Introduction

The Many Hands of the State

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The study of states over the past three or four decades calls forth a number of paradoxes. First, intensifying interest in studying states has run parallel to the intensifying forces of globalization. The more states seem to be entangled in global economic, social, cultural, and political forces, the more scholars reach for the term "state" in their analyses, even as they eschew the "Westphalian" understanding of nation-states as the only proper unit of analysis. The intellectual focus on states also has spilled over into the policy domain, as actors operating within international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank – the very agents of globalization – have become fixated on shoring up states around the globe. Although many once advocated shrinking public sectors so as to liberate markets, many policymakers now believe that building up states and improving their "quality" (e.g., governance) is vital for economic development or political stability.[1]

A second paradox is that the drive to focus on the state as an analytic category developed powerfully within U.S. academia, despite the widespread sense of many that the United States has a governing apparatus that operates in fundamentally different ways than what the literature on states – above all in Europe – suggested. Perhaps the state has become an enduring scholarly preoccupation of United States-based scholars because they feel most keenly the disjuncture between the projection of U.S. power around the globe and antistatist political currents back home. The history of U.S. statebuilding also contains a perplexing mix of power and impotence: fragmented decision-making structures, multiple layers of government, and pervasive intertwining of public and private authority, yet also a remarkable capacity to conquer, enslave, surveil, and imprison.

Because the operation of political authority in the United States fits uneasily with the ideal-typical state lurking in the scholarly imagination, there is a growing literature seeking to better understand what "the state" is and means in the U.S. context.[2]

The third paradox lies in the fact that, even as we have seen the waning of debates between "state-centered" and "society-centered" theories of the state, its autonomy (or lack thereof), and its capacities, studies of states have increased and diversified, drawing on novel but more dispersed varieties of theorizing. While earlier analysis of states displayed a high level of theoretical engagement within a relatively narrow set of empirical debates, we now confront a situation of far greater empirical breadth but less theoretical engagement among scholars pursuing different lines of thinking.

A fourth paradox is that continued interest in states has coincided with a widely accepted reading of Foucault that the juridical power of states has been displaced by, or at least supplemented by, diffuse, capillary, or "mobile" mechanisms of power. Real-world events, including the emergence of nonterritorial political forces such as al-Qaeda and the increasing influence of both local and supranational entities, have also challenged the analytic primacy of states. In light of these developments, some counseled us to leave states altogether and investigate instead governance or governmentality.[3] We disagree.

Indeed, calls to disaggregate states into their component institutions and to assess different forms of power have not led scholars to drop the state from their analyses. Since the publication of the germinal *Bringing the State Back In* volume in 1985, the state has remained a central category and topic of analysis, and the academic and policy literature on the state is now vast, transcending disciplines, subfields, methodologies, epistemologies, and geographic areas of study.[4] We see this in the proliferation of modifiers that scholars use to characterize states – ambidextrous, administrative, associational, austerity, capitalist, carceral, centaur, clientelist, competition, consolidation, delegated, developmental, disaggregated, emergency, familial, failed, hidden, hollow, imperial, Keynesian welfare, laissez-faire, layered, migration, motherless, neoliberal, patriarchal, patronal, penal, phantom, polymorphic, predatory, racial, regulatory, rentier, Rube Goldberg, standardizing, straight, submerged, taxing, theatre, uneasy, warfare, welfare, women-friendly, and workfare – to name a few. This proliferation of modifiers reflects a problematic lack of engagement among analysts of states – how do these modifiers actually relate to each other? But it does indicate that the

concept of the state, however varied and contested it may be, is indispensable to contemporary scholarship.

This introduction, and the volume as a whole, makes an extended argument for the continuing fruitfulness of studying states; yet we need a better analytic armory. Our collective project emerged out of a desire to reflect upon several decades of exciting and innovative research, veering off in many different directions, that has flowered since the initial move to bring the state back in. Building on this wealth of research, we sought to reconnect with one another on a higher, theoretical plane. This volume culminates the intellectual work of several conferences, in which we grappled with theoretical questions about the meaning, contours, and reach of state power as we presented and critiqued our individual analyses of different elements of states. We found intriguing parallels across areas of interest that have been studied in isolation, such as political conflicts over state stratification that resonate across different forms of inequality, time periods, and geographic locations. Moreover, widening our lens beyond nation-states to include empires and other forms of governance enriches understandings of the multiple levels at which governing authority operates, processes of internal and external boundary formation, and how the "rule of difference" operates in both imperial and state contexts. We have arrived at the conclusion that several interrelated theoretical innovations mark the contemporary study of states.

First, our title, *The Many Hands of the State*, aims to capture the pervasive move away from conceptions of states as unitary actors and toward an understanding of states as encompassing multiple institutions, varying forms of interpenetration with civil society, multiple scales of governance, and multiple and potentially contradictory logics. One implication is that to understand states, we must both disaggregate and reaggregate, being attentive to the variable and shifting components of states without losing sight of that which binds them together. This, in turn, enables us to see states not as static structures of political opportunity, but as sets of organizations developing over time. Gaps between rules and their implementation are inevitable, allowing for endogenous as well as exogenous forms of institutional change, and possibly the transformation of the character of states or their constituent institutions.

Second, cultural and constructivist turns in history and the social sciences have drawn attention to the significance of states as classifying, categorizing, and stratifying organizations, as well as to the importance of cognition and cultural schemas in constituting boundaries, institutions, categories, and subjects. Rather than assuming there is a self-evident

separation between "state" and "society" or "economy," analysts argue that the state and its boundaries are shaped by cultural and ideological constructions. This also moves us to regain Weber's insight about the importance of *legitimacy*, without which states cannot maintain a monopoly of violence. State officials seek to construct and preserve monopolies over both material and symbolic force, raising questions about how this has been accomplished or why it has not succeeded.

