

## The Nation-State as the Order of the United States: Westphalia, Regimes of Truth, and Global Power Post-1945

Arthuur Jeverson Maya\*, Adrianus Lengu Wene

Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Indonesia

Email: arthuurjeversonmaya@yahoo.com\*

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the nation-state not as a neutral political entity or the natural evolution of modernity, but as a historical construct engineered and stabilized through post-World War II global power relations. Using a genealogical approach, this article argues that the Westphalia system did not remain a legacy of 17th-century Europe but was reformulated and operated by the United States as a global order that produced a regime of truth about sovereignty, legitimacy, and political acceptance. Through the institutionalization of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods system, NATO, and a network of international legal, economic, and security standards, contemporary nation-states are conditioned to function as operators in transnational governmentality rather than as autonomous political subjects. Sovereignty is symbolically defended yet materially and epistemically subjugated to the American-centric logic of power. This article also reveals the symbolic-theological dimension of this order, in which democracy and freedom operate as state faiths that legitimize intervention and the selective suspension of the principle of non-intervention. The findings of this study indicate that the post-Westphalia nation-state has undergone a fundamental functional mutation—from an instrument of political emancipation to a global disciplinary apparatus that works through normalization, the production of meaning, and symbolic surveillance.

### INTRODUCTION

The nation-state has long been understood as a natural form of politics and has become the main foundation of the modern international order. In many studies of politics and international relations, the nation-state is positioned as the primary subject of neutrality, rationality, and autonomy, while the Westphalia system is often referred to as a historical milestone that marked the birth of the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and equality among states. This perspective positions the nation-state as if it exists outside power relations—as though it were a form of politics that has been normatively completed and merely requires technical operation. As a result, the nation-state is seldom interpreted as a historical construction that continually undergoes shifts in meaning, function, and legitimacy alongside changes in the global configuration of power (Haas, 2024; Murray, 2018; Smith & Scott, 2017).

The reading that naturalizes the nation-state becomes problematic when confronted with the global political reality after World War II (Billig, 2023; Caglioti, 2017). The collapse of European domination and the emergence of the United States as a hegemonic power not only shifted the center of power but also transformed how the world interprets sovereignty, legitimacy, and political acceptance. In this context, the Westphalia system is not treated as an obsolete legacy, but rather reformulated and reoperated as a global normative framework compatible with the interests and logic of U.S. power. The nation-state no longer stands as an

autonomous entity that is horizontally equivalent but is instead positioned within a central–peripheral vertical relationship controlled through global institutions and international standards (Backer, 2016; Chryssogelos, 2020; Cole, 2017).

Post-1945, the establishment and consolidation of international institutions such as the United Nations, the Bretton Woods system, and international security alliances marked the institutionalization of the nation-state order on a global scale (David & Sampaio, 2024; Ikenberry, 2020; Martin, 2016; Pantazelos et al., 2025). However, these institutions do not merely function as coordination mechanisms among states; they also serve as instruments that normalize particular formats of states deemed legitimate, modern, and civilized. State sovereignty is formally and symbolically maintained, yet in practice, it is conditioned by a set of legal, economic, and security standards formulated and sustained within the orbit of U.S. power. Consequently, the nation-state functions as an operator within a global network of governance rather than as a political subject that fully determines its own direction and destiny (Baris, 2021; Smith & Scott, 2017; Wang et al., 2025).

Beyond formal institutionalization, the post-Westphalia nation-state order is also produced through normative narratives operating at symbolic and moral levels (Chang, 2021; KUMAR, 2022; Rusafov, 2025; Smith & Scott, 2017). Democracy, freedom, and development are not only presented as political values but also as universal benchmarks of state legitimacy. States that fail to meet these parameters are often constructed as problematic, unstable, or threatening to the global order. Under these conditions, the principle of non-intervention experiences selective suspension: sovereignty is respected only insofar as it aligns with the dominant normative regime but can be overridden when deemed contrary to universally defined values. Political and military interventions are thus framed as acts of rescue rather than violations of sovereignty, demonstrating that the global order operates through the production of meaning and legitimacy, not merely through overt violence (Prinz & Schetter, 2016; Sanders, 2018; Wilcox, 2015).

This normative structure reveals that the post–World War II nation-state is not merely a legal or territorial-administrative entity but also an effect of a regime of truth that integrates political, economic, and symbolic power. Within this framework, democracy and freedom operate as state faiths—believed, disseminated, and defended through global institutions, discourses, and practices. The rescue narrative has become a crucial instrument that enables the expansion of U.S. influence without the explicit acknowledgment of the underlying relations of domination. Thus, the nation-state, instead of serving as a vehicle of political emancipation, risks functioning as a disciplinary apparatus that subjects both populations and governments to specific global standards.

The urgency of this research is grounded in contemporary developments that reveal ongoing tensions within the U.S.-centered global order. Recent scholarship has documented how the unipolar moment following the Cold War intensified the normalization of American power through institutional mechanisms (Ikenberry 2011). Contemporary challenges to this order—from rising powers like China to regional resistance movements—have exposed the inherent contradictions within the post-1945 system (Acharya 2014). Furthermore, the proliferation of “humanitarian interventions” in the post–Cold War era, from Kosovo to Libya, demonstrates the continuing relevance of understanding how sovereignty is selectively suspended under the guise of universal values (Chandler 2002). Recent data on the differential treatment of nations based on democracy indices and governance scores illustrate how developing countries remain subject to normative surveillance that constrains their policy autonomy while ostensibly promoting universal standards (Merry 2016). The resurgence of debates on American primacy, multilateralism, and the future of the liberal international order makes this genealogical investigation particularly timely for understanding the structural foundations of contemporary global politics.

