When Prof. Laski published his "Problems of Sovereignty"
Sir Frederick Pollock in a letter dated September 20, 1919
written to Mr. Justice Holmes, thus observed:

"Now I have got Laski's Problems of Sovereignty from
the London Library, and think it was an ill day for him when
he fell into the hands of Figgis. ... On sovereignty in
general Laski seems to me confused, and likely to be confusing
to novices. In spite of Bryce's clear exposition, published
sixteen or seventeen years ago, he fails to distinguish legal
sovereignty — the formal authority to make rules not formally
controllable by any other defined power — from political
supremacy — the power of directing the action of legal
sovereignty by lawful means: of which the first is matter of
law, the second matter of fact. L.'s mind seems to me quite
un-legal...... Then, what sane man ever maintained that it
is a necessary attribute of a sovereign to be always obeyed?
Not John Austin, to do him bare justice, though I love him
not. Laski's Austinianism is a figment..... However, Laski
is clever enough to put older men on re-examining and
re-stating their own beliefs, and to be sure that is much.
I would concede to him that in a state of society - if it ever comes about - where the risk of war is negligible and violent crime practically extinct, central government, apart from administrative public services like the post office, may perhaps be regarded as a kind of Supreme Court, political as much as legal, for adjusting the relative claims of semi-independent groups. You and I won't live to see that and I don't much think he will."

Mr. Justice Holmes in his reply to Sir Frederick Pollock dated the 26th October, 1919, wrote thus:-

"Your criticism of Laski is very like those that I have made to him, and like you I have regretted the influence of Figgis. It is an odd thing to see an unbelieving Jew interested in a schism in the Scotch Church......"

The problem of sovereignty thus has been so vexed and delicate one that two foremost citizens of the world of ideas had to come down to the arena of controversy to find in disagreement with another master mind. Much of the confusion in these controversies has perhaps been created by a loose and illegitimate identification of the bearer of the sovereign power with the sovereign power itself.
Even writing in 1919 when the first world war of 1914-18 had just ended, the study of the problem of sovereignty could be mainly confined within the framework of the national frontiers. But the second world war and its aftermath, in spite of its resemblances with its predecessor, has one outstanding difference. "We thought of the first world war as an accident like a railway collision or an earthquake and we imagined that as soon as we had buried the dead and cleared up the wreckage we could go back to living the comfortable uneventful life which at that time had taken to be granted..... This time, by contrast, we are well aware that the end of hostilities is not the end of the story." "The really formidable issue to-day is", as Dr. Toynbee has pointed out, "not whether the world is soon going to be unified politically, but in which of two alternative possible ways this rapid unification is going to come about."

Indeed it is difficult to be complacent with the society that has given us the kind of history we have been surviving for the past half a century. The whole world is now tense, uncertain, adrift. The present epoch has been a time of troubles, an age of anxiety. The very grounds of our civilisation, of our certitude are breaking up under our feet; familiar ideas and institutions vanish as we reach for them.
Thus since the two world wars, much water has flown and the developments in international relations have been so fundamental and far-reaching that the problem of state sovereignty in international life has acquired a greater importance and a newer emphasis. In the altered circumstances of to-day, we can ill afford to wait for the inevitable process of History, like some eighteenth-century Prussian drill-sergeant, to take us by the scruff of the neck and twist our heads straight for us.

My aim, hence, is to give some gleam of insight into the problem which has troubled mankind ever since the dawn of the political organisation of man and has still remained the appropriate subject for to-ti. No apology is therefore needed for approaching the issue which has acquired greater momentum and significance by the impact of deep and profound changes in international life.

There are many angles of vision from which we can look at a problem. But in my venture I have tried to follow in my humble way the famous saying of Spinoza, "when I have applied my mind to politics so that I might examine what belongs to politics, with the same freedom of mind as we use for mathematics, I have taken my best pains not to laugh at the actions of mankind, not to groan over them, not to be angry with them, but to understand them".
My contribution, if it is to be made available, for any purpose cannot be viewed in isolation; for a student's life-work is to add his bucketful of water to the great and growing river of knowledge fed by countless bucketfuls of the kind.

As to the materials dealt with in this volume, I can lay but small claim to originality save in the treatment, and I have indicated my indebtedness to others and the sources upon which my information is based, in their proper places.

But the re-arrangement and re-interpretation of these well-known facts have been made in an original way, since the train of thought upon which they are founded has not, so far as I am aware, been viewed in my light or followed to the consequences I have sought to establish. In this I was inspired by the fact that the great achievement of Lord Bryce in his brilliant book "Holy Roman Empire", consisted not in the discovery of new facts but in marshalling facts already well-known and then re-interpreting in his own way an important period in the history of Western civilisation.

The imperfections and limitations inherent in such a venture are exclusively mine, As a lonely traveller, I have set out my journey among the dark and tortuous paths and if I have succeeded in leaving certain sign-posts for my
fellow-travellers, who with greater equipments and greater facilities may go much beyond the path trodden by me, if I have succeeded in opening up new vistas of thought in a mad and frenzied world that had witnessed the tragedy of two world wars within the brief span of half a century and is living under the shadow of a third, I shall consider my efforts as not utterly fruitless.