

Abstract

This thesis studies the variation of sovereignty in the international order by analysing how the general model of sovereignty is localised in the political practice of two major non-Western rising powers – China and India. I argue that their sovereignty should be understood as liquid despite the fact that these two countries are very often seen as strong defenders of ‘conservative’, ‘absolutist’ or ‘Westphalian’ sovereignty. The empirical core of the thesis investigates China’s approach to sovereignty in relation to Hong Kong and Taiwan and India’s approach to sovereignty in relation to Bhutan and Kashmir.

Based on theoretical eclecticism and pluralism, I develop a theoretical and analytical framework that accounts for constitution (construction) of the sovereignty of China and India but that also have potential for being applied more broadly. It is calibrated to elucidate that sovereignty is a liquid and fluid phenomenon. It is based on the debate between Hans Kelsen and Carl Schmitt and analytically enhanced by including the perspective of scaling (derived from Human Geography) and temporal positioning (inspired by International Relations debates on the role of time).

I propose three key arguments. First, I show that each of the analysed states simultaneously pursues two different modes of sovereignty. Second, I document how easily sovereignty may incorporate various heteronomous logics, elements or practices and coexist with them. Third, I argue that we should move beyond the *clear-cut* inside/outside distinction because, as documented, sovereignty often operates without a neatly defined dividing line between the domestic and the international.