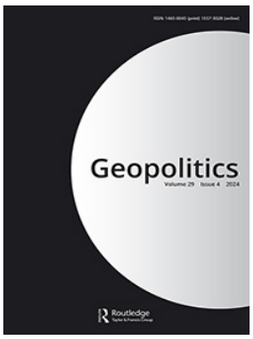

Geopolitics

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/fgeo20

Nationality Beyond the Nation-State? The Search for Autonomy in Abdullah Öcalan and Otto Bauer

Francesco Ventura & Jacopo Custodi

To cite this article: Francesco Ventura & Jacopo Custodi (2024) Nationality Beyond the Nation-State? The Search for Autonomy in Abdullah Öcalan and Otto Bauer, Geopolitics, 29:4, 1400-1421, DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2023.2265308

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2023.2265308

GEOPOLITICS
2024, VOL. 29, NO. 4, 1400–1421
https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2023.2265308

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Nationality Beyond the Nation-State? The Search for Autonomy in Abdullah Öcalan and Otto Bauer

Francesco Ventura [a] and Jacopo Custodi[b]

[a]Department of History, Archeology, Geography, Fine and Performing Arts, University of Florence, Florence, Italy; [b]Classe di Scienze Politiche e Sociali, Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy

ABSTRACT

In today's globalised era, the limitations of the nation-state model are increasingly apparent. This model often demands homogeneity, leading to identity conflicts and separatist demands by national minorities. However, national and cultural identities remain politically relevant, making post-national ambitions difficult to achieve. To address this problem, we compare the thoughts of Otto Bauer and Abdullah Öcalan, who both emphasise overcoming the limits of the nation-state without dismissing national and cultural identities. Öcalan's ideas prioritise autonomy and multiplicity, while Bauer's contribution is based on a deterritorialised notion of national identity. As we argue in this article, the two authors share interesting points of convergence that have been understudied in academia. What is more, this comparison provides valuable insights for understanding contemporary challenges and solutions to multinational societies and identity conflicts.

Introduction

The Kurds, who constitute one of the world's largest stateless nations, have long been subject to various forms of marginalisation and oppression within Middle Eastern countries. Yet, in recent times, the Kurdish Freedom Movement has garnered significant international attention due to its resistance against the Islamic State and the development of novel forms of political and social organisation in northern Syria. Those forms are openly inspired by the writings of Abdullah Öcalan (1949-), the historical leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, and they challenge the nation-state model, proposing instead stateless democracy and autonomy. The practical implementation of these ideas called into question the long-standing concept of the nation-state, which has been a dominant force in global politics for the past two centuries, and sparked significant interest and discussion both in academia and beyond (Alış 2012; Dinc 2020; Hammy and Jeffrey Miley 2022; Komun Academy 2020; Matin 2019; Ventura 2022).

CONTACT Francesco Ventura edu.francesco.ventura@gmail.com Department of History, Archeology, Geography, Fine and Performing Arts, University of Florence, Via San Gallo, 10, Florence 50129, Italy

As we extensively expound in this article, these ideas share significant similarities with the thought of Otto Bauer (1881–1938), one of the leading figures of the Social Democratic Party in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and a prominent Marxist intellectual Motivated by pragmatic discussions on how to address the rise of nationalism within the working-class movement of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bauer delved into the study of the national phenomenon and grew sceptical of the idea of territorial self-determination of nations, which posed significant challenges in a context where nationalities were so mixed within the same territory. Accordingly, he argued that dividing nationalities geographically was, at the very least, problematic.

In light of the above, in this article we systematically compare the ideas of Öcalan and Bauer, and we explore the meanings they assign to national autonomy within and beyond the nation-state. Both authors, though relevant in political studies, have been scarcely explored on this specific topic. Bauer is primarily studied as a Marxist theorist on the historical origins of nations, while Öcalan is examined for his role within the Kurdish liberation movement. Despite both having extensively discussed the relation between the nation-state and nationalities, they are largely omitted in studies discussing the challenges of the nation-state (e.g., Antonsich 2009; Berger and Weber 2006; Dunn 1994; Paul, Ikenberry, and Hall 2003). Moreover, a comparison of these two thinkers is still almost non-existent in academia, despite the existence of several interesting points of contact (along with some noteworthy divergences, as we will discuss). To the best of our knowledge, only a few studies have examined Öcalan-inspired Kurdish autonomy using Bauer's analytical categories (Burç 2020; Nimni and Aktoprak 2018), but a systematic comparison between Bauer and Öcalan regarding the concepts of nationality and the nation-state remains absent.