The novelty of this research lies in its genealogical approach, which fundamentally departs from conventional analyses of the nation-state. Unlike mainstream international relations theory, which treats the nation-state as a pre-given unit of analysis, or critical realist approaches that focus on underlying structures, this study employs Foucauldian genealogy to trace how the very concept of the legitimate nation-state has been historically produced through power/knowledge relations (Foucault 1980). While hegemonic stability theory examines how dominant powers create order (Kindleberger 1973), and neo-Gramscian approaches analyze hegemony through consent and coercion (Cox 1981), this research moves beyond materialist frameworks to investigate how power operates through the production of truth regimes, normalization processes, and subjectification. The genealogical method reveals that the nation-state is not simply dominated by external forces or embedded in structural hierarchies but is actively constituted as a particular kind of political subject through discursive practices, institutional mechanisms, and normative standards. This represents a significant methodological departure from both positivist analyses that naturalize the nation-state and critical approaches that focus primarily on economic or military dimensions of power. By examining how sovereignty itself becomes an effect of global governmentality rather than its foundation, this study offers a novel conceptual framework for understanding contemporary international politics beyond state-centric or structure-centric paradigms.

Based on these concerns, this study views the nation-state not as an independent political entity but as the outcome of a historical process shaped by complex power relations. Using a genealogical approach, this article traces how the United States engineered, stabilized, and maintained the nation-state as a post-World War II global order through institutionalization, knowledge production, and the normalization of meaning. This approach does not seek to compile a linear historical chronology but rather to unpack how the claim to the universality of the nation-state has been formed, legitimized, and defended as a regime of truth in contemporary global politics. Thus, this article aims to open space for a critical reading of the nation-state as a form of power that continues to operate behind the symbol of sovereignty and the language of universality.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative genealogy method to analyze the nation-state as a historical construct that is formed, reproduced, and stabilized through global power relations after World War II. Genealogy in this study is positioned not as a normative historical method or linear origin tracing but as a critical qualitative analysis strategy that operates by reading texts, institutions, and practices as fields for the production of meaning and truth. Thus, this study does not seek empirical cause and effect in a positivistic sense but traces how the nation-state becomes possible, accepted, and normalized as a political form considered natural and universal.

The analysis of genealogical methods in this study is carried out by treating the nation-state, Westphalia, and the United States as discursive and institutional objects whose meanings are formed through language, norms, and practices of global governance. Westphalia is not read as a completed historical fact, but rather as a system of rearticulated and reactivated markers in the post-1945 configuration of power. The analysis focuses on how the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention, and formal equality undergo functional mutations when operated within a global order curated by the United States through international institutions and global normative standards.

The theoretical framework of this research is based on Michel Foucault's ideas, particularly the concepts of power/knowledge relations, *dispositif*, governmentality, and the regime of truth. The power/knowledge relationship is used to show that categories such as sovereign states, failed states, democracy, and stability are not objective descriptions of reality

but products of knowledge production that have regulatory and disciplinary effects. Within this framework, the United States is understood as an actor that not only exerts material power but also produces a framework of knowledge determining the parameters of the nation-state's legitimacy in the global order.

The concept of *dispositif* is employed qualitatively to identify the heterogeneous networks that underpin the global nation-state order, encompassing international institutions such as the United Nations, the Bretton Woods system, and NATO, along with the associated legal, economic, and security practices. All of these elements are analyzed as a single apparatus of power that operates through normalization rather than direct coercion. Through this approach, global institutions are interpreted as mechanisms that shape the nation-state's compliance with a particular format of sovereignty and governance without formally removing the symbol of sovereignty.

The concept of governmentality is used to explain how post-1945 global power operates through qualitative-discursive techniques of management, guidance, and measurement. The nation-state is analyzed as a subject formed to govern itself in accordance with global standards, ranging from fiscal policy and institutional reform to security management—all of which are guided by external parameters that appear technocratic but are deeply embedded in power. In this context, the nation-state is positioned not as an autonomous subject but as an operator within a global network of governance.

The regime of truth is used as an operational concept to examine how democracy, freedom, and development function as dominant truths that are widely accepted and morally legitimized. This study qualitatively explores how these narratives operate as state faiths, framing political and military interventions as salvific acts while allowing the selective suspension of the principle of non-intervention. Thus, intervention is not read as a deviation from the Westphalia order but rather as part of the workings of the regime of truth itself.

Research data are sourced from international policy documents, charters and resolutions of global institutions, reports from international organizations, official speeches by state actors, and relevant academic literature. All these data are treated as discursive qualitative data, analyzed through interpretive readings to identify patterns of repetition, justification, and normalization in the production of political meaning. The analysis is not aimed at verifying factual truth but at uncovering how claims to truth are constructed and operationalized.

Operationally, this qualitative genealogy method functions by linking three fields of analysis simultaneously: the normative field (Westphalia rearticulation), the institutional field (the operation of global institutions), and the symbolic field (the narrative of democracy and freedom). These three fields are examined relationally to demonstrate how the nation-state is produced as an effect of a complex global power network. The validity of the research is maintained through argumentative coherence between the theoretical framework, discursive data, and analytical results, ensuring that the conclusions directly reflect the findings rather than normative speculation.

With this method, the research demonstrates that the post-Westphalia nation-state is not a neutral political unit but a global disciplinary apparatus operating through normalization, the production of meaning, and symbolic surveillance. The qualitative genealogy method enables a critical reading of these transformations without falling into descriptive historicism or structural determinism.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Westphalia as the Global Order of the United States**

The results of genealogical analysis show that the Westphalia system can no longer be understood solely as a historical event of 17th-century Europe that established the principle of state sovereignty in a neutral and equal manner. In the post-World War II global political

configuration, Westphalia underwent a significant functional shift—from a regional peace framework to a global normative architecture operated hegemonically by the United States. This transformation marks a fundamental change in how sovereignty is produced, exercised, and legitimized in the contemporary international system. In line with this, the nation-state no longer stands as a fully autonomous political subject but as a formation continuously reproduced within asymmetrical global power relations.

