THE STATE
Past
Present
Future
BOB JESSOP
The State
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Past, Present, Future
Bob Jessop

polity
In Memoriam, Josef Esser (1943–2010)
## Contents

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The present book is the latest in an unplanned series on state theory, states, and state power that reflects changing conjunctures and shifting interests. It differs in three main ways from its precursors. First, rather than focusing on postwar capitalist states or states in capitalist societies, it comments on the genealogy of the state, the periodization of state formation, contemporary states, and likely future trends discernible in the present (in other words, present futures). Second, reflecting this broader scope, it offers a conceptual framework for studying the state that can be used in more contexts, integrated with more theoretical approaches, and applied from several standpoints. Third, while it draws on diverse theoretical positions and occasionally provides brief critiques, it is concerned, not to draw sharp dividing lines between them, but to synthesize them – where this is both possible and productive. Thus, even where I focus on one particular approach, I also note possible links, intersections, or parallels with other approaches that are not developed here.

This book draws on many years of intermittent engagement with questions of state theory and critical investigation of actual states, above all in Europe. At other times I have been more preoccupied with the critique of political economy, especially postwar capitalism, the development of the world market, and their crisis tendencies. This explains why my analysis often adopts a capital- or class-theoretical entry point. But, as noted above, this is one of many options, none of which can be privileged on a priori grounds but only in terms of its explanatory power for particular problems in particular contexts (see chapter 3). Many scholars have influenced my understanding of
the state through their reflections and historical analyses or through personal discussions with me – and, in several cases, through trenchant criticisms! My personal interlocutors know who they are and their influence is clear in the text and references.

I do want to mention eight sources of continuing inspiration: Nicos Poulantzas, whom I met only once, but to whose work I return regularly, for fresh insights and stimulation; Alex Demirović, who is a tireless and enthusiastic source of critical intelligence and theoretical wisdom; Joachim Hirsch, who has produced some of the best historical materialist analyses of the state and applied them critically to Germany; Jupp Esser, who emphasized the importance of rigorous empirical testing of state-theoretical claims; Martin Jones, who introduced me to economic and political geography, who has been a supportive co-author and interlocutor over many years, and whose influence is evident in chapter 5 and throughout; Ulrich Brand, who reminds me that theoretical engagement can be combined with social and political activism; Michael Brie, who welcomed me at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Berlin and emphasized the importance of an emancipatory unity of theory and practice; and, last but not least, Ngai-Ling Sum, with whom I have been elaborating a cultural turn in political economy with implications for the state as well as for economic analysis.

Special thanks are also due to Louise Knight and Pascal Porcheron at Polity Press for gently nudging and steering this book through the final stages of writing to submission of the final version in 2015. The final version of the text benefited from comments by Colin Hay and three anonymous referees and the knowledgeable and highly professional copy-editing of Manuela Tecusan.

The writing of this book was undertaken in part during a Professorsial Research Fellowship funded by the Economic and Social Science Research Council, 2011–2014, under grant RES-051-27-0303. Neither the ESRC nor the friends and colleagues named above are responsible, of course, for errors and omissions in this text. Indeed, the usual disclaimers apply with unusual force.

I dedicate this book to the memory of Jupp Esser, an inspiring colleague, critical interlocutor, and dear friend, who died too soon from cancer in 2010.

Den Haag
21 March 2015
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Abbreviations

BC  before Christ
DHS  Department of Homeland Security
ECB  European Central Bank
ESM  European Stability Mechanism
EU  European Union
IMF  International Monetary Fund
KWNS  Keynesian welfare national state
OECD  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Q  quaderno (notebook)
SRA  strategic–relational approach
STF  spatiotemporal fix
TPP  Trans-Pacific Partnership
TPSN  territory, place, scale, network
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<tr>
<td>TTIP</td>
<td>Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership</td>
</tr>
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<td>UK</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>USA PATRIOT Act</td>
<td>Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (2001)</td>
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The ‘modern state’ has been part of the political landscape for several centuries, if sometimes only faintly visible on its horizon. Yet social scientific interest has waxed and waned, its foci have shifted, and approaches vary with fad and fashion. Indeed, here as in other fields, it seems that social scientists do not so much solve problems as get bored with them. Interest revives when another generation of scholars or another epistemic community finds new potential in older theories, encounters new problems and research opportunities, or adopts insights, metaphors, or paradigms from other schools or disciplines. In this spirit, my analysis aims to show the continued relevance of theoretical work on states and state power and the need to renew state theory as its referents change. This is reflected in five related tasks that are pursued in part sequentially and in part iteratively, at different places in this book. Limitations of space meant that not all of these tasks are pursued to the same extent or with the same intensity, but I hope to have written enough about each of them to demonstrate their respective heuristic values and the benefits of combining them.

The first, initially question-begging, task is to outline six strategies for analysing states and state power that, if we combine them to exploit their respective strengths, might offer a powerful heuristic for addressing the complexities of these topics. This does not commit me to developing a general and transhistorical theory of the state – an ambition that I have long rejected for reasons given elsewhere (Jessop 1982: 211–13). It does imply support for (meta)theoretical, epistemological, and methodological pluralism in analysing the state and