Chapter 4

The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization: Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind

Sociocultural anthropology often arises from the banality of daily life. I will start this chapter with three banal stories.

In January of 1999, Mr. Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate in economics, was stopped on his way to a conference in Davos, Switzerland, at the Zürich airport for entering Switzerland without a visa. Never mind that Mr. Sen was carrying credit cards, as well as his U.S. resident greencard. Never mind that he claimed that the organizers had promised him a visa to be delivered at the airport. North Americans and West Europeans can enter Switzerland without a visa, whether or not on their way to a conference. Mr. Sen, however, uses his Indian passport. The Swiss police were worried that he would become a dependent of the state, as Indians are likely to be. The irony of the story is that Mr. Sen was on his way to the World Economic Forum. The theme of the Forum that year was "Responsible Globality: Managing the Impact of Globalization."

Less funny but no less ironic is the story of the fourteen-year-old "Turk" who was sent *back* to Turkey by the government of Germany—when in fact he had never set foot in Turkey, having been born and raised in Germany. This was less funny, yet as banal, because similar occurrences are not exceptional. The French and U.S. governments routinely expel "aliens" whose school-age children are citizens by birth.

Less funny still was the encounter between one Turenne Deville and the U.S. government in the 1970s. At the news that the Immigration and Naturalization Service was to send him back to Haiti, Mr. Deville hanged himself in his prison cell. A tragic yet banal story, to the extent that Mr. Deville's suicide is no more dramatic than the wager of hundreds of Haitian refugees who continue to dive—both literally and figuratively—in the Florida seas, betting that they will beat the sharks, the waves, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Are these encounters with the state? In all three cases, we see a government—or a government agency—telling people where they should or should not be. If, as James Scott (1998) among others argues, the placement of people, including their

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enforced sedentarization, is a major feature of statecraft, the encounters I just described do seem to be cases in which state power was yielded to enforce physical placement.

My three stories speak of borders, of the space between centralized governments with national territorial claims where encounters between individuals and state power are most visible. Yet millions of banal and not so banal encounters of the same kind also occur within national or regional boundaries: a car owner facing state emission laws in California; a family facing school language in Catalonia, India, or Belize; a couple dealing with a new pregnancy in China; a homeless person deciding where to sleep in San Francisco, Rio de Janeiro, or New York; a Palestinian in the Occupied Territories having to decide which line to cross and when; or a citizen of Singapore or Malaysia having to conform to prescribed behavior in a public building.

Behind the banality of these millions of encounters between individuals or groups and governments, we discover the depth of governmental presence in our lives, regardless of regimes and the particulars of the social formation. The opening statement of Ralph Miliband's (1969:1) opus on the state still rings true: "More than ever before men now live in the shadow of the state." One can even argue that the penal state has actually increased in size and reach in a number of countries since Miliband wrote—notably in the United States, with the increase of prison space and the routinization of the death penalty.

This, however, is only one side of the story. Indeed, while signs of the routinization of governmental presence in the lives of citizens abound everywhere, the turn of the twenty-first century also offers us images of governmental power challenged, diverted, or simply giving way to infra- or supra-national institutions. From Chiapas and Kosovo to Kigali and Trincomale, separatist movements have become increasingly vocal on all continents. On a different scale, a growing number of analysts suggest that globalization renders the state increasingly irrelevant, not only as an economic actor but also as a social and cultural container. They point to the significance of practices that reject or bypass national state power—such as the "new" social movements—or to the power of trans-state organizations from NGOs and global corporations to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as concrete signs of that relative decline.

Thus this century opens with two sets of contradictory images. The power of the national state sometimes seems more visible and encroaching, and yet sometimes less effective and less relevant. This chapter explores how anthropologists can make sense of that tension and fully incorporate it into our analysis of the state. To do so, we need to recognize three related propositions: 1) state power has no institutional fixity on theoretical or historical grounds; 2) Thus, state effects never obtain solely through national institutions or in governmental sites; and 3) these two features, inherent in the capitalist state, have been exacerbated by globalization. Globalization thus authenticates a particular approach to the anthropology of the state, one that allows for a dual emphasis on theory and ethnography.

If the state has no institutional or geographical fixity, its presence becomes more deceptive than otherwise thought, and we need to theorize the state beyond

the empirically obvious. Yet this removal of empirical boundaries also means that the state becomes more open to ethnographic strategies that take its fluidity into account. I suggest such a strategy here, one that goes beyond governmental or national institutions to focus on the multiple sites where state processes and practices are recognizable through their effects. These state-effects include:

(1) *an isolation effect*, that is, the production of atomized individualized subjects molded and modeled for governance as part of an undifferentiated yet specific "public";
(2) *an identification effect*, that is, a realignment of the atomized subjectivities along collective lines within which individuals recognize themselves as the same;
(3) *a legibility effect*, that is, the production of both a language and a knowledge for governance, of theoretical and empirical tools that classify, serialize, and regulate collectivities, and of the collectivities so engendered;
(4) *a spatialization effect*, that is, the production of boundaries—both internal and external—of territories and jurisdiction.

This chapter is an exploratory formulation of that strategy.

Thinking the State

Exploratory though it may be, this exercise requires a conceptual baseline. We need to determine at what level(s) to best conceptualize the state. Is the state a concrete entity, something "out there"? Or is it a concept necessary to understand something out there? Or is it an ideology that helps to mask something *else* out there, a symbolic shield to power, as it were?

