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In Search of the Non-Western State: Historicising and De-Westphalianising Statehood

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INTRODUCTION

The full genealogy of the state has not yet been the subject of a proper universal inquiry. Discussion of the notion of statehood around the world remains fundamentally derivative of a Western understanding of what the state is and what it can and should be (see also Zartman, Chapter 56, or Roller, Chapter 55, this *Handbook*). Because of a dominant Western claim to universality, discussion of the wider ambit of statehood, when present, is limited to a discussion among Western scholars of different disciplines and their historical influence on and centrality over the international debate on the concept of the state. Expanding one's purview in such an intellectually incestuous and self-centred context has often meant debates are solely opened up to in a close-knit group, primarily from Europe, North America and Global South elites. This scientifically limited vista applies more generally to contemporary history and politics and international relations sacralising the so-called Westphalian state. As a result, this perspective has produced an ahistorical and non-universal outlook on international affairs and on statehood *per se* and has generated a divide on how to try to conceive of the state in a genuinely historicised and global perspective. As David Armitage explains, the history of *political* thought was certainly ascendant – even predominant in some quarters – among intellectual historians on both sides of the Atlantic and increasingly around the world. Yet the history of *international* thought was pursued, if at all, mostly by self-critical students of international relations who had little contact or interchange with those who identified as intellectual historians (Armitage, 2013: 2).

To varying degrees and amidst continuous debate about the complexity of the state and its intricate nature, this construct has stood firmly as a linear history – taught in academia around the world and practised in international organisations globally – gradually pointing not so much to a specific

Western trajectory but more to the determining of a single standard of how statehood is commonly understood, conceptually perpetuated, reflexively practised and politically championed. This overflowing and engulfing Eurocentric intellectual history of the state is problematic, primarily in eschewing other traditions and understandings of statehood. To be certain, the vast and multi-layered Western discussion of the state does raise the matter of alternative, non-Western versions of the nature of the state. When the experience of statehood by non-Western actors is examined in such a canon, however, it is done so in equally problematic ways, as often the conceptualisations offered display traits of Orientalism – explicitly or implicitly – and are either dismissive of such alternative experiences (deemed ultimately not viable or not modernity-ushering) or indulge an ahistorical romanticisation of these different outlooks' eventual (non-) materialisation (thus painting them as ultimately equally untenable).

The non-Western state has, however, a long, complex, dynamic and evolving history. The absence of that history from the dominant canon of international relations, or its relegation to a backburner position, is not an indication of its irrelevance to current affairs, both non-Western and Western. Rather, such invisibilisation is merely an illustration of the larger condition of international affairs, being that it is in need of emancipation from the stifling Westphalian referential. Statehood has been explored and practised in Africa, Asia, the Arab-Islamic world and elsewhere for centuries, pointing to a multiplicity of different imaginaries and practices of the regulation of societal affairs over time, space and history. Today, those experiences can no longer be set aside as they have been for such a long time. They are important in understanding both the history of the state and its contemporary transformation, particularly with regards to the fragmentation, fluidity, transnationality and, indeed, destatisation colouring international affairs since the late 20th century.

Against this background, this chapter argues that bringing the non-Western state into the history and conceptualisation of statehood is necessary to map these dynamics of power accurately and that this incorporation offers, too, the promise of a more comprehensive understanding of what the state is and what it is not, universally. The chapter opens with a review of the historical process whereby the Western state has been established as an international norm and installed as a referential archetype, elevated from a specific European experience to a universal yardstick. The discussion turns next to an examination of alternative forms of statehood, which have escaped such a Western-driven history of the state, trying to elucidate what forms these take and highlighting different routes in these societies to the questions of social contract, power, territory and political struggle. Finally, the analysis closes with an examination of issues around the contemporary transformation of the state, and the ways in which considering more seriously the non-Western forms of statehood – as mutations affecting the form and content of the state played out in the early 21st century amidst a number of Global South processes – can lead to a more scientifically complete and genuinely universal approach to the complex and ever-fleeting notion of statehood.

WESTERNISED STATEHOOD

Non-Western statehood is defined negatively. It is a concept given in relation not to what it is but to what it is not; namely, a Western notional construct of the state and a Western (mostly European) political performance of that conceptualisation. As such, the history of the non-Western state is derivative, positioned in a place from which it has to refer – inevitably and constantly – to an upgraded Western canon to indicate how (and why) it escapes it and what empirical reality (and, indeed, merit) there would need to be to

display such an alternative quality or pursue such a differing project.