Finally, there is extensive rethinking of the nation-state as a form and a unit of analysis in historical and globally situated contexts. Indeed, many of the nation-states whose trajectories have been treated as prototypical of statebuilding and state formation are in fact better conceptualized as multinational and spatially expansive, noncontiguous empires. The nation-state is but one historically specific form of rule among myriad others, ranging from empires to regions to city-states. Research in this area can be read as overlapping with the renewed interest in how boundaries are culturally and materially constituted, as these are not only "internal" – vis-à-vis "society" or the result of projects of nation-building on contiguous territories – but "external" – vis-à-vis other states or spatially distinct territories.

Our aim in this introductory chapter – after revisiting the intellectual origins and evolution that brought us to our current moment – is to elaborate on the theoretical innovations in the contemporary study of states sketched here. Let us note that we do not aspire to impose a single theoretical apparatus, based on a singular definition, for studying states. We see the canonical Weberian definition of the state that is so often cited these days – "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory" – as a serviceable enough starting point for theorizing states, but one that proves limiting, if narrowly understood.[5] Some scholars using variants of this definition focus only on forms of material power, lopping off Weber's cultural concerns encoded in his reference to legitimacy. Questioning how states legitimate their rule moves us to investigate how beliefs about the essential rightness of a state's rule emerge and are reproduced, alongside the development and consolidation of control of the means of coercion.[6] Moreover, like many definitions, Weber's offers an idealized portrait of that which is studied; in reality, many of the most interesting questions about states concern all that has challenged this ideal – how states are embedded in multiple levels of governance, their malleable and contested boundaries, and challenges to their sovereignty. Once we appreciate the multiplicity or, to invoke our favored metaphor, "hands" of states, it is

difficult to imagine that a single theory could address them all adequately. Indeed, the authors in this volume have each drawn in exciting new ways on different theorists, both classical and contemporary, to understand the diverse elements of states and empires.

STUDYING STATES: INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

Our interest in states, power, and politics was encouraged by the "sound of marching, charging feet" that was all around us in the 1960s and 1970s, and then by the fallout, political and intellectual, from the decline of those movements and the new challenges of neoliberalism and various political right turns. The 1970s had ushered in a shift within history and the social sciences to consider the *political* significance of *social* arrangements and processes. Traditional approaches toward politics and power had kept scholars focused on formal institutions, elites, and conventional forms of participation. Instead, social science historians and historically oriented social scientists insisted on the significance of politics from below and the social sources of power and interests, particularly as rooted in capitalist relations.[7] Soon after, debates emerged around how "the state" (it was singular in those days) should fit into analysis of politics and power. A number of scholars who many in this volume would call intellectual progenitors – including Skocpol, Tilly, and Evans – addressed the failures of neo-Marxist or, more broadly, class determinist accounts of politics with an approach that highlighted the state as potentially autonomous actor and institution, with varying structures and capacities, drawing on Weber, Tocqueville, and others. Specifically political logics derived from struggles over the means of coercion and administration, and competition in the world system of states. Against the grain of much previous social–historical analysis, scholars argued that politics was not fully determined by economic forces, either in the near term or in the "lonely hour of the last instance."[8] This critical intellectual move is captured in the phrase *Bringing the State Back In*, the title of the 1985 volume that still merits our attention – a move that can be seen in many ways as the epicenter of the scholarly movement Adams, Clemens, and Orloff called the "second wave" of historical social science.[9]

The intellectual movement to "bring the state back in" sparked controversy and debate, with some arguing the state had always been an important topic of scholarly analysis that did not need to be reintroduced.[10] The tendency of scholarship from the 1980s through the early 1990s to conceive of the state as an actor that concentrated and

institutionalized political authority proved to be both compelling and contested. It was compelling because it threw off the presumed subordination of the state to dominant economic groups while drawing attention to the weighty influence of states in the lives of the ordinary people who paid taxes, served in the military, and were subject to laws and regulations. The political significance of the state was grounded in the assumption that states could be forces against capitalism, as, for example, when Esping-Andersen wrote about "politics against markets" in social democratic Scandinavia, and U.S. scholars considered the progressive legacies of the New Deal in curbing capitalism.[11] State-centered analysis drew attention to the differing capacities and structures of states, as well as the economic and social powers with which states had to contend.[12] And this approach forged links between too-often separate analyses of domestic and international politics, with the state as the central, sovereign actor that lies between the two.[13]

Yet initial conceptualizations of the state-as-actor were heavily influenced by a particular interpretation of Weber, emphasizing his analysis of the material underpinnings of state power rather than his focus on culture, and building upon only a few archetypal examples – Prussia, France, and Japan. The image of states thus underscored certain qualities – centralization, coherence, and autonomy – as intrinsic features of "strong" states.[14] Other states showed signs of being effective and powerful, but lacked such an administrative apparatus. The United States, for instance, long a paragon of statelessness in the academic literature and the national self-conception, clearly lacked the idealized state architecture emphasized by state theorists as central to the "strength" of states, yet mobilized collective power to conquer and settle a vast geographic terrain while dispossessing indigenous peoples, imposed a violent system of slavery, fought two world wars and a cold one, and projected power across the globe.[15] Turning to the global South, we see governing apparatuses that also differ from the bureaucratic ideal type, yet viewing these non-European states solely through the lens of how they fail to measure up to a Western standard assesses states according to preconceived ideas about what they *should* be rather than analysis of what they are.[16] And the categories of "strong" or "weak" that came out of the scholarly fixation on state capacity, understood as infrastructural power to "penetrate" and order civil society, tend to be too vague to tell us much about how states actually govern.