Several international relations scholars have pointed out that Westphalia never truly created equality among states from the outset but instead established an order perpetually shaped by specific distributions of power. Krasner, for instance, asserts that Westphalia sovereignty was “organized hypocrisy” from the beginning, wherein the principles of non-intervention and territorial sovereignty were often suspended in favor of dominant powers’ interests (Krasner 1999). However, this study finds that after 1945, this pattern of suspension became no longer sporadic but institutionalized systemically through United States leadership in shaping the global order. Westphalia was not abandoned but re-engineered to align with the logic of American power as the postwar hegemon.

Historical data indicate that since 1945, more than 150 new states have been recognized as sovereign entities, almost all adopting the format of Westphalian nation-states. However, recognition does not occur in a vacuum; it operates through global institutional mechanisms within the orbit of U.S. influence, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Barnett and Duvall note that power in the contemporary international system is not merely coercive or structural but also productive—that is, it produces state capacity through technocratic norms, practices, and standards (Barnett and Duvall 2005). The findings of this study demonstrate that the American adaptation of Westphalia functions as such a productive framework: it determines the format of states deemed legitimate while simultaneously disciplining variations in forms of sovereignty beyond that format.

From a genealogical perspective, the United States did not simply inherit the Westphalia system from Europe but positioned itself as the global curator of the nation-state order. This position enables the United States not only to formally preserve the principle of sovereignty but also to define the material conditions under which it can be exercised. The Freedom House Report (2023), for instance, shows that more than 65 percent of UN member states employ constitutional and governance structures established or reformed through bilateral and multilateral programs involving USAID, the World Bank, or UNDP—institutions that are financially and epistemically situated within the U.S. sphere of influence. This data confirms that post-Westphalia state sovereignty does not stand independently but is conditioned by a global institutional network functioning as a mechanism of normalization.

Several critical scholars interpret this process as a shift from formal sovereignty to calculated sovereignty. Foucault, in his lectures on governmentality, argues that modern power operates by regulating conditions of possibility rather than through outright prohibition (Foucault 2007). In this sense, the American version of Westphalia functions as a device that governs the boundaries of political acceptability. States that meet particular standards—procedural democracy, market economics, and adherence to international law—are recognized as part of the legitimate order, while deviant states are categorized as “failed states,” “rogue states,” or threats to global stability. Such classification is not merely descriptive; it carries political, economic, and even military consequences.

The findings of this study resonate with Agamben’s analysis of sovereignty as the power to suspend the law. Within the framework of post-1945 Westphalia, the United States occupies a position that allows the selective suspension of the principle of non-intervention in the name of protecting global order (Agamben 1998). Interventions in Iraq (2003), Afghanistan (2001), and Libya (2011) exemplify how state sovereignty can be nullified when deemed contrary to the regime of truth defining international stability and security. In this regard, Westphalia does

not operate as a limiting force but as a legal discourse that legitimizes the suspension of sovereignty itself.

From the perspective of the sign system, the American version of Westphalia functions as a representation that blends law, morality, and security. The principle of sovereignty is still maintained as a symbol, yet its substantive meaning is reduced to compliance with global norms. Harvey points out that this configuration is closely tied to the expansion of global capitalism, in which the nation-state serves as a mediator between the logic of the international market and the domestic population (Harvey 2005). Thus, Westphalia became not only a political framework but also the economic infrastructure that underpinned the structural dominance of the United States in the world system.

These findings show that the post-Westphalia nation-state has not experienced erosion in the formal sense but has instead been stabilized as an effective form of global power. The United States sustains the nation-state as the basic unit of the international order because it allows the management of the world through legal, institutional, and symbolic mechanisms that appear legitimate. In this configuration, Westphalia no longer functions as a principle of equality but as a technology of power that produces a covert global hierarchy, in which the United States occupies a position of meta-sovereignty—both interpreter and custodian of the global nation-state order (Foucault 1980; Krasner 1999; Barnett and Duvall 2005).

The pattern of political and military interventions that has taken place since the beginning of the Cold War shows that the Westphalia principle in post-1945 global practice has not served as a norm limiting power but rather as a mechanism enabling the selective suspension of sovereignty. The intervention in Guatemala in 1954, the involvement in the Congo crisis of the early 1960s, and the military operation in Libya in 2011 illustrate the ongoing practice by which certain countries lose the symbolic protection of Westphalia when deemed incompatible with the order maintained by the United States. In this configuration, sovereignty does not function as a permanently inherent right but as a conditional status that can be withdrawn or reactivated according to geopolitical and normative calculations.

This practice cannot be understood as an incidental deviation from the Westphalia system but as an inherent feature of its operation in the contemporary global order. Categories such as “failed state,” “troubled state,” or “threat to regional stability” serve as discursive devices that transform political differences into technical and administrative problems. In this way, intervention no longer appears as a violation of sovereignty but as a rational and even moral response to a state’s failure to meet universal standards. Here, the relationship between power and knowledge works simultaneously: discursive classifications create conditions of legitimacy for coercive action.

Demographically and politically, the massive expansion of the post-1945 nation-state occurred precisely when the Westphalia format was fully absorbed into the hegemonic framework of the United States. The wave of decolonization in Asia and Africa produced dozens of new states that were formally sovereign yet entered an international system already bound by an established normative grammar. These states did not formulate sovereignty in a vacuum but within a global structure that had already defined specific constitutional forms, models of governance, legal frameworks, and economic orientations as prerequisites for legitimacy. In this context, the universalization of the nation-state is not synonymous with political emancipation but with the standardization of forms of sovereignty.

The post-World War II global institutional architecture reinforced these conditions. The United Nations, with its Security Council structure granting veto power to five specific states, embodies the paradox of modern Westphalia: formal equality among nations is institutionalized alongside a legalized hierarchy of power. The location of the UN headquarters in New York and the financial and political dominance of the United States within various international bodies demonstrate that global legitimacy operates through a clear center of

power. Within this framework, international law does not stand as a neutral system but functions as a medium that mediates and normalizes the unequal distribution of power.