The Western understanding of the state encompasses a long history, leading to the gradual emergence of the contours of what eventually would be recognised – and in time imposed on many non-Westerners during the colonial age – as the 'modern state'. That centuries-long trajectory has had several waystations, with, generically, three key moments identified as constitutive of that genesis: the classical Greek, Greco-Roman or Hellenic system; the Reformation and Renaissance periods; and the 19th- and 20th-century processes of the nation-state. Importantly in that sequence is the symbiotic march – at times visible and at times hidden – of a political project and an intellectual one. Accordingly, the late 15th and 16th centuries witnessed the birth of a 'mythical West', through the forging of a new and totalising ideology that placed its putative legitimacy on a new foundation and gave meaning both to expulsion and appropriation (Bessis, 2003: 12). This political history provided the context for the birth of the notion of the state.

Though the emergence of that standard was neither linear nor consensual, the narrative that, in time, would rise was cloaked in the mantle of intellectual authority, and it proceeded to undercut and shed forms of traditional authority, break with religion and 'old beliefs' and announce itself as being synonymous with modernity. It is the combination of these three characteristics – decreed more than actual – which would also, in time, endow said narrative of the Western state with conceptual force and referentials of practice and ultimately place it at the centre of contemporary 'international' relations. The process was set in motion decisively in the mid 17th century in Europe. A series of three peace treaties were signed by some 100 delegations from 16 European states between May and October 1648, in the Westphalian cities of Osnabrück and Münster, to bring an end to a succession of armed conflicts known as the Thirty Years' War, which had taken place based on religious matters in Central Europe since 1618 (and since 1568 between Spain and the Dutch Republic). It yielded a political-diplomatic configuration predicated on the notion of sovereignty, and it consecrated a vision of the state (known subsequently as the Westphalian state), which these European powers would further integrate in international law and construct as the foundation of the modern international system. The acceptance and elevation of these avowed characteristics (non-traditional, non-religious and modern) and this parlance (the sovereign *primus inter pares* state) would, additionally, be cemented throughout the next phase and well into the 20th century, leading many non-Western societies to seek to establish their own newly independent states based on this European model and – whether wittingly or unwittingly – replay the matrix in their setting throughout their post-colonial phase.

What this establishes, importantly, is that *the history of the state is a political history associated with the history of the West and confined to the Westphalian model*. By virtue of its violence and powerful self-projection, it is also a paradigm inviting emulation or generating replication. The specifics of that experience – in Europe and, later, North America – the choices made or not made and the outcome of local and regional struggles are what conditioned the environment in which a thing such as the state has come to be thought of, and they similarly determined the parameters of what and who delineated its conceptualisation. Accordingly, the nature of the in-time internationalised canon of statehood is coterminous with specific episodes characterising the evolution of one part of the world – in particular, as European actors chose to approach them, the management of violence, the organisation of civic affairs, the establishment of legal systems, the control of individuals (widening later to 'the citizenry'), the invention of foreign policy (following the Westphalian articulation of sovereignty) and, importantly, the subjugation of others beyond a demarcated polity. As Bertrand

Badie (1998: 39) writes, *staged* this way, the state is, first and foremost, that of the jurist and of the historian of the Old Continent. For all the gradual insistence on secularism, the statehood narrative proceeds from the presupposition of a common Christian culture. In sum, as Anthony Smith remarks (1983: 17), the systemic nature of this model is thus: the central social and political change has been the primacy and dominance of the specialised, territorially defined and coercitively monopolistic state, operating within a broader system of similar states bent on fulfilling their dual function of internal regulation and external defence or aggression.

That history is also one that includes the debate and outlook on how the norms for 'us' Westerners – an outlook long confined to aristocratic and bourgeois elites in Europe – should be understood in relation to 'those' non-Westerners: dwellers of distant, non-industrialised, underdeveloped lands dominated by despotism. It is in this second dimension that the history of the state has been equally – though possibly more – dismissive of non-Western statehood. Whereas in the relatively long, first, inward-looking phase, the West had been wrestling with the process of finding ways of lastingly settling and organising societal competition in its midst with minimal consideration for others' traditions or ways, it developed in the second (pre-colonial and colonial) period a much more active outlook on other systems and their organisation of matters such as power and order. Though it increasingly devoted significant resources to such studies, the West's overarching notion was, unshakably, that these 'other' systems were less developed than what the West had come to determine as the nature of state – were inferior to it – or that their approaches were not viable under conditions of modernity, a notion in turn associated tautologically with the West's trajectory (see Halperin, 2006). In sum, the Western impulse to create statehood generated a specific matrix of statehood, which was then invariantly introduced – first for the West and then for the rest, whether colonised or independent. In time, that model became a cornerstone of the so-called modern international state system, which was best embodied in the mid 20th century, in the form of international organisations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations.