Another limitation of the initial literature was the small number of actors in these stories of political conflict – capital, the working class, and

"the state" or, in somewhat less anthropomorphic lingo, state actors (political or policy entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, political leaders). But as scholars asserted the autonomy of the political, many more potential political actors – women and men as gendered actors; religious leaders; ethnic, racial, and national organizations; sexually categorized groups; colonial officials – entered our analytic frames as relevant for shaping state activities. Outcomes of interest also proliferated, including not only the state policies that preoccupied the earlier state-centered literature, but categories of the census and citizenship, how public/private divides were drawn, legal systems, and the political imaginary of state officials.[17] Yet the state remained quite central, as for example when feminist theorists of the state analogized from "politics against markets" to ask if states could roll back the frontiers of male dominance,[18] and scholars of race examined the role of states in securing white supremacy or beginning to unravel it.[19] This work contributed to a larger rethinking of the political as not merely that which takes place in formal politics, but as an ongoing set of struggles of everyday life, including in voluntary organizations, workplaces, homes, and schools. Here, we see interest in both open political struggles and quieter cultural processes of fixing the very boundaries of the state – defining the "public" and "the private," as many feminist analysts have described.[20]

Perhaps most damning for all conceptions of the state as actor was the charge of reification – that viewing the state as a single actor risks subsuming sprawling, complex concatenations of governing institutions under one presumptively unified bureaucratic apparatus. This obscures the multiple actors and processes at work within the state. In response, scholars have sought to unpack this tightly compacted concept, disaggregating the state into its many functions, organizations, and purposes while complicating the initially sharp boundaries drawn between public and private, state and society.

This disaggregating drive has produced much of the literature that inspired our collective project, starting from the many modalities of state action that a metaphor such as "the many hands of the state" implies. When various theories of the state (singular) predominated, analysts conceived of different functions – legitimation and accumulation, for example – as cohering in some way or betraying some inherent contradiction, but kept their eye, simultaneously, on both.[21] Bourdieu gave us a slightly more useful metaphor of the right and left hands of the state.[22] We have been struck by the metaphorical inadequacy of this concept – instead of right and left hands, we have many hands, functions, and forms

of power.[23] Perhaps a better metaphorical representation of our concerns than the Leviathan, wielding scepter and sword, is Kali, the multi-limbed – and many-handed – Hindu goddess of time and death, which are, after all, enduring concerns of historicizing political analysis of states. Alas, her singular embodiment does not yet reflect our interest in boundaries and hybridity; ultimately, we may need to find some science-fictional character to replace Leviathan. But in the meantime, it is our hope that "many hands of the state" will be an inspiring metaphor for scholars seeking to understand states in all their profusion and multiplicity.

STUDYING STATES SINCE *BRINGING THE STATE BACK IN*

The "state-centered" versus "society-centered" debates that characterized the era in which *Bringing the State Back In* was conceived and written fell, by the late 1990s, into intellectual exhaustion and diminishing returns, especially as Marxist influences waned and many in history and the social sciences took multifarious cultural, institutional, and transnational turns. Yet moving past the "state–society" debate has spurred theoretical and empirical innovation and a flourishing of research across a proliferation of sites, historical eras, and policy domains. Given this spreading out of state-focused scholarship and its evolution along transnational lines to encompass empires, colonies, and global systems, we think the time is ripe for people who have been involved in this dizzying array of analyses to enter into deeper intellectual exchange with each other.

Our volume explores four theoretical innovations that shape the grouping of chapters, even though the themes are overlapping and interrelated. First, we examine states as entities whose internal and external boundaries are often shifting and malleable, reflecting political contestation over the state's meaning, purpose, and resources; second, states are assessed as powerful forces for social stratification whose effects are nonetheless subject to negotiation and change; third, we evaluate states as organizations with claims to (legitimate) monopolies over both material and symbolic force, but whose control must be constructed and continually reaffirmed; and fourth, we conceptualize nation-states as one form of globally embedded rule that both has parallels with and often emerged out of empires. Our analysis of these shifts brings us to a series of theoretical observations that can guide further work on states and their indispensible contributions to political authority and social control.

Locating the State: The Problem of Boundaries

Critical to any analysis of the state is an understanding of what the state is and is not. Yet sketching the contours of the state is more complicated than it may seem. The embeddedness of states in international and global relationships is one source of complexity, overlapping sovereignties, and potential blurring of boundaries (as will be discussed in the section on empires that follows). Boundaries are variably clear or blurred in domestic political arenas, too, as states often rely heavily on private agents or difficult-to-classify public–private hybrids to make policies, administer state-funded programs, and deliver services.[24] State authority also operates through multiple levels of government, particularly in federal systems, and some have argued that rescaling processes are pervasive today, with power shifting downward to regional or municipal governments and/or upward toward international and supranational organizations.[25] And, as Risse has argued, many parts of the world are characterized by "limited statehood" – by states that lack full control over at least some part of their territory, having ceded that control to nongovernmental organizations, firms, subnational forms of government, indigenous leaders, warlords and criminal operations, and the like.[26]

Public–private hybridity and blurred boundaries between "state" and "society" are often significant features of states in contemporary and earlier eras, but we must avoid *conceptual* blurring – if all forms of power are viewed as equivalent, we will no longer draw any conceptual distinctions between the state and nonstate realms. In the words of Durkheim, "If the state is everywhere, it is nowhere."[27] Whether justified or not, states are often encrusted in layers of legitimacy and forms of power that help distinguish them from nonstate entities. The latter can be potent, and all the more so to the extent they are financed and supported by states, but the former remains, in most societies, the source from which much legitimate power radiates. If we entirely lose sight of these distinctions we risk losing the state as a theoretically or empirically meaningful category of analysis, and miss a significant element of states' symbolic power.