Unfortunately, sociocultural anthropologists have not given these questions the attention they deserve. In a major review of the anthropology of the state, Carole Nagengast (1994:116) wrote: "Insofar as anthropology has dealt with the state, it has taken it as an unanalyzed given." Interestingly, Nagengast's own treatment of the state in the context of her assessment does not attempt to turn this unanalyzed given into an object of study.[1] Indeed, is there an object to study?

The anthropologist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown answers this question with a resounding "no" that should give us food for thought even if we disagree with its extremism. Introducing Meyer Fortes's *African Political Systems* in 1940, Radcliffe-Brown wrote:

> In writings on political institutions there is a good deal of discussion about the nature and origin of the State, which is usually represented as being an entity over and above the human individuals who make up a society, having as one of its attributes something called "sovereignty," and sometimes spoken of as having a will (law being defined as the will of the State) or as issuing commands. The State in this sense does not exist in the phenomenal world; it is a fiction of the philosophers. What does exist is an organization, i.e. a collection of individual human beings connected by a complex system of relations... There is no such thing as the power of the State... (1955 [1940]: xxiii).

One could call this death by conceptualization inasmuch as Radcliffe-Brown conceptualizes the state into oblivion.

To be sure, that answer carries the added weight of both empiricism and methodological individualism. Yet Radcliffe-Brown is not simply saying that "army" is merely the plural for "soldiers." Nor is he saying that the state does not exist because we cannot touch it. Governmental organizations have different levels of complexity even if for sake of functionality, when not for the sake of functionalism. Thus, a generous reading of Radcliffe-Brown, which would prune out the added philosophical baggage of his school and times, still leaves us with a powerful answer. The state is neither something out there nor a necessary concept. Each and every time we use the word, words such as "government" would do the conceptual job, and they would do it better.

I do not agree with that answer, as I hope to make clear. However, it seems to me that anthropologists cannot continue to ignore it. Radcliffe-Brown's answer to the state question contains a warning that anthropologists should keep in mind. Since the state can never be an empirical given, even at the second degree (the way, say, particular governments can be thought to be), where and how does anthropology encounter the state, if at all? What can be the terms of our analytical encounter with the state? What can we possibly mean, for instance, by an ethnography of the state?

In an important article, written in 1977, Philip Abrams revives Radcliffe-Brown's warnings. Abrams provides a sophisticated demonstration of the reasons to reject the existence of the state as an entity and he raises some serious doubts about the analytical purchase of the state concept. He writes (1988:76): "The state . . . is not an object akin to the human ear. Nor is it even an object akin to human marriage. It is a third-order object, an ideological project. It is first and foremost an exercise in legitimation. . . . The state, in sum, is a bid to elicit support for or tolerance of the insupportable and intolerable by presenting them as something other than themselves, namely, legitimate, disinterested domination."

Contrary to Radcliffe-Brown, Abrams admits an object for state studies: the very process of power legitimation that projects the image of an allegedly disinterested entity, "the state-idea."[2] As stated, Abrams's "state-idea" is not immediately conducive to ethnography but it does provide a warning that balances Radcliffe-Brown. Something happens out there that is more than government. The question is what.

Theorists have provided different answers to that question that I will not survey here. For the purposes of this discussion, let me only say that my own evolving view of the state starts with the "enlarged" notion of the state first put forward by Antonio Gramsci. I also find extremely fruitful Nicos Poulantzas's reworking of Marx and Gramsci. I continue to gain also from various writers such as Ralph Miliband (1969), Louis Althusser (1971 [1969]), Paul Thomas (1994), James Scott (1998), and Étienne Balibar (1997).[3] All this is to say that I do not claim to provide an original conceptualization. Rather, I hope to make a contribution to an ongoing dialogue with an eye to the kind of research best performed by sociocultural anthropologists (see also Trouillot 1997).

Most of the writers I have mentioned insist that the state is not reducible to government. In Miliband's (1969:49) words, "what 'the state' stands for is a

number of particular institutions which, together, constitute its reality, and which interact as part of what may be called the state system." Miliband's overly sociological treatment of that system needs to be backed by Poulantzas's and Gramsci's more elaborate conceptualizations of the state as a privileged site of both power and struggle. Gramsci's insistence on thinking state and civil society together by way of concepts such as hegemony and historical bloc is fundamental to this approach. I read Gramsci as saying that within the context of capitalism, theories of the state must cover the entire social formation and articulate the relation between state and civil society. One cannot theorize the state and then theorize society or vice versa. Rather, state and society are bound by the historical bloc that takes the form of the specific social contract of—and thus, the hegemony deployed in—a particular social formation. "A social contract is the confirmation of nationhood, the confirmation of civil society by the state, the confirmation of sameness and interdependence across class boundaries" (Trouillot 1997:51). Yet even that phrasing needs to be qualified lest it seem to reinforce the nineteenth-century homology of state and nation.

As institutionalized in degree-granting departments in a context where faith in progress was unquestioned, nineteenth-century social science built its categories on the assumption that the world in which it was born was not only the present of a linear past but the augur of an ordained future. For most of its practitioners, the world may not have been eternal but the referents to the categories—if not the categories themselves—used to describe that world were eternal. Nineteenth-century social science generally assumed the ontological fixity of the boundaries it observed. State boundaries were prominent among those. They provided the natural frameworks within which the processes studied by social scientists occurred (Wallerstein et al. 1996:80). In its simplest form, their methodological assumption, shared equally by literary scholars, ran along the following lines: France was obviously a nation-state. It had, therefore, a single economy, a single history, and a single social life, all of which could be studied by the appropriate discipline, all of which were also fundamentally circumscribed within the distinct political territory called France.

