



Beyond the Territorial State?

Abstract When a territory is stabilised and acquires an institutional character, it takes the form of a delimited space with fixed boundaries that is controlled by a group of people and has exclusive internal sovereignty and equal external status. The paradigmatic example of an institutionalised territorial space in modern times is the state, as it always presupposes a territory. But how does this relationship develop? This chapter discusses the role of the concept of territory in relation to the state and the historical dynamics shaping this relationship.

Keywords State · Nation-state · Territorialisation · Sovereignty · Urban powers · Nationalism · Regionalism

This chapter deals with critical analyses and reflections in contemporary scholarship, especially by sociologists, historians and geographers, as well as international relations research into the relationship between territory and state. The goal of this chapter is to highlight how the use of a territorial approach, unlike naturalising approaches, is key to understanding the construction of European states in modern times, as well as their recent transformations. We start with Max Weber's definition of the state as a "human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (2019: 136). Thus,

Weber provides us with an ideal type of state, an abstraction. The risk of this approach, however, when the ideal is conflated with the empirical, is that the distinction between the idea of the state and its concrete articulation and transformation becomes blurred. Above all, territory is “given” and not constructed. The expression “given territory” tends to avoid how modern democratic states are embedded in territorial processes, including when rescaling, regionalisation and supranational empowering challenge the modern relationship between territory and state.

In the past few decades, various scholars have focused on the historical processes through which modern states have been constructed and shown how they are the result of a concerted effort rather than a natural trend in how societies are organised (e.g. Evans et al., 1995). Historical approaches have stressed in various ways state-building as an articulation of the “state” and the “nation”, although the territorial dimension is not always highlighted. Consequently, mainstream political sociology and political science continue to use the concepts of nation-states and national states avoiding the concept of territorial state (Keating, 2017a). Instead, more than 30 years ago, Charles Tilly recommended distinguishing between some ideal types of states: (1990: 2–3): Non-national states, such as empires and city-states, that have been the most common models; national states, which are “states governing multiple contiguous regions and cities by means of centralized, differentiated and autonomous structures”, are less common, and nation-states, where “people share a strong linguistic, religious and symbolic identity”, are even rarer in Europe. Moreover, with the concept of a territorial state, the emphasis is on the state seeking control of territory and population and claiming mutually independent sovereignty inside delimited borders, according to the legacy shaped by the Peace of Westphalia since the seventeenth century. With the concept of territorial state, it has been focused on the transition from the feudal personalisation of power towards abstract authority over a delimited territory. Sociologist Saskia Sassen, who combined the concept of national state and territorial state, emphasises the evolution from the Middle Ages. Institutional authorities’ ability to exclusively impose territorial jurisdiction (i.e. the validity of their own laws in a specific geographical area), as in the modern territorial states, is a result of a profound transformation: “The national territorial state became the final locus of authority rather than a monarch’s divinity, a lord’s nobility, or the claims of religious bodies. It repositioned the meaning of membership

toward a territorial collectivity derived from a complex abstract authority” (Sassen, 2006: 80). While the nation and national components stress the legitimisation of the state in terms of “character” and “will” (Agnew, 1994: 59), the territorial component underlines the state’s legitimacy to control and shape its territorial area and the people within this area. Thus, the question arises of how the territorial state is constructed over time. To answer, we can distinguish, from an analytical point of view, two aspects: the state as a *construction* and the state as a *performer*.

STATE CONSTRUCTION

As a “state without territory is not possible” (Oppenheim, 1955: 451, cited in Knight, 1992: 311), one might argue that modern nation-states and national states are by-products of territorial processes, which implies a complex construction over time. Historian John Gerard Ruggie (1993) asserts that the political organisation of space takes different forms: territorialised or not, mobile or fixed, mutually exclusive or not. In the mediaeval system, authority was personalised and parcelled out within and across territorial spaces where inclusive bases of legitimation prevailed. Before the thirteenth century, there were few or no fixed boundaries between different territorial spaces shaped by competing political authorities; there were mainly transitional zones and frontiers understood as spaces with blurred boundaries (Ruggie, 1993: 150). The Peace of Westphalia concluded the Thirty Years’ War and enshrined the principle of the recognition of exclusive territorial authority, which called into question the transversal logics that had previously been dominant. Thus, a new historical phase was inaugurated in which a system of territorially delimited states was constituted and progressively articulated by the separation between public and private spheres, where the private is to be understood as the space of property and economic production, which in the nineteenth century would take the form of modern capitalism and the industrial factory. By contrast, the sphere of public power became the monopoly of central authorities—or, rather, the power of the sovereign as the sole holder of legitimate force—for the various great European powers over time. This transformation involved the overcoming of the parcelling out of powers and the guarantee of the (relative) autonomy of the private sphere.

