United States be better off by seeking simply to keep order in its own hemisphere, while allowing the Europeans to do the same in theirs? The error in such logic was in believing that the United States could insulate itself from the wider world. "Isolation has passed away," Lowell insisted. Geography was relative rather than absolute, and technological innovation had diminished its importance. How long would it be, he wondered, before "Zeppelins can sail across the ocean and drop tons of bombs on American cities?" In his boldest stroke, Lowell implied that the famous Farewell Address was obsolete. "Things have changed since the days of Washington," and the United States must keep up with the times. "When the world is moving forward . . . it is a great mistake to walk backwards and look backwards."

Then there was "the greatest bugbear of all—the Monroe Doctrine." Far from contradicting that venerable policy, Lowell insisted, "this [League] covenant merely extends it all over the world"—by prohibiting aggressive intervention everywhere. Lodge had claimed that joining the League would require pulling down this fence. "That is perfectly true if your object is to preserve the fence," Lowell responded. "But if your object is to preserve the fruits inside the fence you do not fail to preserve them by making the fence cover two orchards instead of one." More provocatively, Lowell suggested that League membership would temper any "imperialistic" impulses the United States itself might harbor toward its own neighbors. It was time to abandon the presumption that "the Americas are game preserves in which no poachers are allowed, but in which the owner [the United States] may shoot all he pleases."

Lowell did support one amendment, which he hoped would alleviate "a great deal of misunderstanding." Namely, the United States should insist that both the powers of the League and the obligations of its members be limited to those specified by the Covenant. With this specification, the Covenant would "[mean] what it says, and not something else." He also agreed with Lodge that the United States must avoid submitting questions about domestic matters, including immigration and the tariff, to the League. As to the

Covenant's other obligations—to help fund the Universal Postal Union, to exchange information about armaments industries, to register all treaties with the League, to promote “humane treatment of labor” at home and abroad, and to “maintain freedom of transit and equitable treatment of commerce” with all League members—these were “not very important” and “need not . . . delay us.”

Finally, Lowell reassured Americans that the League posed no peril. The envisioned nine-member League Council was hardly a “supersovereign body,” as some had alleged. It lacked the “power to direct or order anything,” even in response to aggression, and League members were “under no obligation, legal or moral, to accept” its advice and recommendations, unless the entire Council—including the U.S. representative—agreed. The proposed League Assembly, composed of all member states, posed even less of a threat to American sovereignty, since “they have practically no powers except to discuss.”

Senator Lodge, who was permitted a final rebuttal, insisted that the Covenant would need to be amended significantly to have any chance of approval. And the place to do this under the U.S. Constitution was not in Paris but in Washington. He chastised Wilson for ignoring the Senate’s “right to advise and consent,” and for breaking with his presidential predecessors—including Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, and Grant—by failing to consult U.S. senators during treaty negotiations. Had the president submitted an early draft to legislators for possible revisions, “he would have had the amendments laid before him to present to the Peace Conference in Paris. The battle would have been more than half won by the mere submission.” Instead, Wilson had allowed “the powers, the constitutional functions of one of the great branches of government [to become] atrophied, evaded, denied.”

In his closing minutes Lodge waxed patriotic, invoking touchstones of American identity and nationalism. “We are a great moral asset of Christian civilization,” he declared. “How did we get there? By our own efforts. Nobody led us, nobody guided us, nobody controlled us.” Wilson’s Covenant would take the republic down a different, dangerous path, toward “the dim red light of internationalism” (a clear reference to Leninism). He warned his fellow citizens: “You are being asked to exchange the government of Abraham Lincoln, of the people, for the people, by the people, for a government of, for, and by *other* people.”

Lodge did not advocate isolationism, but rather a distinctly American internationalism. “I want my country to go forth: I want her to be a help to humanity as she has been”—just as she had helped defeat “autocracy and barbarism” in the Great War. “But I cannot but keep her interests in my mind,”

he insisted. And these required defending the country's historic freedom of action.

I want to keep America as she has been—not isolated, not prevent her from joining other nations for these great purposes—but I wish her to be master of her fate. . . . I want her kept in a position to do that work and not submit her to a vote of other nations, with no recourse except to break a treaty which she wishes to maintain. We must not only strive to keep the world at peace, we must try to keep America as she is. I do not mean outside a League, but keep her as she is in her ideals and her principles. . . . Let her go on in her beneficent career, and I want to see her as she has always stood, strong and alive, triumphant, free.

Although partisans on each side claimed that their champion had triumphed, the debate was a draw in intellectual terms. “Both men won,” concluded the moderator, Massachusetts governor Calvin Coolidge. As a practical matter, however, the event tilted political opinion slightly in Lodge’s direction, by persuading previously undecided Republicans that Wilson’s Covenant contained significant flaws—and that the Senate should adopt a prudent, methodical, and cautious approach to U.S. membership. Although media and public skepticism would take longer to emerge, the seeds of doubt had been sown.⁴

Over the next twelve months, the national debate over the League only grew more heated and partisan. In March 1920 the Senate definitively rejected the Versailles Peace Treaty (including the League Covenant), inaugurating an era of relative isolationism in U.S. foreign policy.

MUCH ADO ABOUT SOMETHING: CONFUSION AND CONTROVERSY OVER SOVEREIGNTY

The Lodge-Lowell debate occurred a century ago. But the choices and dilemmas raised that night—and in the broader League fight that unfolded over the ensuing, tumultuous year—endure. Indeed, they are at the heart of contemporary deliberations and disagreements about America’s global role. Namely, can the United States best advance its interests and values through international institutions—including formal multilateral bodies and treaty obligations—or through its own national efforts and more flexible cooperative arrangements? How can the United States ensure that the multilateral commitments that it *does* embrace do not infringe on the authority of the U.S.