One way to locate the boundaries of the state – and to comprehend the complex goals and practices of state authorities and other political actors in erecting them or effacing them – is to examine the concrete ways in which states do the work of governing. It is only in examining the real-world practices of governance – the mix of public and private (nonprofit or proprietary) actors charged with implementing policies

and the nature of their relationship, the responsibilities of national versus subnational layers of government in program delivery, the role of law in achieving various objectives, and the lived experience of state policies on the ground by those subject to them – that we gain insight into what the state is.[28] One example is the extensive literature on street-level bureaucracy – the sites at which individuals and public authority meet, and where varying degrees of discretion allow public officials and, increasingly, private organizations to implement policies in ways that often diverge considerably from formal policy goals and rules.[29] Focusing on boundaries also draws attention to the political struggles over where state power starts and ends – why some political actors might seek to "hide" the state's power, for example, while others might try to draw attention to it.[30]

We can also draw on insights from the cultural turns in sociology and history, and the constructivist one in political science, about how cultural schemas influence categories and classifications, including those that demarcate boundaries between state and nonstate realms. As Mitchell noted back in 1991, the state is not a thing, hovering above society; instead, its very contours reflect ideological and cultural work shaping how officials portray the lines between state and nonstate and how citizens perceive them. Viewing the state as a "sociocultural phenomenon" highlights that states are not solely constellations of material power, but embody ideas and beliefs about legitimacy, sovereignty, disinterestedness, and coherence.[31] Such an approach also compels us to scrutinize the narratives about the state that officials – and scholars – produce as a set of cultural or ideological products. In his Collège de France lectures on the state, Bourdieu warns against adopting the self-legitimating categories of the state that only deepen its mystifying character:

> The state . . . is something that you cannot lay your hands on, or tackle in the way that people from the Marxist tradition do when they say "the state does this," "the state does that." I could cite you kilometers of texts with the word state as the subject of actions and proposals. That is a very dangerous fiction, which prevents us from properly understanding the state . . . be careful, all sentences that have the state as subject are theological sentences – which does not mean that they are false inasmuch as the state is a theological entity, that is, an entity that exists by way of belief. [32]

In this view, states profoundly shape the normative order, influencing the very terminology we use to describe them and where we locate their boundaries.

Stratification and the Transformation of States

States can impinge powerfully on social relations. States and their emanations – policies, laws, institutions, and doctrines – define, classify, standardize, and measure the world around them in ways that enable officials to better master and remake it.[33] In striving for greater legibility of the populations and territories that state authorities seek to control, these officials deploy practices and schemas that shape and reshape existing lines of social difference or create new ones, stratifying people along the lines of race, class, ethnicity, religion, gender, nationality, age, and sexual orientation, to name only the most prominent. We see these phenomena in empires, where the "rule of colonial difference" divided rulers from the ruled – their colonial and racialized subjects.[34] The legacies of this rule are found in the racializing institutions of the descendants of metropolitan and settler colonial states of the Global North, including the United States. The power of states to authoritatively name, define, and rank order people raises the stakes of political struggle: capturing some of the varied organs of the state is one important avenue for groups to name themselves, define the content of their identity, and craft policies that promote their interests.[35] States can forcefully remake social relations through their power to surveil and incarcerate people, to draft people to fight in wars, and to relocate or even exterminate populations.[36]

The impulse to characterize states by these kinds of effects has contributed to the large number of "modifier + state" terms that we noted at the beginning of this chapter. Affixing a label to states – the patriarchal state, the straight state, the racial state – is an important way to signal how public actions order political and social relationships. Yet we should be careful of overly aggregated analyses: does the term "patriarchal state," for example, encompass all governing entities, including national and subnational forms of government, all agencies, courts, and the legislative branch? The answer may be yes, but precisely how states stratify – through which actors, institutions, and processes – needs to be fully spelled out.

These totalizing labels also have rather static connotations: if the entire state is patriarchal, how could it ever not be? In practice, many analysts of state-shaped stratification are also investigators of state change, precisely because the hierarchies generated and sustained by state policies often spur social or political movements in response. As Scott has shown, the power of the states to transform society is fearsome, indeed, but people have also displayed considerable ingenuity in wriggling out from under

this power or mounting challenges to it, either directly or more subversively.[37] We should therefore think about stratification not as an endpoint but as a process subject to contestation and reform, as in the various movements for civil rights and liberation. Nonetheless, we should also avoid teleologies of inevitable progress, for mobilizations in favor of hierarchy and privilege may bolster the maintenance or even intensification of state stratification, as in the turning back of Reconstruction and reimposition of Jim Crow in the U.S. South.

One way to tackle these complex processes of stratification and change is to draw upon the flourishing institutionalist literature. Institutionalism both paralleled and developed out of the work of state-centered scholars and the various forms of institutionalism have helped counter the overly aggregated portrayals of states that initially marked the literature.[38] Moreover, increasing attention within the institutionalist literature to processes of change dovetails with a larger interest of many scholars in state transformation.[39] Institutionalists have sought to characterize and theorize forms of change, both exogenous and endogenous, in response to criticisms that their own accounts were unduly static. Scholars of states have been similarly interested in processes of state transformation, uncovering the ways in which actors and institutions within states can become agents of reform, remaking lines of division and inequality.[40] Here, research on states as differently configured sets of access points that reformers can enter has been especially fruitful, directing our attention to processes transforming states' operation.[41]

In disaggregating states into their component institutions, however, we do not want to lose sight of that which makes the state distinctive.[42] State institutions are not just like other institutions and our theories of institutional origin, stability, and change must help us to understand states' unique characteristics; the distillation and concentration of power in states, while taking varying forms in different places and time periods, generates a characteristic and often potent organizational form, for reasons both cultural and material.[43] This is why so many theorists have grappled with the state analytically and sought to describe that which separates it from other forms of power: Bourdieu referred to the state as a holder of metacapital, for instance, while Durkheim viewed the state as a form of political consciousness, but "one that is limited but higher, clearer and with a more vivid sense of itself" than political society as a whole.[44] For Weber, it is how states compel obedience that sets them apart from other forms of power. We then come back to the question of how states induce, or force, people to obey.