Thus the conflation of state and nation was naturalized because it seemed so obvious within that present—evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. But what if the correspondence between statehood and nationhood, exemplified by the claimed history of the North Atlantic and naturalized by its social science, was itself historical?[4] Indeed, there are no theoretical grounds on which to assert the necessity of that correspondence, and there are some historical grounds for questioning it.

If we suspend the state-nation homology as I suggest we should, we reach a more powerful vision of the state, yet one more open to ethnography, since we discover that, theoretically, there is no necessary site to the state, institutional or geographical. Within that vision, the state thus appears as an open field with multiple boundaries and no institutional fixity—which is to say, it needs to be conceptualized at more than one level. Though linked to a number of apparatuses, not all of which may be governmental, the state is not an apparatus but a set of processes. It is not necessarily bound by any institution, nor can any institution fully encapsulate it. At that level, its materiality resides much less in institutions

than in the reworking of processes and relations of power so as to create new spaces for the deployment of power. As I put it elsewhere (Trouillot 1990:19): "At one level the division between state and civil society has to do with content. . . . At another level it has to do with methodology in the broad sense." The consequences of that position are crucial to the understanding of the changes that define our times.

Changing Containers

The idea that the state was a natural container—and indeed, the only legitimate one—of populations and of their defining practices was first proposed in most vigorous terms by the government of the Franks under Francis I. Though absolutist France tried to put this idea in practice through the forceful Frenchicization of the hexagon from Francis I to Louis XIV to the Revolution, its success was only partial. Linguistic history alone makes the point: The language of Isle de France, which later evolved into modern standard French, was not the mother tongue of the majority of French citizens at the time of the French Revolution (Calvet 1974:166). It took a little Corsican man whose first language was not French—and who was born less than a year after the French army took control of his island—to fully nationalize the French state. It also took, of course, the political and cultural hegemony of the French bourgeoisie.

The lesson is clear: The conflation of state and nation is a process that requires time, constant intervention, and much political power. The Napoleonic reforms of French institutions and their successive corrections up to World War II came close to achieving the dream of a somewhat culturally unified France. But even then, reality introduced its inevitable discrepancies. In his autobiographical writings, 1947 Nobel laureate André Gide (1929), who was raised as a Protestant in that most Catholic country, recalls his own multilingual childhood and his own lack of national roots. He threw this absence of ruins as a badge of honor in his famous response to right-wing nationalist Maurice Barrès, whose novel *Les Déracinés* (1897) called for a new appraisal of French roots.[5] Still, one can argue that nineteenth-century bourgeois governments were more able to enforce—and nineteenth-century bourgeois societies more willing to accept—the idea of the state as a natural container. Indeed, in an amazingly short time the naturalization of the nation-state has become one of the most powerful and pervasive fictions of modernity, an essential part of the North Atlantic narratives of world history.

The problem with this narrative today is that it has become suddenly less persuasive, though we are not entirely sure what, if anything, should replace it. Changes in the functions and boundaries of national states generate confusion even among social scientists in part because globalization now produces spatialities—and identities—that cut through national boundaries more obviously than before, and in part because the social sciences have tended to take these very same boundaries for granted. Social scientists argue about the declining relevance of the state, politicians and activists debate about the extent to which the state should be multicultural, and reactionaries all over the North Atlantic vociferate about the need to secure their borders from unwanted immigrants.

The pattern should now be familiar: it echoes others exposed throughout this book. An idea first proposed in forceful yet indistinct terms by the European Renaissance becomes quickly institutionalized by the nineteenth century, and with that institutionalization gains the power of a necessary universal, only to be questioned by the changing experiences that singularize our times.

My proposed solution should also be familiar. First, we need to take distance from the nineteenth century and reject the restrictive terms under which it framed the legacies of the Renaissance. We are best equipped to assess the changes that typify our times if we approach these changes with a sober awareness that the national state was never as closed and as unavoidable a container—economically, politically, or culturally—as politicians and academics have claimed since the nineteenth century. Once we see the necessity of the national state as a lived fiction of late modernity—indeed, as possibly a short parenthesis in human history—we may be less surprised by the changes we now face and may be able to respond to them with the intellectual imagination they deserve.[6]

Second, we need to reject the temptation to search for a unique linear trend that would account for all the changes that mark our times, the temptation to suggest that states everywhere are gaining or losing power in the same way and at the same time. Claims of the declining relevance of the state along globalitarist lines are at best premature, if only because they presume such a continuum.

There are other problems with various assertions about the growing irrelevance of states. First, they often rest on an illusion of the political as an analytically distinct sphere, a proposition questioned long ago by Talcott Parsons (1951:126ff.) and explicitly rejected by most of the state theorists I have used here, notably Gramsci. A second theoretical slip is the illusion that states are equivalent to governments. Since many of the kinds of intervention traditionally thought to be within the purview of governments are not as easily achieved or simply impossible today, globalitarists conclude that the state has declined. A third theoretical rejoinder to the declining relevance thesis is that the state and the international system of states—without which each state is, in turn, unthinkable—are necessary conditions of possibility for globalization.