As this dominant perspective on the state emerged, it came to be embodied in a number of Western schools of thought standing *de facto* as the sum total of knowledge about the state: Weberianism (see Anter and Bruhns, Chapter 14, this *Handbook*); Marxism and Gramscian Marxism (see Guo, Chapter 7, this *Handbook*), realism and neo-realism; liberalism; and neo-liberalism and constructivism (see Ayukawa, 2011) – the latter three perspectives also demarcate the contours of international relations. Such production developed in parallel with norm codification of a number of areas in Western societies, with the specific *subjective* settling thereof incorporated into what was gradually understood as a universal *objective* standard. What this has meant for that body of knowledge being born is that, rather than occupying one place in the larger realm of the global determination of statehood, *Western* statehood became then and there the pedestal from which the universality of a standard for the state would be spoken – again, whether explicitly or implicitly and indeed whether wittingly or unwittingly. The longer-term impact of this dystrophy is that well into the 21st century, discussion of international statehood remains centrally located and owned by a given Western tradition. Any text critiquing that heirship – the present one included – faces the trap of being inevitably reactive to that incipient statement of ownership. Equally derivative of that centrality of the Western conception of statehood is that as the West came to dominate international affairs from the mid 18th century onwards, international affairs in turn would be defined in relation to the centrality of the state itself. As per that history, by the end of the 19th century, the nation-*state* would come to be regarded as

the yardstick of both modernity and international sovereignty (see Chandler, 2010). And by the mid 20th century, the (problematic) paradigm of state-codified, state-centred, state-owned, state-ruled, state-oriented and state-performed international relations would reign supreme on the arrangements of the old and new nations.

What that meant for the latter is that those specifics of Western statehood had to be treated as a matter of normative fact, and whatever non-Western understanding of statehood could be entertained in the context of the struggles for national liberation had to posit itself *contra* that nomothetic norm. To the extent that many of these young nations across Africa, Asia and the Middle East had already experienced Western statehood in its colonial manifestation, often internalising it amidst the 'civilising mission' and the so-called *white man's burden*, the challenge to invent a tradition or devise a norm away from Western statehood was simply too large of an undertaking. Conceptual alterations could be envisioned – notably those that concerned the expansion of the basis of a social contract between the individual and the community, as in the case of Pan-Africanism, Pan-Asianism and Pan-Arabism (see Mohamedou, 2018) – but the categories of the 'imported state' (Badie, 2000) were already well entrenched, possibly too much so to allow a fully emancipated invention process.

As conceptualised by Max Weber a century ago in July 1919, in *Politics as a Vocation*, Western statehood posited the notion of the monopolisation of violence as constitutive of statehood – an aspect that another German, Otto Hintze, had identified earlier as central to the process of statehood (see Gilbert, 1975). This feature was derived largely from analogical reasoning in relation to the specific Western experience of development of capitalism and organisation of military affairs. Though the monopoly of violence was an issue germane to power configurations in many other non-Western settings, it did not necessarily play in the same manner or hold a similar centrality. In places where capitalist commerce was flourishing (e.g., *Bâzâri* in Persia) or where armies were predominant (e.g., Janissaries in the Ottoman Empire), the outlook of the state did not proceed from the same consideration and configuration of monopoly of power and violence. Rather, in the Muslim world, for instance, the logic was one of a supervisory, regulatory role played by the monarch or Sultan, with the question of recourse to violence modulated and constrained in a variety of ways: terrestrially with the *shura* (consultation) and religiously, beyond.

