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The discipline of International Relations (IR) has for too long been marred by the privileged position of the sovereign territorial state as the unquestioned starting point for any analysis of international affairs. The state and its territorial extension in space as an unhistoricised starting point for IR thinking is the target of Larkins’ inspiring book. He starts off with a critical diagnosis of IR theory. He is critical of the way that territorial sovereignty is taken as a given starting point for thinking politically about the international. While this is a point that has been made before by critical scholars within the discipline, Larkins underlines his critique by drawing a parallel to Immanuel Kant’s notion of the a priori. For Kant time and space constitute pure forms of intuition (*Anschauung*) that conditions the possibility of talking meaningfully about the world. For Larkins ‘territory serves as an *a priori* condition underpinning state theory in International Relations’ (p. 19).

Larkins critically labels this as the territorial *a priori*. He suggests that the assumed givenness of the state-territory nexus prevents IR scholars from understanding the proper historical origin of modern politics; and it prevents us from embracing the world in its full complexity and articulate novel and more adequate accounts of world politics. I will return to this issue subsequently.

Analytically, the book opens from chapter four which presents a very interesting reading of Dante, Dionysius and other sources on the medieval ordering of space. The claim here is that hierarchy was the all-encompassing organising principle for political life in the Middle Ages: ‘this vertically ordered Dionysian hierarchy served as the epistemic condition of possibility for the erection of a hierarchical spatial architectonics that would support medieval theocracy for a millennium’ (p. 57-8). Chapter five presents an analysis of the political discourses of Middle Ages centred on discussions of the Papacy, Empire, and Monarchy. Larkins shows how the emerging theory of kingship in the thirteenth century broke with the hierarchical order of medieval cosmology.

In sequence, chapter six exposes the Renaissance critique of hierarchy as an ordering principle for politics. The critique is expressed by the writings of Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola representing a new notion of the human soul: ‘their promotion of the doctrine of the dignity of man is important in so far as it anticipates the principle of sovereign identity’ (p. 110), which again leans itself to a less hierarchical ordering of political cosmos. As shown in chapter seven, the departure from hierarchy was captured by Machiavelli with his political writings on the legal concept of dominion which alludes to a sense of sovereignty; his distinction between siting sovereignty, international anarchy, and security politics as necessities for political life.

In response, Larkins pursues a dual mission: to restate the Renaissance as a formative period of modern IR; and to show how the transition from hierarchy to anarchy was structured around a new spatiality that came to structure an emerging political reality during this period. It is only natural that this is based on a reading of late medieval and renaissance cosmology. Yet, before we get that far, the first two chapters present the criticism and diagnosis described above. Chapter three presents his notion of territory as being discursive and hence a child of culture and history. While this perspective has merits it also tends to ignore the question of what kind of space territory is. I will return to this issue subsequently.
ternal and external violence which supports
the spatial figure of inside/outside; and finally
his emphasis on *italianità* which grounds
national identity in the territory of the state.

In chapter eight, Larkins demonstrates how
art began to visualise land and authority to-
gether. Driven by the novel ambition to repre-
sent forms of nature geometrically accurate
and a new symbolism of power political au-
thority was increasingly represented as being
linked to a particular place. These observa-
tions are in sync with previous statements on
the emergence of territoriality in IR. John Rugg-
gie, for example, has linked the emergence
of single point perspective in visual arts with
the rise of sovereign territoriality. Chapter ni-
ne turns to the territorialisation in internatio-
nal society. Early European colonisation dri-
ven by Iberian powers under the auspices of
papal authority represented, in Larkins view,
a territorialisation of international politics. It
signalled an early parcelisation of space on
a global scale. With that, Larkins concludes
his – historical analysis demonstrating the Re-
naisance emergence of the territorial imagi-
nary that has been turned into the territorial a
priori in IR.

While the specific arguments related to the
historical account are persuasive and insight-
ful, the general argument of the book might
leave the reader familiar with the IR debates
on territoriality with a desire to learn more.
There is a sense in which the historical mate-
rial is portrayed so it supports the argument
of scholars such as Walker and Richard Ash-
ley. Larkins is quite blunt in his criticism of IR
scholars for not engaging properly with histo-
y and the classics in political theory. Yet, he
rarely strays from or questions the estab-
lished arguments within poststructuralist wri-
tings in IR. And this is a shame for two rea-
sons. First, Larkins own account and reading
of the period is more detailed and thorough
than the mentioned authors. As such he could
possibly have done more to push this research
agenda towards new insights rather than – as
he does at times – confirm empirically what
has been established in more abstract writing
within the discipline. Second, I am not always
persuaded that the overall conceptual frame-
work match the historical ambitions of Lar-
kins. The key issues here are the notion of ter-
ritorial a priori and his conceptualisation of
territory as discourse. Both ignore the broa-
der spatial transitions that took place during
the period and which are not easily captured
within a framework of territory only. In chapter
nine, for example, when he suggests that
the papal division of the world into a Spanish
and a Portuguese sphere in 1493 represented a
territorialisation of international society, I dis-
gree. This was rather about a new relations-
ship between space and sovereignty that was
not necessarily territorial. Early European ex-
pansion was more about linking sites in net-
works of trade and exploitation than about a
particular territorial logic. In conclusion, Lar-
kins’ book is highly recommended as a histo-
rical specific account of the emergence of non-
hierarchical and spatially particular politics in
the Renaissance. There is much need for this
type of study in IR. However, this recommenda-
tion does not come without a slight regret
that the book could have done more to ques-
tion the relationship between space, territory
and politics rather than adopting the maybe
not so helpful notion of a territorial a priori.

Jeppe Strandsbjerg über Larkins, Jeremy:
*From Hierarchy to Anarchy. Territory and Politics
Before Westphalia*. New York 2010, in: H-Soz-
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