

THE

# NATION-STATE and GLOBAL ORDER

A Historical  
Introduction to  
Contemporary  
Politics

Walter C. Opello, Jr.  
& Stephen J. Rosow

# The Nation-State and Global Order

---

## A Historical Introduction to Contemporary Politics

Walter C. Opello, Jr.  
Stephen J. Rosow



BOULDER  
LONDON

Published in the United States of America in 1999 by  
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.  
1800 30th Street, Boulder, Colorado 80301

and in the United Kingdom by  
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.  
3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU

© 1999 by Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved

Unless otherwise noted, maps are taken from Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule*, University of California Press, © 1978 The Regents of the University of California. Used with permission.

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Opello, Walter C.

The nation-state and global order : a historical introduction to  
contemporary politics / Walter C. Opello, Jr., Stephen J. Rosow.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-55587-811-3 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN 1-55587-832-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. State, The. 2. State, The—Origin. 3. Comparative government.

I. Rosow, Stephen J. II. Title.

JC11.063 1999

321'.009—dc21

98-28937

CIP

### **British Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book  
is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the United States of America



The paper used in this publication meets the requirements  
of the American National Standard for Permanence of  
Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984.

# The Nation-State and Global Order

*For my daughter, Katherine*  
—W. C. O., Jr.

*To the memory of Bernard Rosow*  
—S. J. R.

# Preface

---

The seed for this book was planted during a conversation over lunch one day in 1993. During that conversation, the subject of the state came up. Opello, who had been trained as a comparativist and behaviorist in the late 1960s and early 1970s, took the view that the state was little more than a subsystem of the broader social system of which it was a part. He also argued for a hard-and-fast distinction between “domestic” and “international” politics, although he recognized that certain “issue areas” transcended the boundary of the two. Rosow, who had been trained in political philosophy and international relations in the late 1970s and early 1980s, took a more critical view. He argued that the state was a central construct that had a history. The state, he argued, was an ensemble of relations of power, neither reducible to a social structure nor an autonomous actor.

Consequently, Opello began to question his assumptions and began to read the body of literature that had appeared on the state in the 1980s as a critical challenge to mainstream, behavioral political science. That literature, and additional conversations over lunch with Rosow, convinced him that the state should be the central organizing concept of the discipline and should be “brought back in.”

Once converted to a statist perspective, Opello suggested that he and Rosow develop a course for undergraduates on the history of the state. Opello taught the course, called “The Nation-State and Global Order,” for the first time in the spring of 1994. It was then that he realized that the reading available on the state was too advanced for many students. So he suggested to Rosow that they coauthor a textbook written at a level that would make the idea of the state accessible to undergraduates. Rosow agreed, and Opello began to do the research and preliminary writing during

the summer of 1994. He finished a draft at the end of the autumn semester 1996. During the academic year 1997, Rosow redrafted the manuscript, moving its conception away from Opello's more essentialist perspective. Opello amalgamated the two versions, which were returned to Rosow for additions and correction. The result of this "shuttle writing" is the book you have before you.

Others have helped make this book possible. At SUNY, Oswego, Karen Nicholas, the History Department's resident classicist and medievalist, read the manuscript and called our attention to a number of historical "howlers" we had made; to her we are deeply grateful. We would like to acknowledge with many thanks the help of Cindy Leflore, the Political Science Department secretary, who good-naturedly typed the first draft of the manuscript from Opello's penciled draft. Andy Makal, our international studies assistant, expeditiously checked the accuracy of the many names, dates, and places mentioned in the text as well as the accuracy of the bibliography. Students in the four sections of the "Nation-State and Global Order" read and commented on earlier versions of the manuscript. Olivia Opello read the entire manuscript and made numerous helpful suggestions. The comments of the anonymous reviewers helped us tighten the interpretive framework. Opello especially thanks his daughter, Katherine Anne Rose, a graduate student in political science at New York University, who patiently put up with her father's ruminations on the state during their daily runs together when she was home for the holidays. Finally, Rosow thanks Ellen Goldner for her love, support, and friendship over the years of this project, and for graciously putting up with the weekends they could not be together because he remained fixated on a computer screen.

None of these people are responsible for any errors in fact or interpretation we have made. Only we carry that responsibility.

A thousand years scarce serve to form a state;  
An hour may lay it in the dust: and when  
Can Man its shattered splendour renovate,  
Recall its virtues back, and vanquish Time and Fate?

—Lord Byron, from “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage”

No society is possible in which power and compulsion are  
absent, nor a world in which force has no function.

