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SOVEREIGNTY AND COOPERATION: LEGAL TENSIONS IN COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the tension between state sovereignty and the international legal obligations assumed by States in the contemporary context. The selected scope prioritizes multilateral treaties of global relevance, with emphasis on human rights, the environment, and economic cooperation, areas that frequently reveal conflicts between domestic constitutional norms and binding international commitments. The theoretical framework begins with the classical conceptions of sovereignty formulated by Bodin and Hobbes and consolidated in Westphalia, reinterpreted in light of modern International Law, particularly through scholarship recognizing the functional limits of state autonomy. The methodology combines a qualitative legal-dogmatic approach with documentary and comparative analysis. International treaties, decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, UN reports, and specialized literature were examined, together with recent studies on global governance. This methodological triangulation made it possible to confront theory with practice, identifying how States respond to external normative pressures and which mechanisms they use to justify domestic resistance. The results indicate that sovereignty, although still central to International Law, is increasingly conditioned by global legal interdependence and the challenges of multilateral cooperation. It is concluded that contemporary sovereignty should be understood not as an absolute concept, but as a relational instrument capable of engaging with commitments assumed at the international level, preserving autonomy without undermining legal solidarity among nations.
Keywords: State Sovereignty, International Law, International Obligations, Multilateral Treaties, Legal Cooperation.

Resumo

Este artigo tem por objetivo examinar a tensão entre a soberania estatal e as obrigações jurídicas internacionais assumidas pelos Estados no contexto contemporâneo. O recorte selecionado prioriza tratados multilaterais de relevância global, com ênfase em direitos humanos, meio ambiente e cooperação econômica — áreas que frequentemente revelam conflitos entre normas constitucionais internas e compromissos internacionais vinculantes. O referencial teórico parte das concepções clássicas de soberania formuladas por Bodin e Hobbes, consolidadas em Vestfália, e as reinterpreta à luz do Direito Internacional moderno, notadamente por meio de uma doutrina que reconhece os limites funcionais da autonomia estatal. A metodologia combina uma abordagem jurídico-dogmática qualitativa com análise documental e comparativa. Foram examinados tratados internacionais, decisões da Corte Europeia de Direitos Humanos, relatórios da ONU e literatura especializada, além de estudos recentes sobre governança global. Essa triangulação metodológica permitiu confrontar a teoria com a prática, identificando como os Estados respondem a pressões normativas externas e quais mecanismos utilizam para justificar resistências internas. Os resultados indicam que a soberania, embora ainda central no Direito Internacional, encontra-se cada vez mais condicionada pela interdependência jurídica global e pelos desafios da cooperação multilateral. Conclui-se que a soberania contemporânea deve ser compreendida não como um conceito absoluto, mas como um instrumento relacional capaz de dialogar com os compromissos assumidos em âmbito internacional, preservando a autonomia sem comprometer a solidariedade jurídica entre as nações.

Palavras-chave: Soberania Estatal, Direito Internacional, Obrigações Internacionais, Tratados Multilaterais, Cooperação Jurídica.

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo examinar la tensión entre la soberanía estatal y las obligaciones jurídicas internacionales asumidas por los Estados en el contexto contemporáneo. El alcance seleccionado prioriza los tratados multilaterales de relevancia global, con énfasis en los derechos humanos, el medio ambiente y la cooperación económica; ámbitos que a menudo revelan conflictos entre las normas constitucionales internas y los compromisos internacionales vinculantes. El marco teórico parte de las concepciones clásicas de la soberanía formuladas por Bodin y Hobbes —consolidadas en Westfalia—, reinterpretadas a la luz del Derecho Internacional moderno, especialmente a través de la doctrina que reconoce los límites funcionales de la autonomía estatal. La metodología combina un enfoque jurídico-dogmático cualitativo con un análisis documental y comparado. Se examinaron tratados internacionales, decisiones del Tribunal Europeo de Derechos Humanos, informes de las Naciones Unidas y literatura especializada, junto con estudios recientes sobre gobernanza global. Esta triangulación metodológica permitió contrastar la teoría con la práctica, identificando cómo responden

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los Estados a las presiones normativas externas y qué mecanismos emplean para justificar su resistencia interna. Los resultados indican que la soberanía, si bien sigue siendo un elemento central del Derecho Internacional, se encuentra cada vez más condicionada por la interdependencia jurídica global y los desafíos de la cooperación multilateral. Se concluye que la soberanía contemporánea no debe entenderse como un concepto absoluto, sino como un instrumento relacional capaz de articularse con los compromisos asumidos a nivel internacional, preservando la autonomía sin menoscabar la solidaridad jurídica entre las naciones.
Palabras clave: Soberanía estatal, Derecho Internacional, obligaciones internacionales, tratados multilaterales, cooperación jurídica.