Sociologist Norbert Elias illustrates how the centrality of the monopoly concerns not only the exercise of force but also the creation and role of

an administrative system, as well as power over the army and taxation, which is a crucial component in defining the state:

Forerunners of such monopoly control of taxes and the army over relatively large territories have previously existed in societies with a less advanced division of functions, mainly as a result of military conquest. It takes a far advanced social division of functions before an enduring, specialized apparatus for administering the monopoly can emerge (...) It is only with the emergence of this continuing monopoly of the central authority and this specialized apparatus for ruling that dominions take on the character of 'states'. (Elias, 2000: 268)

However, without spatial appropriations, the territorial state does not transform into a reified institution. The state is a cognitive and normative map in which individuals and groups believe and with which they identify. In other words, "the state is invisible, it must be personified before it can be made visible, symbolised to be loved, imagined before it can be conceived" (Walzer, 1967: 194). As the spatial appropriation of the institutional authority preceded the modern territorial state, the modern nation-state is a combination of the two components of this notion: the state and the nation. Sassen (2006: 53–54) observes how during the Middle Ages there was a call to the homeland, which was closely tied to community, while patriotism, *amor patrio*, referred to both the Christian paradise and one's places of birth and living rather than political entities. In short, in the Middle Ages, the modern concept of nation did not exist yet and would only become dominant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the need to build a sense of belonging to the state, particularly in disputed territorial areas, would play a central role in modern territorialisation strategies.

STATE PERFORMER

To the extent it is taken for granted in modern politics and society, the territorial state plays a performing role in shaping social and political practices and representations. Specifically, the state and its apparatus are both by-products and strategists of statehood. They perform territorial identities through legal rules and their capacity to consolidate and legitimise their authority through a "secular religion" like nationalism (Mosse, 2023). The role of the state in redesigning collective identities through a

nation-building strategy has been often pointed out by the literature (e.g. Cabo & Molina, 2009; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1984). The French territorial state is a noteworthy case. While it appears nowadays to be a kind of idealised model of the nation-state based on a homogeneous culture and language, the French state is a long-term strategic construction involving a composite set of conquered territories that have been annexed and integrated into an administrative state, previously consisting of more or less strong local and regional identities. In the nineteenth century, the French state did not correspond to the model of the nation-state composed of integrated inhabitants who recognised themselves in a single nation, in the state and its laws. As historian Eugen Weber writes in his classic study from the 1960s:

[S]till around 1870, the inhabitants knew that they were French subjects, but for many of them this status was more of an abstraction. The populations of entire regions felt little identity with the state or with people from other regions. Before this changed, before the inhabitants of France could come to feel a community in the strict sense, they had to share significant experiences. Roads, railways, schools, markets, military service and the circulation of money, goods and printed matter enabled such experiences, loosening old ties and instilling a national view of things in regional minds [...]. French culture only became truly national in the last years of the century. (Weber, 1976: 476)

Weber's study, as well as subsequent studies, including by anthropologist Peter Sahlins (1989), shows how territories, particularly in their institutionalised forms, are the product of specific strategies promoted by actors, rules and devices enacted within a given spatial perimeter. These strategies do not operate in empty or neutral spaces but contribute to the construction of a new symbolic reality that interacts with subjects that have already been socialised in other territorial spaces (Anderson, 2018). State strategies of nation-building involve not only forms of physical coercion but also symbolic violence. A state territorial strategy manifests itself with all its strength when internalising disciplinary action favouring the organisation and control of individuals' behaviour (Foucault, 2014). Therefore, it is worth noting that there might be a clash of legitimacy, even beyond the French case, between those who represent the central state (e.g. officials, *préfets* and teachers) and "the barbarians", "the savage beasts". This struggle can also take on violent connotations. In France, it took almost a century of practical and symbolic concrete interventions,

threats, sophisticated administrative procedures, negotiations and various forms of repression to eradicate local identities, languages and affiliations and to impose a collective local appropriation of a unitary nation-state on the entire population across the national territory. Undoubtedly, the consolidation of national territorial identities was the result of intentional top-down strategies to uproot local identities. This process also involved a range of mechanisms and processes, including the development of railway networks, the establishment of national mass communication systems (e.g. radio and television), the institutionalisation of forms of national solidarity (e.g. modern welfare systems), a pact of non-belligerence between the business world and trade unions and the exceptional economic growth of the post-Second World War period known as the Glorious Thirty, which was based on the dominant nation-state model of institutionalised territoriality.

SOVEREIGNTY

At the heart of the dialectic between construction and performance, there is a question of sovereignty. As there is no state without territory or identification of its members to that territory, there is no territory without some form of control over it (i.e. a power that expresses itself with authority), which helps to establish borders vis-à-vis other states and power within itself. This does not mean territory necessarily forms a territorial state. According to historian Charles Maier (2016: 286), territories, as circumscribed geographical spaces controlled by borders, are not constructed solely for the sake of creating sovereign states. However, when speaking of state authority, the term most commonly used is territorial sovereignty, of which there are many interpretations, with a hard core that is little discussed: the control of authority exercised over a territory. Territorial sovereignty can be distinguished into two components: exogenous and endogenous. The first focuses on relations with the outside world, other sovereignties and other states; the second refers to the internal power of the prince, the dictator, the government, the parliament and the people. In the first case, we generally refer to national sovereignty, and in the second, to parliamentary, popular sovereignty, etc. Of these different declinations, the history of political thought has developed different and articulated keys to interpretation. As historian Giorgio Galli argues, sovereignty “is not an instance—a concept, an institution, a faculty and an empire, a methodological point of view—in itself concluded

