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## Book Review: Stephen David Krasner “Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy” 1999, Princeton University Press

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### Book Summary

This is a book review of *Sovereignty; Organized Hypocrisy* authored by Stephen David Krasner. This book review seeks to analyze the man, message, meaning, and method adopted by the author in the book in arriving at the catchy title *organized hypocrisy*. First the man, Stephen David Krasner is the Graham H. Stuart Professor of International Relations and a Senior Fellow in the Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. Stephen was born in 1942, became an academic and a practicing diplomat in the United States<sup>1</sup>. He is the author of *Defending the National Interest: Raw Material Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton) and *Structural Conflict: The Third World Against Global Liberalism* and is the editor of *International Regimes*<sup>2</sup>. He was the Director of Policy Planning in the State Department nominated the former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. He has been regarded as a realist whose contribution has travelled along way the international relations landscape introducing concepts such as punctuated equilibrium, regime theory, hegemonic stability theory and critical juncture theory<sup>3</sup>. Robert Keohane, one of his contemporaries, considers him as the subversive *realist* an *institutional theorist* and *constructivist* who show that these three ideas are not mutually exclusive<sup>4</sup>. To this end, international

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<sup>1</sup> Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs. "Krasner, Stephen". 2001-2009.state.gov.

<sup>2</sup> See back page

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin J. Cohen “International Political Economy : An Intellectual History”

<sup>4</sup> (Keohane 2013)

relations scholars and enthusiasts would find it extremely difficult to ignore the ideas put forward in the book.

### **The Message**

Second, the message of sovereignty is contained in eight chapters running from page 3-238 of exiting discourse that should be read out, internalized, and analyzed by all the international relations students at all academic levels. Chapter one<sup>5</sup> is perhaps one of the most interesting chapters as it discusses the idea of sovereignty and its discontent. Chapter two<sup>6</sup> discusses the theories of institutions in the context of international politics pitting together the debates between realist, liberalist and all their contemporary discourses. The idea of sovereignty is considered alongside minority rights and human rights where the book considers the idea of the ruler and the ruled<sup>7</sup>. In terms of international political economy, the issue of lending and borrowing has attracted the attention in the book by considering sovereign debt and the challenges that it poses especially for developing countries<sup>8</sup>. Chapter six and seven consider the debates on constitutional structures of states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and after 1945. For the chess enthusiast, the book concludes with an interesting discussion with the imagery of the game of chess, summarizing the debates raised in the chapters of the book.

### **The Meaning**

Third, the book brings out very curious ideas on the meaning sovereignty which is to be understood as being grouped into (1) domestic<sup>9</sup>, (2) interdependence<sup>10</sup>, (3) international legal<sup>11</sup> and Westphalian sovereignty<sup>12</sup> and how it has been practiced (pg.5). The focus is largely on the last two which are more prominent in the rest of the book. The central argument

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<sup>5</sup> Page 3-42

<sup>6</sup> Page 43-72

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 3 and 4

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 5

<sup>9</sup> Relates to the public authority within a state and ability of the State to have control over its territory.

<sup>10</sup> This refers to the ability of states to control the movement across its borders

<sup>11</sup> Here the idea of recognition by other nation states within the international society.

<sup>12</sup> Where there is exclusion of external actors from entering into domestic authority.

made in the book is found in the sociologist James March and Johan Olsen<sup>13</sup> idea that in the international system, the logic of consequences is dominated by the logic of appropriateness. In other words, states do what is appropriate regardless of the consequences and that they are not as sovereign as they ought to be. The assumption made is that first, the ruler is the head of state, and they are the decision makers within the state<sup>14</sup>(pg.7). Second, the ruler wants to stay in power with the aim of promoting security, prosperity, and values of their constituent. With this in mind, the book argues that the ruler (the main actor), is driven by local factors more than the international system.

The ruler may by invitation or intervention allow the idea of sovereignty to be easily compromised. Allowing external actors (institutional or otherwise) makes it easy for rulers to make choices that allow multiple norms that in some instances does not allow maximization of the utility of the state. To this end, the ruler ends up making decisions that have consequences within the international system, but are driven by calculated material and ideational interest, not to be taken for granted by some overarching structure which is what is referred to as organized hypocrisy. In other words, some rulers will be whipped into a position by the international system without knowing the consequence of what happens locally (as hoped in the Westphalia sovereignty).

Some of the discontents of sovereignty are based on several compromises that leaders enter into including contracts, convention, coercion, and imposition. Although a ruler is bound by conventions in the international law, they may enter into contracts by way of coercion or imposition. This makes it a quagmire for the ruler to assert sovereignty based on the contingent factors such as actions by previous rulers that bound the states.

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<sup>13</sup> March, James G.; Olsen, Johan P. (2011). "The Logic of Appropriateness". In Goodin, Robert E. (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford University Press. March, James G.; Olsen, Johan P. (1996). "Institutional Perspectives on Political Institutions". *Governance*. 9 (3): 247–264. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0491.1996.tb00242.x. ISSN 1468-0491.