The nature of the state also resulted from the level of violence that had been exerted by Western actors in the modern era. Whether in the form of Napoleon's large-scale campaigns in the early 1800s or the two world wars, fascism and Nazism of the 20th century, such extreme violence (concentration camps, mass extermination, genocide) – performed abroad on others through colonialism – brought about the subjugation of Western societies, endowing the Western state with a national-security DNA historically lacking elsewhere (even when similarly destructive conflicts took place). In effect – though this may appear paradoxical given the emphasised image of the liberated and democracy enjoying Western citizen – the strength of the Western state is correlated with its emasculated citizenry domestically. A case in point is the Vendée region in France where, between 1793 and 1799, the republican-led massacre of close to 200,000 people directly served the new French state-building process in the name of liberty, equality and fraternity (Secher, 1986). The 1960s revolts and the 2010s ones are, in that regard, counterwaves to the conservative authoritarianism of the 1950s and the security authoritarianism of the 2000s (on the control of Western populations to secure sovereignty, see, notably, the works of Giorgio Agamben, Hannah Arendt, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Félix Guattari, Franz Kafka, Michael Mann, Achille Mbembe and Carl Schmitt). Elsewhere, the

dynamic often played out differently, and communities fought to retain more agency so that the would-be state-makers had more difficulties launching modern-day violence that is so vastly devastating across their societies. Resultingly, the statehood experience deriving from that particular effort was more tentative. In other words, the Western state was successful (in emerging and establishing itself) because it was more lethal. Generally, this trait is linked to the Western mode of war, which is so lethal because it is so amoral – shackled rarely by concerns of ritual, tradition, religion or ethics, or by anything other than military necessity (Hanson, 2001: 21). Elsewhere, the locus of violence has been more disputed, more uncertain – and indeed remains so. The fluidity and unresolved nature of the monopoly of violence equation in non-Western systems objectively sets the experience of statehood in those parts of the world *away from* the internationalised Western state matrix, with the consequence that analyses of that experience fail to recognise that difference and therefore instead stress it as a shortcoming, when pushing back against a maximally violent state is in fact a healthier societal trait, which in the short term, however, has produced less statehood and more conflict.

Seen in that way, the 'permanent' strife or 'volatility' in the Global South are therefore not necessarily constitutive of a dystrophy, as the classical narrative on that part of the world goes, but, clinically, correspond rather to a mere non-conformity with a settled Western model whereby the total violence of the state has allowed it to enjoy total control of the community's affairs. Yet the final expression of the Westernised state is the character of inevitability it acquired. And yet again, such decreed inevitability is the sum total of a given experience collapsing the Western experience of capitalism, sedentarisation, mass violence, colonialism and administrative and financial control of a politicised military, into 'the modern state'. These different elements could and often did come out in different configurations elsewhere as, for instance, nomadism, lesser violence, decentralised occupation and uncontrolled warriors shaped the dynamics alternatively.

All in all, the West's status as a dominant actor in international affairs – colonial Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries followed by imperial America in the 20th and 21st centuries – over the past 350 years or so has led to the writing and organising of modern international relations as an expansion of inter-European developments (see Hulme and Jordanova, 1990; Eze, 1997; Beate, 2000; Teschke, 2003; and Birdal, 2014) and, consequently, the establishment of a synonymous understanding of universal statehood and Western statehood. The latter, however, is (as noted) a particular construct resulting from the given history of the West; one which, as captured notably by Charles Tilly (1975, 1985, 1990), has merged coercion, capital and administrative control (also see Cohen et al., 1981 and Kaspersen & Stransbejerg, 2017). Formulated and practised contemporaneously with the modern era, this *sui generis* construct has gained ascendancy, too, as it was projected onto and replicated into the vast territorial colonies that came under the control of European power, well into the 20th century. This matrix was further cemented when, upon reaching independence, the new nations of the Global South imagined and pursued statehood in the 1950s and 1960s within the confines of that given model, one also reinforced by the sovereignty and recognition codification of the international and regional organisations that came to light throughout the 20th century, starting with the League of Nations and followed by the United Nations.

OTHER STATEHOODS

An understanding of non-Western statehood – a category itself in need of unpacking and a focus on the diversity of experiences, which can be too cavalierly classified under it – is urgently needed to objectively and clinically

account for the nature of the state, or at the very least how its construction has been attempted or conceptualised by others beyond the West. As an open-ended category (and, more importantly, as a work in progress), the contents of non-Western statehood cannot be established in a finite way. Besides helping to de-link international politics from one place and one incarnation of authority (Western statehood), this overdue discussion can bring important missing elements, regarding both the history of the state and its contemporary evolution and transformation.