These conditions result in what can be understood as selective sovereignty, in which the protection of the principle of non-intervention depends on a country's position within the global normative order. Countries deemed compliant with the standards of liberal democracy, market economics, and international security gain recognition and stability, while those that reject or deviate from these standards face sanctions, isolation, or open intervention. In this logic, hypocrisy is not the failure of the Westphalia system but its internal mechanism—one that enables it to continue functioning under hegemonic conditions.

Furthermore, the American version of Westphalia operates not only through legal and military institutions but also through epistemic projects that shape the global political imagination. The production of knowledge via democracy indexes, freedom reports, economic rankings, educational networks, and international non-governmental organizations creates a normative map of the world that defines each country's position within the global hierarchy. The language of democratic transition, development, and stability functions as a governance technology that encourages countries to voluntarily conform to external parameters. Thus, power does not always appear as coercion; it also operates through the normalization and internalization of standards.

From the perspective of governmentality, this mechanism demonstrates that the nation-state is maintained as a political form not because of its autonomy but because of its effectiveness as a global management unit. The state retains administrative responsibilities over its population and territory, while its strategic policy orientations are framed by norms and interests produced at the global level. Westphalia, in this configuration, serves as a symbolic infrastructure that allows global power to operate without explicitly eliminating the language of sovereignty.

Through this position, the United States does not merely act as a dominant actor among others but occupies the role of interpreter and guardian of order. It exists neither fully within nor entirely outside the Westphalia system; its position enables it to determine when the principle of sovereignty should be upheld and when it may be suspended. It is here that Westphalia transforms from a power-limiting principle into a technology of power itself, and the nation-state is produced as a symbolically stable yet politically flexible form.

Thus, Westphalia in the post-World War II global order can no longer be understood as a normative principle that restricts state power but rather as a symbolic architecture that enables global power to operate legitimately. The principle of sovereignty has not collapsed but has been repositioned. It is preserved as a universal language, while its meaning and operationalization are regulated through an institutional, discursive, and normative network centered on the United States. The nation-state endures as the dominant political form, not because of its autonomy but because of its capacity to channel and manage global power in a decentralized manner. In this configuration, the United States occupies a position of meta-sovereignty—not as a replacement for Westphalia, but as its interpreter and enabler. As a result, Westphalia functions not as a foundation of equality but as a technology of power that produces a global hierarchy through the very language of sovereignty itself.

### **The Institutionalization of the Nation-State in the Post-1945 Global Order**

The results of the analysis show that the mutation of Westphalia into the global order of the United States does not operate in the abstract but is institutionalized through a post-1945 institutional architecture that functions as a tool for the normalization of the nation-state. The United Nations, the Bretton Woods system, and international security alliances not only function as coordination mechanisms among states but also produce standards of legitimacy that determine how nation-states should be organized, governed, and evaluated. Through these

institutions, state sovereignty is formally maintained yet materially directed by a set of transnational norms and practices.

The United Nations plays a central role in this process by combining universal recognition of sovereign states with hierarchical decision-making structures. The one-state–one-vote principle in the General Assembly conveys an impression of formal equality, but substantive authority is concentrated in the Security Council, which grants veto power to five permanent members. This structure demonstrates that international legitimacy is not distributed symmetrically but is managed through selective mechanisms that enable the suspension of sovereignty in the name of international security and peace. In line with this, Weiss emphasizes that the United Nations was never designed as an arena of global democracy, but rather as an instrument for stabilizing a world order led by the great powers—particularly the United States (Weiss 2013).

In global economic and political realms, the Bretton Woods system serves as a key mechanism by framing the nation-state as an economic management unit aligned with the logic of the international market. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank not only provide financial assistance but also condition domestic policies through structural adjustment programs, fiscal reforms, and economic liberalization. Harvey notes that this mechanism transforms economic sovereignty into a technocratically legitimized domain of intervention, where national economic decisions are guided by global parameters set by dominant powers (Harvey 2005). In this context, the nation-state continues to function as an administrative authority, but its decision-making capacity is increasingly constrained by external standards.

Institutionalization also extends into the security domain, particularly through NATO and the post–Cold War collective security regime. This alliance not only regulates military defense but also establishes definitions of threats, stability, and legitimate intervention. Since the 1990s, the concept of security has expanded from territorial defense to human security, regional stabilization, and conflict prevention, effectively opening the space for cross-border intervention. Buzan and Wæver show that the process of securitization enables political issues to be constructed as existential threats, thereby legitimizing extraordinary actions (Buzan and Wæver 2003). Within this framework, security institutions operate as instruments that normalize the suspension of the principle of non-intervention.

The findings of this study indicate that these three institutional domains operate interdependently as a single global device. The nation-state is produced and sustained as a legitimate political form, but only insofar as it functions according to the norms of international law, global economic governance, and standardized security logic. Barnett and Duvall refer to this as productive power—a form of power that shapes the capacities and identities of actors through norms and practices rather than direct coercion (Barnett and Duvall 2005). In this context, the nation-state is not eliminated but reconstituted to remain compatible with the existing global order.

Furthermore, the institutionalization of the nation-state order has produced an evaluative mechanism that functions as a disciplinary instrument. The democracy index, freedom ratings, and economic governance assessments serve as technical languages that determine a country's position within the global hierarchy. This mechanism not only measures but also directs state behavior through incentives, sanctions, and normative stigma. Foucault emphasized that modern power operates through normalization—the creation of norms that compel subjects to organize themselves according to established parameters (Foucault 1979). On a global scale, this normalization transforms the nation-state into a self-disciplining subject that regulates its actions to preserve international recognition and legitimacy.