Constitution, the rights of U.S. citizens, and American national identity? And when the United States does cooperate with others, what constraints should it accept on its external freedom of action and domestic policy choices?

At their core, these questions have one subject: *sovereignty*—namely, the status of the United States as a constitutionally independent, democratic republic, at liberty to shape its own destiny abroad and govern itself at home without external interference.

Sovereignty is among the most frequently invoked, polemical, and vexing concepts in politics—particularly American politics. The concept wields symbolic power, implying something sacred and inalienable—the right of the people to control their fate without subordination to outside authorities. And yet there is little consensus in the United States about what sovereignty actually entails. Individuals can use the term to mean very different things, and they often employ it as a cover for underlying anxieties about an American national identity they see at risk or a country they fear is in terminal decline. Often lost in these heated discussions is that sovereignty has at least three dimensions—authority, autonomy, and influence—and that advancing U.S. interests in a complex world sometimes requires difficult trade-offs among defending the U.S. Constitution, protecting U.S. freedom of action, and maximizing U.S. control over outcomes. Navigating these choices requires sober thinking.

Given its emotive pull, however, the concept of sovereignty is easily hijacked by nationalists, as well as political opportunists, to shut down debate. By playing the sovereignty card, they can curtail more reasoned discussions over the merits of proposed international commitments by portraying supporters of global treaties or organizations as (in effect) enemies of motherhood and apple pie. Secretary of State Dean Rusk bemoaned this dynamic half a century ago in testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The problem with discussing the question of American “sovereignty,” he noted, was that “immediately people wrap the American flag around themselves and resort to that form of patriotism which Samuel Johnson once referred to as ‘the last refuge of the scoundrel.’”⁵

The discourse over American sovereignty has only grown more heated over the past five decades. During the 1990s, Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, angered a generation of liberal internationalists by blocking U.S. membership in multilateral treaties and withholding U.S. dues to the United Nations (UN) in an effort to impose reform on the world body. In more recent years, John Bolton, who served as U.S. ambassador to the UN under President George W. Bush, has warned of

“the coming war on sovereignty.” John Fonte of the conservative Hudson Institute frames the choice for the United States as a binary one in his book *Sovereignty or Submission: Will Americans Rule Themselves or Be Ruled by Others?*⁶ On Capitol Hill, meanwhile, more than two dozen senators have formed the “Sovereignty Caucus.” According to Representative Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.), one of its cofounders, the group was established to “protect and defend the rights of American citizens and the interests of American institutions from the increasing influence of international organizations and multilateral agreements. It will promote policies and practices that protect U.S. self-determination, national sovereignty, and constitutional principles and defend American values from encroachment by transnational actors.”⁷ Not to be left out, state legislatures from Idaho to South Carolina to Texas have passed resolutions reasserting U.S. sovereignty.

On the campaign trail for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, the New York real estate mogul Donald J. Trump used his first major foreign policy speech to excoriate the “false song of globalism”: “The nation-state remains the true foundation of happiness and harmony. I am skeptical of international unions that tie us up and bring America down. And under my administration, we will never enter America into any agreement that reduces our ability to control our own affairs.”⁸ Accepting the GOP nomination in Cleveland that summer, Mr. Trump pledged to put “America first,” resurrecting the pre–World War II phrase associated with American isolationists like Charles Lindbergh.⁹ Candidate Trump promised U.S. citizens that if elected he would help them take their country back—and make it great again. This agenda included renouncing international agreements that he claimed hamstrung U.S. freedom of action, including the Paris Accord on Climate Change; restoring U.S. control over the country’s southern border with Mexico; disowning “awful” trade deals struck with other countries; and pulling back from entangling overseas alliances and commitments.

Trump’s surprising election in November 2016 as the forty-fifth president of the United States placed front and center the question of whether and how the United States can reconcile long-standing sovereignty concerns with the requirements of sustained and effective international cooperation.

In his dark inaugural address, Trump promised to pursue the hypernationalist agenda on which he had campaigned.¹⁰ In his first days in office he drafted several provocative executive orders intended to advance U.S. sovereignty, as he conceived it.¹¹ He directed his administration to begin construction of a wall along the border with Mexico, to withdraw from the planned Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade bloc, to renegotiate the North American Free Trade

Agreement (NAFTA), to suspend all refugee admissions to the United States, to ban immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries deemed hotbeds of terrorism, to begin a process to slash U.S. contributions to the United Nations, and to impose a moratorium on all new multilateral treaties. If one conviction animated these disparate actions, it was that the world order the United States had created after World War II no longer served U.S. interests. Americans had to restore their sovereignty—by regaining control of their borders, adopting economic protectionism, withdrawing from global bodies, and reconsidering multilateral conventions.

As his chief strategist, the new president chose Stephen K. Bannon, former executive chairman of the website Breitbart News, a media focal point of the white nationalist “alt-right” movement, which—among many other constituencies—had helped propel Trump to power. Bannon’s “worldview, as laid out in interviews and speeches over the past several years,” the *Washington Post* helpfully explained, “hinges largely on [his] belief in American ‘sovereignty.’” Among other convictions, “Bannon said that countries should protect their citizens and their essence by reducing immigration, legal and illegal, and pulling back from multinational agreements.”¹²

Trump and Bannon had tapped into a strain of populist nationalism that commands powerful support in some quarters of American society—but which internationally minded U.S. elites had long ignored. Its adherents depict U.S. sovereignty as under siege, to the detriment of American liberties and U.S. freedom of action. And its rhetoric flows hot. One need not probe deeply on the Internet to find would-be defenders of U.S. sovereignty who warn ominously about nefarious global bodies determined to undermine U.S. constitutional government. They include outfits like Americans for Sovereignty, Council for America, InfoWars, and WorldNetDaily, which invites visitors to its site to sign a “Re-Declaration of Independence: Petition to Protect U.S. Sovereignty.”¹³