and self-sufficient. Rather, it must be considered in its complexity” (2019: 13). Thus, a distinction must be made between absolute and relative sovereignty, which recalls a debate rooted in two opposing philosophical theses of the seventeenth century: those of Thomas Hobbes and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. While the former, who succeeded in imposing his definition on subsequent political thought, saw sovereignty as absolute and ultimate power, the latter advocated for a shared, more pragmatic version of sovereignty (e.g. Krivenko, 2020).

From a historical point of view, it appears difficult to argue that absolute state sovereignty ever existed in relation to other established powers. Indeed, a large body of historiographic and constitutionalist literature has highlighted the mythological character of sovereignty in its absolute sense, although this interpretation has continued to dominate representations of the modern state. The inter-state dynamic has always been shaped by interdependence, and consequently, sovereignty depends to some extent on the recognition of other states, which can be called into question. Meanwhile, territorial states also have to bargain with local forces, as it is not always possible to impose decisions from the centre without bottom-up legitimation, and with economic powers that prosper throughout extra-territorial relations. As Michel Foucault notes, as early as the eighteenth century, the government of the territory implied the power to discipline and regulate while ensuring the circulation of people and goods (Foucault, 2004: 31). In contemporary territorial states based on representative democracy, some other questions arise: Who wields supreme power, the citizens or their representatives? And if the state is moulded in processes of rescaling and globalisation, how can the principle of absolute sovereignty be legitimated?

DE-TERRITORIALISATION AND RESCALING

The territorial state’s capacity to achieve legitimacy is far from linear or permanent. In the past few decades, political scientists and political sociologists have addressed the following crucial question: What is the political impact of the state’s decreased control over its territorial space in relation to globalised processes and the delegation of some national state competencies to other public and private bodies? There has been a lively debate to provide answers to this question. Some believe that the nation-state has lost its essential functions, especially from a socio-economic point

of view, by giving up at least part of its ability to control the territory when compared with the past, when the social-democratic pact in Western countries (especially in Europe) had made the state the arbiter of the development of full employment and the welfare state during the Glorious Thirty, corresponding to the stability of regimes resulting from the Cold War. In the words of Jeppe Strandsbjerg, a scholar in international relations:

[T]here was a certain sense of harmonious correspondence between a world of sovereign nation-states and the cold war. The spatial image of the state seemed a perfect match with the spatiality of the world. To the extent that it was theorized at all, territorial space was implicitly conceptualized as a billiard ball, as a solid unit interacting with other units according to the mechanical physics of Newton. The main lines of conflict were those between states territorially [...]. Territorial exclusivity was the rule of the game. The enemy was kept at bay through containment and the building of walls. (Strandsbjerg, 2010: 21)

The end of the Cold War marked a turning point in European history. Territory understood as a form coinciding with the state, the organising principle of modern societies and a functional referent of international relations, was plunged into crisis. According to Bertrand Badie (1995), another scholar in international relations, there has never been a perfect correspondence between political spaces and territorial boundaries. The territory circumscribed within state borders has certainly not represented the entire political space because on many continents, regional powers have a long history, but also because supranational relations precede the current crisis of the territorial state. However, in the late twentieth century, the diverging tendency has strengthened: More or less everywhere, the control of space within precise borders defined by the territorial state left room for a proliferation of territorial spaces with multiple identities, which cannot be traced back to a single territorial geography.

The strong de-territorialisation of the past few decades does not mean the end of territorial states, but it changes the way of conceiving contemporary states, at least among scholars who in some way demand a territorial approach to the analysis of the state. One of the contributions of the re-evaluation of the state in recent decades is the emphasis on its status as a social construction. Its territoriality is not a given but the result

of the actions of its institutions and their strategies to institutionalise the territory and the state itself. These efforts may be more or less successful and may vary in terms of legitimacy and practical and symbolic appropriations. This process implies avoiding any naturalised approach to the relation between territory and state.

While the concept of territory in legal, sociological and political science scholarship is closely connected to that of the state, the recent transformations of the state ask to go beyond approaches conflating territory, sovereignty and state. As geographer John Agnew argued in his famous 1994 essay entitled “The Territorial Trap”, it would be wrong to regard states as reified units of sovereign territorial space, unchanging in time, mutually exclusive and containers of society. The interdependencies between “internal” and “external”—between foreign and domestic policy—are mostly always present, even if their relevance must be historicised. Furthermore, it would be limiting to assume that the territorial sovereign state is the only possible container of society, ignoring alternative forms of territoriality, such as cities and metropolises. This reasoning applies above all as a critique of “methodological nationalism” to how it has managed to impose itself on the social and political sciences by attributing a taken-for-granted greater importance to phenomena that have a national spread or presence while avoiding regional and local relevance (see Chapter 2). Despite the persistent role of the territorial trap in scholarship (e.g. Shah, 2012), several strands have influenced the social sciences over the past 30 years. Among these strands, perhaps the most prolific have emphasised rescaling de-territorialisation with the rising power of cities and urban spaces and with new institutional arrangements among supranational (or macro-regional) and micro-regional powers (e.g. Brenner, 2004).