Thus, post-1945 institutionalization cannot be understood as a neutral process of constructing the international order but as a concrete mechanism operationalizing the United States' version of Westphalia. The nation-state functions as an administrative node linking

populations and territories to a global logic, while international institutions act as the device that ensures the operational alignment of these states with the order maintained by the prevailing center of power. In this configuration, global institutions do not exist outside the state but constitute an integral part of how the nation-state is governed and interpreted in contemporary global politics.

Further evidence of the institutionalization process can be traced through concrete data on the inequality of decision-making structures and resource distribution in major global institutions. In the United Nations, for example, the Security Council holds the authority to legally bind all member states, while the General Assembly produces only nonbinding recommendations. From 1946 to 2023, more than 80 percent of all Security Council vetoes were exercised by the five permanent members, with the United States being one of the most active users—particularly on international and Middle Eastern security issues (UN Security Council Voting Records 2023). This fact demonstrates that global legitimacy is not produced through procedural equality but through an institutionally legalized concentration of authority.

This institutional dominance is reinforced by the funding structure. The United States is the largest financial contributor to the United Nations, providing about 22 percent of the regular budget and over 25 percent of the peacekeeping budget through the early 2020s (UN Secretariat 2022). This financial dependency significantly influences agenda setting, mission priorities, and the trajectory of institutional reform. In this regard, Weiss (2013) asserts that the ability of major donor countries to align financial support with political preferences renders the UN a structurally asymmetrical institutional arena, albeit wrapped in the language of multilateralism.

In the global economic sphere, data from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank show a similar mechanism. The quota-based voting system makes the United States the largest single voting holder, with approximately 16.5 percent of the voting rights in the IMF—enough to veto strategic decisions that require a special majority (IMF Voting Power Database 2023). This position enables the United States to influence the design of lending policies, the terms of structural adjustments, and the direction of borrowing countries' economic reforms. Stiglitz's research (2002) shows that IMF structural adjustment programs consistently promote market liberalization, privatization, and deregulation, often with heavy social impacts on developing countries. In this context, the economic sovereignty of the nation-state is not formally abolished but constrained through policy commitments legitimized as technical necessities.

Another illustration can be seen in the dissemination of governance and democratic standards through development assistance and cooperation mechanisms. Data from the OECD Development Assistance Committee reveal that since the 1990s, most bilateral and multilateral development aid has required institutional reform, fiscal transparency, and competitive elections as prerequisites for aid sustainability (OECD DAC Reports 2019). These conditions compel recipient countries to adapt their domestic political structures to externally determined norms. From a genealogical perspective, this practice suggests that institutionalization operates through the internalization of standards rather than direct coercion.

In the field of security, the expansion of NATO's post-Cold War mandate illustrates how security institutions function as instruments for normalizing intervention. NATO's operations in Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (2001–2021), and Libya (2011) were justified in the name of humanitarian protection and regional stability, often without an explicit Security Council mandate or based on broad interpretations of existing resolutions. Data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute show that more than 60 percent of multinational military operations since 1990 have involved NATO members or their partners (SIPRI 2022). This confirms that the institutionalization of global security operates through alliances effectively situated within the orbit of U.S. leadership.

Beyond formal institutions, evidence of the institutionalization of the nation-state can also be seen in the proliferation of global evaluative instruments. Freedom House, the World Bank Governance Indicators, and the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index routinely classify countries according to specific criteria that are then used as reference points for foreign policy, investment, and international cooperation. World Bank data show that governance ratings correlate directly with foreign investment flows and access to international financing (World Bank 2020). Within this framework, measurement is not merely descriptive but performative—it shapes state behavior through symbolic incentives and sanctions.

Analysis of these data indicates that the institutionalization of the post-1945 nation-state has not diminished the role of the state but has locked it into a particular format. The nation-state remains the fundamental unit of the international order, though its function has shifted toward managing populations and territories according to established global standards. Consistent with Foucault’s analysis of normalization, power works by establishing benchmarks that compel subjects to adapt in order to maintain acceptance (Foucault 1979). On a global scale, the nation-state functions as a subject that is continuously evaluated, classified, and directed.

Thus, this empirical and institutional evidence confirms that the post-1945 global order does not merely sustain the existence of the nation-state but actively shapes the manner in which the state operates. International institutions act as concrete mechanisms that operationalize the United States’ version of Westphalia, rendering sovereignty a formally recognized yet structurally constrained concept. The nation-state persists not as an autonomous decision-making center but as an administrative node within an institutionalized global power network.

Theoretically, the post-1945 institutionalization of the nation-state can be understood as a form of hegemony that functions through organized consensus rather than overt domination. Gramsci interpreted hegemony as the capacity of a power to make its interests appear as the public interest through ostensibly natural institutions, norms, and practices (Gramsci 1971). In the context of the post–World War II global order, international institutions serve as the space where such hegemony is articulated—disseminating values produced by the United States as universal standards. Cox extended this notion to the international sphere, arguing that global institutions are not neutral but reflect and stabilize specific historical structures favoring dominant powers (Cox 1981). Within this framework, the nation-state is not only governed by global institutions but also reproduced as a political form compatible with the hegemonic order. In other words, the institutionalization of the post-1945 nation-state constitutes not just a coordination mechanism but a hegemonic strategy that integrates structural coercion with normative consent, enabling the nation-state to fulfill its global functions without continuous external coercion.

### **The Nation State as an Operator in *Global Governmentality***

The results of the analysis show that after the nation-state was institutionalized through the post-1945 institutional architecture, its main function shifted from an autonomous political subject to an operator within the global governmentality scheme. In this configuration, the state is no longer primarily understood as the center of political will that independently determines the direction of its policies, but rather as an implementing apparatus that internalizes and translates global norms, standards, and rationalities into domestic governance practices. The nation-state retains administrative authority over its territory and population, but the rationality that guides the use of that authority is formed externally.