1 INTRODUCTION

Sovereignty is one of the most fundamental concepts of International Law, constituting the foundation upon which relations among States are structured. Traditionally understood as the absolute autonomy of each nation to determine its political and legal course, sovereignty has its roots in the classical formulations of Bodin and Hobbes, consolidated in the Westphalian system in 1648. However, as global interdependence intensifies, this concept becomes relativized in light of the need for legal cooperation and compliance with internationally assumed obligations (Brownlie, 2000; Cassese, 2005).

In the contemporary context, state sovereignty faces unprecedented challenges. The proliferation of multilateral treaties in areas such as human rights, the environment, trade, and collective security imposes limits on the absolute exercise of national autonomy. By adhering to these commitments, States recognize that their domestic authority must engage with international norms, creating a zone of tension between normative independence and legal solidarity (Shaw, 2011; Silva, 2020). This dilemma lies at the center of discussions concerning the validity and scope of international obligations.

The United Nations Charter, the legal framework of the contemporary international order, establishes in Article 2 the principle of the sovereign equality of States (ONU, 1945). At the same time, the same instrument reinforces the need for international cooperation and compliance with multilateral commitments. This apparent contradiction demonstrates that sovereignty, far from being an absolute concept, increasingly presents itself as a relational category subject to external constraints in the name of peace, security, and global development (Ferrez, 2017).

Several recent episodes demonstrate the vulnerability of sovereignty in the face of binding international norms. Decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, often rejected by certain States, illustrate the conflict between international commitments and domestic constitutional supremacy (Benevenisti, 2013). Likewise, the resistance of certain countries to accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court reveals the persistence of the idea of sovereignty as a shield against external interference, even in cases involving crimes against humanity (Nunes, 2020).

The issue at hand, therefore, is not merely to define the limits of sovereignty, but to understand how it can be reconciled with the demands of legal cooperation in a globalized world. Growing interdependence among States means that no country can independently resolve issues such as climate change, pandemics, or migration flows, which transcend borders and require collective solutions (Henkin, 1979). Cooperation thus ceases to be merely a political choice and becomes a functional requirement of the international order.

The central objective of this article is to investigate the extent to which state sovereignty, traditionally conceived as full autonomy, can be reconciled with compliance with international legal obligations. The research seeks to analyze the theoretical foundations of the concept of sovereignty, its transformations over time, and the challenges imposed by the need for multilateral cooperation (Brownlie, 2000; Cassese, 2005). In addition, it seeks to examine exemplary cases of tension between domestic norms and international commitments, identifying patterns and contradictions.

From a theoretical standpoint, the investigation begins from two principal schools of thought. The first, more traditional in nature, maintains the centrality of sovereignty as a nonnegotiable element of the international order. The second, more contemporary, argues that sovereignty should be reinterpreted in light of global cooperation, assuming a relational and functional character (Benevenisti, 2013; Nunes, 2020). The articulation of these perspectives makes it possible to understand how International Law is reconfigured in response to transformations in the global political landscape.

It is important to emphasize that, although sovereignty remains the legal foundation of the international order, its absolute exercise has become increasingly impracticable. The expansion of multilateral normative regimes demonstrates that state authority is frequently limited by commitments assumed externally. This reality requires States to reconcile their normative autonomy with the binding force of agreed rules, under penalty of political isolation or loss of legitimacy (Shaw, 2011; Goldsmith; Posner, 2005).

Academic discussions also point to the need to overcome the false dichotomy between sovereignty and cooperation. Rather than opposing concepts, the two may be understood as complementary, insofar as sovereignty increasingly depends on cooperation in matters of common interest in order to be preserved (Ferrez, 2017). This reasoning is supported by theories that conceive of States as "trustees of humanity," responsible not only for their own populations but also for universal interests (Benevenisti, 2013).

