

processes creates an effective organization and contributes to accountability and transparency. Although the author does not explicitly deal with sustainability issues in her work, she places her institutionalization analyses in a sustainability-related context and reflects on the associated need for further research and practical development. Strong institutions is a sustainability goal unanimously adopted by the international community in the United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights as a General Assembly resolution (UN/A/Res/70/1) in 2015, with Sustainable Development Goal 16, which calls for peace, justice, and strong institutions, and provides for the development of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, as such institutionalization is significant in order to create distributive justice for data regulation and trade.

In this study, the European internal efforts to institutionalize data transfer and governance regimes are first analyzed under European law. Building on this, Fahey explores the European Union as a significant global digital player and data sovereign as it has extensive geopolitical data regulation ambitions in the area of value creation and procedures. The focus of the European external institutionalization dimension is then developed with an analysis of this area in the United States of America, Japan, and China. The study includes cross-regional and cross-thematic process-oriented top-down and bottom-up analyses of the complex link between institutionalization and global governance, best practice, and high standards regulations as well as the activities and autonomy of non-state actors. It then focuses on the topics of data protection and data transfer within digital commerce in relation to both personal and non-personal data, internet regulation (Internet of Things) and internet security, data localization, extraterritoriality, and law enforcement. In view of the criticism of international institutions and general institutionalization, this monograph can provide an impetus for further conceptual research on emerging topics. The results presented were funded by the EU Trade and Investment Policy Horizon 2020 Research Network and the Erasmus + Jean Monnet Chair in Law and Transatlantic Relations held by Elaine Fahey. Her research has been conducted at the European University Institute (EUI), Florence, icourts Copenhagen, and Keio University, Tokyo. The book is aimed at both legal practitioners and academics conducting research in the fields of information technology and data law with the forward-looking topics addressed gaining relevance in international, supranational, and national governance and legal systems.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

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Sovereignty, International Law, and the Princely States of Colonial South Asia

by Priyasha SAKSENA. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. xviii + 272 pp. Hardcover: £90.00; eBook. doi: [10.1093/oso/97801928665850010001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/97801928665850010001)

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This book accelerates an intellectual discourse towards reimagining the perceived concept of sovereignty through the lens of the intricate relationship of the South Asian princely states with and within the British Empire (the East India Company (Company)), the Crown, and the British Indian Government. This with-and-within narrative, I understand, unfolds into a compelling tale, elucidating how the concept of sovereignty has found itself disputed when understanding the legal status of princely states in the colonial as well as the post-colonial setup. The inherent ambiguity of the impact of paramountcy on princely states' sovereignty, Saksena argues, created a space for legal argumentation wherein international law was used as a tool to interfere in state affairs. Additionally, the right of *diwani* accorded to the Company through treaties with princely states ultimately aided the establishment of British sovereignty over South Asia. Paradoxically, such actions also augmented the Company's interference in princely states' affairs.

Saksena underscores the loosely crafted concepts of international law which help produce "unequal treaties" (p. 27) and a resident figure in the princely states, aligning with the general Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) argument that international law acted merely as an instrument to impose Euro-centric principles on non-European, uncivilized population. Chapter 2 discusses the controversy around the extradition of British subjects to princely states, as exemplified through events in Pudukkottai and Hyderabad. Saksena also highlights how the paramountcy doctrine was kept ambiguous, eventually exacerbated by exploiting the language of international law and exemplified by introducing other intervening policies such as the doctrine of lapse, allowing the company to annex more states.

In evaluating the late nineteenth-century scholarly works, Saksena draws attention towards a shift from the Christian-natured international law to a civilized-uncivilized dichotomy. This highlights the attempt to apply international law to the uncivilized non-European contexts to increase colonial control, thereby resorting to a parochial lexicon for international law. The overarching argument remained that sovereignty was a malleable concept, concurrently avowing that princely states could be equated with either the British government or British India. Exemplifying the cases of Travancore and Baroda, however, also cements the argument for divisible sovereignty that retained colonial control despite reiterating the princely states' sovereignty. What follows is an evaluation of sovereignty debates in the interwar period wherein the equal footing of princely states with the British Crown was ruled out, and discussions within the Indian States Committee that yielded only higher interference by the British Government in the state affairs.

Subsequently, in Chapter 6, the focus is on 1930s federation debates with princely states striving to safeguard their individual interests. The idea of federation, however, proved untenable in the decolonization era marked by the partition plan engendering India and Pakistan alongside the accession of princely states to either of the unions with the exceptions of some states that were annexed (Hyderabad, Junagadh) and contested to date (Kashmir). Despite its striking relevance to the sovereignty debates, Kashmir remained largely absent in the chapters. This book, nonetheless, strikes a balance between concluding a debate on sovereignty as understood through the lens of colonized princely states and generating another discourse on the persistent ambiguity of this concept in the post-colonial context.

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