The concept of governmentality, as formulated by Foucault, emphasizes that modern power operates through the management of life, population, and the economy by establishing norms and techniques that make subjects govern themselves (Foucault 2007). On a global scale, this rationality functions through a set of indicators, policy guidelines, and evaluative practices

that render the nation-state a continuously adapting agent. Programs of bureaucratic reform, good governance, and security risk management act as technologies of government that guide the behavior of states without requiring direct coercion. In this context, the nation-state both exercises power over its population and becomes the object of broader global power.

Evidence of this functional shift can be seen in how domestic policy is now formulated in relation to global standards. Fiscal reform, trade liberalization, and public sector restructuring are often presented as unavoidable technical necessities, even though they originate from specific economic-political rationalities. Rose and Miller demonstrate that governmentality operates through “programmes” linking expert knowledge with everyday governmental practices, thereby enabling policy to appear as a rational solution to objective problems (Rose and Miller 1992). Within the context of the post-1945 nation-state, these global programs transform the state into the implementer of policies derived from transnational normative frameworks.

In the political sphere, a similar mechanism functions through the proceduralization of democracy. Elections, legal reform, and the strengthening of representative institutions are treated as key indicators of state legitimacy, often regardless of social or historical context. Diamond notes that post-Cold War democracy tends to be reduced to a minimal set of procedures that can be externally measured and evaluated (Diamond 2008). Within the framework of global governmentality, this proceduralism allows political legitimacy to be quantified and compared across countries, thereby encouraging nation-states to adapt in order to maintain international recognition.

Security rationality also reinforces the nation-state’s role as an operator. Issues such as terrorism, migration, and cybersecurity are constructed as global risks that require coordinated responses. Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde argue that securitization turns political issues into existential threats that justify extraordinary action (Buzan et al. 1998). In practice, nation-states implement security policies formulated within a global framework, ranging from legal harmonization to data exchange and joint operations. The state functions both as the executor of global security policy and as the entity responsible for overseeing compliance.

The findings of this study indicate that global governmentality does not eliminate the nation-state but rather depends on it. The state serves as the primary node connecting global rationalities with local practices. It administers populations, gathers data, and enforces policies designed to align with global standards. Within this framework, sovereignty is not abolished but reconfigured as the capacity to effectively manage and implement external norms. Foucault emphasized that modern power is most effective when it operates through freedom rather than by suppressing it (Foucault 1980). The nation-state as the operator of global governmentality embodies this principle.

Empirical evidence of the nation-state’s strengthening position as an operator in global governmentality can be seen in the growing proliferation of measurement and reporting instruments linking domestic governance practices to transnational standards. Data from the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators show that since the early 2000s, governance scores have been systematically used as prerequisites for access to financing, investment, and international cooperation (World Bank 2020). This mechanism incentivizes states to adjust their legal frameworks, public administration, and economic management to conform to externally defined indicators. In this context, measurement is not merely descriptive but performative, as it actively shapes the direction of state policy.

In the security sector, data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime show an increase in the harmonization of national laws related to terrorism, money laundering, and transnational crime since 2001, particularly through the adoption of global models of legislation and protocols (UNODC 2019). The nation-state serves as the primary actor in translating the global security regime into domestic law—expanding the authority of state

apparatuses and strengthening surveillance systems. Hameiri and Jones assert that this process demonstrates how statehood is actually reproduced through governance interventions rather than weakened by them (Hameiri and Jones 2017). The state does not lose its role but is directed to perform specific functions within the global power architecture.

The views of various scholars reinforce these findings. Rose emphasizes that modern governance operates through “governing at a distance,” that is, by regulating behavior through standards, audits, and evaluations that lead subjects to internalize the aims of power (Rose 1999). On a global scale, the nation-state is the principal medium of this practice. It regulates populations in the name of national interest, yet the rationality guiding such regulation is structured within a global framework. Thus, the state simultaneously performs a dual role—as both the ruling agent and the controlled object.

Theoretically, this condition confirms that global governmentality is not opposed to the persistence of the nation-state but rather dependent on it. The nation-state functions as a technology of power that enables normalization to occur effectively because it possesses political legitimacy, administrative capacity, and proximity to the population. However, a critical consequence of this configuration is the depoliticization of sovereignty. Political decisions are reframed as technical necessities, normative choices are translated into rational imperatives, and conflicts of interest are obscured as managerial problems.

A critical analysis of global governmentality thus exposes the central paradox of the contemporary nation-state. The state remains a pivotal actor in global politics, yet its role is increasingly confined to operational functions. It is no longer the primary arena for articulating collective political will but has become the mechanism for implementing a pre-established global rationality. Within the Foucauldian framework, this represents the most effective form of power—one that operates through guided freedom rather than overt coercion (Foucault 2007). The nation-state, as an operator of global governmentality, becomes the locus where transnational power assumes its most stable and invisible form.

### **Democracy and Freedom as a Global Truth Regime**

The results of the analysis show that democracy and freedom in the post–World War II global order do not merely function as political values but operate as a regime of truth that determines the legitimacy of the nation-state. In this configuration, democracy and freedom are not positioned as the outcomes of internal political struggles but as universal normative standards that must be met for a country to be recognized as legitimate and modern. As such, both function as evaluative languages that classify countries as acceptable or deviant, stable or problematic.

Empirical evidence of this regime of truth can be observed in the use of global indicators as references for international policy. Data from Freedom House show that since the early 2000s, assessments of political and civil liberties have been consistently employed by donor countries and multilateral institutions as the basis for determining aid, cooperation, and sanctions (Freedom House 2022). Likewise, the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index categorizes nations into full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes, and authoritarian regimes—classifications that then influence foreign policy and investment flows (EIU 2023). In this context, democracy is no longer merely a normative principle but an instrument of measurement with tangible material consequences.

Scholars affirm that such measurement is performative. Merry notes that global indicators do not simply reflect reality but actively shape the policy practices and priorities of the states being measured (Merry 2016). The nation-state is encouraged to conform to these parameters not only to enhance democratic quality but also to maintain international legitimacy and recognition. Within the framework of governmentality, measurement functions as a normalization technique that directs behavior through normative incentives and stigma.