The methodology of this qualitative study is guided by documentary and legal-dogmatic analysis, with emphasis on treaties, conventions, international judicial decisions, and specialized literature. The objective is to articulate theory and practice by confronting classical and contemporary formulations of sovereignty with the empirical challenges faced by the international community (Cunha, 2016; Silva, 2020). This methodological perspective makes it possible to reveal the complexity of the legal tensions arising from compliance with international obligations.

In this sense, the relevance of the research is not only theoretical but also practical. Understanding the tensions between sovereignty and cooperation assists in developing legal solutions capable of harmonizing domestic norms with international commitments. The consolidation of more effective global governance depends precisely on the capacity to articulate these two poles in a balanced manner, ensuring both the autonomy of States and the effectiveness of international norms (Nunes, 2020).

The debate on sovereignty is also particularly current in light of the intensification of resistance to multilateralism. In several regions, nationalist discourses demanding greater decision-making autonomy vis-à-vis international organizations have gained strength. This tendency, however, conflicts with legal commitments already assumed, highlighting the challenge of reconciling national identity with international responsibility (Henkin, 1979; Goldsmith; Posner, 2005).

Environmental issues constitute another field in which the tension between sovereignty and cooperation recurs. Many States resist implementing environmental treaties on the grounds that they violate domestic normative autonomy, even in the face of global crises requiring joint action. This resistance reinforces the idea that sovereignty, when conceived in absolute terms, may become an obstacle to addressing universal problems (Silva, 2020; Nunes, 2020).

From a historical perspective, the evolution of International Law can be understood as having always revolved around the dialectic between sovereignty and legal limitation. From the earliest peace treaties, through the creation of the League of Nations, and into the United Nations system, the international order has been built around attempts to balance the autonomy of States with the need for cooperation (Brownlie, 2000; Cassese, 2005). This trajectory confirms that sovereignty, although central, has never been absolute in practical terms.

Against this background, it becomes clear that contemporary sovereignty must be understood in functional terms. More than formal independence, it is a legal-political instrument that must engage with commitments assumed internationally. This understanding is essential to ensure that States continue to exercise their autonomy without undermining the legal solidarity necessary to maintain the global order (Benevenisti, 2013; Nunes, 2020).

Finally, the research seeks to situate the reader within the central debate permeating contemporary International Law: the tension between sovereignty and cooperation. Throughout the article, the analysis seeks to deepen the theoretical foundations, examine exemplary cases, and discuss the legal mechanisms capable of balancing these two dimensions. The relevance of the topic is

justified not only by its academic currency but also by the practical urgency of constructing legal solutions that make more just and effective global governance possible (Henkin, 1979; Shaw, 2011).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 State Sovereignty in Contemporary International Law

State sovereignty, understood as the supreme and independent power of the State, is one of the central pillars of International Law. Historically conceived as absolute autonomy, it was consolidated after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 as a founding principle of international relations (Brownlie, 2000). In the contemporary world, however, this classical conception has been questioned in light of growing global interdependence and the need for cooperation to address transnational problems.

Scholars such as Cassese (2005) emphasize that sovereignty, although it remains a structuring element of the international order, has undergone a process of transformation. It can no longer be viewed as unlimited power, but rather as competence conditioned by multilateral norms that bind States in areas such as human rights, collective security, and international trade. Sovereignty today therefore presents itself more as a functional than an absolute concept.

For Shaw (2011), sovereignty should not be confused with total independence, because in practice there have always been limitations imposed by treaties, alliances, and customary norms. What is occurring today is an intensification of this process as a result of the expansion of multilateral normative regimes. Understanding sovereignty in the present therefore requires analysis not only of its historical origins but also of its continuous interaction with International Law.

Silva (2020) reinforces the view that, at the legal level, sovereignty must be reconciled with the increasing normative density of International Law. This means recognizing that States do not act in isolation, but in constant interaction, and are required to adjust domestic policies to norms agreed

upon internationally. This perspective relativizes the traditional notion of absolute supremacy without, however, denying the centrality of the concept.