As we elaborate in this article, the comparison of these two authors on this issue allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the enduring challenges posed by the contemporary nation-state model and to explore new approaches for addressing its long-standing difficulty in managing internal diversity. Indeed, rediscovering Bauer's thought on nationalities and the nation-state, and comparing it to the more recent thought of Öcalan, and its concrete realisation in Rojava (Syria),[1] permits the enrichment of studies on the crisis of the nation-state and the solutions to it, towards political communities more inclusive of ethnic, cultural and national plurality. Finally, comparing Bauer and Öcalan's thoughts about nationalities has the potential to disclose relevant theoretical and practical consequences for contemporary geopolitical analysis. The fact that the ideas of Öcalan play a central role in the troubled region of the Middle East makes this intellectual effort even more timely and less abstract. Their focus on nationalities *before* the nation-state compels us to decentre geopolitical analysis from the state and its allied concepts. Even more significantly, it

may help assign a bolder place to autonomy within geopolitical studies (Delay 2018; Dinc 2020; Gerber and Brincat 2018; Jongerden 2022; Matin 2019; Shahvisi 2018).

Based on the above, the article proceeds as follows. The first section sets the theoretical problem and briefly discusses the challenges posed by the contemporary nation-state model concerning internal national pluralism. The second and third sections present the core of Bauer and Öcalan's theoretical contributions to this theme. The fourth section lays out a comparative analysis of the two, focusing on three axes of comparison: mobility, spatiality and autonomy. Finally, the concluding section summarises and discusses the previous sections and reflects on the broader relevance of this article, paving the way for further research on how Bauer and Öcalan's insights can inform novel political solutions to the global challenges faced by the nation-state model.

Nationalities and the Nation-State: Setting the Problem

Among political concepts, nationality and nation-state stand out for their pervasiveness in the world politics of the last two centuries. To this day, there are very few areas of the world that are not politically administered by nation-states, and the concept of nationality still remains one of the most enduring traits for defining and categorising people.

Following the Italian geographer Franco Farinelli (2019), the nation-state and its territory are characterised by Euclid's features of geometry: continuity, homogeneity, and isotropism. Continuity requires that state territory be contiguous and not separated by other sovereign territorial entities. Homogeneity is the goal of the twofold process of nationalisation of territory and territorialisation of national identity (Kaiser 2002), which transforms indigenous identities and places them into the nation-state space (Brenner et al. 2008). Isotropism establishes the hierarchisation of state territory, as it means that all parts of the state point in the same direction, the capital city, thus 'they operate in total uniformity' (De Nuzzo 2019, 169).

In today's globalised era, where economic and political power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of transnational corporations and international organisations, the limitations of the nation-state model are becoming more apparent, with its power that seems to be shrinking in many areas of the world (Berger and Weber 2006; Creveld (Van) 1999; Crouch 2018; Habermas 1999). Moreover, the increased mobility of people, goods and information across borders has challenged the traditional notion of a homogeneous national identity, making cultural diversity the norm in a world of nation-states that claim to be mono-national (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul 2008; Nimni and Aktoprak 2018). Accordingly, the nation-state model appears to be struggling to address economic challenges, as well as the growing cultural

diversity within its borders, often triggering identity conflicts and demands for separatism by national minorities.

Facing this, many voices have been raised over the years regarding the need to 'go global', in terms of democracy, culture, citizenship and/or identity (see: Nussbaum 1996). In this perspective, fostering a de-territorialised 'global identity' could permit to go beyond the nation-state and its narrowness, towards a 'cosmopolitan democracy' capable of 'globalis[ing] democracy while, at the same time, democratising globalisation' (Archibugi 2004, 438).

Similarly, geographic scholarship demonstrated the existence of a link between local places and transnationalism, which opens the nation-state (Ehrkamp 2005; Leitner and Ehrkamp 2006) and overcomes methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). These scholars especially highlighted 'the importance of the city as a locus of cosmopolitan conviviality founded not on shared identity, but on a politics of connectivity' (Antonsich 2018, 8), stemmed from everyday encounters between strangers (Amin 2002; Koefoed and Simonsen 2011; Leitner 2012). The nation was therefore left out from this two-side framework of locality and transnationality.

