

notion of sovereignty that the author narrates in her compelling work differs from that of sixteenth-century Western thinkers such as Hobbes and Bodin. For those thinkers, if sovereignty was to be achieved, it was based on protecting the state against outsiders. But, Saksena takes a more nuanced approach by projecting sovereignty during the British Raj as a discourse for deciding the legal status of the princely states in India, and she further discusses how the question of sovereignty arose in the colonial period and contributed to the formation of the modern Indian state. With significant intellectual influence from the works of Lauren Benton and Rande Kostal, the author aptly unfolds the twisted identities of the princely states through the lens of sovereignty.

After briefly presenting an overview, Chapter 2 is an analysis that tries to locate the applicability of sovereignty as an ambivalent concept in the unequal relationship that existed between the British and the princely states. In this encounter, British paramountcy was upheld by using international law as an imperial tool favouring the interests of the British East India Company. The discussion from Chapter 3 highlights the structural changes made by the British after the 1857 Mutiny, which ended the rule of their East India Company by consolidating British central power over India as a direct subject of the Crown. Saksena gives an interesting account of the issues of sovereignty that pervaded the troubled relations between the British and princely states. The main one was Henry Maine's depiction of sovereignty as "a divisible" and as a question of fact, which attracted the British authorities in India to establish their rule by claiming that princely states were under the orbit of British rule in India. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the usage of sovereignty as a double-edged sword in the interwar years, where the British used sovereignty as a legal basis to intervene in the internal affairs of the princely states. In return, the princely states also sought to redefine sovereignty as a divisible concept, which enabled them to acquire a quasi-international status.


The centralized notion of territorial sovereignty that emerged in the advent of decolonization in South Asia is well discussed by Saksena in Chapter 6. For instance, the author shows how the State of Hyderabad disappeared from the political landscape of South Asia with the articulation of territorial sovereignty as the paramount factor. The author should be complimented for undertaking a complex and challenging field of research. It is my sincere hope that this book will spur further debate in the scholarship.

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## Conceptual (Re)Constructions of International Law

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This edited book presents a compilation of inquisitorial conversations involving international lawyers, scholars, and practitioners. Within these exchanges, the authors

undertake to engage in constructing, deconstructing, and subsequently, reconstructing international law at a conceptual level. Furthermore, the book examines interactions between international law and diverse actors influencing its architectural evolution. The book's structure is tripartite, dedicating each section to distinct focal points of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction within international legal theory.

The first part of the book includes contributions from David Lefkowitz, Andreas Hadjigeorgiou, and Jörg Kammerhofer, who attempt to theorise the foundational construct of international law. The section opens with Kammerhofer's exposition of Kelsen's pure theory of law, demonstrating the logical convergence of doctrine and theory (interpretation) in international law. Hadjigeorgiou's chapter revives the forgotten legacy of the "Oxford Jurisprudence Circle" through historical analysis, advocating for a common conceptual framework (custom) that links domestic and international legal systems. While acknowledging the novel efforts, David Lefkowitz notes that international law's adequacy might be questioned if it fails to meet practical standards of justice, legitimacy, and governance within the rule of law.

Antony Carty takes the lead in the deconstruction process, exemplifying his critique of customary international law and providing an organic alternative to transition from "decay" to "renewal". Meanwhile, Maiko Meguro argues for a deductive process in rationalizing the construct of "*what is international law?*". She raises concerns about Westernization and urges researchers from the Global South to embrace empiricism and multiperspectivism when exploring the alternate narratives of the discipline. With reference to translation studies, she underlines the quandary of legal transplantation, indicating potential conflicts due to differing perceptions of law, society, and ideology. Tamar Megiddo concurs with Meguro's call for diversity in empirical research strategies, noting that law is always rooted in social-cultural contexts and that this includes international law. Furthermore, Megiddo touches on the concept of "vernacularization", emphasizing how local agents engage with international legal concepts, translating them into domestic contexts to mobilize advocacy efforts. Consequently, the evolution of international law emerges not solely as a consequence of unilateral top-down transplantation but as a symbiotic discourse between local practices and universal norms.

The third section on reconstruction presents several distinct propositions aimed at reimagining the concepts of international law. For instance, Aaron Fichtelberg directs the readers' attention towards methodologies and foundations in international law, along with the role of sovereignty in facilitating legal discourse. In Kostiantyn Gorobets' chapter, he conducts a jurisprudential investigation into the concept of authority in international law. On the other hand, Tamar Megiddo advocates for a reorientation that recentres individuals within the discourse of international law through his concept of "constructivist methodological individualism" and examines the compliance pull for individuals. Lastly, Panos Merkouris attempts to locate the "correct interpretation" within international law.

This book offers an insightful reflection for international law scholars and practitioners alike. The authors' conversational template provides a unique opportunity for readers to engage, internalize, and reflect on some of the foundational questions pertaining to international law.

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