<sup>14</sup> This is one of the arguments that would not sit well with the Liberalist

The book then adopts a constructivist angle to consider the idea of minority and human rights as occupying a critical role in the international financial institutions. The debate on minority rights has been aptly demonstrated in age of international financial institutions. The idea is that political leaders have not always honored international egal sovereignty as they should and have treated violation to it in a cavalier manner as such not exploiting its potential.

### **The Method**

The method deployed in arriving at these finding is equally fascinating. Since Krasner focuses on the Westphalia sovereignty, he deploys a creative and convincing historical approach to the Ottoman empires and how they were extinguished. The book navigates the lackluster approach adopted by international relations scholars with historical clarity and precision to account for the need to live the ideals of Westphalia<sup>15</sup>. Second, the book exploits an excellent combination of theoretical and practical approach toward sovereignty while adopting empirical data through case studies. Here the author considers instances where states are coerced into accepting intervention while they ought to be sovereign. Third, thematic approach to sovereignty has been explored to a great extent focusing on the ruler which appears to be a Hobbesian approach to power. The idea of Westphalia came before Hobbes and Locke but as correctly pointed out by Krasner, most forget that the 1648 treaty related to the end of the Roman Empire and was a new constitution for the Catholic Church<sup>16</sup>. This thematic approach points to the idea that rulers play a critical part in the formulation of practice of sovereignty. Although in the Hobbesian state of nature power is with an absolute monarch<sup>17</sup>, the relationship between the ruler and ruled according to Krasner is one of collegiality and compromise where the ruler does what the ruled aspires (benevolent dictator).

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<sup>15</sup> (Joffe 1999)

<sup>16</sup> (Krasner, *Sovereignty* 2001)

<sup>17</sup> (Hobbes 1588-1679)

Fourth, the theoretical and practical methodological approach gives prominence to the discussion on logic of consequences (theory) which explains why leaders act as they do (sovereignty in practice). This gives a challenge to the dominant theory on logic of consequences that focuses mainly on identities, roles, and norms as the main shapers of foreign policy behavior. Instead, Krasner contends that power and interest in international relations explain the appropriateness of actions taken by states (practice) as opposed to the norms and institutions of international system (culture and tradition) as the main influencer to behavior (theory). In other words, he argues that the practice of international relations cannot be explained only by considering norms and institutions.

### **Critical Appraisal**

Although the book is well written and congruently organized, there are some areas that can be challenged successfully. First, the book places premium on the individual actor (ruler) and gives prominence to their role without considering that rulers may vary in different context, personality, predilections, and predisposition. In other words, there may be instances where different variables influence the leaders view of sovereignty based on context or personality. There are different frames for analyzing the ruler as an actor including the rational actor model, bureaucratic model, and actor-specific model<sup>18</sup>. Although this is not what the book set out to do, it would offer better and deeper analytical frameworks as opposed to sweeping commitments to a general view of rulers.

Second, there is an abundance of evidence that the author is a realist presenting himself as a neorealist. The consistent reference to interest and power are the hallmark or realist. Although he uses constructivist frames when considering the minority rights and human rights perspective, there end result is that the state has not maximized sovereignty (power). The organizing principle under the realist frames is power<sup>19</sup>. The book falls in the

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<sup>18</sup> Valerie M. Hudson "Foreign Policy Analysis: Actor-Specific Theory and the Ground of International Relations" Foreign Policy Analysis (2005) 1, 1 – 30

<sup>19</sup> (Waltz, Man State and War 1959 ) (Keohane 2013) (Waltz, Theory of International Politics 1979)

trap most realist fall into by placing the individual at the center of all activities of state and in his case sovereignty. This view ignores that there are other approaches to reality including institutions help frame the conversation of the individual and cooperation is the currency of liberalist. Although the book was written about 20 years ago, the idea of power then as it is now not necessarily domiciled in the ruler only. Since sovereignty is a social construct as admitted by Krasner, each individual ruler adopts one style or the other not merely based on the coercive powers that exist in the international system.

Third, the book fails to consider the difference between certain concepts which would have enriched the discourse more. These include influence and authority where the later focuses on the rights, obligations and status of States which creates the norms for sovereignty and the former is more on leadership<sup>20</sup>. It must be pointed out that sovereignty is not absolute and is often circumscribed by political expediency and the exercise of power is not particularly enlightening<sup>21</sup>. For one to be sovereign they would be willing to accept certain constraints otherwise they would not be sovereign. The constraints are viewed by Krasner as being a violation of the Westphalian model of sovereignty. The fact that states are autonomous does not indeed mean that when the act in a particular way they are violating the idea of sovereignty. This challenge arises because of the lack of distinction between authority and autonomy that is dominated in the book.

Another area that is undeveloped is the term organized hypocrisy. Although these are very attractive attributes of international relations discourse for realist, they are not given prominent attention. For instance, the organizing principle in the international system is anarchy<sup>22</sup>, which would explain the word organized. While hypocrisy would explain the reason why the international system positively discriminated.