NEW URBAN POWERS

Urban planners, scholars of political economy and international relations, as well as historians, sociologists and political scientists, have investigated the growing role of global cities and metropolises in contemporary dynamics since the 1980s. Following the pioneering work of Henry Lefebvre, who wrote as early as the 1960s of a looming urban revolution (2003), subsequent studies highlighted several important aspects concerning globalisation processes (2009). Firstly, they underscored the increasing concentration in global cities (first and foremost, New York

City, Tokyo and London) of the headquarters of multinational corporations (i.e. the main actors of economic and financial globalisation). In other words, these studies show the extent to which globalisation has created new spaces and new hierarchies, in contrast to the narrative that the flows are distributed more or less equally around the globe. Global cities exert such a power of concentration and attraction in the production of wealth, as well as direct interrelationships between them, that they are somewhat autonomous from nation-states (Sassen, 2001).

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the network of urban centres was integrated into national territorial economies and, thus, subordinate to nation-states. However, since the economic crisis of the 1960s, urban centres, which have grown exponentially, have created their own network structure, thus forming a new scale of global economic and productive activity that is disengaged from their subordinate role to nation-states. In what has been called the archipelago of the world-city, a network of interconnected urban nodes is expressed, providing services, infrastructures, technologies, development and accumulation strategies and defining a diversified set of local and global arrangements that cross, intersect and bypass national economic territories (Brenner, 2004).

The emergence of the network of world-cities is the result of a two-fold, interrelated process: on the one hand, the deconstruction of the Fordist model and the decline of the traditional industrial factory, and on the other hand, the development of a new international division of labour that concentrates high-tech and high value-added production mainly in global cities while relegating manufacturing to peripheral and semi-peripheral areas in pursuit of profit maximisation. It should be noted, however, that neither nation-states nor mid-tier cities disappear or are relegated to a purely marginal role. The control exercised by global cities is only partial, especially because the localisation of production processes must be adapted to the specific social, political and institutional configurations of individual localities and regions. Studies on global cities sometimes present a narrative of a world without places, borders, regulation and territorial control by the state. However, others emphasise that the state and its core institutions continue to play a relevant role within the network of global cities, albeit to a lesser degree than in the era of traditional industrialism. Each global city maintains a direct and intense relationship with the nation-state to which it belongs, which is essential to compete for and foster the attractiveness of people and businesses. Moreover, states and more generally institutions located at various scales of

government play a role that remains crucial in shaping, regulating and recalibrating relations between the local and the global (Brenner, 2019).

MULTI-SCALING STATEHOOD

While the processes of globalisation do not imply a full disarticulation of territorial states, a less unitary, delegative, plural model of the state seems to be asserting itself. A *multi-scaling statehood* appears to be taking shape precisely at a time when the role of the nation-states was considered outdated, not only because of the expansion of the logic of capitalism and the development of global cities but also as a result of the de- and re-territorialisation of the powers towards a supra- and a subnational institutional articulation.

Supranational instances of governance have acquired a role never seen before in contemporary history, especially in Europe. The boost came mainly between the 1990s and 2000s with the creation and strengthening of public and semi-public institutions aimed at coordinating part of public policies that had previously been under virtually exclusive control of nation-states, such as monetary policy and trade. The example of European Union, created through the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, with increased powers over the European Economic Community that had emerged in the 1950s, or the World Trade Organization founded in 1994 are some of the most relevant examples. However, the unprecedented expansion of international cooperation, at least since the Second World War, concerns not only monetary and trade institutions but also regional and multilateral initiatives involving foreign policy, health policy, human rights, the environment and national security. Moreover, compared with the regional and multilateral arrangements of the first post-war decades, specific structures of integrated governance and supranational regulation have emerged, with decision-making processes transferred from individual nation-states to new higher-level political institutions (Gruber, 2000).

Simultaneously, a varied process of decentralisation, devolution and federalisation has taken hold in many countries: also on the European continent due to the explicit strategy promoted by the European Union (Keating, 2017b; King & Le Galès, 2017). Although the notion of a Europe of the regions will remain in some ways only a slogan, the changes that have taken place make it possible to speak of an era of regionalisation of political authority that began in the 1950s. A study covering 42 countries on different continents in between 1950 and 2006 showed that not

all of them experienced a process of regionalisation, but where reforms were carried out, which was in the majority of countries (31 cases), there was an increase in regional or at least sub-state powers. In 15 countries, a subnational institutional authority was introduced that had not existed before or had not had the same decision-making weight. The number of nation-states with regional parliaments increased from 16 to 31 (Hooghe et al., 2010: 52 ff.). In turn, the processes of decentralisation and devolution and the growing interest in federalism in recent decades in many European countries and beyond have helped to open up new fields of research and create academic journals, publishing series and handbooks specialised in the study of subnational and especially regional political dimensions (Harbers et al., 2021).