The regimes of truth surrounding democracy and freedom also operate through moral narratives that legitimize intervention. The concepts of “responsibility to protect” and “humanitarian intervention” are framed as ethical obligations of the international community when a state is perceived to have failed in protecting its citizens. Data indicate that since the 1990s, justifications for intervention have increasingly invoked the language of human rights protection and democracy, even when the corresponding international legal mandates were contested (Bellamy 2011). In practice, this moral discourse enables the selective suspension of sovereignty in the name of universal values.

Theoretically, this configuration aligns with Foucault’s analysis of the regime of truth as a set of procedures that determine what counts as truth, who is authorized to speak it, and how it is circulated (Foucault 1980). In the contemporary global order, democracy and freedom are produced and disseminated through institutions, reports, and discourses that render them as self-evident truths. This truth does not exist outside power; rather, it serves as the primary medium through which power operates and legitimizes itself.

A critical reading of this condition reveals that when democracy and freedom are treated as established truths, politics tends toward an increasingly depoliticized state. The diversity of historical experiences, social structures, and cultural expressions is no longer regarded as a legitimate source of political conflict but is instead simplified into numbers, indexes, and evaluative rankings. Conflicts of values are displaced from the sphere of normative debate to the administrative realm—reduced to questions of how far an entity meets predefined standards. Mouffe argues that the dominance of such normative consensus erases the agonistic dimension of democracy and replaces it with technocratic governance that manages differences rather than confronting them politically (Mouffe 2005). On a global scale, this dynamic transforms democracy from a space of productive conflict into a disciplinary mechanism that normalizes compliance.

Further strengthening of the position of democracy and freedom as a global regime of truth can be traced through the direct correlation between democratic scores and differential treatment within the international system. World Bank data show that countries with high democracy and governance scores enjoy cheaper access to financing, more stable foreign investment flows, and preferential trade cooperation compared to countries with lower ratings (World Bank 2021). This correlation indicates that democracy functions not only as a political norm but also as a mechanism for distributing benefits and disadvantages across the global order. In a genealogical reading, this relationship reveals how normative truths are produced in tandem with their material effects.

Scholarly analyses emphasize that this mechanism is far from an institutional coincidence. Brown argues that liberal democracy under neoliberal globalization has been reduced to a set of procedural indicators compatible with market rationality, thereby losing its substantive dimension as a form of collective political practice (Brown 2015). In this context, freedom is primarily understood as market and institutional freedom rather than as political freedom grounded in participation and contestation. These findings resonate with Crouch’s critique of post-democracy, in which democratic procedures are maintained while strategic decisions are transferred to technocratic and transnational arenas (Crouch 2004).

Methodologically, qualitative genealogy enables the reading of such data and indicators not as objective measures but as discursive artifacts that produce specific political subjects. Democracy scores, freedom reports, and governance indices are analyzed as components of a global device that regulates state behavior through normalization and comparison. In Foucault’s terms, this mechanism operates through the production of norms that distinguish between the normal and the deviant while establishing procedures for correcting deviation (Foucault 1979). The nation-state thus internalizes these norms, adjusting its domestic policies to remain within the zone of normality.

Theoretically, this configuration suggests that the regime of truth surrounding democracy and freedom operates in conjunction with global governmentality. Democracy no longer functions primarily as a political arena but as a technology of government enabling the management of populations and states through moral and technical language simultaneously. Rose calls this transformation a shift from politics to management, wherein normative conflict is translated into issues of efficiency and compliance (Rose 1999). On a global scale, this shift renders democracy measurable, auditable, and steerable according to external standards.

A critical reading of this configuration reveals that when democracy and freedom are positioned as a regime of truth, the nation-state does not dissolve but undergoes a significant transformation in its role. The state remains the principal vehicle for this regime's operation—it organizes elections, formulates civil rights regulations, and structures political institutions consistent with global standards. However, in this process, the state progressively loses its ability to interpret and define democracy according to its own historical and social context. In such circumstances, global power does not negate democracy but reduces it to sterile procedures, thereby muting its agonistic political potential.

Thus, the integration of empirical data, theoretical frameworks, and methodological operations in this subchapter confirms that democracy and freedom are not merely collectively agreed normative values but instruments of power that operate through the production of truth. Through measurement, classification, and moral narrative, this regime enables a subtle yet powerful reconfiguration of the nation-state's sovereignty. The nation-state continues to appear as a democratic and sovereign entity, yet its political practices are directed by a pre-established global rationality—making democracy simultaneously a language of legitimacy and a disciplinary mechanism within the contemporary world order.

### **The Nation State as an Effect of the United States' Power Relations**

In the post-1945 global order, the sustainability of the nation-state cannot be separated from the United States-centered configuration of power. Institutional data show that U.S. influence in global decision-making structures is consistent and cross-sectoral. In the United Nations Security Council, the veto power held by its members continues to function as a legal mechanism for suspending the sovereignty of other states in the name of international security, while the dominance of the United States' financial contribution to the UN budget materially reinforces that position. In the economic sphere, the quota and voting rights structures of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank provide the capacity to steer the macroeconomic policies of borrowing countries, especially through conditionality schemes binding fiscal, monetary, and institutional reforms. In the security domain, data on multinational operations show that most global stabilization interventions and missions involve alliances and leadership within the orbit of the United States—ensuring that the definitions of internationally legitimate threats and responses are never geopolitically neutral.

Several international relations scholars have long argued that global institutions cannot be understood as technically neutral arenas isolated from power relations. Cox observes that international institutions stabilize particular historical structures by generalizing the interests of dominant powers as common ones (Cox 1981). Harvey adds that the neoliberal global order requires the nation-state not to be abandoned but to serve as crisis manager, guarantor of social stability, and enforcer of market discipline (Harvey 2005). Barnett and Duvall conceptualize this configuration as a form of productive power, in which institutional norms, practices, and categories not only govern state behavior but also shape state identity and capacity as a “normal” actor in the international system (Barnett and Duvall 2005).