Developing the Sinews of Power

If states are the distinctively powerful governing structures of our time – the very embodiment of modernity that emerged out of and reinforced capitalism, geopolitical competition, imperial expansion, racial hierarchies, and masculine domination – why and how did this come about? And how are some states able to preserve this power – to maintain order, for example, or to respond to governing challenges – while others are not? These questions have animated a large and ever-growing literature on statebuilding that has helped identify the factors shaping the historical development of states around the globe.[45] One contribution of this work has been to shift our understanding of states away from the Lockean, social contract view of states toward one that highlights the violent, messy, and historically contingent processes by which states are made or unmade.[46] The study of states as works in progress also helps analysts avoid reifying them, eschewing a sharp demarcation of state–society boundaries, for instance, and instead examining the processes by which such boundaries get defined. And a focus on the emergence, development, or decline of specific institutional capacities allows us to better understand the successes and failures of particular state projects, thereby avoiding a common functionalist presumption that the states' projects – or those of political authorities or economically dominant classes – are always successful. Much work has homed in on the specific instruments of statebuilding – taxation, for example – or the development of bureaucratic capacity and autonomy in subparts of the state apparatus.[47]

With intellectual cross-fertilization from the cultural turn, work on statebuilding has transcended the earlier, almost exclusive emphasis on material aspects of statebuilding – a focus on physical force; administrative and extractive powers; and control over borders, resources, and people – capital and coercion, in varying degrees, as Tilly had it.[48] States seek a monopoly not only over the use of physical force, but also over the use of symbolic force.[49] A state's power lies not only in its ability to prevent exit and coerce compliance, but also in its ability to induce agreement – to manufacture categories, standards, and principles of social, economic, and political organization that penetrate deep into individual consciousness.[50] Making sense of state authority thus requires us to examine not just material force but also state structures, ideas, and belief systems that shape how individuals or social groups view themselves and their relationship to states.[51]

Another avenue for thinking about how state power is constructed and maintained is through linking statebuilding and representative politics. An ambiguity of the second-wave historical sociological and political science literature was whether to include legislative branches, ruling parties, and democratically elected executives as part of the state. Initially, many scholars seemed to say no, as the states judged as having greater capabilities were those whose civil servants are relatively insulated from rough-and-tumble democratic politics.[52] Moreover, the very problem of statebuilding in the United States was interpreted by scholars as that of forging bureaucratic autonomy in a porous and fragmented polity subject to the whims of electoral politics.[53] These studies brought important insights about state–society relationships but also contributed to conceptual confusion over state "strength" and "autonomy" and the relationship of states to electoral politics. In part, the confusion stems from a misreading of the European statebuilding experience: In focusing on political centralization and bureaucratic coherence as features of an effective state, some scholars exaggerated these qualities (as in the case of France) and neglected crucial counter-examples, such as Britain, in which the power of the fiscal–military state was furthered, not hampered, by representative institutions that mediated social and political conflict.[54]

The development of governing authority in the United States affords further insights into the linkages between civil society, representative institutions, state power, and statebuilding.[55] An important vein of historical research on the United States has shifted attention from the success or failure of grand statebuilding projects from the center to how actors in the periphery fashioned discrete, disjointed, and highly variable administrative and legal approaches to governing a vast, decentralized nation. Democratic politics – the decentralization and fragmentation of political power and concomitant flourishing of civil society as a preexisting site of governance – is the backdrop here, shaping the many hybrid forms of public–private action and the heavy reliance upon law.[56] As Novak describes it, U.S. governing arrangements that emerged in the nineteenth century represented

> . . . a distinctly new kind of coercive power emerging within popular sovereignties, democratic societies, and modern economies – a power more diffuse, less visible, less clearly identified with a single individual (i.e., the king) or institution (i.e., the church), sometimes private as well as public, woven into the everyday substructure of modern social and economic organization.[57]

But if democracy augmented governing authority in the United States, it did so in complex relation with antidemocratic, coercive aspects of rule,

as in the subnational authoritarianisms that, in the slaveholding and later Jim Crow states, were part of a larger political bargain for securing territorial control.[58] Scholars of statebuilding in the United States and in other parts of the world direct us to investigate how political authority is concretely constructed and legitimated through governing practices, routines, and symbols as well as through the raw exercise of power. In so doing we can start to understand not only how states construct their material power but also how they produce, in the words of Abrams, "a managed construction of belief about the state ... [that binds] subjects into their own subjection."[59]

States and Empires: The Transnational/Global Turn

Finally, it is important to situate states in international and global dynamics. Initial work in the state-centered vein emphasized the Janus-faced nature of states vis-à-vis the international arena and domestic sphere;[60] one rationalist version of this understood state actors as playing two-level games, at home and abroad.[61] International relations scholars and others were encouraged to peer inside the black box of the state, rather than to conceptualize states as persons.[62] Similarly, those studying domestic political processes turned to the international, supranational, and global spheres, and the forces of diffusion, interdependence, reaction, and isomorphism.[63] And states necessarily had to be situated within larger divisions of power, including imperial relationships and global divisions of labor. Globalization and the growing international and supranational organizational architecture have only intensified the need to cast our visions both below and beyond the nation-state.[64]

In so doing, one needs to strike a balance between highlighting the global forces that have altered or undermined states to varying degrees and emphasizing the resilience of states as dominant actors in the global sphere. We can see this in the economic realm, where the early rush to proclaim the death of the state was subsequently turned back.[65] Claims of neoliberal convergence featured in sweeping and far-too-generic analyses of the revival of capitalist power in the years since 1980, but these accounts have been powerfully challenged by scholars investigating the complicated nexus between states and economies.[66] Market-oriented reforms in many parts of the world have not necessarily diminished the overall role of the state in the economy but often altered modes of state intervention, producing *expansions* of the public sector in some places to buffer societies against economic liberalization.[67] And while the rise in

international regulatory bodies initially created new avenues through which firms could impose their interests, states have pushed to regain at least some control over these entities, generating hybrid forms of governance.[68] Even if the state has not been eclipsed, however, it is not tenable to view states as isolated and fully independent units.