In reality, globalization is not theoretically or historically conceivable without a number of strong states and, most especially, without a strong international state system and constant state intervention. Whether we date the new freedom afforded to finance capital to the termination of the Bretton Woods system by the United States in 1971, or to the deregulations imposed by the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the 1980s, the economic landscape of globalization is the fruit of a number of governmental decisions systematically calibrated to produce a terrain most favorable to finance capital. In two decades, North Atlantic governments led by the United States and the United Kingdom broke down the centuries-old institutions that regulated the operations of finance capital (Labarde and Maris 1998:100–5). If politics appears irrelevant today, the state of affairs that brought on this irrelevance was the product of concerted political decisions.

This state of affairs—where states are supposedly irrelevant—is maintained through the background presence and the constant interventions of very powerful states that help maintain the interstate system. Never before have states punished

other states so often and so systematically through economic sanctions and embargos than in this era of alleged state irrelevance. Yet while embargos, however routine, could be explained away as anomalies of the system, the freedom of finance capital—the backbone of the system—can be guaranteed only by the military power of the strongest states and by the recognized rules of the interstate system. Corporations that move freely across political borders do so because they rely on state protection within these borders. Without that political—and military—protection, the freedom of economics vanishes in thin air. The proper behavior of each individual state relies upon the enforcement power of the international state system. In practice as in theory, in historical as well as in structural terms, globalization is a political phenomenon inconceivable without state intervention.

As suggested in chapter 3, ours are times of dislocation, polarization, and fragmentation. It is against the background of this fragmented globality that we can best evaluate changes in the effectiveness of the national state as a primary site for economic exchange, political struggle, or cultural negotiation. These changes cannot be measured quantitatively on a singular scale. Even if we were to reduce states to governments, a quick comparison of Iran, Mexico, India, France, Iraq, and the United Sates within and across their recognized borders suggests that one cannot measure governmental power on a continuum. The changes that typify our times are not unilinear, but multiple, and as I suggested earlier, sometimes contradictory (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). I will note only a few among the most significant ones.

First, and directly related to globalization as defined here, the domains of intervention of national governments are rapidly changing. Caution is necessary lest we exaggerate our empirical markers. Private companies and individuals have often exercised what boils down to state power or taken over state functions since at least the fifteenth century. I already mentioned the transnational power of Amsterdam merchants who towered above most European kings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see chapter 2). Long before that, in 1453, the town of Genoa had turned over political and administrative control of the island of Corsica to the bank of Saint George, a commercial and financial firm. Much later, in 1892, the postmaster of the United States, acting as a private citizen-broker, bought the entire foreign debt of the Dominican Republic. Between these dates we could find many such examples.

A central difference today is the extent to which a dominant global discourse pushes governments all over the world to relinquish domains of interventions that in the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth had been firmly established as state-controlled. This new construction of state powerlessness relative to private efficiency—which one must insist is a political choice—eases the transfer of jurisdictions and responsibilities.

Second, and quite important for sociocultural anthropologists, national states now perform less well as ideological and cultural containers, especially—but not only—in the North Atlantic. Third, new processes and practices that seem to reject or bypass the state-form—such as the new social movements—creep into the interstices so opened. Fourth, state-like processes and practices also increasingly obtain in nongovernmental sites such as NGOs or trans-state institutions

such as the World Bank. These practices in turn produce state-effects as powerful as those of national governments.

To complicate matters, none of this means that national governments have stopped intervening in economic or other walks of life. The number of sovereign states has more than quadrupled between 1945 and the end of the last century. But the kinds of intervention national governments perform have changed—at times considerably. As Terry Turner (2002) acutely notes, we can see in retrospect that since the end of World War II military intervention within the North Atlantic has become obsolete as the means to capture the leadership of the capitalist world economy.[7] More recently, changes in the composition and spatialization of capital have rendered government interventions in international commerce both less necessary and less effective.[8]

Most crucial for sociocultural anthropologists, the national state no longer functions as the uncontested social, political, and ideological container of the populations living within its borders. To be sure, it was never as solid a container as we were told to believe. However, in the North Atlantic at least, and to a lesser extent in the American states that saw the first wave of decolonization, it often secured the outer limits of political struggle, economic exchange, and cultural negotiation. Their performance notwithstanding, national governments were often expected—and often pretended—to act as cultural containers. Now neither citizens nor governmental leaders expect the state to play that role effectively.[9]

That is due in part to governments' inability (especially in the South) or unwillingness (especially in the North Atlantic) to deal with the increased inequality ushered in by globalization and, more importantly, to deal with the citizenry's perception of that mixture of inability and unwillingness. That is due also to the increased inability of national governments, from Iran and China to France and the United States, to play a leadership role in the shaping of cultural practices, models, and ideals. Almost everywhere both the correspondence between the state system and what Louis Althusser (1971) calls the "ideological state apparatuses" have declined as these apparatuses increasingly reflect rather than deflect locally lived social tensions, notably those of race and class.[10] The fiction of isolated national entities built by nineteenth-century politicians and scholars no longer fits the lived experiences of most populations.

Cracks in the fiction appeared soon after World War II. In the North Atlantic, the declining relevance of war as the path to global economic leadership also meant a decline in the use and effectiveness of nationalist rhetoric—partly masked and delayed, especially in the United States, by the existence of the Soviet bloc. The deep tremors experienced in Africa and Asia during the second wave of decolonization[11] augured badly for presumed national homogeneity. Where and how to delineate the borders of new African and Asian polities proved often enough to be an unforeseen predicament. Partition by decree, in cases as varied as India-Pakistan, Israel-Palestine, and French and German Togo, exposed the artificiality and the use of power inherent in border-making practices. Cases such as Algeria's *pieds noirs* suggested that even the distinction between home and elsewhere was not as easy as once thought.