If, as discussed above, statehood has been Westernised, it is because a process of appropriation has taken place wherein the particulars of an experience were elevated to standard and doctrine. In Western philosophy, when knowledge or theory comprehends the other, then the alterity of the latter vanishes as it becomes part of the same. In all cases, the other is neutralised as a means of encompassing it: *ontology amounts to a philosophy of power*, an egotism in which the relationship with the other is accomplished through its assimilation into the self (Young, 1990: 13). The process has similarly been one of exceptionalising representations (for instance, the state systems of the Chinese and Japanese worlds have long been associated with 'different' – read problematic – warring traditions (Porter, 2009) allegedly preventing them from pursuing modern statehood) or one of Western interference in the state-building process of the new nations. As Michael Wesley (2008: 369) remarks on the legacy of such purview impacting development work from the mid to late 20th century onwards, there is an emerging pattern of *how* state-building is being undertaken by Western states and Western-dominated development agencies. There are two influences shaping the emerging state-of-the art on state-building: conceptions about the nature of the state in the minds of policy-makers in the developed world, and the post-colonial sensitivities and practicalities that attend the project of state-building interventions.

In truth, the continuous impact of this is vivid. In the Middle East and North Africa, for instance, the wave of neo-authoritarianism in the 2010s was directly linked to such deeper historical trends, proceeding to resist calls for democratisation on the basis of the re-establishment of order and stability (and 'fight against terrorism') supported by 'the international community'. From a strictly political point of view, global dynamics have contributed in many ways to this neo-authoritarian restructuring: not only through direct external interference in the domestic politics of Arab states (e.g., support of or opposition to specific groups, as in the case of Lebanon; geostrategic rent for friendly regimes, as in the case of Egypt and so on), but also, from a structural point of view, by providing new techniques and languages of power (Guazzone and Pioppi, 2009: 325).

In US social sciences, the state has been equated with the notions of government and political system. The European tradition, particularly the German and the French, has been concerned with the idea of state as such. From this has emerged a vision of the state as a natural subject of international relations, enjoying the prerogative of maintaining order and the legitimate exercise of the monopoly of violence, and characterised by key aspects related to sovereignty, territory, population and recognition – all underscoring the importance of what will be identified (by Machiavelli, Hegel and others) as 'reason of state' (*ragione di stato*): precursor of national interest and national security. All along, however, the concept of the state in this Western tradition remained equally characteristically elusive. As Philip Abrams (1998) pointed out, we have come to take the state for granted as an object of political practice and political analysis while remaining quite spectacularly unclear as to what the state is. Noting the successful history of the state as an organisation system, Gorm Harste (2013: 95) remarks, along the same lines, that our intellectual undertaking is so immensely embraced and constituted by

states that their self-definitions constitute the schemes in which we think when we classify and give meaning to social systems. Against this architecture, since decolonisation the new states have had to deal primarily with the impact of such imprint and the resulting 'overload' and security-predicament components identified by Mohammed Ayoob (1995); namely, the lack of adequate time required for state-building, the near impossibility of alienating juridical sovereignty once it is achieved, the highly disruptive colonial inheritance, the accentuation of ethnic fissures due to modernisation and the demands for political participation, economic redistribution and social justice, as well as the unrepresentative and authoritarian character of the regimes generating a cycle of violence and counter-violence.

Beyond the actions and traditions of the West, what does non-Western statehood entail? Given the vastness of what is discussed here as *non*-Western, a large number of aspects could be identified on the basis of the history and practice of cultures and societies round the world, notably in Africa, Asia and the Arab-Muslim world, to name but those large ensembles. Attempting a first generic typology, we can nonetheless name four sectors in which such different statehoods can be delineated: the nature of the social contract as a basis for the state-building process, the arrangements around the notion of power, the concept of territory and the idea of struggle.