No doubt these vigilant netizens see themselves as modern-day “minutemen,” patrolling cyberspace to expose an insidious international conspiracy—enabled by domestic fifth columnists writing for organizations such as the Council on Foreign Relations or the *New York Times*—to deprive the United States of its God-given sovereignty. But they often traffic in hysteria reminiscent of the fictional general Jack D. Ripper of *Dr. Strangelove*, who famously warned that Communists had designs on Americans’ “vital bodily fluids.” As such, their most persuasive role is to serve as exemplars of what the historian Richard Hofstadter famously called “the paranoid style in American politics.”¹⁴

Such alarmism does the nation a disservice. It stokes groundless fears that the U.S. constitutional system is at risk, even as it invokes an imaginary past in which the country enjoyed complete freedom of action. It also ignores the extent to which the United States, in pursuit of its own national interests, has already integrated itself into a system of international rules largely of its own making. Finally, such polemics distract Americans from what is really at stake in the sovereignty debate: namely, the ability of the United States to shape its destiny in a global age.

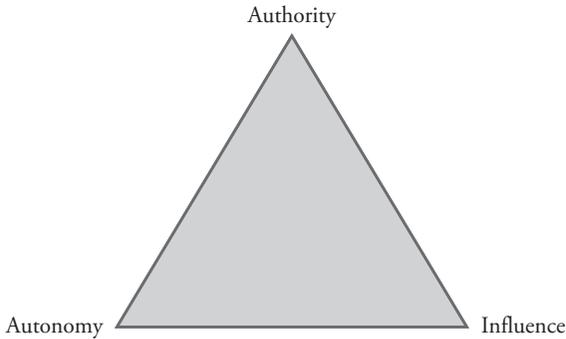
This book is aimed at readers bewildered by the sovereignty debate—including those who wonder what all the fuss is about or find themselves unsure how to weigh competing claims. It is unlikely to win over die-hard, self-styled “defenders” of American sovereignty. But I hope it will reassure those puzzled by current controversies, persuading them that the United States can indeed reap the benefits of international cooperation without significant incursions on its constitutional authorities or undue restrictions on its freedom of action.

To be sure, deepening economic integration, rising security interdependence, and developing international law *do* pose dilemmas for traditional U.S. conceptions of national sovereignty. The United States cannot successfully manage globalization, much less insulate itself from cross-border threats, simply on its own. As transnational challenges grow, the nation’s fate becomes more closely tied to that of other countries, whose cooperation will be needed to exploit the shared opportunities and mitigate the common risks inherent in living on the same planet.¹⁵

To advance their interests and aspirations in today’s world, Americans need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of what sovereignty means. And their government must adopt a more pragmatic approach to navigating inevitable trade-offs among its various components. The first steps are to think clearly about the implications of current trends, about what U.S. prerogatives must be protected, and about what circumstances might warrant adjustments in U.S. policy and psychology.

One impediment to a more candid conversation is a widespread failure to recognize that sovereignty has multiple dimensions. Indeed, when Americans invoke the term, they often imply very different things—and thus talk past one another. Disentangling these meanings can help us distinguish between symbolic but often specious claims and real, practical dilemmas—including painful choices between opposing objectives that sometimes arise. Once we recognize that sovereignty can be disaggregated, we see that it is possible—even desirable—to voluntarily trade off one aspect of sovereignty for another.¹⁶

FIGURE 1-1. The Sovereignty Triangle



The three core dimensions of sovereignty are authority, autonomy, and influence. *Authority* refers to the state's exclusive and legitimate right to make rules. *Autonomy* refers to its ability to make and implement decisions independently. *Influence* refers to the state's effective capacity to advance its interests. Figure 1-1 depicts these dimensions as distinct poles of a "sovereignty triangle."

As applied to the United States, sovereignty-as-authority implies that the Constitution is the supreme law of the land and no external constraints should limit Americans' right to govern themselves as they see fit. Sovereignty-as-autonomy implies that the U.S. government, acting on behalf of the people, should have the freedom of action to formulate and pursue its foreign and domestic policies independently. Sovereignty-as-influence implies that the United States should be able to shape its own destiny. In sum, American sovereignty means that the United States possesses inherent rights that should not be surrendered, autonomy that should not be infringed upon, and a fate that it should be able to influence.

Each of these three attributes is a valued objective in and of itself. The practical difficulty, as this book will explain, is that sovereignty-as-authority, sovereignty-as-autonomy, and sovereignty-as-influence are often in tension. That is, advancing one dimension may require trade-offs with one or both of the others. When it comes to sovereignty, as in economics, there is no free lunch. The requirements of international cooperation make this clear. In an age of globalization, exercising sovereignty-as-influence requires working with others. But moving in that direction can carry costs for sovereignty-as-autonomy, since a commitment to work with others forecloses notional actions the United States might otherwise take. And it could also infringe on

sovereignty-as-authority, if the United States were to accept the political authority of a supranational body or, more commonly, delegate certain authorities to (or pool those authorities within) international organizations.

How grave are these dilemmas? The answer is partly subjective, since it depends on where individuals place themselves on the sovereignty triangle, and which of the three values they seek to privilege. A liberal internationalist, for instance, might place herself at the bottom right corner, prioritizing effective influence in solving a global problem of interest to the United States through cooperative action, even if that implied a loss of autonomy or, conceivably, even authority. A great power nationalist, meanwhile, might consider the lost freedom of action too high a price to pay and insist on retaining autonomy. A constitutional “originalist,” finally, might be unwilling to accept the perceived costs to domestic popular sovereignty inherent in subcontracting U.S. foreign policy goals to an international institution that is perceived to lack democratic accountability.