As good as this sounds in theory, these approaches tend to clash with the fact that national and cultural identities are not losing their political relevance, making any post-national ambitions difficult to implement (at least through democratic processes). Indeed, national identities do not seem to be fading away, although many hypotheses of this kind have been voiced over the years. In the 1980s, Hobsbawm (1992, 192) assumed that the increased scholarly attention on nationalism was a sign that 'the phenomenon is past its peak': 'The owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling around nations and nationalism'. Despite Hobsbawm's optimism, nowadays we are currently experiencing a re-emergence of national identity as an important source of political identity, often triggered by right-wing forces (Bieber 2018; Crouch 2017a, 2017b; Eger and Valdez 2015; Gingrich and Banks 2006; Milačić and Vuković 2018) and secessionist and sub-state national movements (Lecours 2012; Olivieri 2015; Ruiz Casado 2020), but also, at times, by left-wing actors (Burbano De Lara 2015; Custodi 2021; Custodi and Padoan 2022; Gerbaudo 2017).

According to the 2017–2022 World Values Survey, 88.5% of the people interviewed in the world declared to be 'Very proud' or 'Quite proud' of their nationality (WVS 2022).[2] In fact, the decline of the nation-state sketched above should not be confused with the decay of national identity and pride (D'Eramo 2009; Nimni 1991). Nonetheless, nationality cannot be taken as a monolith, as demonstrated by the second-generation immigrants, who at times strategically seek to position themselves within the nation, rather than in opposition to that (Antonsich 2018), or by the emergence of diasporas' hybrid infrastructures, which assemble multiethnic contributions for the national purpose (Ventura forthcoming).

In light of this problem, delving further into the ideas of those who emphasised the significance of transcending nation-states and their limitations, while still acknowledging national and cultural identities, becomes valuable. As elucidated in the introduction, we will now closely examine and compare the perspectives of Otto Bauer and Abdullah Öcalan on this subject, situating them within the wider theoretical discourse presented in this section.

Bauer's National Cultural Autonomy

As soon as we approach the thought of Otto Bauer, we find ourselves faced with an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, there is certainly a more neutral – even sympathetic – revaluation of nationality, compared to the critical attitude of many Marxists of his era. For instance, Lenin condemned Bauer's theses, asserting that they were driven by a 'nationalistic infatuation' (Lenin 1914, 398). On the other hand, however, Otto Bauer was also critical of the nation-state and was never fully persuaded by the principle of (territorial) national self-determination, arguing that even the most homogeneous nation has some national minorities within its territory (Bauer [1924] 2000, 271).

Rather than a contradiction, this difference in judgement between nationality and the nation-state is at the heart of Bauer's thinking on this matter. It is at the basis of the so-called principle of national cultural autonomy, which is a key legacy of Bauer's thought. In a nutshell, this principle detaches the concept of nation from the concept of territory, and asserts that national communities should be organised as autonomous units in multinational states regardless of residential location (Nimni 2005, 2007).

To better understand this idea, it is necessary to first put together the political circumstances in which it was set out: At the end of the nineteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a multinational state where ethnic and national tensions were rising, as well as harming the unity of the labour movement. Its capital, Vienna, was a cosmopolitan city with peoples from all corners of the empire. The German-speaking social democrats were preaching a humanist message of fraternisation, rejecting national tensions as divisionary and wishing to preserve the framework of the Empire, but the Czech labour movement was instead under a considerable nationalist influence (Munk 1985, 86). Troubled with the proletariat torn by national divisions, 'the Social Democratic party lacked any common analysis of national conflicts within the multinational states, and could offer no united guidelines beyond an abstract profession of internationalism' (Loew 1979, 19). In Bauer's own words, the 'devastating power battles among the nations' were making the struggle of the Social Democrats more and more difficult, dooming 'the unity and decisiveness of the proletarian army' to be 'destroyed by these national contradictions' (Bauer [1908] 2016, 283).

As a first attempt to respond to this situation, in 1899 the party approved the *Brünner Programm*, which provided the socialist movement with a political line on the national theme. Partly inspired by Karl Kautsky, the programme advocated for restructuring Austria into a federal state based on language divisions. It aimed at transforming the state into a democratic federation of nationalities (*demokratischen Nationalitätenbundesstaat*), where each nationality would be divided territorially and have administrative autonomy, while economic policy would be left to the central state.