—Karl Polanyi, from *The Great Transformation*



# Contents

---

<i>List of Maps</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
Introduction: The State and the Study of Politics	1
■ PART 1 FORMATION AND EMERGENCE OF THE TERRITORIAL STATE	
1 The Ancient Roman State: Imperial Rule	13
2 The Feudal “State”: Indirect Rule	29
3 The Medieval State: Direct Rule	47
■ PART 2 FORMS OF THE MODERN TERRITORIAL STATE	
4 The Absolutist State: Sovereignty Instituted	69
5 The Liberal State: Sovereignty Universalized	91
6 The Antiliberal State	111
7 The Managerial State: Sovereignty Rationalized	133

■    **PART 3**

**GLOBALIZING THE TERRITORIAL STATE**

8	The Colonial State: Sovereignty Expanded	161
9	The Nation-State: Sovereignty Reimagined	181
10	The Postcolonial State: Reflexive Sovereignty	201

■    **PART 4**

**CHALLENGES TO THE STATE**

11	The Present State of States	225
12	Conclusion: The Future of the State	243

	<i>Glossary</i>	257
--	-----------------	-----

	<i>Bibliography</i>	263
--	---------------------	-----

	<i>Index</i>	277
--	--------------	-----

	<i>About the Book</i>	291
--	-----------------------	-----

# Maps

---

Barbarian Invasions of the Fifth Century	24
Europe: Political Divisions and Invasions, 800–900	32
Dominions of Henry II, 1154–1189	80
France, 1035–1328	84
The Expansion of Russia, 1462–1796	118
The Hanseatic League and the Teutonic Knights	124
Brandenburg-Prussia, 1440–1806	126
The Partition of Africa, 1914	177
Japan, 900	209

# Introduction: The State and the Study of Politics

---

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the belief that a new democratic age has dawned is widespread. Paradoxically, however, many people are skeptical and cynical about the ability of government, even a democratic one, to provide peace and prosperity. This paradox is reflected in two common, but divergent, responses. While some people are embracing a world of multicultural connections by throwing off national identities in favor of global ones,<sup>1</sup> others are retreating into more and more privatized worlds in which they cut themselves off as much as possible from people different from themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these simultaneous celebrations of globalism and retreats from public life, states still persist in capturing the political imaginations and allegiances of vast numbers of people around the world. States continue to collect taxes, manage economies, organize collective identities, and make war. War, in fact, undoubtedly accounts for much of the state's endurance. Despite humankind's best efforts over the past three hundred or so years to eliminate it, war is still a global scourge, as devastating, if not more devastating, than ever! Moreover, it is still primarily states, or groups aspiring to form states, that make war, although in important ways this is no longer exclusively the case.

States, in significant and troubling ways, are also expanding their powers of surveillance and coercion. Some categories of people are being imprisoned by the states in which they live at ever-increasing rates.<sup>3</sup> In many, censorship is on the rise, private communications are being monitored more frequently, and deviance from the "mainstream" is becoming more and more suspect and subject to interrogation. In spite of the end of the Cold War, the military budgets of the major protagonists have not fallen

dramatically. The “peace dividend” many expected has not been realized. States continue to represent the world to their citizens as a dangerous place requiring a strong national defense and “the next generation” of advanced weaponry. States continue to exaggerate and fabricate external threats in order to present others as “enemies.” Nationalism and patriotism show few signs of abatement.

What is a state? This is a difficult question to answer because the idea of the state conjures multiple meanings and associations. Sometimes the state refers primarily to an institutional apparatus: bureaucracies, armies, ministries, police, legislatures, political parties, and the like. At other times it signifies something broader, more in keeping with its reference to a territorial entity, such as the state of France. At still other times it refers to its legal and symbolic character as sovereign power. Defining the state in terms of any one of these alone—institutionality, sovereignty, territoriality—would be a mistake. Moreover, the history of the state is not a simple or linear process. Its development has been rather messy and unpredictable, complex and open to a multiplicity of possible trajectories. This book presents a historical approach that interprets how these different meanings of the state are constructed and interpenetrate to constitute the abstraction referred to as the state.

## ■ HISTORY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE STATE

Why take a historical approach to understanding the state? History is important because only by examining the state in historical perspective can it be shown that the state is not universal and given, not an immanent part of human nature. A history of the state reveals how it was created by people acting within the boundaries of the understandings and structures of their time and place, as well as through contingent conditions and circumstances. The state is an effect of the way peoples live.<sup>4</sup> A historical approach reveals, for example, that sovereignty, although a crucial component of states, is not identical to the state. Sovereignty is instituted, as Hobbes said, not by states as if states preexisted sovereignty and took possession of it, but as part of the state’s development. Therefore, the historical specificity of sovereignty—the way it is formed, instituted, and reproduced at particular times and places—is important to an account of the state.