2.2 Sources and Nature of International Obligations

Compliance with international obligations is intrinsically linked to the principle of pacta sunt servanda, which requires treaties to be observed in good faith (Cassese, 2005). This rule, recognized as one of the foundations of International Law, ensures predictability and stability in relations among States. In practice, however, conflicts arise when such obligations collide with domestic constitutional norms.

According to Brownlie (2000), the sources of International Law—conventions, custom, and general principles—are binding and limit the sovereign action of States. By adhering to multilateral treaties, nations assume commitments that transcend their normative autonomy, revealing the need to reconcile domestic law with external obligations. This phenomenon is especially visible in human rights and environmental regimes.

Shaw (2011) emphasizes that the binding nature of international obligations is reinforced by the growing institutionalization of supervisory mechanisms, such as the European Court of Human Rights and the International Criminal Court. Even so, the absence of universal coercive mechanisms makes enforcement of these obligations dependent on the political will of States, weakening their effectiveness.

Silva (2020) notes that the central challenge lies in reconciling constitutional sovereignty with international commitments. In some countries, the understanding prevails that constitutional norms have absolute primacy; in others, international treaties are accorded supremacy, particularly when they concern fundamental rights. This diversity of legal interpretations contributes to the tension between national autonomy and multilateral cooperation.

According to Cançado Trindade (2014), the binding force of international norms is not limited to treaties, but is also supported by the recognition of peremptory norms (jus cogens), whose validity

does not depend on the express acceptance of States. This normative category represents a hard core of International Law that prevents the relativization of essential principles such as the prohibitions of genocide, slavery, and armed aggression. In this sense, the international normative hierarchy introduces objective limits on sovereignty, which cannot be invoked as justification for violating rights regarded as universal.

Another relevant aspect lies in the contribution of national constitutional courts, which play a crucial role in harmonizing legal orders. As Alexy (2002) observes, dialogue between national and international courts constitutes an indispensable mechanism for constructing a "community of interpreters" of law, in which the authority of international norms is gradually strengthened through their internalization within domestic legal systems. This movement points toward the consolidation of multilevel constitutionalism, in which state sovereignty is reinterpreted as part of a broader cooperative structure intended to protect universal values.

2.3 International Cooperation and Legal Interdependence

International cooperation has become indispensable for addressing global problems that transcend national borders. Issues such as climate change, pandemics, and mass migration cannot be resolved in isolation by a single State, requiring joint action and normative coordination (NUNES, 2020). This reality reinforces the idea that sovereignty, although preserved, must engage with multilateral commitments.

Henkin (1979) had already warned that "no State is an island" and that the effectiveness of International Law depends on the willingness of countries to cooperate. This perspective shows that sovereignty does not disappear, but acquires a relational character, allowing States to preserve autonomy while simultaneously engaging in collective obligations. This is a necessary adaptation to the growing interdependence of international society.

Benvenisti (2013) goes further by arguing that States should be viewed as "trustees of humanity," responsible not only for their own populations but also for universal interests. This conception broadens the traditional notion of sovereignty by linking it to duties that transcend borders, such as environmental protection and the defense of human rights. In assuming such commitments, States limit their autonomy but strengthen their legitimacy in the global arena.

Ferraz (2017) observes that international cooperation should not be regarded as a threat, but as a condition for the preservation of sovereignty itself in contexts of interdependence. By sharing responsibilities within multilateral regimes, States are able to confront challenges they could not overcome individually. Sovereignty thus manifests itself not as isolation, but as the capacity to participate actively in the construction of collective norms.

Alexy (2002) adds that the effectiveness of international cooperation depends on dialogue between national and international legal systems, forming a model of multilevel constitutionalism. This model of normative interaction ensures that sovereignty is reinterpreted in a manner compatible with the protection of universal legal interests, avoiding contradictions among distinct legal orders. Interdependence thus not only limits but also qualifies the exercise of sovereignty.

Finally, Cançado Trindade (2014) emphasizes that international cooperation represents the concrete expression of solidarity among peoples, a value increasingly consolidated as a structuring principle of contemporary International Law. The notion of solidarity reinforces the idea that sovereignty should not be viewed only through the lens of autonomy, but also as shared responsibility for maintaining peace, justice, and the protection of human dignity. This view projects cooperation as an inevitable path toward strengthening international legitimacy and effectuating universal rights.