"Returning to empire" is one prominent strand of work taking up the challenges presented by globalization and the complexity of relations between the "West and the rest" over the centuries of their contact, conflict, and exchanges.[69] This research has developed the initial second-wave insights that states were embedded in global contexts – the world system of states in the Hintzean–Weberian approach or the world system in Wallerstein's influential but economically determinist version – while also examining politics from the point of view of the oppressed. Extensive work on revolutions and national liberation struggles against colonial and imperial powers and on the resistance of people of color against white racial supremacy in both the Global North and the Global South revealed relations of domination between global-North states – formerly colonial and imperial powers – and states of the global South that were formerly colonies and dependencies.[70] Currently, analysts are debating how to conceptualize different forms of imperial domination. Steinmetz, for example, suggests a distinction between territorial (colonial) and nonterritorial (imperial) forms of empire, with significant repercussions for the shape of individual metropolitan and peripheral states.[71] Colonialism's profound, complicated, and enduring legacies on states around the globe, and the extent of inequalities of power and resources between global North and global South, underline how strongly international and global forces have impinged upon states.[72]

We also see deeper conceptual linkages between states and empires, such that the study of one can and should enrich the other. Definitions of empire – "a centralized, hierarchical system of rule acquired and maintained by coercion through which a core territory dominates peripheral territories,"[73] for instance, or "relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies"[74] – bear more than a passing resemblance to many definitions of states. Statebuilding often required a projection of power over hostile hinterlands inhabited by supposedly backward or even barbarian people judged to be in need of civilization.[75] Weber noted that there were continental (e.g., statebuilding) versions of imperialism, found in Russia and America, and "overseas" versions, such as those practiced by England and other European states,[76] while Adams and Pincus emphasize that

"European state formation – in all cases – was a thoroughly imperial project in the early modern period."[77] Power, domination, and racialization featured in studies of empires surely carries over to the study of states (and vice versa).[78]

SUMMARY: THEORIZING STATES

This analysis of the rich and proliferating literature on states and empires and its signal theoretical innovations brings us to several core analytic conclusions that we hope will stimulate conversations across various scholarly divides and promote new lines of research.

First, we reaffirm the state as a foundational concept in the social sciences, one that cannot be replaced with "governmentality" or "governance" or "institution," because states are more than mere institutions and signify forms of power that differ from those found in other arenas. The distillation and concentration of power in states, while taking varying forms in different places and time periods, generates a distinctive and often potent organizational form. States are more than bundles of governing institutions, because of their claim to embody the will of a collectivity, whether this occurs through democratic channels or not; the legitimacy in which officials try to encase their actions; and their recognition in the international arena.

Second, states concentrate and deploy both material *and* symbolic powers. Weber was right to emphasize states' control of the means of coercion in specified geographic territories, but he also highlighted the centrality of legitimacy to any form of rule; neither coercion nor legitimacy is a given – they both must be accomplished. State legitimacy requires more than mere force; states also operate through the pull they have on the public consciousness. The subjective element of state power is of vital importance, as states are not mere arenas in which utility-maximizing individuals satisfy their goals. At the very least, states help define those goals, and some would see states operating at a deeper level in constituting subjects and shaping the forms of knowledge out of which public and private action develop.

Third, states work through varied modes of governance. States often delegate to nonstate and subnational actors; they subsidize private agents to do their work; and they may be subject to strong pressures from external agents, including international organizations, nongovernmental actors, and foreign governments. Although it is important to analyze the blurred lines that may result from this complexity, we must avoid a

concomitant conceptual blurring such that all forms of power are viewed as equivalent. State power is legitimized in distinctive ways and states deploy forms of power that are different from those used by nonstate entities. Rather than allow the distinctions between state and nonstate institutions to be dissolved into conceptual murk, we are better off charting the linkages and flow of resources and power between these spheres or investigating where boundaries blur, why that might be the case, and what implications this has for power, authority, and legitimacy.

Fourth, our metaphor of the many hands of the state highlights the complexity and multiplicity of actors and institutions within the state, pushing us to go beyond reifying simplifications that would view the state as a uniform, cohesive entity. Doing so draws attention to contradictory or incoherent forms of state action and also helps us think about processes of state transformation, which most often occur unevenly across institutions. Moreover, it encourages a rethinking of the relationship between states and representative institutions (or the lack thereof), a specific and critical element of the broader range of relationships of states to social actors. Once we give up on simplifying notions of states as unified agents, what next? Our challenge is to disaggregate and reaggregate, dissect and reassemble, always taking into consideration the multiplicity of state forms and functions as we try to understand what in some instances binds those parts together and, in others, subjects them to varied centrifugal forces.[79]

Finally, we should situate states vis-à-vis the international and transnational arenas without assuming that these forces always and everywhere undermine the state. There are many challenges to states posed by the forces of internationally mobile capital, transnational political and social movements, international and supranational organizations, or simply states with more power than others. Yet formal legal sovereignty remains a defining feature of what it is to be a state.[80] States are not being eclipsed, but they are enmeshed in forces operating both below and beyond state boundaries. The study of empires can help us think about how states have been and continue to be situated in global contexts, including how international relations of power – between what we now call global North and global South, or between the metropole and colonies in earlier times – enduringly shape states across the globe.