On the one hand, the re-articulation of supra- and subnational powers has led to a partial weakening of the role of the nation-state; on the other hand, new rules, regimes and mechanisms have been developed and contributed to reshaping the territory from the point of view of its management, economic role and forms of belonging. It no longer seems taken for granted that the nation-state, as a central power, holds power and sovereignty in all its traditional competencies. The state has to reckon with, then negotiate, cooperate and sometimes come into conflict with subnational and supranational powers, institutional and non-institutional powers and public powers, as well as private powers, which develop their own jurisdictional spaces that partly overlap and partly intersect with those of the nation-state. In an attempt to describe what is happening in Europe with the process of upward and downward integration, the concept of multi-level governance has been introduced, in which decision-making competencies are no longer monopolised by national governments but shared by actors at different levels, including subnational governmental bodies. As such, supranational institutions have become actors in their own right, playing a role independent of national governments and, to some extent, subnational powers. Moreover, the traditional separation between national and international politics has been challenged by pressure groups and public-private or transnational partnerships (Hooghe & Marks, 2001).

SOVEREIGNISM

The emergence of new subnational and supranational institutional powers, as well as the growing complexity and transversal logics associated with economic and urban changes, does not seem to indicate a newly established territorial order in Europe and elsewhere. On the contrary, at the level of social dynamics, uncertainty and risk appear to be the dominant figures in this historical phase (Beck, 1992; Bauman, 2007). On the political level, many responses allude to solutions relying on the same assumptions that have been weakened by the transformations or that involve radicalising the strategies already in place. According to the French scholar in International relations Bertrand Badie (2017: ff.), there is a tension between, on the one hand, a territorial, multiple and differentiated spatialities produced and shaped by the social, cultural, political and institutional processes of today's world and, on the other, the resurgence of a concept of territory based on identity and nationalist claims. This resurgence tends to either put the declining power of the nation-state back at the centre or allude to a new state for communities that denounce a lack of self-determination. As economic, institutional and cultural processes make it increasingly difficult for the nation-state to maintain control over many aspects of individual and collective life, new questions and demands arise, but they are often incompatible with the functionalist narrative of multi-level governance. Among the various forms of protest and disaffection that sociological and political literature has highlighted in recent years, political actors demanding greater sovereignty bring the issue of re-territorialisation strategies back to the centre. A disarticulated and transformed sovereignty corresponds to—or rather responds to—a sovereignism whose political objective is to re-establish a presumed lost national and popular sovereignty (Basile & Mazzoleni, 2020). Sovereignty might be presented as a matter of faith especially when vast processes of globalisation and institutional rescaling boost interdependence and uncertainty at the same time.

Sovereignism today takes the form of a varied set of political mobilisations on different scales. Despite their diversity, these mobilisations denounce “distant” power as being synonymous with anti-democratic power. In response, they call for a redefinition of borders, rights and authorities. These claims include the demand for institutional autonomy or independence, the recovery of the power of the nation-state that supposedly suffers from a declining sovereignty, as well as a struggle

for regional (linguistic, religious, cultural) identity within and against the nation-state. Thus, there are different forms of territorial mobilisation: the nationalism of majorities and that of minorities or supposed minorities, who feel threatened by the nation-state's sovereignty or who denounce the illegitimacy of the nation-state against a minority "nation" that lacks its own legitimate sovereignty. Territorial mobilisations have many motivations: the struggle for territorial justice between regions within a nation-state; greater autonomy on the part of regions of a state that feel discriminated against on account of wealth or opportunity; demands for the recognition of institutional competences within the framework of a more or less centralist or decentralised state; secession from the state to establish a new state; and the struggle to defend national sovereignty endangered by external pressures (e.g. by European integration). Thus, territorial mobilisations are forms of territorialising strategies that are conflicting and even antagonistic to the institutional context in which they are called upon to act.

NEO-NATIONALISM

From a historical point of view over the past century, the main form of territorial politicisation has been nationalism. While sovereignism is a more specific form of politicisation regarding territorial control, nationalism entails a broader set of cultural dimensions, including symbolic identification and belonging. Of course, there are many definitions of nationalism, and there is no doubt that a certain polysemy and ambivalence of this notion must be recognised (Connor, 1994; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1984; Smith, 1998). However, it is interesting to mention that Ernest Gellner (1983) identifies in the various forms of nationalism the claim of congruence between national unity and political unity (i.e. national integrity). The partial disarticulation between state and territory as a result of transnational economic processes, supranational integration and the dynamics of decentralisation has claimed a come-back for national integrity aimed at restoring the coincidence between nation and state or what was presumed to be such. In other words, neo-nationalism is a form of mobilisation that fights for the territory, defined by national belonging, to be matched by recognised sovereignty within the state perimeter. In nationalism, there is also the idea that this recognition is being violated or is somehow frustrated or unfulfilled, and that a reaction is needed to achieve this. It should not be surprising that this goal remains topical,

particularly because nationalism has been one of the most enduring and tenacious political ideologies in world history over the past 200 years (Bieber, 2020).