Additional evidence of this power relationship can be seen in the way democracy and freedom are operationalized as global evaluative standards. Countries scoring high on democracy and governance indexes gain access to cheaper financing, preferential trade arrangements, and elevated diplomatic legitimacy, while those with low scores face sanctions,

isolation, or reform pressures. This correlation between normative indicators and material outcomes shows that democracy and freedom function not merely as values but as mechanisms for distributing rewards and penalties in the global order. Consequently, the legitimacy of the nation-state is determined not only by formal recognition but also by transnationally measurable performance.

Within Foucault's theoretical framework, this configuration can be understood as an operation of global governmentality functioning through systems of signs and normalization. Democracy, freedom, stability, and good governance act as truth-markers defining what is rational, legitimate, and acceptable. Such truth does not stand outside power but is produced through reports, indexes, audit procedures, and policy discourses that recast political decisions as technical necessities. The nation-state internalizes this sign system and regulates its population according to established parameters. Sovereignty, therefore, is not abolished but directed through the regulation of conditions of possibility. Power operates most effectively not by direct coercion, but through normalized and guided freedom.

Analytically, the contemporary nation-state must thus be understood as the relational effect of the U.S.-led global order. It is neither a passive victim of external domination nor an autonomous subject capable of complete self-determination. The nation-state persists because it provides administrative capacity, political legitimacy, and proximity to the population—qualities that global institutions lack. Through the state, global power is exercised in a decentralized, seemingly legitimate, and relatively stable form. Democracy and freedom supply the moral language; global institutions provide the technical mechanisms; and the nation-state serves as the operational medium that unites both.

This narrative rejects a simplistic dichotomy between sovereignty and domination. The sustainability of the nation-state depends on its ability to function within broader power relations. The United States, in turn, does not replace the nation-state but requires it as the most effective political form through which the global order can be reproduced. In this configuration, the nation-state ceases to be the original source of political will and becomes instead the locus where global power assumes its most stable, normalized, and least contested form.

Sovereignty here appears not as the founding principle of politics but as a function continually produced through power relations demanding readability, measurability, and manageability. The nation-state derives its durability from its capacity to operate within networks of evaluation that demand performative consistency. What is at stake is no longer the legitimacy of origin but the stability of operation. States that effectively manage their populations, organize their economies, and uphold security according to normalized parameters are treated as legitimate actors, whereas those that fail to meet these parameters are positioned as anomalies in need of correction. Thus, sovereignty shifts from a political claim to a form of administrative competence.

This shift marks a profound transformation in how power operates. Power now functions less through commands or prohibitions and more through the regulation of conditions of possibility—limiting the spectrum of options without formally eliminating them. The nation-state moves within a space that appears autonomous but is in fact mapped by indicators, standards, and procedures that define what is rational and responsible. Within this space, political decisions rarely manifest as ideological choices but appear as technical responses to external evaluative pressures that have been internalized.

The power relationship does not demand absolute uniformity. National variations, institutional differences, and historical specificities are preserved—but only insofar as they do not disrupt the core operation of the global order. Diversity is permitted as expression, not as structural alternative. The nation-state may choose its policy style, but it cannot reject the rationality framework that defines success and failure. At this point, plurality serves as an ornament of legitimacy, while the evaluative structure of judgment remains singular.

The conceptual implication of this condition is a subtle form of depoliticization. Conflicts of interest, struggles over values, and differences in political vision do not vanish but are reframed as issues of efficiency, compliance, and performance. The language of politics is replaced by the language of management, and normative opposition is translated into deviation requiring adjustment. In this position, the nation-state becomes an effective medium for global power because it manages populations in the name of national interests while simultaneously adapting to demands defined beyond the space of domestic deliberation.

From an analytical perspective, this marks the point at which the nation-state functions as a stable relational effect. It is not directly dominated but is shaped through a circulation of truth that links legitimacy to performance. The United States, through its normative and institutional leadership, need not appear as an overt ruler, because the structure operates autonomously. The nation-state performs its role, reproduces order, and upholds global rationality using the language of sovereignty and democracy, which still appears to be its own.

Consequently, critique of this order cannot halt at the level of specific policies or institutions, for the core problem lies in how truth itself is produced and operationalized. As long as sovereignty is measured by obedience and democracy is reduced to procedural performance, the nation-state will continue to function as an efficient operator of the hegemonic global order. It is in this sense that the analysis positions the nation-state not as a surviving residue of modernity, but as a political form consciously engineered to conform to a power that operates through normalization rather than through open conquest.

## CONCLUSION

This research argues that the post-1945 nation-state is not a sovereign or autonomous entity, but a political formation produced and stabilized within a U.S.-centered global power structure. Westphalian sovereignty is not discarded but rearticulated as a universal language that enables global management through ostensibly neutral institutions and norms. In this context, the nation-state endures not because of its independence but because of its effectiveness as an operational medium of global power, where sovereignty is refunctioned as an administrative and performative capacity measured through compliance, stability, and indicators. States that meet these parameters gain legitimacy, while those that do not are framed as problems requiring correction. Rejecting the simple dichotomy between external dominance and internal sovereignty, this analysis shows the nation-state as both a product of the global order and an active agent in reproducing it through everyday governance—where power operates through normalization, evaluation, and the internalization of regimes of truth that link legitimacy to measurable performance. The United States thus acts not as a direct ruler but as an interpretive center, orchestrating the global order without erasing the symbols of sovereignty. The article's main contribution lies in offering a genealogical reading of the nation-state as a relational effect of global signs, institutions, and rationalities. This perspective opens critical space to examine how democracy, freedom, and sovereignty are produced as universal norms, thereby shifting political analysis from identifying dominant actors to understanding the normalization mechanisms that render dominance stable, legitimate, and seemingly unquestionable.

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