THE CHAPTERS IN THIS BOOK

For this volume, we sought out work that embodies some of the dominant trends in contemporary research while pushing scholarship in new and

exciting directions. Our book covers the four major areas of scholarly interest and activity that are featured as the themes of this introduction.

Part I investigates the ways in which state boundaries are defined, understood, shifted, or maintained. Three of the chapters are reflective of the flourishing literature on the U.S. state that seeks to map its contours, while a fourth chapter situates these boundary questions in the global arena, where states are subject to pressures from international organizations, private entities, and other states. The chapters push forward literatures on these topics by highlighting how contestation over both material and symbolic resources shapes where boundaries are drawn. The dividing line between state and nonstate is not solely a matter of law or physical demarcations, but reflects understandings of what "public" signifies or what the "state" means – designations that are at issue in many political struggles, and arguably are constitutive of politics itself.

We see these struggles in the early twentieth-century United States, when expanding public responsibility for social welfare spurred debates over the relationship between government agencies and charitable organizations. As Clemens' Chapter 1 shows, these debates reveal a scramble for power and resources, but also competing visions about what it means to lodge responsibility in the public or private sector. Reconciling equal but standardized treatment (from the state) with individualized but variable care (from charitable organizations) proved difficult, and rather than definitively resolve this tension, the state–society boundary was subject to continuous political maneuvering. In Chapter 2, Mayrl and Quinn examine similar maneuvering and contestation in the United States today in debates over the significance of the state in supporting and shaping market forces. They argue that these disputes, as well as habituation processes, influence whether people see the state and its many hands by drawing attention to, or obfuscating, its responsibilities and reach. Thus, against the widespread claim that the U.S. state is "hidden" or "submerged," owing to its reliance on tax breaks, regulations, and the delegation of responsibilities to private agents, they forward a more encompassing theory of states, cognition, and classification, contending that the U.S. state is not hidden but is frequently misrecognized.

Lara-Millán's Chapter 3 looks at contestation over institutional boundaries within states, examining how governing agencies with joint responsibilities for disempowered populations – in this case, inmates in Los Angeles county jails – jostle to seize or cede control over people. Faced with overcrowding and budget austerity, county officials battled with each other to shift some of the incarcerated population out of jails

and into hospitals, an example of "people exchange." Lara-Millán thus offers us a disaggregated account of the state's power to move and control human populations, one that peers behind the state façade to examine the motivations and behaviors of the agents operating within. Finally, in Chapter 4, Fourcade examines the many hands *on* the state from outside national boundaries through the example of private credit rating agencies that scrutinize and grade countries' credit worthiness. The stakes around these evaluations are tremendous: extensions or denials of credit (and the terms attached to it) affect the well-being of human societies and the profits of investors, but these evaluations also shape the perceived boundary between states and the nations they symbolically represent. Thus, financial market actors often assess not only state capacities but also characteristics of entire societies and economies, placing nations into distinct categories of moral worth.

Part II of the volume offers fresh perspectives on the stratifying effects of states and how these are transformed over time. Our chapters in this section push the large literature on state stratification beyond monolithic understandings of these processes and examine how different state agents and their various "products" – including legal decisions, redistributive policies, regulations, and the rhetoric accompanying these governing acts – create, reproduce, and reshape lines of difference and inequality. In so doing, the authors highlight the uneven and often contradictory nature of stratifying and classifying schemas, underlining how these very schemas can provoke social and political resistance that at times achieve transformations of state institutions, while also identifying some of the institutional sources of resistance to change.

In Chapter 5, Orloff investigates the transformation of state policies in Sweden and the United States from supporting households of breadwinning men and caregiving women to encouraging, or compelling, women's paid work, developing a new understanding of institutional change in gendered labor policies (a "many-handed" concept) as encompassing both the destruction of old policies and the construction of new ones. She situates this analysis of policy transformation vis-à-vis changes in feminist state theories, which have shifted from understandings of states as unitary in logic – patriarchal – to conceptualizing them as incorporating multiple institutional logics, including a potentially gender-egalitarian one. Htun and Weldon in Chapter 6 investigate some of the state's "hands" on gender relations through a typology that captures the multidimensional nature of state action vis-à-vis gender equality, illustrating the uneven international spread of policies to combat violence against women and

to reform women's status in family law. Exploring why the adoption of transformative policies is so variable across time and space, they find that both hinge on the power of social forces vis-à-vis states. In the case of family law, the historically entrenched power of religious actors often stymies possibilities for reform, while it is the mobilization of autonomous feminist movements that is vital for action on violence against women.

The problem of empowerment looms large in analyses of states and racial transformation; those with power have few incentives to cede it, creating barriers to challengers of racial hierarchy and the state policies that uphold it. This problem motivates King and Lieberman's assessment in Chapter 7 of how the U.S. state became a force for civil rights advancement, with some institutions changing from oppressor to protector in the span of a generation, even as others continued to promote segregation and inequality. Their analysis develops a disaggregated conceptualization of the state by identifying variation in the American state's stratifying effects with respect to race, as well as shifts in the capacities of activists and reformers versus those who would uphold hierarchy. Paschel's Chapter 8 on the radical shift in Brazil from colorblind to race-conscious policies offers a similarly disaggregated view of the state and its relationship with activists seeking to reform its policies. She locates an array of political opportunity structures not only at the domestic level but also in the international forums in which activists, experts, and diplomats comparatively assessed Brazil's racial arrangements and made moral and political claims. Although the resulting policy shifts have been important and meaningful, Paschel identifies other state policies and practices that contribute to maintaining obdurate racial inequalities.