Although some narratives have tried to present a post-national image of the evolution of contemporary democracies, territory as a space of national contention and claim is far from having been consigned to the dustbin of history, even in Europe in recent decades, including open violent contentions. The etymological origin of the term territory derives from the Latin *territorium*, *terra*, dry matter as opposed to water, which shares its root with *terreo* or *terrere*, i.e. to intimidate, terrorise or keep away. The most widely discussed narrative is that of nationalism as opposed to globalisation and the weakening of the nation-state in favour of supranational powers. From the experience of the former Yugoslavia to today's tensions in the Mediterranean area and war in Ukraine, nationalist sentiments often fuel violent confrontations. Even in the pacified and reunited Europe after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union, dreams of a world without nationalist conflicts have proved elusive.

To observe nationalist controversies, political science tends to highlight the role of political actors, parties and movements, their discourses and strategies, but also to point out how multi-scalar political systems can become spaces of opportunity for these actors (Heinisch et al., 2019). Nationalism is also seen, perhaps more traditionally, from a transnational expansionist perspective (i.e. as a strategy and process of re-territorialisation that transcends a given nation-state), where what is at stake is the redefinition of the symbolic and political-institutional borders of the territory, as in the case of the plans to build a Greater Russia as a premise of the current war (Nygren, 2008) or the strategies of Viktor Orbán's government in claiming parts of Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine for the Hungarian nation, as well as Israel's vis-à-vis the occupied Arab territories. However, much of contemporary nationalism seems to develop in opposition to supranational powers, mingling in Europe with Euroscepticism, or with forms of protectionism antagonistic to free trade and its guarantors, as in the case of the measures implemented by the Trump presidency in the United States against the World Trade Organization. The geopolitical redefinition of powers, the changing territorial dynamics, the narratives of flows and contingency and the uncertainties of a more fluid social world do not take away space but in some ways tend to provide unprecedented opportunities for the various forms of nationalist

claims, which refer to lost roots, a missed autonomy and a nation-state to be safeguarded or strengthened.

REGIONALIST CONTENTION

A form of territorial mobilisation that sometimes overlaps with nationalism is regionalism, which expresses the idea of defending the identity and interests of a particular region that has autonomy or sovereignty that they consider to be insufficient. The notion of “region” has a wide range of meanings in the various disciplines of the social sciences and the historical tradition of European countries. Two main meanings can be distinguished: as a macro-region, a continent or set of countries that share common traits; or as a micro-region, the expression of a circumscribed space located within a larger structure that usually coincides with a national state. A region is the result of the coming together of various concepts of space, although in recent studies focused on the processes of decentralisation or federalisation, one of its institutional translations prevails: an institutional system, as a regional government or as a group of institutions operating over a territory (Keating, 1998: 8). Broadening its connotation, the region qualifies as a more or less circumscribed spatial area where social interaction takes place, a political and institutional space or a group of institutions operating in a territory that may correspond to an administrative division with characteristics that distinguish it from other regions. However, a region is not a taken-for-granted space but the result of a set of struggles about the legitimate space of representation and power (Bourdieu, 1991). According to this perspective, the study of regions should assume them as changing and multidimensional processes, where different symbolic and legal strategies, scales and borders are at stake (Paasi, 2009).

It is no coincidence that scholars sometimes use the expression minority nationalism as a synonym for regionalism. Until a few decades ago, regionalisms in stateless regions in the Western world were considered the expression of an archaic revolt against modernity, in particular against the modernity represented by the homogenous ideal type of the nation-state. By contrast, in recent decades, there has been a diverse strand of studies that consider regionalist mobilisations as expressions of profound changes in the social, cultural, economic and institutional dynamics of contemporary democracies. In other words, regionalist claims are one of the many manifestations of the processes of globalisation and

territorial rescaling, which have imposed new challenges on the relations between centres and peripheral regions, particularly on the European continent (Keating, 1998, 2018).

The enhancement of regional traditions does not necessarily lead to the emergence of political movements and parties. Where it does happen, in a regional space with more or less distinctive cultural, linguistic or institutional boundaries, peripherality becomes a metaphor and symbol of a politicisation of both socio-economic asymmetries and specific territorial and cultural affiliations (Rokkan & Urwin, 1983). Even in the absence of a common agreement on how to characterise regionalist parties, described as autonomist, ethnic or ethno-regionalist, more or less left- or right-wing, there is a growing awareness of their importance (e.g. Dandoy, 2010). Regardless of the diversity of the forms of claim, the lowest common denominator of political regionalism is a demand for greater sovereignty and more resources, the ability to make autonomous decisions and a denunciation of discrimination or asymmetry in relation to a broader space of belonging, which is generally, but not necessarily, the nation-state (Hepburn, 2009).