While such trade-offs can be real, their gravity is often exaggerated. Too great a defensiveness against any perceived losses of U.S. sovereignty-as-autonomy or U.S. sovereignty-as-authority can be counterproductive if it deprives the United States of the opportunity to exercise its sovereignty-as-influence—that is, to shape its destiny in a global era.

The United States is hardly the only nation protective of its sovereignty, as chapter 2 discusses. But its dilemma is more acute than for most other countries. The reasons are geopolitical, constitutional, and ideological. To begin with, the unmatched power of the United States, as well as its *de facto* status as the ultimate guarantor of world order, encourages U.S. insistence on untrammelled freedom of action abroad. Meanwhile, the U.S. Constitution—and the reverence with which it is held—complicates the U.S. assumption of multilateral obligations, particularly those that appear to infringe on the separation of powers, the prerogatives of the fifty states in America’s federal system, or the consent of the American people. Finally, the enduring ideology of American exceptionalism, which holds the United States to be unique among nations, makes Americans inherently anxious about submerging themselves in multinational ventures, organizations, or treaties.

These factors help explain why sovereignty has long been a lightning rod issue domestically and why the nation—despite its claims to and legacy of global leadership—is so often the odd man out internationally. No country has done more since World War II to foster a rule-bound international order, spearheading major multilateral treaties and institutions. And yet the United States has repeatedly opted out of international commitments, including

conventions supported by overwhelming majorities of nations, perceived to constrain its policy autonomy and freedom of action.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Mine Ban Treaty, and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) are but a few examples. More commonly, the United States has carved out special exceptions within treaties to gain unique privileges, while supporting constraints on the behavior of other states.

Debates over U.S. sovereignty have grown louder in the twenty-first century, as the United States tries to reconcile venerable national instincts with new global realities. Self-styled “sovereignists,” predominantly but not exclusively conservative in their orientation, worry that the United States risks sacrificing once-sacrosanct prerogatives on the altar of “global governance,” as unaccountable international institutions and haphazard trends in international law infringe on U.S. freedom of action abroad and U.S. regulatory autonomy at home, running roughshod over U.S. democracy and the U.S. Constitution in the process. On the other side of the debate, meanwhile, some apostles of “world government” either dismiss such concerns as unwarranted or, alternatively, welcome these sacrifices on the grounds that sovereignty is an outmoded principle and an obstacle to effective global governance.¹⁷

In fact, neither sky-is-falling fears nor what-me-worry complacency is warranted. Contrary to sovereignist mythology, U.S. sovereignty has never been absolute. Since the founding of the republic, the United States has wrestled with how to reconcile its national autonomy and independence with the requirements of international cooperation. At a practical level, moreover, the United States has become well versed in trading off autonomy for influence. Since 1945, in particular, the United States has joined hundreds of international organizations and multilateral treaties, each of which limits its freedom of action, calculating that collective efforts could advance U.S. interests more effectively than could unilateral action. Such bargains have brought tangible benefits. They have nurtured an open world economy that has generated unprecedented wealth, underpinned an international security system with rules governing the use of force and mechanisms to keep weapons of mass destruction (WMD) under lock and key, and undergirded U.S. global leadership by legitimating American power. This last factor is particularly important as U.S. power declines relative to its former dominance.

Contrary to assertions by globalists, however, such choices have not been cost-free: they have required real trade-offs between U.S. prerogatives, including limited delegation of political authorities and constraints on U.S. freedom

of action. Traditional concepts and practices of sovereignty *are* being tested by the ever-increasing velocity and volume of cross-border flows of goods, money, services, ideas, and people; by the emergence of new transnational security threats; by the rise of nonstate actors; and by innovations in international law. Deepening globalization also challenges sovereignty's popular dimension, or the expectation that the consent of the governed is the only legitimate basis for political authority, since democratic deficits often plague new multilateral institutions created to manage interdependence.

Fortunately, these challenges are seldom insuperable. The United States is fully capable of cooperating with other nations in multilateral settings that preserve its sovereign authority while accomplishing desired goals, providing that it is willing to sacrifice some notional (but often illusory) freedom of action, by accepting reciprocal obligations alongside its foreign partners. International organizations and treaties will remain imperfect, but the benefits they provide, such as enforcing universal trade rules or arresting potential pandemics, will frequently outweigh the constraints and frustrations. And in many settings, the United States can also avail itself of less formal, *à la carte* forms of cooperation by forming "minilateral" coalitions of the willing. Such smaller groupings of the capable, interested, and like-minded cannot entirely replace standing institutions. But they are becoming more important features of the global institutional landscape, and their very informality and flexibility can reassure sovereignty-minded Americans worried that the United States is sacrificing too much national authority and autonomy for the sake of global ventures.

SOVEREIGNTY BARGAINS

To shape its own fate, the United States will more often need to consider "sovereignty bargains,"¹⁸ voluntarily delegating some autonomy—but only rarely authority—to gain increased influence over outside forces, advance its national interests, and shape its fate as a nation. The duty of U.S. politicians and diplomats is to ensure that the benefits of sovereignty losses outweigh the costs, and that incursions on traditional U.S. prerogatives or constraints on U.S. behavior are acceptable on prudential, moral, and/or constitutional grounds. American statesmen and -women should design institutions for international cooperation that deliver the same (or better) results while minimizing true sovereignty losses. The purpose of this book is to help U.S. policymakers think more clearly about what is actually at stake in the sovereignty debate, as

well as to provide insights about what sorts of bargains may be warranted, based on the relative value they place on authority, autonomy, and influence.

Recognizing that sovereignty can be disaggregated into authority, autonomy, and influence helps to transcend stale debates about whether U.S. sovereignty is (or is not) eroding and, if so, whether this is (or is not) a bad thing. It also becomes clear that the United States can trade off one facet of sovereignty to advance another.