2.4 Exemplary Cases of Tension Between Sovereignty and International Obligations

Cases of resistance to decisions of the European Court of Human Rights clearly illustrate the tension between sovereignty and cooperation. Several States, after being found responsible for human rights violations, have argued that their constitutions prevail over international obligations, revealing

the conflict between domestic normative autonomy and multilateral commitments (Benevenisti, 2013).

Another example is the refusal of some countries to accept the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. States that have not ratified the Rome Statute justify their position on the grounds of preserving sovereignty, even in the face of the need to ensure accountability for war crimes and genocide. This behavior demonstrates that legal cooperation encounters barriers when it is perceived as a threat to the State's monopoly on power (Nunes, 2020).

Resistance to the implementation of environmental treaties is likewise revealing. Several countries, by prioritizing immediate economic interests, have delayed or obstructed the implementation of agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. This posture, frequently legitimized in the name of sovereignty, exposes the difficulty of reconciling domestic policies with global commitments (Silva, 2020).

Goldsmith and Posner (2005) argue that, in many cases, States comply with international obligations only when those obligations coincide with their strategic interests. This realist view contrasts with the normative perspective that defends the primacy of multilateral rules. Analysis of these cases confirms that International Law operates in a permanent tension between legality and politics, with state sovereignty serving as a key element of this unstable balance.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study was structured around a qualitative approach because the object of investigation—the tension between sovereignty and international obligations—cannot be measured solely through statistical criteria, but requires critical interpretation of normative frameworks and state practices. Qualitative research makes it possible to examine in depth the relationship between normative autonomy and legal cooperation, offering greater sensitivity to the subjective elements that permeate state conduct.

The study is legal-dogmatic in nature because it begins with the interpretation of international norms currently in force, such as multilateral treaties, decisions of international courts, and general principles of International Law. This method makes it possible to understand the normative foundations that limit or condition state sovereignty and to analyze how they are received in the practice of international relations. Legal dogmatics is indispensable when investigating the normativity of international obligations.

In addition, the study is exploratory-descriptive, as it seeks both to formulate hypotheses concerning tensions between sovereignty and cooperation and to describe systematically the legal mechanisms governing this relationship. This methodological combination makes it possible to situate the research problem within the theoretical field while also presenting a detailed account of empirical reality through exemplary cases.

Documentary analysis constitutes one of the central techniques employed, involving the examination of international treaties, doctrinal opinions, and judicial decisions. Particular consideration was given to UN documents, reports of the European Court of Human Rights, and provisions of the Rome Statute. These materials make it possible to identify how the international community seeks to reconcile the sovereignty of States with the binding force of multilateral norms.

Another relevant methodological dimension is comparative analysis, applied to different situations involving resistance to or acceptance of international obligations. This approach facilitates the identification of common patterns, such as the prevalence of domestic constitutions over treaties, as well as cases of successful cooperation. The comparative method strengthens critical understanding of the factors that lead States to accept or reject multilateral commitments.

The research also incorporates a systematic literature review encompassing classical and contemporary works of International Law. Texts by Henkin (1979), Brownlie (2000), Cassese (2005), and Shaw (2011) were compared with more recent contributions such as Benvenisti (2013), Ferraz (2017), and Nunes (2020). This intersection of perspectives ensures the theoretical currency of the

investigation and makes it possible to contextualize the sovereignty debate across different historical and political periods.

From the standpoint of validity and reliability, the study relies on widely recognized primary and secondary sources. Validity derives from the use of official documents and the careful selection of specialized literature, while reliability is related to consistency in the analysis and the clear explanation of the criteria adopted. This ensures that the results obtained can be reproduced in future research.

The methodology was designed to align with the article's objective: to understand contemporary sovereignty as a relational concept conditioned by compliance with international obligations. By articulating dogmatic, documentary, and comparative analysis, the study seeks to offer a critical and comprehensive view of the phenomenon capable of engaging both legal theory and the practical challenges faced by the international community.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the tensions between sovereignty and international obligations demonstrates that the classical conception of absolute state autonomy no longer finds support in the contemporary legal system. The cases examined show that, although States preserve the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in the United Nations Charter (ONU, 1945), their practical conduct is conditioned by commitments assumed in multilateral treaties. This finding confirms the thesis that sovereignty, although central, has a limited character in the face of international cooperation (Brownlie, 2000).