Regarding the reasons for the emergence and consolidation of regionalist parties, there are several factors in the field (Swenden & Bolleyer, 2014). The most frequently evoked factors are, firstly, cultural and linguistic ones (i.e. these parties arise on a territorial substratum that is more or less strongly nurtured by minority cultural forms of belonging, particularly linguistic ones, which differ from the majority ones within the nation-state). The second type of factor is socio-economic: The causes are said to lie in forms of inequality or asymmetry with respect to the major centres. The third order of factors is geopolitical: They are linked to the decline in the role of the nation-state, economic globalisation and European integration, which have contributed to a reconfiguration of the relations between regions and nation-states. It was precisely the weakening of the centrality of the nation-state that favoured the emergence of regionalisms and, thus, of new expectations of recognition and autonomy, economically or culturally, in an increasingly interdependent world (Keating, 1998: 3). Instead of reducing mobilisation and protest, the increased autonomy of regional powers would have increased the opportunities for political actors and the expectations of citizens belonging to minority cultural and linguistic realities.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE STATE AND THE LEGITIMATE TERRITORIAL SPACE

In this chapter, we focused on the relationship between territory and state and saw how the evolution of this relationship varies over time. The territorial state is the modern performing construction of the institutionalised territory. We broadly traced the process of the rise, consolidation and partial questioning of the nexus between territory and nation-state. The nexus between the territorial state, nation-state and sovereignty is a historical product that is anything but a foregone conclusion. The attempt to create new loyalties in the populations living in the territory, especially through targeted strategies, has been successful in many ways throughout modern and contemporary history, and this is particularly true when it comes to states with a centralist tradition, where there have been efforts to eradicate local identities and impose a collective national identity. For centuries, the territory was identified with the state, in particular with the nation-state, but more recently, this model has been challenged—first and foremost, by the new urban, supranational and subnational powers that prefigure a new and more complex articulation of territorial spaces. In recent decades, with the strengthening of globalisation processes, the partial delegation of sovereignty to subnational and supranational entities and the rise of metropolises as the backbone of global economic processes, we have been witnessing a partial disarticulation between nation-states and territory. This implies a diminished ability of nation-states to exercise direct control over their territory.

The territorial state has not disappeared, nor has part of its power, but it is adapting to the new configuration. Although institutionalised territories existed before the territories shaped by nation-states, and institutional territorial spaces other than that of the nation-state have remained, the latter is far from being declared extinct. A territorial approach to politics suggests a double reading: On the one hand, states continue, within the processes of global, international and transnational interdependence, to produce territory and to delimit, in a more or less cooperative or conflictual negotiation, their role in controlling resources, private and public interests, access and presence of the population together with a composite configuration of public and private entities. However, the emergence of new institutional, subnational and supranational powers, the growing complexity and transversal logics and the changes in the capitalist system do not seem capable of prefiguring a new territorial order, as

shown by the various forms of nationalist and regionalist territorial mobilisation that have emerged in recent years in Europe and other parts of the world.

The territorial state, with its procedures and the actors that embody it, continues to produce territorial space. As Henri Lefebvre already noted several decades ago, “the main function of the political-state space is to regulate flows, to coordinate the blind forces of growth, to impose its law on the chaos of “private” and “local” interests; but it also has another, no less important, albeit opposite function: that of preserving fragmented spaces within their limits, of maintaining their multiple functions” (Lefebvre, 2009: 302–303). In other words, one should not too rigidly oppose a state order based on popular and national sovereignty to a model of multi-level governance. According to this interpretation, the contemporary multi-scalar state implies both homogeneous and multiple territorial spaces. This complexity explains the functionality of modern states to the development of capitalism, driven by internal economic interests and increasing interdependences. Within this complex configuration, the nation-state model appears neither defunct nor redundant but represents a persistent and highly relevant form of spatiality, complementary to regional and supranational spaces, networks and flows. The Westphalian model based on sovereign states has been called into question but has not disappeared. This is also helped by the fact that the territorial state continues to inform ordinary, everyday representations of legitimate political organisations through what has been referred to as mundane nationalism—that is, a set of symbols, norms and languages that reproduce forms of identification shaped by national history (Billig, 1995). The main consequence of territorial complexity in linking with the persistent role of the nation-state and national state is a rising contention and struggles about the legitimate space of territoriality in democratic politics. Unsurprisingly, the age of globalisation and territorial rescaling is characterised by increasing controversies in terms of sovereigntism, neo-nationalism and regionalism. This does not reduce but rather increases the heuristic relevance of a territorial approach to politics.

REFERENCES

- Agnew, J. (1994). The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory. *Review of International Political Economy*, 1(1), 53–80.

