



## Can a Nation Exist Without Sovereignty?

In the very first sentence of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson invoked the need for Americans to “dissolve the political bands which have connected them” with Great Britain and to “assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of Nature and Nature’s God entitle them.” In other words, by declaring independence, America was also asserting her sovereignty, although Jefferson did not use that term.



The notion of sovereignty traditionally implied a sovereign personage — a monarch by any other name — in which the ultimate authority of the state was believed to reside. According to this theory, a monarch is a necessary single repository for that ultimate authority. The major theoretical justification for the maintenance of the British monarchy is so that there can be a single personage in which the sovereign authority of the government of Great Britain (as well as of the governments of all those countries, such as Canada and Australia, which belong to the Commonwealth of Nations) can be placed.

Under a monarchical system, however, the sovereignty of a prince or even a king may be limited by some higher monarchical authority, such as an emperor (often styled a king of kings). It was a common practice over the ages for lesser monarchs and oligarchic authorities to pay tribute to higher and more powerful authorities. Thus, for example, the two “king” Herods of the New Testament were actually tetrarchs who exercised monarchic authority over Judea — but remained subordinate to Rome. During the peak of British power in India, many princely states remained nominally independent of the British Raj — but still paid tribute or made other significant concessions to the British in exchange for partial sovereignty.

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The sovereignty alluded to by Jefferson is of an altogether more robust sort, and is not contingent on the whim of any foreign power, monarchical or otherwise. This modern notion of sovereignty is usually traced to the Peace of Westphalia, the treaty that ended the Thirty Years’ War, Europe’s last great religious war. So long and devastating was that war, which included most of the powers of continental Europe in a no-holds-barred tilt between Catholic and Protestant powers, that the exhausted powers of Europe were forced to reconsider what it meant to be a nation at all. The reluctant conclusion was that, in recognition of irreconcilable differences between Catholic and Protestant forces, and in acknowledgement of the fact that these two great religious forces were likely to endure, each side



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needed to accept the other's right to govern themselves as they saw fit. This meant that, in theory at least, interference by one nation in another's internal affairs as a result of ideological or dogmatic differences was no longer to be countenanced; every independent nation, no matter how large or small, was to be regarded as an equal in the conduct of its internal affairs and its diplomacy. As a result, Catholic and Protestant states, as well as monarchies alongside republics, all were equivalent entities under the so-called law of nations. Pioneering theorists of the law of nations, such as Grotius, Pufendorf, Wolf, and Vattel, all helped to cement this notion of absolute sovereignty as legal doctrine.

According to Jefferson's Declaration, the same "laws of Nature and Nature's God" that give rise to unalienable rights such as life and liberty also confer upon a people the right to assert their sovereignty and remove themselves from the sovereignty of another, if they have sufficient cause for so doing. For the American Founders, sovereignty resided not in the person of some monarch, but in the people themselves. Aspects of such popular sovereignty could be delegated to a government, but could always be reclaimed by the people if their government chose to abuse it — or refused to fully vindicate it.

In our day, sovereignty is routinely ignored and derided by political and media elites. For example, the alleged need for free trade is frequently invoked to criticize any exercise of economic sovereignty such as tariffs and import controls. Yet if national sovereignty is truly inviolate, any independent nation should have the absolute authority to set its own trade policies, however ill-considered they might seem to other countries. Nevertheless, the United States, thanks to the untiring efforts of these same elites, now finds itself subordinate to a number of international trade authorities, including NAFTA and the WTO, that have been granted ascendancy over aspects of domestic law.

Another area in which a sovereign nation enjoys absolute independence is in its military policy. A truly independent, fully sovereign United States of America would have unfettered authority over its own military, both as to the types of weapons it chooses to deploy, and over the decision to resort to war. Yet America today is hamstrung by dozens of treaties restricting the type and number of certain weapons it may possess, and requiring it to come to the defense of nations to which it is bound by treaty — nations in far-flung areas of the world such as Estonia and South Korea. In other words, we no longer enjoy total sovereignty over our military destiny. We have also lost control over our own borders, as the ongoing flood of illegal immigrants attests. No sovereign nation can long exist without border control.

And we are even losing control of our ability to make such laws as we please, thanks in large measure to our decades-long membership in that most pernicious of globalist institutions, the United Nations, as well as related entities such as the aforementioned WTO. The UN was founded as a platform on which to erect a true world government that would put an end to national sovereignty, and our continued membership in it is an affront to the Founders and to the sacrifices they made to secure our independence and sovereignty in the first place.

Popular sovereignty is the very basis of our entire system of government. Without it, we would still be subordinate, to some degree, to Great Britain, as is the case with Canada. To remain free, we must maintain our sovereignty and independence, especially from the UN-centered system designed to take them from us.

— Charles Scaliger



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