The results also indicate that state resistance to compliance with international decisions is more frequent when such obligations directly conflict with domestic constitutional norms. On several occasions, national courts have asserted the primacy of the constitution over international treaties, reinforcing the idea that sovereignty continues to be used as a shield against external interference

(Shaw, 2011). This phenomenon creates a paradox between formal recognition of international obligations and their effective implementation.

In the field of human rights, the tension was found to be particularly evident. States that have ratified international protection treaties frequently refuse to comply with decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, alleging violations of their normative autonomy (Benevenisti, 2013). This posture undermines the legitimacy of the international protection system and reinforces the perception that legal cooperation still encounters significant political and legal barriers.

Another important finding concerns environmental issues. Treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement represent significant advances in constructing global climate governance. Nevertheless, the resistance of some States to adopting emissions-reduction measures demonstrates that sovereignty is still invoked as justification for avoiding commitments that affect domestic policies and economic interests (Silva, 2020; Nunes, 2020). This selectivity undermines the effectiveness of the agreements and threatens the stability of the international system.

Comparative analysis also revealed that sovereignty remains a central element in matters of international security. Many States reject the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, arguing that submission to the Court violates their sovereign authority (Nunes, 2020). This finding confirms that, although cooperation is increasing, there remain areas in which States strongly resist limitations on their autonomy. This posture weakens the universality of International Criminal Law.

The realist perspective advanced by Goldsmith and Posner (2005) reinforces this interpretation by arguing that States comply with international obligations only when those obligations coincide with their strategic interests. This means that legal cooperation is selective and instrumental in practice. This conclusion contrasts with the normative view of authors such as Cassese (2005), who defend the universal binding force of international norms regardless of contingent interests.

At the same time, positive findings were also identified, indicating progress in reconciling sovereignty and cooperation. In certain contexts, States have accepted restrictions on their autonomy

in the name of preserving universal legal interests, as in voluntary adherence to human rights and environmental treaties (Ferrez, 2017). This movement demonstrates that sovereignty, reinterpreted as a relational concept, can strengthen state legitimacy in the international arena.

The concept of States as "trustees of humanity," advocated by Benvenisti (2013), offers a promising perspective. By assuming international obligations in defense of collective interests, such as environmental protection or the promotion of peace, States increase their external legitimacy and contribute to consolidating a more stable international order. This finding demonstrates that cooperation, far from weakening sovereignty, can strengthen it by making it functional.

Henkin (1979) had already emphasized that state behavior in the international arena is marked by a general tendency to comply with norms, even if selectively. Although cases of resistance exist, most international obligations are observed by States, strengthening confidence in the international legal system. This finding qualifies more pessimistic criticisms and suggests that cooperation, though imperfect, is a concrete reality of international relations.

Another important point of discussion concerns legitimacy. International norms and decisions are more readily accepted when perceived as fair and impartial. Conversely, when shaped by geopolitical interests, their legitimacy is contested, increasing state resistance (Shaw, 2011; Ferrez, 2017). This indicates that, in addition to formal legality, perceived legitimacy is an essential factor in the effectiveness of International Law.

The results demonstrate that sovereignty has not disappeared but has transformed. Today it should be understood as functional sovereignty, limited by international obligations and adapted to global interdependence. This transformation does not mean a loss of state authority, but rather a redefinition of its role within an increasingly normative and institutionalized international order (Cassese, 2005; Nunes, 2020).

The discussion reveals that the future of international relations will depend on the capacity of States to reconcile autonomy with multilateral cooperation. For sovereignty to remain relevant, it

must be reinterpreted in dialogue with universal commitments. This balance is an essential condition for confronting the global challenges of the twenty-first century and consolidating a more stable and effective international legal order (Brownlie, 2000; Benevenisti, 2013).