- Anderson, B. (2018). *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Amsterdam University Press. First edition 1983.
- Badie, B. (1995). *La fin des territoires. Essai sur le désordre international et l'utilité sociale du respect*. Fayard.
- Badie, B. (2017). *La fin des territoires*. Fayard.
- Basile, L., & Mazzoleni, O. (2020). Sovereignist wine in populist bottles? An Introduction. *European Politics and Society*, 21(2), 151–162.
- Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid times: Living in an age of uncertainty*. Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society*. Sage.
- Bieber, F. (2020). *Debating nationalism: The global spread of nations*. Bloomsbury.
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism*. Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). Identity and representation. Elements for critical reflections on the idea of region. In *Language and symbolic power* (pp. 220–228). Polity Press.
- Brenner, N. (2004). *New State spaces. Urban governance and the rescaling of statehood*. OUP.
- Brenner, N. (2019). *New urban spaces: Urban theory and the scale question*. OUP.
- Cabo, M., & Molina, F. (2009). The long and winding road of nationalization: Eugen Weber's peasants into frenchmen in modern European history (1976–2006). *European History Quarterly*, 39(2), 264–286.
- Connor, W. (1994). *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding*. Princeton University Press.
- Dandoy, R. (2010). Ethno-regionalist Parties: A typology. *Perspectives on Federalism*, 2(2), 194–220.
- Elias, N. (2000). *The civilizing process: Sociogenetic and psychogenetic investigations*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Evans, P. B., Rueschemeyer, D., & Skocpol, T. (Eds.). (1995). *Bringing the state back in*. Cambridge University Press.
- Foucault, M. (2014). *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the collège de france, 1977–1978*. St Martin's Press.
- Galli, C. (2019). *Sovranità*. Il Mulino.
- Gellner, E. (1983). *Nation and nationalism*. Cornell University.
- Gruber, L. (2000). *Ruling the world: Power politics and the rise of supranational institutions*. Princeton University Press.
- Harbers, I., Tatham, M., Tillin, L., & Zuber, C. I. (2021). Thirty years of regional and federal studies. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 31(1), 1–23.
- Heinisch, R., Massetti, E., & Mazzoleni, O. (Eds.). (2019). *The people and the nation: Populism and ethno-territorial politics in Europe*. Routledge.
- Hepburn, E. (Ed.). (2009). New challenges for stateless nationalist and regionalist parties. Special issue. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 19(4–5).

- Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (Eds.). (1984). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2001). *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G., & Schakel, A. H. (2010). *The rise of regional authority. A comparative study of 42 democracies*. Routledge.
- Keating, M. (1998). *The new regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial restructuring and political change*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Keating, M. (2017a). The territorial state. In D. King & P. Le Galès (Eds.), *Reconfiguring European States in Crisis* (pp. 121–136). OUP.
- Keating, M. (2017b). Europe as a multilevel federation. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24(4), 615–632.
- Keating, M. (2018). Rescaling the European state: A constructivist and political perspective. In K. Detterbeck & E. Hepburn (Eds.), *Handbook of territorial politics* (pp. 17–29). Elgar publishers.
- King, D., & Le Galès, P. (Eds.). (2017). *Reconfiguring European States in crisis*. OUP.
- Knight, D. B. (1992). Statehood: A politico-geographic and legal perspective. *GeoJournal*, 28(3), 311–318.
- Krivenko, E. Y. (2020). *Space and fates of international law: Between Leibniz and Hobbes*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (2003). *The urban revolution*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (2009). *State, space, world*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Maier, S. C. (2016). *Once within borders. Territories of power, wealth, and belonging since 1500*. Harvard University Press.
- Mosse, L. G. (2023). *The nationalization of the masses. Political symbolism and mass movements in Germany from the Napoleonic wars through the third reich*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Nygren, B. (2008). *The rebuilding of Greater Russia: Putin's foreign policy towards the CIS countries*. Routledge.
- Paasi, A. (2009). Bounded spaces in a 'borderless world': Border studies, power and the anatomy of territory. *Journal of Power*, 2(2), 213–234.
- Rokkan, S., & Urwin D. W. (1983). *Economy, territory, identity: Politics of West European peripheries*. Sage.
- Ruggie, J. G. (1993). Territoriality and beyond: Problematizing modernity in international relations. *International Organization*, 47(1), 139–174.
- Sahlins, P. (1989). *Boundaries: The making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*. University of California Press.
- Sassen, S. (2001). *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2006). *Territory, authority, rights*. Princeton University Press.

- Shah, N. (2012). The territorial trap of the territorial trap: Global transformation and the problem of the state's two territories. *International Political Sociology*, 6, 1–20.
- Smith, A. (1998). *Nations and nationalism in a global era*. Polity Press.
- Strandsbjerg, J. (2010). *Territory, globalization and international relations. The cartographic reality of space*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Swenden, W., & Bolleyer, N. (2014). Regional mobilization in the 'New Europe': A research agenda. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 24(3), 249–262.
- Tilly, C. (1990). *Coercion, capital, and European states. AD 900–1990*. Basil-Blackwell.
- Walzer, M. (1967). On the role of symbolism in political thought. *Political Science Quarterly*, 82, 191–204.
- Weber, E. (1976). *Peasants into Frenchmen: The modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*. Stanford University Press.
- Weber, M. (2019). *Economy and society*. Harvard University Press.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