Defined as authority, for instance, U.S. sovereignty is not at risk just because the United States has porous borders or is vulnerable to financial crises. But its sovereignty-as-influence is reduced in both scenarios, and reasserting that influence may require either sacrificing authority (to an outside global entity, for instance) or—far more likely—voluntarily ceding some policy autonomy within a bilateral, regional, or multilateral partnership that constrains its theoretical freedom of action for the benefits of international cooperation.

Similarly, the United States may sacrifice some sovereignty-as-autonomy in joining an international organization like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) or ratifying a multilateral treaty like the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The former obliges the U.S. government to accept certain international nuclear standards and to abide by the decisions of the organization's board of governors. The latter requires the United States, among other things, to forgo an entire class of weapons. But by joining such frameworks the United States is in fact reaffirming its sovereignty-as-authority, as well as enhancing its sovereignty-as-influence—in this case its capacity to restrain the spread of weapons of mass destruction, a goal that would be unattainable through purely unilateral action.¹⁹

The most heated debates over U.S. sovereignty today focus on alleged losses of authority. Sovereignty's defenders worry that the U.S. constitutional system of government, which derives its democratic legitimacy from the consent of the governed, is threatened by unaccountable international organizations, proliferating international treaties, and the rampant expansion of international law. Such concerns are overblown. Sovereignty bargains of this sort are rare for the United States, which remains very stingy about transferring real authorities to intergovernmental—much less “supranational”—bodies.

The U.S. decision to join an international body or to be bound by an international convention represents an *expression and exercise* of sovereignty, not its abdication, based on a self-interested calculation that it has more to gain than to lose by throwing its lot in with—and leveraging the contributions of—other like-minded sovereign states. Moreover, the United States always retains the right, if the situation requires, to renounce its membership in any international

organization or even to abrogate its treaty commitments.²⁰ The decision to “exit” may be a costly one, but it remains an ultimate option.

The much more typical trade-off is between autonomy and influence—that is, between independent decisionmaking and action, on the one hand, and enhanced problem solving within collective frameworks, on the other. The question boils down to this: What constraints on its notional range of policy options, both domestic and external, should the United States be prepared to accept in exchange for greater cooperation in exploiting the opportunities, mitigating the risks, and managing the shared dilemmas of globalization?

Although not quite as volatile as debates over sovereignty-as-authority, this question of U.S. freedom of action still generates controversy. Americans naturally resist international constraints on their policy options—an independent streak reinforced by the country’s power, geography, and historical identity. However, insisting on national autonomy can undermine America’s capacity to advance its objectives and shape its fate in a globalized world. This is obvious when it comes to managing problems that transcend borders, such as the consequences of climate change or the international spread of infectious diseases. In an age of transnational challenges, “effective” sovereignty increasingly implies coordinated responses with other independent states, often within international institutions. And the price of that enhanced problem solving is typically a willingness to cede some sovereignty-as-autonomy for sovereignty-as-influence.²¹

As the world becomes more interconnected, advancing U.S. national security, economic prosperity, and social welfare—and preserving the viability of planet Earth—will require innovative approaches to multilateral cooperation. Whether the United States is prepared to make this shift is unclear. Many of the voters who supported Donald Trump in November 2016 were skeptical of globalization, dubious of international cooperation, and sensitive to lost U.S. freedom of action.

Figuring out when and how to strike sovereignty bargains will be one of the biggest foreign policy challenges facing the United States in the twenty-first century. This is admittedly a different approach to U.S. sovereignty than the one advocated by America’s Founders, like Washington and Jefferson. They warned the young United States—at least as long as it remained a weak republic in a world of great powers—to steer clear of international commitments. Times have changed, however. The United States should continue to protect its constitutional system from unwarranted encroachments. But America’s ability to shape its fate—that is, to exercise sovereignty-as-influence—will more often require that it relax its insistence on sovereignty-as-autonomy.

Today the best measure of effective sovereignty is not the absence of foreign entanglements, but indeed the extensiveness of a country's links with the outside world. It is not about steering clear of international attachments, but about steering global forces and events in a positive direction. The model to emulate is no longer Greta Garbo, the actor who famously declared, "I want to be alone." It is Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, who had 93 million "followers" as of July 2017. In an ironic twist, the state's ability to make its influence felt as an independent political unit increasingly depends on the extent of its interdependence with other states.²²

A ROAD MAP FOR WHAT'S AHEAD

Chapter 2, "There's No Place Like Home: Sovereignty, American Style," introduces the idea of sovereignty and discusses how it has been conceived, expressed, and defended in the United States. It traces sovereignty's emergence as a principle of political order in the late Middle Ages and its consolidation, first in Europe and ultimately globally, as *the* fundamental rule of international relations. It highlights sovereignty's historical attributes, including international legal recognition, supreme political authority, freedom from external intervention, control over cross-border flows, and rule by the consent of the governed. The last of these features—also known as popular sovereignty—is the distinctive American contribution to the concept.

The chapter disputes the frequent contention that globalization has placed sovereignty "at bay" or "on the ropes." The sovereign state remains vital—in both senses of that word. It is fundamental, serving as the bedrock of international order. And it is vigorous, shaping and defining the terms of global integration. There is nothing on the horizon that can take its place as the ultimate source of legitimate political authority and practical capability. And there is no country better placed than the United States to defend its sovereign prerogatives.

Given this state of affairs, why are U.S. sovereignty debates so fraught, vigorous, and volatile? Why do Americans devote such energy to asserting, guarding, and defending their sovereign rights? American vigilance reflects five factors: political ideology, national identity, constitutional structure, geopolitical realities, and accelerating globalization. The first three of these influences date from the republic's founding, and their legacy endures today. The last two (taken up in chapter 3) reflect evolving external forces.