Additionally, Cançado Trindade (2014) observes that the principle of international solidarity is emerging as a normative foundation capable of legitimizing new forms of cooperation. Applied to matters such as environmental protection and human rights, this solidarity consolidates the notion that sovereignty must be exercised responsibly toward the international community, avoiding setbacks in the protection of collective interests.

Alexy (2002) complements this debate by emphasizing that the legitimacy of International Law derives from a continuous process of dialogue between national and international legal orders. This "multilevel constitutionalism" reinforces the idea that sovereignty is not eliminated but reorganized in accordance with common principles that ensure stability and predictability in international relations.

Klabbers (2017), in turn, emphasizes that global interdependence creates new obligations of cooperation, particularly in areas such as climate governance and humanitarian protection. For the author, sovereignty should be reinterpreted as "cooperative sovereignty," a concept that expands the authority of States by linking them to collective commitments indispensable to the survival of the international order.

Finally, Sands (2018) emphasizes that the transformation of sovereignty is most evident in International Environmental Law, where global norms overlap with national policies in defense of universal interests. The evolution of climate regimes demonstrates that international legal cooperation has become not only necessary but a condition of survival in the face of global challenges that transcend every national border.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis developed in this study demonstrated that sovereignty, although it remains a foundation of International Law, can no longer be understood as an absolute concept. Contemporary reality shows that its practical application is continually conditioned by multilateral obligations assumed through treaties, conventions, and international judicial decisions. This transformation reveals that state sovereignty has evolved from a conception of unlimited power toward a relational and functional notion.

The results discussed showed that, despite the continued presence of the principle of sovereign equality of States in the United Nations Charter, compliance with international obligations is indispensable to preserving the world order. The coexistence of national autonomy and global cooperation therefore constitutes one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century. This finding confirms the centrality of the debate concerning the reconciliation of normative independence and legal solidarity.

It was also found that the resistance of some States to accepting decisions of international courts or implementing environmental treaties does not constitute a rejection of the international legal order, but rather demonstrates its structural tensions. Invoking sovereignty as justification for resisting cooperation reveals both the strength of the principle and its limitations in the contemporary world.

In this sense, contemporary scholarship points to the need to understand sovereignty as an adaptable category. States, when assuming international commitments, should be viewed as trustees of the interests of humanity, extending their responsibilities beyond their own borders. This perspective redefines sovereignty and transforms it into an instrument of global cooperation.

Analysis of the cases examined reinforces the conclusion that the effectiveness of international obligations depends not only on their formal legality but also on the legitimacy perceived by States. Norms accepted as impartial and universal receive greater adherence, whereas decisions viewed as

politicized encounter resistance. The effectiveness of International Law therefore requires both robust normative mechanisms and practices that strengthen its credibility.

Another concluding point is that sovereignty, reinterpreted in light of cooperation, can strengthen the State itself. By adhering to human rights, environmental, or economic treaties, countries increase their international legitimacy and demonstrate commitment to universal values. Far from weakening States, this movement reinforces their position in the global arena by integrating them into networks of trust and reciprocity.

On the other hand, the realist approach demonstrates that States tend to comply with international obligations when those obligations coincide with their strategic interests. This finding reveals that sovereignty continues to be exercised as a political calculation in which compliance with or resistance to international norms depends on an assessment of costs and benefits. This pragmatic view challenges the universal aspirations of International Law.

Nevertheless, it is possible to state that the general trend points toward stronger cooperation. Recent global crises—such as climate change and pandemics—have demonstrated that no State can confront them alone, reinforcing the need for normative and institutional integration. In this context, sovereignty comes to be exercised not against, but through, international cooperation.

Accordingly, tensions between sovereignty and cooperation should not be viewed as insoluble contradictions, but as constitutive elements of the international order. Modern International Law is built precisely upon this unstable balance, in which national autonomy is preserved but continually mediated by multilateral legal commitments. This dynamic sustains the vitality of the system, despite its imperfections.

It is concluded that contemporary sovereignty should be understood as a relational concept conditioned by the need for global legal cooperation. Strengthening multilateral institutions, enhancing the legitimacy of decisions, and harmonizing domestic norms with international obligations are fundamental paths toward consolidating more just and effective global governance.

Only in this way will it be possible to reconcile state autonomy with international solidarity for the benefit of the stability of the world system.

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