Whereas Jean-Jacques Rousseau's social contract was pre-eminently a philosophical organisation of the arduous relationship between man's freedom and the authority needed for the determination and functioning of institutions (see Williams, 2014) under a search of harmony and regulation, its rational and liberal perspective was equally illustrative of a waystation in the Western state-in-the-making journey. As such, that reading approached discussion of the state as a monolith and therefore posited the structure and attributes of that entity as markers of the interaction with society (the general will) and the individual. Earlier in non-Western settings, such constructs did not necessarily obtain and the same determination of social affairs could proceed, for instance, on a privileging not of structure but of time. Discussing the primacy of the historical in the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldun written in 1377, Aziz al Azmeh indicates how the idiosyncrasy of a dynasty (read regime or administration today) comes to be inscribed in the more general and superior idea of the state. As he writes,

> There is nothing that distinguishes any of these strains of historicity from another except for external factors: name and date…There is no difference of genus but only of sheer unspecific difference: the fact that a state is that of the Fatimids or the Hamdanids, for instance, is not pertinent in any way to the constitution of the state. Both are structurally homologous in the strictest of senses: they consist of elements (sovereigns) in succession. In this structure, the name and date are *contingent differences* among structures that are, in essence, interchangeable. *The state is the succession of sections of duration*, each designated by the name of a sovereign, without reference to structures of the social, geographical or even genealogical orders which, in fact, the state integrates. (Azmeh, 1982: 20)

At the heart of this question is the notion of the outlook on the nation. Elsewhere, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 149) captures this in noting that nationalism, one may say, presents the question of *vision* and *imagination* in ways that are more complicated than a straightforward identification of the realist or the factual, which the political might suggest. This inherent plurality of the category 'imagination' is also what in the end makes it impossible to see the political as something that constitutes a 'one' or a whole. This raises further the question of the very organisation of the community (see Rodinson, 1983).

Second, if the state can therefore be different temporalities, interacting with complex national imaginaries, then the notion of power can come to play out in non-Western

settings equally differently from the force- and violence-oriented Western tradition. It is in that sense that alternative systems can be understood, not so much in escaping that centrality of power as force, but in pointing out neglected aspects of power as competence. This is an aspect that has tended to come into the statehood discussion subsequent to the idea of force, to support the project's implementation, rather, as it were, than being considered as an incipient determinant of the complex and multi-layered set of dimensions presiding over the notion of state-building. In the case of African 19th-century systems, there existed, as Alison Ayers (2006: 173) notes,

> specific notions and forms of political community and democracy, documenting elaborate and diverse rule-based systems of claims and obligations; restrains on political authority; collective decision-making and the principle of consensus; complex mechanisms to constrain and mediate tensions or internal oppositions arising from kinship, locality, age/generation and gender; and elaborate judicial procedures. Many of these social organisations were also highly decentralised and largely egalitarian, containing redistributive mechanisms that thwarted tendencies to reproduce inequalities, thus limiting internal social differentiation.

Third, if Western statehood is inherently linked to the notion of a clearly delineated contiguous territory – what Peter Haldén (2017) discusses relatedly as 'the realm' – non-Western statehood more often opens the possibility of fluid transnational space as a base of political authority, not merely social movement. The action of emancipated actors – whether armed or not and whether organised as groups or not – has historically pointed out the acuity of this parameter, as such actors sought to establish political dominion across such spaces. In the Middle East and North Africa, for instance, this has been a regular feature of irregulars from the Ikhwans of the Arabian Gulf in the 1910s to the Islamic State of the 2010s, by way of Al Qaeda in the 1990s and indeed the *Fedayeens* of the 1970s. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the same mobility-cum-challenge to authority was a feature of regional politics in the Sahel, West Africa and East Africa, underwritten by a way of war that enables transnationalism and also highlights the engulfing, overflowing impact of border areas on centre ones (see Reid, 2012; Nugent, 2019). In the early 20th century – and notably as a result of global transformations ushered by the post-September-11 era – territoriality has in effect come to be questioned as a marker of statehood (see Bauman, 2002. To be certain, the importance of territoriality had been de-emphasised earlier, notably in relation to modernity; see, for instance, Herz, 1964). As *fortress* Europe and the *wall*-building United States seek to preserve statehood in accordance with such line markers, this recent evolution further highlights the importance of this aspect of statehood above and beyond classical contiguous territoriality.