The ideological emphasis that Americans place on sovereignty's popular foundations helps explain U.S. touchiness. The United States was the first modern republic to base legitimate political authority on the consent of the governed, and the heart of the American constitutional order is the principle that the people rule. This legacy makes Americans inherently skeptical of political authority, and they are acutely sensitive to international organizations they perceive to be intruding on the supremacy of the U.S. Constitution and the nation's domestic policymaking processes.²³ They are determined to bring such bodies to heel by making them democratically accountable to American citizens.

Reinforcing this instinct is a pervasive public commitment to American exceptionalism. This is the conviction that the United States is a distinctive and superior political community, founded on unassailable principles and possessing a special global destiny. Americans regularly invoke this noble vocation to justify abstaining from global arrangements or constraints that bind other nations.

The U.S. Constitution, which divides power among three co-equal branches of government and reserves significant powers for the U.S. states, further complicates America's assumption of international obligations. Regardless of executive branch preferences, the separation of powers allows Congress to determine what international treaties get approved and what funds get appropriated for international purposes. The U.S. federal system can also place hurdles before U.S. international engagements by delegating many authorities to the fifty U.S. state governments. Collectively, these three factors help explain the long-standing U.S. discomfort with multilateral cooperation, global organizations, and international law.

Chapter 3, "Power and Interdependence: U.S. Sovereignty in the American Century," turns to the two remaining influences on U.S. conceptions of sovereignty, with a special focus on the past one hundred years. The first is the nation's evolving geopolitical position in relation to other global power centers. The second is globalization, which has buffeted the United States with transnational forces and integrated it into the wider world. Unlike the enduring, essentially static forces of ideology, culture, and institutions, power and interdependence are dynamic factors. Together, they have tempered some traditional American defensiveness with respect to sovereign authority and autonomy.

America's geopolitical position and exposure to globalization have changed profoundly since 1776. The once-tiny, vulnerable republic has become the

most powerful nation in history. Meanwhile, ongoing revolutions in technology, communications, transportation, and complex supply chains have deepened and broadened its integration into the world economy.

America's rise to globalism in the twentieth century tempered instinctive U.S. wariness toward international organizations and "entangling alliances." The United States sponsored the creation of the United Nations during World War II and, once the Cold War began, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the wider U.S. alliance system. The Roosevelt and Truman administrations worked with Congress to reconcile these new commitments with safeguards for American sovereignty, including constitutional authority and U.S. freedom of action. Still, the U.S. conversion to globalism remained ambivalent, selective, and conditional. The United States sponsored new multilateral institutions and shaped global rules, but it resisted encroachments on its Constitution and constraints on its autonomy.²⁴

The end of the Cold War left the United States as the world's only superpower and allowed the pace of globalization to accelerate—with ambiguous impacts on U.S. sovereignty. On the one hand, the scale of cross-border flows (both positive and negative) has increased incentives for sovereignty bargains, whereby the United States exchanges some maneuvering room for more effective efforts to reap the benefits and mitigate the downsides of interdependence. On the other hand, the massively powerful United States has often chafed at the restraints of institutionalized multilateral cooperation and preferred advancing its national interests unilaterally—or through flexible, ad hoc frameworks that protect its freedom of action. Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama addressed this convergence of U.S. power and global interdependence in different ways—reaping different benefits and incurring different costs in the process.

Chapters 4–8 examine how inherited U.S. concepts of sovereignty shape contemporary American attitudes toward international law, international security, international economics, international borders, and international organizations—and how recent trends are testing and transforming long-standing U.S. policies in each of these five arenas. Each chapter identifies the most serious American sovereignty concerns; addresses the range of potential trade-offs among U.S. authority, autonomy, and influence; and recommends new sovereignty bargains that will allow the United States to secure the gains of interdependence at acceptable cost.

Each chapter begins with a vignette about a recent political controversy, intended to animate what is at stake in quarrels over sovereignty, which otherwise can seem an abstract concept. These incidents illustrate just how pervasive

U.S. sovereignty debates have become—and how much they shape public and private attitudes about America’s role in the world.

Chapter 4, “Do as I Say, Not as I Do: American Sovereignty and International Law,” explores the ambiguous and fraught U.S. relationship with international law—grist for some of the most contentious U.S. sovereignty disputes.²⁵ At a rhetorical level, U.S. officials have always supported international law, recognizing America’s interest in a rule-bound world order. And yet actual U.S. attitudes and policies have been wary and defensive, thanks to U.S. power, American exceptionalism, and the constitutional separation of powers.

Since World War II, the United States has sought to shape international rules, while sometimes holding itself apart from legal obligations accepted by the vast majority of other states. Two prominent examples are the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. At the root of these controversies is whether international law can be made compatible with U.S. sovereignty-as-authority. Can the U.S. Constitution be reconciled with evolving international legal norms?

Conservative politicians, jurists, and scholars worry that the United States is becoming enmeshed in a thicket of legal obligations that infringe on American popular sovereignty, undermine Congress, and run roughshod over U.S. federalism.²⁶ They object to what they see as an ever-expanding definition of customary international law, the cross-border activism of left-wing U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) seeking to define international legal norms, a growing body of “transnational law” that lacks domestic provenance and thus legitimacy, an over-reliance on “self-executing” treaties, and the growing habit of U.S. courts to cite foreign law in their judicial decisions.

Chapter 4 finds these concerns excessive. The United States is at no risk of seeing its Constitution subordinated to international law, and U.S. leaders remain vigilant in ensuring that U.S. international legal commitments pass constitutional muster. The United States has multiple mechanisms to protect its sovereign legal authorities. These include placing reservations on its treaty ratification, declaring some treaties to be “non-self-executing,” and taking steps to slow the growth of customary international law.