Part III of the volume investigates questions that are at the heart of the expansive literature on statebuilding: how states construct and preserve their capacities to maintain order and govern. Yet, while much of the literature on statebuilding focuses on the material processes of policing borders and taxing populations, the authors here also examine the sources of symbolic power. As Davenport notes in Chapter 10, states cannot sustainably rely on repression alone, but usually govern through some amount of popular agreement, or at least acquiescence. How order is produced, and legitimacy maintained, is thus central to the existence and persistence of states.

One source of power derives from liberal political institutions. In Chapter 9, Novak, Sawyer, and Sparrow challenge prevailing understandings of how state power operates in the United States – through formal law, laissez-fare government, or the "cold monster" of the

bureaucratic state. Instead, they trace an alternative genealogy of American political power, showing how representative institutions have enabled political authorities in the United States to harness and organize social energies by joining some amount of public consent to the use of force. That sense of legitimacy proves particularly important in enabling what Davenport calls, in Chapter 10, the "joint production of coercion." Davenport finds that, given the costliness of repression, those in power often engage in a public performance of order and control, legitimating their own existence while downplaying or undermining challengers to the status quo. Political authorities not only make determinations about how much force to use, given the challengers they face, but also try to influence public perceptions of state power through how their actions are depicted in media accounts and other sources.

Mehrotra's contribution to this volume, Chapter 11, also examines representations of state power – in this case, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century debates in the United States over the federal government's adoption of a progressive income tax. He argues that these debates helped construct political agreement over a new system of taxation, enabling state actors to reach deep into the wallets of the citizenry. However, the aim here was not only to generate needed public resources, but also to forge a new set of ties, both affective and material, between the state and the public. Finally, Kestnbaum's Chapter 12, on what he calls "the revolution in war in the late eighteenth century," examines the move by state officials in Europe and the United States to mobilize citizens behind war-making projects through emotional appeals. As in Fourcade's analysis of the conflation of states with the societies they govern during the recent financial crisis, Kestnbaum charts the growing identification of the population with state power as war became the "business of the people." This revolution spurred changes in the practice of war that reverberate to the present day, including the rise of partisans who voluntarily fight on the state's behalf and the treatment of civilians as "fair game" for military targeting.

Part IV of the volume situates the study of states in the international arena through a focus on empires. The study of imperialism was curiously absent from the state-centered literature that developed in the 1980s, but since then scholars have developed an exciting line of work on empires past and present, building on earlier research on world systems, dependent development, and the dually situated character of state elites. Our authors reveal multiple linkages – theoretical and empirical – between

states and empires. The legacies of imperialism and colonial states on contemporary states in both the Global North and Global South are significant and lasting, for example in the instantiation of (colonial) rules of difference in the racializing institutions of modern states. Moreover, bringing an imperial theoretical framing to political history recasts our understanding of the emergence of modern nation-states as encompassing far more than consolidating control across a contiguous space.

Adams and Pincus in Chapter 13 contend that the original transition to modernity in Europe was propelled by and indeed inextricable from colonialism and empire, arguing that "the European empires of the early modern era were part and parcel of state formation projects . . . and vice versa. The many hands of the state were vested in empire." Moreover, intellectual observers, political elites, and subject peoples did not necessarily distinguish between empires and states, but saw both as related forms of political organization heralding a break with what had come before. In Chapter 14, Hussin investigates the actual operation of colonial states by examining how a set of intermediaries – Indian Muslim judges in the British empire – rendered legible the societies and polities that colonial officials were seeking to rule while shaping a specific understanding of Islamic law and religion in Indian institutions. The translative work performed by these intermediaries was critical to the operations of British rule on the ground and has had lasting effects on the nature of the postcolonial successor states to the Raj. Finally, in Chapter 15, Steinmetz connects theorizing about states and empires through revisions to Bourdieu's influential theory of bureaucratic or state fields. Steinmetz applies an amended version of field theory to the imperial sphere, cracking open the colonial state to look within it and view the class struggles among officials that at times had deadly consequences for those living under their rule.

The chapters collected here offer the diverse reflections of theoretically engaged scholars on one of the most contested and indispensable concepts in the social sciences. Taken together, these chapters range impressively over the scholarly terrain of states and empires. Each presents an original analysis of a critical arena while creating new analytic tools for future research. We expect that the next thirty years of research on states and empires will be as rich and creative as the last, and hope that this volume contributes to intellectual work that is, we think, crucial for the necessary political work of harnessing states to the needs and demands of the people of the world.

Notes

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42 This loss can be seen in Schmitter's definition of the state, for instance, as "an amorphous complex of agencies with ill-defined boundaries, performing a great variety of not very distinctive functions," cited in Mitchell, "Limits of the State."

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46 Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*; Reno, *Warlord Politics*; Tanisha M. Fazal, *State Death: The Politics and Geography of Conquest, Occupation and Annexation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

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52 Bertrand Badie and Pierre Birnbaum, *Sociologie de l'Etat* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1982); Hugh Heclo, *Modern Social Policies in Britain and Sweden: From Relief to Income Maintenance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press 1982).

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54 Pierre Rosanvallon, *L'État en France de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 61–74; Sheri Berman, "From the Sun King to Karzai: Lessons for State Building in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2010); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State 1688–1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). We note that early social science theorizing about states assumed representative politics was important, if not central, to what states are about. Weber includes representative bodies and elected

officials as potentially powerful actors in modern states, while for Durkheim, the essence of the state is its legislative function, as it is in parliaments, and not within the bureaucracies, that the most vital work of states occurs, that of fashioning "collective representations and acts of volition" that will guide the polity. And Dewey's writing on the democratic state was in part directed against Hegel and his intellectual descendants, who sharply demarcated state from society.

55 Carpenter, *Building Bureaucratic Authority*

56 William Novak *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Brian Balogh, *A Government out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Clemens, "Rube Goldberg State"; John, "Rethinking the Early American State."

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65 Peter Evans, "The Eclipse of the State?" *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (1997): 62–87.

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