A young member of the left side of the party, Otto Bauer, disagreed with the idea that national differences should be crystallised territorially, as well as with the definition of nationality simply as a community of people speaking the same language. According to Bauer, dividing nationalities geographically, in a context in which they were so mixed within the same territory, was – to say the least – problematic. Instead, he contended that the cultural autonomy of nationalities should be extra-territorial, thus considering the nation more as an 'association of persons' rather than a 'territorial corporation' defined by a common language (Bauer [1924] 2000, 281). Together with Karl Renner (who first sketched the concept of national cultural autonomy), Bauer argued that the various nationalities of the state should be organised in a way that permitted them to freely administer their cultural affairs regardless of the territory in which they resided. It was an innovative standpoint that kept together a defence of national autonomy and a critique of the nation-state.

Driven by pragmatic discussions on how to cope with the spread of nationalisms within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bauer deepened his studies on the national phenomenon, and in 1907 he published *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*. The book soon became the cornerstone of the Viennese Marxist school (which was later to take the name of Austro-Marxism) and it paved the way to a far-reaching debate on nations and nationalism that lasted until the beginning of World War I, involving the major Marxist theorists of the time. In just a few years, high-profile Marxists published articles and books on this topic, often as a polemical response to Bauer or subsequent assessment of Bauer's ideas. Examples include Karl Kautsky's *Nationality and Internationality* (1908), Rosa Luxemburg's series of articles known as *The National Question and Autonomy* (1908–1909), Josef Stalin's *Marxism and the National Question* (1913) and Vladimir Lenin's *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (1914).

In his groundbreaking text, Bauer argued that 'national characters' do exist, but they are a material product of history, not a 'mysterious spirit of the people'. The character that marks out a nation is not 'a fixed thing', but rather an ongoing historical process whose elements are variable and change in time (Bauer [1924] 2000). Therefore, for Bauer the nation cannot be understood by listing a set of categories or by referring to some essential qualities. This is why his theory has been defined as an 'epistemological

break' (Munk 2010, 49). The theory eventually results in the intricate definition of the nation as 'the totality of human beings bound together by a community of fate into a community of character' (Bauer [1924] 2000, 117). However, the nation is not alone in having a 'community of character': class has that too. Yet, the community of character of class emerges from a similarity of fate, whereas in the case of the nation from a community of fate (Bauer [1924] 2000, 101).

To this sophisticated theoretical conceptualisation of national character and formation, Bauer integrated a normative discussion in defence of national cultural autonomy, further developing the concept. His aim was to overcome the challenging distinction between national majorities and minorities by guaranteeing equal collective representation to each nationality, without nationalities having to be linked to any defined territory. Whereas many theories of national autonomy required a territorial base for the autonomous national community, Bauer insisted that national autonomy should be non-territorial. Not surprisingly, this idea was also referred to as the 'personality principle', exactly because it aimed to set national belonging at the *personal* level (Bauer [1924] 2000, 281). Central to this conception of national autonomy was the idea that national communities should be organised internally in a democratic way and the affiliation to one or another nationality should be a voluntary choice and not imposed (Nimni 2000).

Renner originally explained this point by comparing national communities to religious communities: just as different religions could exist within the same state, members of different national communities could coexist with their own unique institutions and national organisations, as long as they did not seek exclusive control over a particular territory (Nimni 2000). In this way, members of each national community, whatever their territory of residence within the multinational state, would form a single public association endowed with sovereign powers over all national-cultural affairs (such as the educational system). Only in this way, Bauer argued, it could have been possible to establish multinational socialist states which various nationalities could proudly identify with, without the risk that nationalist demands would break the unity of the labour movement (and of the future socialist state) (Bauer [1908] 2016).

Öcalan's Notion of Democratic Nation

The question of nationality in Abdullah Öcalan must be understood within his wider theoretical framework, characterised by a thought which is 'inextricable from action' (Graeber 2020, 167). As the co-founder of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, or PKK), his purpose concerns the liberation of Kurdistan and the Kurdish society: a twofold entangled mission.