From the 1950s to the 1990s, the Cold War, in spite of its rhetoric, also brought home the relevance of events happening in other regions of the globe. In North

America, Vietnam—and later the taking of hostages in Teheran—played a key role in ushering in that understanding. In the 1970s and 1980s citizens throughout the North Atlantic discovered their partial dependency on foreign imports after most OPEC countries assumed ownership of their oil fields.

One can safely suggest, however, that geopolitical and economic changes on the world scene were less crucial in breaking the fiction of impermeable entities than the manner in which those changes have affected the daily lives of common citizens in the North Atlantic since the 1970s. To give but one example, the objective degree of U.S. involvement in Indochina in the 1960s was arguably less than that of Spain in seventeenth-century Mexico, that of France in eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue/Haiti, or that of Britain in nineteenth-century India. That involvement might not have contributed to changing North Americans' imagination if not for the fact that television made the Vietnam War a daily occurrence in their homes, just as television would later make the Iran-U.S. confrontation a matter of nightly routine. Even more than television, refugees knocking at the door, new patterns of immigration, and the reconfiguration of the ethnic and cultural landscape in major North Atlantic cities brought the elsewhere to the home front. The speed and mass of global flows—including the flow of populations deemed to be different and often claiming that difference while insisting on acceptance—profoundly undermined the notion of bound entities, and not just on an abstract level. The barbarians were at the door, which was bad enough; but they were also claiming that "our" home could be theirs.

North Atlantic natives both rejected and accommodated that daily presence. Segregationist practices notwithstanding, the commodification of exotic customs and products, from Zen and yoga to Mao shirts and dashikis, facilitated a guarded cultural acceptance. Food played a major role in that process. "Korean" vegetable shops in the United States and "Arab" groceries in France provided needed services. A wave of "ethnic" restaurants swamped Paris, London, Amsterdam, and New York beginning in the 1970s and now brings couscous, curry, or sushi to inland cities once thought impermeable to Third World cultural imports. The daily presence of the Other, mediatized, commodified, tightly controlled, yet seemingly unavoidable—as Other—on the screen or on the street is a major trope of globalitarist ideology. That trope functions at least in part because it illustrates for local populations the growing difficulties of the national state functioning as container even within the North Atlantic. There are plenty of other such tropes. The consolidation of "ethnic" votes in the United States is among the most blatant.

Lest the argument be misunderstood, let me reiterate that it does not adhere to the dominant theses of the declining relevance of the state. I fully agree that the European Union makes sense only against the background of national states that remain as powerful as ever. Their surrender of part of their traditional power to the construction of Europe also allows them to increase their reach at home. I also agree that in many areas of the world, from Eastern Europe to South Asia and the Caribbean, states cling ever more to their role in defining citizenship and the ethnic or cultural content of that citizenship. Assessing Benedict Anderson's influential work (1983), I suggested over a decade ago that the nation is not an imagined political community but an imagined community projected against politics, more

specifically against state power (Trouillot 1990:25–26). Thus, I do not think that national states have become irrelevant as containers for the English or the French—the opposed poles of the Union—or as projects for Palestinians, Kashmiris, Kurds, Nevisians, Basques, Martinicans, Puerto Ricans, Corsicans, or Gypsies, to cite only a few. National liberation movements of all kinds remind us of the potency of the appeal. That they are now often labeled "separatist" also reminds us that this appeal is based on a North Atlantic fiction that became universal, albeit one for which we do not yet have an alternative. We do not need to formulate a specific alternative in order to acknowledge the fact that both the efficiency of these containers and the desirability of these projects now face qualitatively new obstacles. On the contrary, the more we acknowledge the contradictions that mark our times, the better we can pierce through its fragmented globality and the more likely we are to find imaginative solutions to the dilemmas that differentiate us from previous eras.

For An Ethnography of the State

None of the above means the declining relevance of the state, if by state we mean more than the apparatus of national governments. If the state is a set of practices and processes and the effects they produce as much as a way to look at them, we need to track down these practices, processes, and effects whether or not they coalesce around the central sites of national governments. In the age of globalization state practices, functions and effects increasingly obtain in sites other than the national but that never fully bypass the national order. The challenge for anthropologists is to study these practices, functions and effects without prejudice about sites or forms of encounters. I will note the possibilities of that approach by sketching further the state effects mentioned at the beginning of this chapter as ground for an ethnography of the state.

Nicos Poulantzas (1972) identified what he called the "isolation effect"—which I read as the production of a particular kind of subject as atomized member of a public—as a key feature of statecraft. Through the isolation of socio-economic conflicts, notably class divisions, the state guarantees not only its own relative autonomy vis-à-vis dominant classes, but also produces atomized, individualized citizens who all appear to be equal within a supposedly undifferentiated public sphere. Modern states produce subjects whose consciousness and agency it channels through restrictive individual forms. Ultimately the individual is isolated—alone in the voting booth, in the tribunal, or in the tax collector's office—and theoretically equal to all such individuals. Thus the isolation effect separates individuals from the very social history that produced them as distinct individuals in the first place.