Finally, the Western standard of statehood has assumed a certain linearity in the organisation of social and political struggle, underwriting the state-building process and linking it to modernity. Other traditions point to the possibility of going beyond these two dimensions by also de-Westernising social emancipation and expression of struggle (between whom and what rather than against whom and what). In the classical statehood canon, struggle has also been readily associated with a dynamic leading to or, at minima, a possible creation of the conditions of modernity (particularly in the case of revolution, e.g., 1789, 1848, 1917, 1989). The state's capacity to carry out violence has also been taken as given, when there is no evidence to that being systematically possible (see Centeno, 2002). Other perspectives have featured struggle more as a dynamic of demarcation and preservation, the resulting state out of which (which is not a *sine qua non* outcome) would take a less power-oriented and less modernity-driven form. For instance, as Arturo Escobar (2004) argues, self-organising social movements and engaging with the politics of difference

through place-based yet transnational political strategies, can, at a time of globalisation, contribute to a reflection beyond the notion of the Third World and beyond modernity itself. In other words, the struggle itself *is* statehood rather than its eventual outcome. Yezid Sayigh (2000: viii) aptly remarks in that regard that the Palestinian case shows that the state-building dynamic does not come into operation only after independence. Rather, the search for state shapes the articulation of goals, formulation of strategies, choice of organisation structures and conduct of internal politics through much of the preceding struggle.

The violent history of Western state-making from the 17th century to the 19th century, followed by communism, fascism and Nazism in the 20th century, has led to an understanding of struggle – and particularly national struggle – as related to violence. Accordingly, the nationalism displayed both leading up to and subsequent to the decolonisation era in the Global South has been coloured by that perspective so much that any popular outburst in those non-Western regions (even when expressed in the name of rights, accountability or representation) is readily associated with a threat to the state. Arguably, however, nationalism is not necessarily linked to violence. As Siniša Malešević (2013) has demonstrated, contrary to Max Weber's elective affinities, not only are there no natural linkages between nationalism and violence but, importantly, the connections between these two phenomena only emerge under specific historical conditions. Reification of nationalism as related to violence obscures the coalescence (what Ibn Khaldun had called *iltiham*; see Azmeh, 1982) that materialises around feelings of *nation*alism and how that in itself is a marker of statehood – at that level, that is without necessarily seeing the trouble brewed by nationalism as a vector of statehood. In prioritising class, violence and capital over myth, memory and mimesis (Selbin, 2010), the Western statehood sequence has similarly excised these other (again, not merely alternative) forms of (again, not solely routes to) statehood.

TRANSFORMING STATEHOOD

Non-Western statehood emerges importantly as a set of historical processes more than structures (contrary to what Nettl argued in 1968). The fact that the state is an entity that always survives the different type of limitations that are imposed upon it – be they legal, societal, normative or otherwise – prompts us to understand the saliency of the state as an essentially continuous quality, one resulting from its temporality and a permanent action of construction and de-construction. The international aspect of the state (sovereignty and autonomy) is affected by disturbances only conjuncturally, rarely structurally. Similarly, but for secession, domestically generated situations (such as coups and revolutions) yield changes in the form, attribution and constitution of the state, not necessarily its existence.

With the all-important notion of sovereignty (and its national security, national interest, maintenance of public order, struggle against terrorism derivatives, etc.) qualified thus, what can be revealed in exploring non-Western statehood as a marker of evolving statehood is that critique and emancipation are intimately and creatively related in many non-Western settings (as opposed to their increasingly automated acceptance in the Western metropolis), and this, indeed, connects with how, for many an anti-state militant, *critical* theory and *liberation* theory came to be associated. If Western statehood has been a route to management of affairs – for all of Rousseau's *reveries*, he ends up with a *contract* – non-Western statehood has been and still is in many places almost the opposite, the pursuit of settlements to secure foresight. As Walter Mignolo (2011: 323) writes on this issue, given the historical power differential

in the structure of knowledge, a synthesis would prioritise critical theory, with philosophy of liberation as a runner up in the Third World. If racism was of the essence for philosophy of liberation, it was because philosophy of liberation realised that racism operates also in the domain of knowledge, not only down there in society. Philosophy of liberation, in other words, made an early statement about the fact that knowledge is geopolitical and that knowledge has been ranked, hierarchically, in relations with regions of the world (from developed to underdeveloped) and with imperial language.

Non-Western statehood may or may not display the above features, but statehood itself is mutating. In that respect, the most important element impacting the evolution of the state in the international system of the late 20th and early 21st century has been the rise of transnational non-state armed groups – a transformation that has taken place primarily in non-Western states and spaces. The significance of these actors is manifold, and their impact is continuously rising. Two of the key features they have introduced are their expanded contestation of the state's monopoly of power and their transnational navigation of space (social, political, economic, cultural and digital). Beyond, these actors have raised the triple question of how existing states have to respond to the persistent challenge the organisations represent by their self-empowerment (since at least the 1980s), the groups' very real institutionalisation of violence (best embodied in the Iraqi–Levantine experience of the Islamic State circa 2013–2017) and the larger meaning and possibilities associated with such forms of decentralised political violence (see Tuğal, 2017).