The chapter underscores that the U.S. decision to sign and ratify a treaty is an *exercise* rather than an abdication of sovereign authority. What any treaty does, by design, is limit the autonomy of all parties, so that they can be confident in one another’s behavior and realize common aims. While each proposed multilateral treaty needs to be considered on its merits, too great an insistence on U.S. freedom of action would be counter to U.S. national interests.

Finally, the chapter finds overblown the claim that U.S. judges (including Supreme Court justices) undermine the integrity of U.S. constitutional law when they make modest references to foreign jurisprudence. Also, given existing safeguards, international law does not pose any significant threat to the U.S. separation of powers and federal system established under the U.S. Constitution. What international law *does* provide is an opportunity to enhance the dense latticework of international cooperation that has evolved, particularly since 1945, so that the United States can better manage the dilemmas of interdependence.

Chapter 5, “Don’t Fence Me In: The Use of Force, Arms Control, and U.S. National Security,” asks how the United States can reconcile its traditional desire for sovereign autonomy with the reality of global security interdependence. On the one hand, the United States has an obvious interest in cooperating with others to address terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and other transnational dangers, as well as in securing international legitimacy when it feels compelled to use force. On the other hand, as the world’s most powerful nation, with heavy responsibilities, it understandably seeks maximum room for maneuver, and often begrudges the requirements of collective security, particularly within the United Nations. Sovereignty considerations continue to shape U.S. security policy, including the UN Security Council’s authorization of military force, U.S. support for (and participation in) UN peace operations, and the U.S. posture toward arms control agreements.

The chapter notes the paradoxical U.S. position with respect to national sovereignty and rules governing the use of force. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has intervened militarily both with an explicit UN Security Council mandate (as in the Gulf War in 1991 and in Libya in 2011) and without one (as in Kosovo in 1999 and in Iraq in 2003). Meanwhile, it has been a leading exponent of the doctrine of “contingent sovereignty”—the notion that countries forfeit any presumption against external intervention when they support terrorism, pursue WMD, or commit (or fail to prevent) mass atrocities. The United States has also been a major proponent of UN peacekeeping, even as it resists placing U.S. soldiers under the direct command of foreign officers.

The U.S. stance toward arms control and nonproliferation efforts reveals similar ambivalence. As a practical matter, the United States has joined numerous international organizations and multilateral initiatives to combat the spread and use of WMD. Each framework obliges it to forgo certain options, reducing its notional range of maneuver, and some bodies include intrusive multilateral verification schemes to address cross-border threats. In rare

instances the United States has even traded a bit of sovereign authority in return for more effective cooperation. Despite these benefits, American “sovereignists” routinely complain that such arrangements unacceptably constrain U.S. freedom, infringe on U.S. legislative prerogatives, and even endanger U.S. constitutional liberties. Few of these broad critiques hold water. They also ignore a reality of the modern world: the spread of lethal technologies gives the United States a huge incentive to enter into reciprocal, consensual arrangements with other nations to jointly contain these emerging threats.

A similar logic applies when it comes to preserving stability in the global commons—including the oceans, outer space, and cyberspace—as these domains become more crowded, cutthroat, and conflictual.²⁷ In all three spheres the United States has a fundamental interest in negotiating new rules to preserve a stable, predictable, and regulated arena, even if these reduce its freedom of maneuver. Although the United States must always reserve the right to act alone to defend its national security, the pursuit of maximal autonomy would undercut cooperative efforts to achieve objectives that the nation cannot achieve on its own.

The United States will need to strike similar sovereignty bargains to reap the benefits and mitigate the downsides of global interdependence. In recent years, both conservatives and progressives alike have complained that the United States has sacrificed its sovereignty to the dictates of the international economy. This is the topic of chapter 6, “Stop the World, I Want to Get Off: Globalization and American Sovereignty.” It addresses the contemporary U.S. backlash against global integration and the vocal insistence, so prominent in the 2016 presidential campaign, that the United States must reassert sovereign control over its economy.

Since 1945 the United States has been the world’s leading champion of an open, nondiscriminatory system of international trade and payments, governed by multilateral rules and institutions. The economic gains have been impressive, if unevenly shared. At the same time, the quickening pace and swelling quantity of international transactions—including flows of ideas, information, goods, services, money, and people—is straining the capacity of all states to manage their own domestic economies, cushion themselves from volatility, and deliver on social goals. These trends help explain the populist backlash against globalization in the United States and many other countries.

The contemporary crisis reflects in part the collapse of a previous sovereignty bargain that was at the heart of the post–World War II global economic system. The major institutions created to govern the postwar economy—including the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the General Agreement

on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)—were intended to reconcile a broad commitment to openness with sovereign flexibility for governments to mediate the pace and terms of their countries' integration into the new system so that they could pursue social welfare goals such as full employment. Over time, however, this compromise broke down. The forces of capital were liberated, and governments—including in the United States—either abandoned or found it harder to uphold their end of the domestic bargain.

In the mid-1990s the United States doubled down on globalization, promoting the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, as well as the World Trade Organization (WTO) to succeed the GATT. Significantly, both arrangements included legal provisions that both limited U.S. sovereign autonomy and impinged (albeit modestly) on U.S. sovereign authorities, most notably in binding dispute settlement mechanisms.

Chapter 6 recommends that the United States restore balance between global economic integration and its own national economic and social welfare needs by making greater use of the sovereign autonomy it retains to pursue those domestic objectives. This is not a counsel of autarky. Rather, the United States should negotiate new multilateral bargains with major trading partners that offer nations greater protections against an unregulated global market and help American workers and firms adjust to international competition. The United States should also collaborate with like-minded governments to strengthen mechanisms of global economic governance so that these are capable of withstanding sudden shocks, building on the initial steps that the international community took in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2007–08.