In many societies today, the national public sphere is fractured differently than when Poulantzas wrote. At the same time, the relative rise of judicial power in almost all North Atlantic countries suggests that individual atomization is going on while mechanisms of homogenization also take new forms. Identity politics notably signals new configurations of the citizenry. Rising notions of universal human rights and the global spread of North Atlantic legal philosophy and

practices produce isolation effects, in both the North and South, and at times with the backing of national governments or with the still timid support of transnational state-like institutions. The isolation effect—including the masking of class divisions, the joint production of a public, and the atomized subjects that comprise it—still obtains, but the processes and practices—and hence the power—that produce it are being deployed in unexpected sites.

Following Poulantzas's approach and terminology, we can identify a number of state-effects on which he did not insist by name. To the isolation effect we can add, as suggested earlier, an identification effect, a legibility effect, and a spatialization effect. In all these cases we observe a *déplacement* of state functions, a move away from the state-system as described by Miliband, or even from the state apparatuses described by Althusser. State power is being redeployed, state effects appear in new sites, and in almost all cases this move is one away from national sites to infra-, supra-, or trans-national ones. An ethnography of the state can and should capture these effects in these changing sites.

We may call "identification effect" that capacity to develop a shared conviction that "we are in the same boat" and therefore to interpolate subjects as homogenous members of various imagined communities (Balibar 1997; Poulantzas 1972; Scott 1998; Trouillot 1997). This homogenizing process, once thought a fundamental purview of the national state, is now shared by the national state and a number of competing sites and processes including region, gender, race, and ethnicity. Identity politics helps redefine the national for better and—often—for worse. The so-called "new" social movements also have become sites for accumulating, redirecting, or deploying social and political power that often tries to bypass or challenge national states, albeit with limited success.[12] Many are both parochial and global, with multiple boundaries.[13] Few—not even the U.S. Michigan militia—see national borders as the sole line of demarcation for their activities.

The national state also produces what I call a "legibility effect," following James Scott's (1998) development on legibility practices. The tools that enable government planning, practices ranging from the production of a language and a knowledge for governance to the elaboration of theoretical and empirical tools that classify and regulate collectivities, produce such effects. From income or age groups to voting districts, governments measure populations in serialized units that gain a life of their own through these enforced divisions and in the process become manageable targets of state power. However, as Scott himself suggests, governments are not the only actors who "see like a state." In the South notably, NGOs and trans-state institutions from the World Bank to the IMF now act in this way—at times better than states themselves—and produce similar if not more potent legibility effects. UNESCO or ILO statistics are more reliable than those of quite a few national governments. NGOs' capacity to plan effectively at the local and regional level all over the South, and the World Bank and the IMF's power to envision and promote everywhere a future based on their assessment—however questionable—of the present, have moved a number of state practices away from the national. For better and for worse, these are all, analytically, state-like institutions.

Since most state effects can be captured in part through the subjects they contribute toward producing, ethnographers are well poised to follow this worldwide

déplacement of state functions and practices. Part of the difficulty of studying the state today stems from a single-track methodology that followed the trail of state practices, which were assumed to be immediately observable as such, from government institutions to civil populations. In a context where institutions are increasingly not acting as expected, this single-track methodology leads either to impasses or to the rediscovery of the obvious. By focusing on state effects through the lived experience of subjects, we can build an ethnography of the state up from the ground. We can discover when and how some of these effects obtain, their conditions of production, and their limits.

To give one manifest example, we are well equipped to follow NGOs "on the ground," to evaluate their capacity to interpolate specific populations and the conscious acceptance or rejection of that interpellation. Kamran Ali's ethnography of a family planning campaign in Egypt—which involves USAID, internationally funded NGOs and the national government—suggests that one of the potential outcomes of the campaign is the production of newly atomized "modern" subjects (Ali 1996, 2000). I read Ali as saying that nongovernmental and governmental practices combine today in the production of quite new yet quite "Egyptian" citizens. Similarly, NGOs attempting to reform "street children" in Mexico City are also producing new yet Mexican subjects, with different mixtures of accommodation and resistance on the part of the citizenry so shaped (Magazine 1999). The extent to which emerging subjects recognize the state-like nature of nongovernmental organizations and other institutions vary, but there are indications that the awareness of their roles is increasing. Beatrice Pouligny (personal communication) reports that some Haitians say in reference to NGOs: "*yo fè leta*" (literally, "they make the state"). In the Haitian language (where the word *leta* can mean "state" or "bully"), the phrase suggests that at least some citizens see NGOs as a site of power equal to and capable of challenging the state, but also as potential bullies.[14]

NGOs are only the most obvious cases begging for an ethnography of state effects. We need to note, however, that they fit within a more general movement of privatization of state functions (e.g., Hibou 1999; Gill 2001) of which the rise of privately run prisons, the proliferation of private armies in Africa and Latin America, and the privatization of public enterprises worldwide are other evident manifestations. Only careful ethnographies will tell us the extent to which these—or other less visible emergent manifestations—produce state effects.