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<sup>20</sup> (Kingsbury 2000) (Oros 2000)

<sup>21</sup> (Goldsmith 2000)

<sup>22</sup> (Waltz, Man State and War 1959 )

Fourth, as correctly pointed out the sovereignty project is a continuous one that ought to be tested in as many domains of knowledge as possible. These include the area of recognition which is one of the building blocks of sovereignty. Recognition is however not an automatic indicator of sovereignty as it could exist without governance or autonomy and the converse governance without recognition and autonomy<sup>23</sup>. Krasner argues that the idea of sovereignty is not going to be influenced/affected by globalization and those who hold such view take lightly the idea of an autonomous State<sup>24</sup>. The idea here is that contending with the idea of sovereignty is not flogging a dead horse especially because it cannot be ignored nor is it the final authority on all matters to do with statehood. However, globalization is admittedly changing the control of sovereignty which is a nightmare for the realist adherent who insist on domains such as power and interests, a problem that Krasner’s thought cannot surmount.

### **Conclusion**

The discussions that Krasner introduced in the field of international relations continue to dominate the study of international relations to date. Although sovereignty was a major subject for discussion in the nineteenth century, Krasner judiciously delineates four meanings of the term sovereignty as has been employed in the international relations and law literatures. The discourse in the book does not conclude the debate on sovereignty however, it contributes to the discourse of international relations.

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<sup>23</sup> (Krasner 2013)

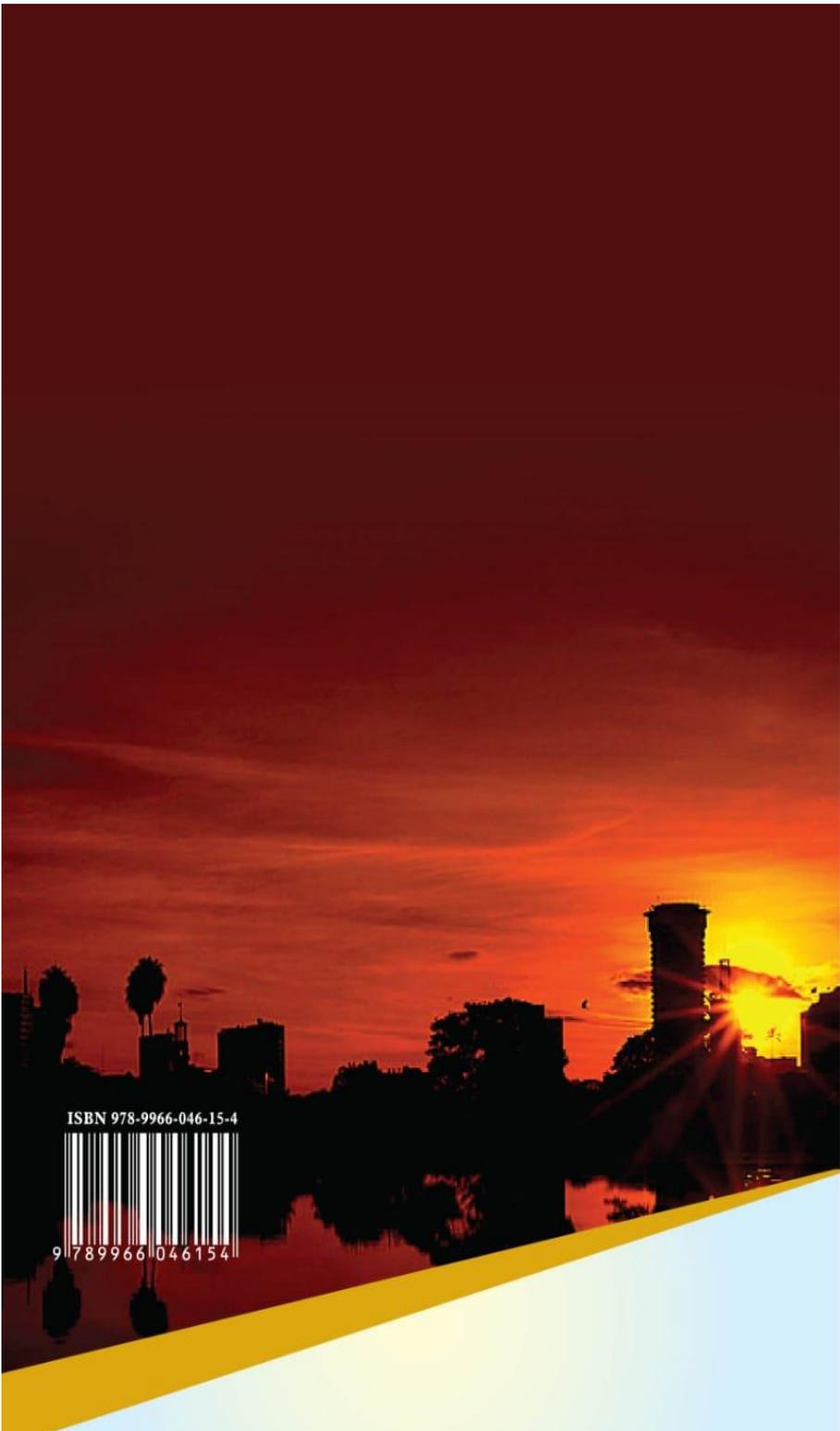
<sup>24</sup> (Krasner, Sovereignty 2001)

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