Recent American anxieties about globalization have merged with fear that the United States has lost control of its borders, permitting the entry of illegal immigrants that not only displace U.S. workers but also endanger the safety of American citizens. This is the subject of chapter 7, “Good Fences Make Good Neighbors: Immigration and Border Security.” In 2016 Donald Trump successfully exploited these concerns in his quest for the presidency. He promised to build a “great wall” along the southern U.S. border, to round up and deport 11 million undocumented individuals, and to bar, at least temporarily, Muslims from entering the United States. Such “solutions” were simplistic, unrealistic, and coldhearted, but they resonated with a visceral public understanding of a core dimension of sovereignty—namely, the state’s ability to control its borders, including to regulate who enters and is allowed to stay in the country.

Chapter 7 argues that the vision of complete U.S. border control has always been a mirage—and that making headway on illegal immigration and

other cross-border threats will require more rather than fewer sovereignty bargains with other countries, not least with Mexico. Improving border security will also depend on crafting tailored approaches to the very distinct challenges posed by illegal immigration, narcotics trafficking, and transnational terrorism, which have too often been conflated in American political discourse and the public imagination. Finally, a sustainable U.S. policy toward immigration—legal as well as illegal—will require a more honest public conversation about the societal dimensions of U.S. sovereignty, including how best to assimilate new arrivals and encourage social cohesion within a single, increasingly diverse nation.

The trade-offs between traditional conceptions of U.S. sovereignty and the growing need for multilateral cooperation are nowhere more obvious than in international organizations. A century after Lodge and Lowell squared off in the Boston Symphony Hall, the terms of U.S. membership in global bodies continue to roil U.S. domestic politics. These debates are the subject of chapter 8, “Don’t Tread on Me: The United States and International Organizations.”

American resistance to the constraints of multilateral bodies is ironic, of course, since the United States more than any other country is responsible for their proliferation. And yet from the earliest postwar years, many Americans—particularly conservatives—have vociferously opposed any perceived infringements that international organizations might place on the nation’s sovereign authorities and autonomy.

Ground zero for these debates has been the sprawling UN system, which critics depict as a threat to U.S. democratic sovereignty and freedom of action. In their dystopian scenario, the world could well become a giant version of the European Union. Such a fevered critique overlooks the profound differences between U.S. participation in intergovernmental bodies like the United Nations and membership in a supranational organization like the EU. It also ignores how tarnished the EU has become as a model for economic and political integration.

More generally, sovereigntist warnings about the UN disregard just how little independent power that body actually wields and how modest are the resources at its disposal. By the same token, such alarums fail to explain how the United States could possibly achieve many international objectives purely through its own efforts. Rather than constraining U.S. policy options, international organizations often *expand* them, by allowing the United States to share burdens with others as well as to gain legitimacy for its purposes.

That said, the UN and other international organizations do raise inherent dilemmas for U.S. sovereignty, particularly with regard to democratic

accountability. Multilateral organizations require members to delegate some authority to their secretariats and to accept collective decisionmaking within intergovernmental boards created to supervise them. The first of these challenges, “delegation,” makes it hard to ensure that the UN (or any other organization) fulfills its mandate rather than pursuing an independent agenda. The second, known as “pooling,” means that U.S. influence over any organization may well be diluted by other member states.

These are real and persistent challenges. International organizations can and sometimes do take on a life of their own, doing things at odds with their initial purposes (not to mention U.S. interests) and with little opportunity for American citizens to seek redress through processes of representative democracy. Such risks are manageable, however. The chapter identifies several strategies and tactics that the United States can adopt to limit or rein in dysfunctional behavior by international organizations and reduce some of the democratic deficit that afflicts them. These include insisting on transparency and information sharing, promoting vigilance by independent watchdogs, and requiring “sunset” provisions to phase out initiatives or agencies that cease to be relevant. There is, lastly, the ultimate option of renouncing U.S. membership. As long as this remains a credible threat, the United States can be said to have preserved its sovereign authority.

Reconciling international organizations with the principle of national sovereignty is a very different goal than world government, an objective that one still sometimes hears on the left-wing, utopian fringe. For centuries, dreamers have envisioned that humanity might one day put aside its divisions and embrace a planetary political system in the form of a world government, or even a global state. This is an awful idea, on many grounds. Rather than striving for some misguided cosmopolitan paradise, the United States must work to rejuvenate international cooperation within the sovereign state system.

Building on the previous chapters, chapter 9, “Conclusion: American Sovereignty and International Cooperation,” argues that there is both less and more at stake in the sovereignty debate than is conventionally asserted. Contrary to the arguments of many sovereigntists, the United States faces few threats to its sovereignty-as-authority—or the supremacy of the U.S. Constitution and the popular sovereignty that it embodies. What the United States does and will be more likely to confront is a trade-off between sovereignty-as-autonomy and sovereignty-as-influence. As global power diffuses, economic integration deepens, and cross-border challenges proliferate, the imperative for multilateral cooperation will expand and the scope for U.S. freedom of action will shrink. To promote acceptable international outcomes and to shape its des-

tiny in a global age, the United States will at times need—paradoxically—to accept voluntary constraints on its room for maneuver. Clinging to sovereign autonomy will be both difficult to sustain and detrimental to U.S. interests.

The good news is that multilateral cooperation comes in various forms, and the United States will often be able to rely on more flexible, informal frameworks, as opposed to standing and often rigid international organizations. Such *à la carte* multilateralism has a lot going for it, allowing the United States to create ad hoc coalitions of the interested, capable, and like-minded in ways that allow it to protect its sovereignty-as-authority and maximize its sovereignty-as-autonomy, while still delivering on its sovereignty-as-influence. Still, it would be a mistake to believe that such flexible minilateralism can entirely replace standing international organizations, or that nonbinding arrangements carry the same weight as commitments grounded in international law. The key for the United States is to harmonize its reliance on flexible frameworks with the international organizations and treaties upon whose resources, expertise, and legitimacy it will rely over the long haul.