Postcolonial Chaos

Ethnographies of state effects—as registered in the lived experience of subjects—are most urgent in postcolonial societies. There national institutions never produced such effects as successfully as in most industrialized countries, and the *déplacement* produced by globalization encounters much less resistance. Unfortunately, the common knowledge that independent states emerged in the periphery of the world economy as replacements of colonial polities has not generated the much needed debate about either their specificity or that of the colonial state itself (but see Alavi et al. 1982; Comaroff 1997; Coronil 1997; Trouillot

1990). Not only does the postcolonial state bear many colonial scars, it also developed characteristics of its own that make the encounter with the forces of globalization significantly different than that of the North Atlantic. Drawing on my previous work on the postcolonial state (Trouillot 1990), I will note some of the features that deserve closest attention today and prompt ethnographies that do not rely on the obviousness of national institutions.

Given their insertion into the interstate system upon which they depend for their viability, their reproduction, and their capacity to claim jurisdiction, all states are to some extent outward looking. Isolation imposed from the outside or isolationist rhetoric generated from within barely attenuate this centrifugality, but throughout the North Atlantic outside connections, indispensable as they may be, provide the necessary background against which state effects obtain at home by way of local institutions. By contrast, in the periphery the centrifugal forces inherent in political and economic dependency gather enough strength to significantly challenge the centripetal direction of the state. Peripheral polities are not only outward looking, their home priorities can be set and achieved only in light of the country's subaltern position in the world economy and the interstate system. Dependency sets the peripheral state apart from industrialized countries.

In many postcolonial societies the disjuncture between state and nation, often masked with partial success in the North Atlantic, expands to such an extent that it may become a feature of daily life (Trouillot 1990). The fiction of homogeneous entities never obtained in the South or Eastern Europe. The peripheral state never produced an identification effect as competently as did the state in France, Britain, Germany, or the United States. Just like dependency, this greater disjuncture between state and nation predates political independence. In an important essay on the specificity of the colonial state, John Comaroff (1997:15) notes that unlike European polities, "colonies were never places of even tenuously-imagined homogeneity." In the postcolonies successive governments not only had to impose homogeneity through violence, as they did for centuries in Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, they had to do so with fewer resources and much less time to reap the expected results. Success was rare and many nationalist governments saw their homogenizing projects meet armed resistance. Given the stakes, others did not even try, contenting themselves to rule over national patches.

The uneasy interface between state and nation in the periphery is tied to a similar discrepancy between political and economic power, exacerbating features inherent in the deployment of state power. Contrary to the most simplistic analyses of orthodox Marxism, state power is never synonymous with class domination (Trouillot 1990:27). In the periphery, where dominant classes tend to be those with the strongest ties with international capital and most open to foreign influence, state power and—consequently—the legitimacy of national governments require a deepening of that distance. The nationalist stance became a necessary feature of state politics, the guarantee of a small room to maneuver for most political leaders vis-à-vis the dominant classes, the ultimate justification of political independence. Nationalist populism often emerged as the mixture that best combined the individual aspirations of local leaders and the multiple reactions of various parts of the citizenry with the visibility of economic dependency.

Given the limits of this populism, its inability to modify either the class structure at home or the structures of dependency within the world economy, it often blossomed around messianic figures. From Nehru's India and Peron's Argentina to Aristide's Haiti, the Third World has produced a spectacular range of messianic figures whose popularity at home was matched only by their relative powerlessness vis-à-vis the structures of dependency.

Globalization, as defined here, has changed the rules of the game to such an extent that the nationalist stance is increasingly harder to maintain, especially in populist and messianic forms. First, flexible production and the domination of finance capital have increased the economic dependency, the overt prominence of which is now part of the political landscape. IMF officials give direct and public orders to many heads of peripheral states whose messianism now looks like an empty pose. Meanwhile, many among the middle classes abandon the symbols of a cultural nationalism of which they were, until the second half of the twentieth century, the most resilient advocates.

Second, Third World messianism always stood in a symbiotic relationship with North Atlantic utopias. Political messiahs promised or were expected to uplift their nations, to devise a magical leap that would help their people either bypass the hurdles imposed by North Atlantic modernization, or reach their own homemade versions of modernity. In either case, these prognoses and promises relied implicitly on North Atlantic visions of progress and utopia, even if only as counterpoints to a homemade future. They always assumed a linearity to world history, whether it was to be joined, broken, or bypassed. With the crumbling of North Atlantic utopias, Third World messianisms lose the ability to harness state power through a prophetic drive because they lack a universalist narrative against which their prophecies make sense as visions of an alternative future.[15]

Today, the identification effect—the production of subjects who recognize themselves as part of overlapping collectivities, nationality remaining the dominant one for about a century—increasingly escapes the purview of the peripheral state. The fragmentation that accompanies globalization further saps the legitimacy of that state and reduces the impact of nationalist discourse on the routine of daily life. Outside of events deemed exceptional (such as armed conflicts with a traditional foreign enemy), individuals in the postcolony are ever more likely to identify with an ethnic or linguistic group, a religion, a sect, a political movement, or even a village or a gang, than to cling to a national identity that claims to encompass all citizens equally yet provokes no representative spark in their political imaginary. It is also less likely that the main leaders of such gangs, sects, or movements with which individuals identify will gain state power in their own name, or if they do, that they will gain legitimacy in the interstate system. Some of the religious groups that now provide powerful interpellations to a fragmented citizenry—from the Falong Gong in China to U.S.-based evangelical sects in Latin America and the Caribbean—claim to have no interest in direct political power. These claims may change as their numbers grow. Regardless, with separatist, ethnic, and factional tensions feeding on and reproducing national fragmentation, the probability of internecine conflicts increases within countries outside of the North Atlantic. So does the probability of border conflicts that help cover, albeit

temporarily, the internal weaknesses of the state. Globalization has made explicit a congenital weakness of the peripheral state: its inherent difficulty in producing identification effects. Ethnographies centering on the lived experience of subjects will have to demonstrate when such effects are produced, through what institutional clusters, and explore the consequences of this *déplacement*. As this discussion suggests, the political stakes are high enough to warrant such research. So are the intellectual ones.