Other important benefits of a historical approach are, first, that social constructions that appear to be universal, fixed, or given, such as the distinction between state and society, the relationship between domestic (inside) and international (outside) politics, the connection between institutions and ideology, and the separation of public and private, can be shown to be creations of particular historical state-sovereignty formations.

Second, a historical approach also permits the inclusion of insights drawn from areas usually understood as outside the theory of the state, such as international relations and feminist theory. Third, a historical approach also allows the examination of the mutual embeddedness of the state in economies, religions, and everyday traditions, without collapsing the state into any one of these. As one scholar has put it:

A construct like the state occurs not merely as a subjective belief, incorporated in the thinking and action of individuals. It is represented and reproduced in visible, everyday forms, such as the language of legal practice, the architecture of public buildings, the wearing of military uniforms, or the marking out and policing of frontiers. The cultural forms of the state *are* an empirical phenomenon, as solid and discernible as a legal structure or a party system.<sup>5</sup>

The historical treatment of the state presented in this book pays attention both to continuities and discontinuities over time. It will show that the sovereign, territorial nation-state is a fundamentally different ensemble of governing practices from city-states and traditional imperial states. The *city-state* is a territorially small, independent urban conurbation that constitutes an autonomous political entity. It represented itself within an ensemble of governing practices that involved an intensive logic of place. That is, its representations of power and authority invoked a history and mythology of its distinctive place. The best historical examples of such entities are the city-states of ancient Greece (Athens, Sparta, etc.), the cities of the Hanseatic League along the coast of what is today northern Germany (Bremen, Hamburg, Danzig, etc.), and the republican cities in what is now northern Italy (Venice, Genoa, Pisa, etc.) during the early Renaissance. A contemporary city-state is Singapore, which occupies only 641 square kilometers, an area smaller than New York City.

The modern nation-state is also different from the *traditional imperial state*. The central government of traditional empires, such as the Roman, Chinese, Inca, Syrian, and Zulu, had only limited, sustained authority over the extensive territory of the empire, which was internally fragmented and ethnically heterogeneous, being composed of numerous culturally distinct tribal societies. Empires governed through a representation of space as extending out from the center, not necessarily the same in all areas of the empire. Because the central government did not have a monopoly of coercive force, it required its army to take the field regularly against local warlords, armed tribesmen, and bandits. Ordinary people within such empires had very little contact with imperial officials, except at taxpaying time. By and large, these empires did not interfere in economic life, although there were important exceptions. They did not exhibit a sense of what today would be called “nationalism.” The frontiers of traditional empires were

not internationally recognized as boundaries are today. Boundaries were simply the limits of military expansion that could be moved outward at will through additional conquests. Thus, there was no recognition of “interimperial” rights or law, that is, no globalized system of empires.<sup>6</sup>

The modern *nation-state* is a unique creation of specific historical, political, social, and economic circumstances. It is different from city-states and traditional empires in that the nation-state claims *sovereignty* over a fixed *territory*, both attributes being recognized, in principle, by other nation-states that are members of a globalized system of nation-states. Nation-states represent territory as an empty space to be filled in by the representations of the state’s power and authority. Through their governing practices and artifacts, nation-states diffuse a singular identity within the bounded space their borders arbitrarily but legally enclose.<sup>7</sup> The sovereign territoriality of a state is represented by a capital city, a flag, an anthem, a passport, a currency, armed forces, national museums and libraries, embassies in other sovereign states, and usually a seat in the United Nations. Today’s global order comprises about 203 recognized nation-states.<sup>8</sup>

As the sovereign territorial state is a historical creation, theories to explain its existence as well as the way it functions are themselves part of the history of the state. The connection between the history of the state and theories of the state will be explored in detail in the body of the text. What follows is a brief outline designed to distinguish our approach from others.

## ■ POLITICS AND THE THEORY OF THE STATE

Throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century the state received much scholarly attention. It was something that needed to be explained by political science, and the disciplines of history, law, and philosophy in which political science was then contained. After World War II, however, the state came to be taken for granted. Although the state’s existence continued to be felt through the actions of its military apparatus, its bureaucracy, its ministries, and its police, its presence seemed unproblematic, routine, clear, and, above all, necessary and laudable, in no need of questioning. It was as if, at least in the United States, everyone knew what the state was supposed to do—reconstruct Europe, stop communist “expansionism,” manage the liberal capitalist economy to prevent another depression, and provide welfare.