Emphasis on structure, war and economy has privileged Western experience and masked not merely mutations of this sort and other avenues onto statehood but the very nature of the state itself as resulting from other elements. Just because the historical experience of those countries most successful at adapting to the modern globalised economy has been characterised by high levels of state involvement does not mean that their experience will be reflected in the institutional arrangements that prevail globally, as Peter Evans (1997: 83) remarked while these dynamics were emerging 20 years ago.

In the final analysis, the question of the non-Western state is important not merely in terms of its own elucidation but, more generally, in terms of what it comes to usefully help address as a crucial gap in the current dominant understanding of the state in international affairs, both conceptually and practically. From now on, addressing it requires not merely acknowledging the picturesque existence of other traditions, to be gazed on paternalistically or romantically, but instead summoning actual categories of knowledge interrogating the actors, values and dynamics used reflexively over the past century to think, speak and perform statehood under one dominant Western matrix. The conflation of Western statehood with statehood *per se* has made it more difficult to pursue this project. From Karl Marx's and Max Weber's flawed discussions of the 'Asiatic mode of production' or 'Islamic patrimonialism', respectively (see Turner 1974; Zimmerman, 2006; Allen, 2017) to more recent works, the sequence has been one dismissal of the non-Western state based on suppositions about its inferior nature.

The deeper question, as Robert Vitalis (2015: 169) has termed it, is of the discipline of international relations' long entanglement with race and empire, speaking of the varieties of Eurocentrism that haunt international thought in the 21st century (also see Hobson, 2000, 2007 & 2012). In the context of the entrenched whiteness of social-sciences disciplines and the need for rethinking conceptual and methodological visions of the state – which would have the US, UK or French student readily see Ibn Khaldun as central rather than peripheral to this universal exploration – what has to be tackled first is the knowledge production about and therefore of the state. As Sadiah Qureshi (2018) notes,

present curricula assume that white men write about universal truths, while people of colour are only expert in a narrow field – usually to do with questions of identity and heritage. This is precisely how and why the road is paved to a rendering of the Southern state in exceptionalising or underperforming terms of statehood. The non-Western state cannot replicate the Western state because the latter is not a model but an instance of historical experience. Importantly, it is an experience that displayed specific geographies, spaces, choices and ideologies, and at the same time it is an experience that projected itself onto what would in time be considered a non-Western state through conquest, occupation and tutelage. With their 'traditions' stunned or erased, large segments of the non-Western world – in reaction to the Western state – had to successively seek to emulate that hegemon state to gain independence from it, then state-build to not so much build societies but rather merely (asymmetrical) sovereignty, and ultimately justify their 'underdevelopment' in the face of latter-day normative standards of a performance and ranking (which were really a discourse of power). Specifically, against the background of a conceptual invisibilisation of colonialism (Tusalem, 2016), half-born non-Western statehood suffered a second closing as the edifice was born in a formatted way and, a generation later, further problematically assessed as 'fragile', 'failed', 'weak' or 'collapsed'. The circularity of that normatively dispossessive sequence is that upon decreeing the inability of those states to live up to the standards of the Western state, what is then proposed is a return to a form of neo-colonial control:

> [N]ot all states will or should survive in their current form. *The populations of many failed states might benefit more from living indefinitely in a 'non-state' society* than in a dysfunctional state, artificially sustained by international efforts. Long-term '*non-state' arrangements could range from international trusteeships to affiliations with willing third-party states* to special status within regional bodies, and alternative accountability mechanisms could be developed to overcome democratic deficits associated with the lack of formal legal statehood as currently understood by international law. (Brooks, 2005: 1159)

Away from such neo-colonial reification, the problematisation of non-Western statehood has to give way to a positive project wherein the study of the domestic and international relations of places such as Africa, Asia and the Arab world is co-constitutive of the fullness of international affairs. Its significance lies in what it shows about the changing nature of international society, in particular the increasing prominent role that non-state actors are playing in international relations and the significance of norms and rules in the constitution and functioning of international society. A historically informed perspective provincialising the Western experience of statehood and remedying its scientific gaps by opening up to wider non-Western experiences is needed to understand statehood, particularly as it evolves in its next phase.

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