The weakening of the peripheral state—most obvious in the identification of subjects—reproduces itself with regards to all the effects highlighted in this chapter. I have already mentioned the increased power of NGOs, of trans- and supranational institutions in producing both the isolation and the legibility state-effects in peripheral societies. International organizations, private or state-sponsored, now help to fashion throughout the periphery an incipient public sphere that expands beyond national confines. For better and for worse, this new arena incorporates North Atlantic dominant tropes from the language of the ecological movement and the discourse on individual human rights to the rhetoric of ethnic or racial preferences. The knowledge necessary for the management of local populations in the postcolony increasingly accumulates in foreign hands, both private and state-sponsored. Such recent developments only confirm the need for detailed ethnographies that document the extent of the *déplacement* and reveal whether or not it entails the production of fundamentally new subjects and fundamental changes in the reach and potency of state power.

Are national governments in the postcolony obsolete reminders of fictitious histories? Are they everywhere mere survivals from times gone by? Or are they left only to watch borders—and ineffectively at that? The three stories with which I started this chapter suggest that government still performs a gate-keeping role.[16] Regardless of the relative effectiveness of governments at border patrol, the national state still produces—and quite effectively among most populations—a spatialization effect. Citizens all over the world may be less likely to buy the slogan that all nationals are in the same boat, but they remain aware that "we" (however defined) do live in a place usually defined in part by a political border.

While the spatialization effect may also be produced in other sites, national governments are less likely to let go of their power in this domain. With the spectacular exception of the European Union—a truly innovative and changing formation, of which we cannot even guess the long-term political consequences inside or outside of Europe—national states are likely to retain their power to define political boundaries. First, in a context marked by the obvious incapacity of national states to function as cultural containers the protection of borders becomes an easy political fiction with which to enlist support from a confused citizenry. Second, the right to define boundaries remains a fundamental component of sovereignty to which national governments must cling in an age where many state functions obtain elsewhere. To put it bluntly, national states produce countries and countries remain fundamentally spatial. Globalization itself produces inequalities that are also fundamentally spatial. The economic prospects of most individuals, their access to health, to education, their life expectancy, their very ability to express themselves both as individuals and as citizens, depend primarily

on the country within which they reside. Hence it is quite understandable that emigration has become a favored venue of individual improvement. As befits our speculative age, the world economy has taught most individuals the three rules of real estate: location, location, location. Yet most human beings continue to act locally most of the time, even though many claim to think globally. One of anthropology's many challenges for this century may be to pay deserved attention to the tensions inherent in that contradiction.

The respatialization of various state-functions and effects occurs today in a context already marked by the differential respatialization of markets. These incongruent spatialities inevitably produce tensions in the location of state power and in citizens' perception of and reaction to its deployment. An anthropology of the state may have to make these tensions a primary focus of its research agenda. These tensions will be found not only in organized politics but also in the many practices through which citizens encounter not only governments, but also a myriad of other state-like institutions and processes that interpolate them as individuals and as members of various communities. Anthropology may not find the state ready-made and waiting for our ethnographic gaze in the known sites of national government. Government institutions and practices are to be studied, of course, and we can deplore that anthropology has not contributed enough to their study. However, anthropologists are best suited to study the state from below through ethnographies that center on the subjects produced by state effects and processes. We may have to look for these processes and effects in sites less obvious than those of institutionalized politics and established bureaucracies. We may have to insist on encounters not immediately transparent, and we must further insist that our colleagues in other disciplines recognize their importance. We may indeed have to revert to the seemingly timeless banality of daily life.

Coda

This banality is a matter of perspective. As all perspectives, it is revelatory only under certain circumstances. As we move closer to matters of ethnography and to methodological issues, we may want to pause and make more explicit some of the lessons learned in this exploration of the state.

The critical reading of both Radcliffe-Brown and Abrams, among others, should warn us that concepts are neither words nor definitions; they are not terms that can be simply replaced by a more or less equivalent gloss. Government and state may or may not be interchangeable words. But to decide that they are not—as I have argued—depends on one's conceptualization, on a particular theoretical construction of the object of study. Whether or not we agree with the various and overlapping conceptualizations of the state put forward by Gramsci, Poulantzas, Abrams, or others—the virtues of which I have tried to integrate—we can agree that these virtues boil down to framing the object of study in ways that open it to investigation—notably, but not always or only, empirical observation.

A related lesson from reading many of the authors cited here, from Radcliffe-Brown to Abrams, from Gramsci to Poulantzas by way of Althusser, becomes

almost unavoidable. If concepts are not words and if conceptualizations provide the theoretical frame that helps to construct the object of study, then this object of study can never be what is given to the naked eye, however sharpened its vision. The object of study cannot be the object of observation.

To these three theoretical lessons—the necessary distance between concepts and words, the necessary construction of the object of study, and the necessary gap between the object of study and the object of observation—we may want to add the need to establish distance from the state-centrism of nineteenth-century academic production. This state-centrism heavily influenced anthropology's approach to its objects of study, including the early deployment of the concept of culture in North America, which is the topic of the next chapter.