Two approaches came to dominate political science during the post–World War II years: functionalism and pluralism. *Functionalism* emphasized how social roles, norms, and individual psychology functioned to create social and political order. *Pluralism* sought out the ways in which the diversity of social interests, organized into pressure groups, could

produce an ordered and fair distribution of collective goods and services. Both viewed the "state" as too ambiguous a concept for political science because it could not be defined in a way that eliminated all value judgments and, hence, could not be studied empirically. Moreover, both approaches assumed that society was separate from the state and established society as the primary focus. States did what societies wanted or pressured them to do. In short, politics was to be explained by what happened in "society," not the state.

The focus on "society" and individual psychology was connected to the extension of American power after World War II. Political scientists in the United States sought to generalize the Western liberal democratic model of state and society, especially the U.S. version, to newly independent states. In this way, new states could be more easily incorporated into a world order in which U.S. interests and values would prevail, and communism would be unable to gain a foothold in the non-European world. In order to project the Western, liberal democratic model of state and society, U.S. political scientists sought a "general" theory to explain how societies, no matter where they were, could function smoothly, if their economies, politics, and social structure were integrated and balanced. "Disequilibrium" among these balanced parts, it was feared, would create an instability that could be exploited by leftist groups in their bids for power and, thus, increase the influence of the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, the disinterest of the discipline of political science in the state was, in part, a product of the state's success. In the advanced capitalist states, such as the United States, Japan, and the states of Western Europe, the state more or less successfully managed increasing economic prosperity and steady advances in the welfare of their subject populations. Public policies considered "socialistic" when initially proposed, such as social security, health care for the poor and aged, unemployment insurance, and the minimum wage, became staples of these states. The "welfare state" did not need serious analytic attention from political scientists because it seemed to provide a common good that few questioned. This positive view was reinforced by the fact that Western European states and the Japanese state had successfully transformed war-ravaged economies into prosperous, dynamic capitalist powerhouses.

By the early 1970s, however, all was not well and the state came under intellectual scrutiny and political challenge. Among mainstream political scientists a new subfield of the discipline called *policy analysis* arose out of new bureaucratic politics models of government and a new interest in decisionmaking. Policy analysis had two concerns in the United States. One was to explain how the United States became embroiled in the Vietnam War in spite of widespread domestic dissent and expert advice that the war could not be won. The hope was that models of bureaucratic politics would



shed light on how foreign policy decisions could be better made to prevent future Vietnams.

The second concern was the search for answers to the vexing question of how state programs could be more efficiently managed in the face of challenges by those who deemed them wasteful. While not reviving an interest in the state per se, and while accepting the prevailing individualism and rationalism of pluralist and functionalist political science, the policy analysis approach did refocus on the activities of government bureaucracies. Eschewing a concept of the state, policy analysis drew on theories of organizational behavior and decisionmaking that, in turn, were drawn from mathematics (game theory), social psychology, and cybernetic engineering. As with functionalism and pluralism, the implicit normative emphasis of policy analysis was on promoting order, routine, and efficiency against the messy indeterminacy and contingency of politics.

The first political and social scientists to renew an interest in the state were crisis theorists, many drawing on various Marxist traditions.<sup>10</sup> *Crisis theories* sought to explain why the welfare state seemed no longer able to sustain the prosperity and security of the postwar era. Many of these theories were inspired by Marx and traced the failures of the state to its inability to extract sufficient resources or to maintain its legitimacy in the context of a capitalist economy. Some argued, on the one hand, that the state could not take in enough money to pay for all its programs, along with Cold War military budgets (which were seen as necessary to ensure foreign outlets for capital and sources of raw materials); and some, on the other hand, argued that the legitimacy of the state, which rested on its promotion of equality, could not overcome the class inequality produced by capitalism.<sup>11</sup>

Increasingly, in reaction to both functionalism, pluralism, policy analysis, and crisis theory, some political scientists began to focus explicitly and look more favorably upon the state. These scholars examined how the state had functioned historically both as an organization of domination and as a promoter of reforms that might make good on the promises of the welfare state.<sup>12</sup> This effort to “bring the state back in” was critical of the way the state had been subordinated to society and the economy by the functionalists and neo-Marxist crisis theorists.<sup>13</sup> Instead, these scholars began to look at how state institutions made decisions, under what influences, and with what effects. These *statist theories* viewed the state as an agent in itself, as an autonomous entity in the sense of being institutionally separate from society, which could take independent action, even against society’s wishes. Statist theories have led to fruitful studies of particular states by integrating historical sociology and political science. However, while statisticians have been attuned to the historical nature of particular states, they have assumed an ahistorical and reified concept of the state; states are historical but the state is not.<sup>14</sup>