In his own words, 'the PKK never regarded the Kurdish question as a mere problem of ethnicity or nationhood. Rather, [. . .] it was the project of liberating the society and democratizing it' (Öcalan 2011, 7). After Öcalan's capture in Öcalan (1999), such project shifted from Marxism-Leninism towards a libertarian democratic confederalism, in which the nation-state is seen as antithetical to a free society (Casier and Jongerden 2012; Irmak 2015; Jongerden 2015; Jongerden and Knapp 2016; Matin 2019; Öcalan 1999, 2005, 2017b).

Drawing upon the American theorist Murray Bookchin (1982, 2018, 2018), the Kurdish leader develops a civilisational philosophy of history, imbued with historical materialism and addressed against social hierarchies. Human history is understood through the dialectical lens of the opposition between the legacy of domination and the legacy of freedom (Bookchin 1982), that is the struggle, respectively, for or against a hierarchical organisation of human life. In the current times, according to Öcalan (2015, 2017c, 2020), the legacy of domination unfolds through the trinity of nation-state, capitalist modernity and capitalist civilisation. On the contrary, the legacy of freedom is represented by what he calls democratic nation, democratic modernity and democratic civilisation, articulated in the political form of a democratic confederation. Here, the locution 'democratic' refers to the self-governance of both individuals and local communities in opposition to the elites' government (Öcalan 2020). Although overlapping and mutually generative, the terms democratic modernity and democratic civilisation offer different nuances. The latter is the civilisation based on the moral and political society, as defined by Öcalan (2020), while the former is its contemporary manifestation under modern conditions.

At the centre of his critique of the concept of nation, we find a vigorous animosity against the homogenising role of the state, which 'aims at creating a single national culture, a single national identity, and a single unified religious community[3]' (Öcalan 2011, 12–13). The purpose of the Kurdish leader is to develop a theory of nation, which can preserve and defend social plurality and diversity against the state's 'assimilation and genocide' (Öcalan 2011, 12), perpetrated 'in the name of an imaginary unitary society' (Öcalan 2011, 25).

At the core of state homogeneity, the PKK leader glimpses the processes of sacralisation and deification of the nation. Öcalan (2016) even suggests that theocracy is the conceptual foundation of the nation-state, and that the ancient 'monarch-god was replaced by the nation-state god' (Öcalan 2017a, 14), of which nationalism is the religion. Thus, the nation-state is 'the maximum form of power' because it 'is the most developed unity of monopolies such as trade, industrial, finance, and power', in addition to the 'ideological monopoly' (Öcalan 2011, 10).

Following this interpretation, we can see that Öcalan counterposes the pre-national natural communities, directly experienced by their members, to the abstract national communities, which are intellectually fabricated. Therefore, the nation is conceptualised as an abstraction of the collective identity, at a higher scale than tribes, clans, families, villages and cities, engendered by the capitalist necessities to create homogenised markets (Öcalan 2013). The 'important thesis' (Öcalan 2017a, 10) is that the nation-state is the historical basis of capitalism because the former 'domesticates the society in the name of capitalism and alienates the community from its natural foundations' (Öcalan 2011, 12).

Öcalan thinks of the nation as the sum of a shared mindset and institutional organisation; like body *and* mind together. On the one hand, echoing Benedict Anderson (Anderson 1996), Öcalan (2017a, 12) describes the nation as 'a *forma mentis* [. . .] an abstract and imagined phenomenon'. On the other hand, the mindset needs to be concretely enacted. In defining a nation as a community of people who share a common mindset, for Öcalan (2017a, 24) 'language, religion, culture, market, history and political borders play not a decisive but a bodily role'. It is here that the Kurdish historical leader seeks to create a hiatus between nationhood and statehood (Türk 2022). If it is possible to change the national mindset, then its political organisation must change as well, losing the statist traits of homogeneity and hierarchy.

This alternative is represented by the notion of democratic nation, which 'is the common society formed by the free will of free individuals and communities' (Öcalan 2017a, 21). Whereas the nation-state pursues the homogenisation of society, the democratic nation is founded on diversity and multiplicity, which guarantee an open and flexible conceptualisation of identity, inclined to new cultural hybridisations (Öcalan 2014). Therefore, the democratic nation is plurilingual, multireligious, multiethnic, pluricultural and inclusive to other groups, communities and individuals: 'The unifying factor in the democratic nation is the free will of the people and those groups who decide to belong to that nation' (Öcalan 2017a, 21–22).

As a concept developed against social and cultural hierarchies, the democratic nation defines a new kind of nationhood, whose main aim is to preserve diversity and plurality within a common goal of freedom and solidarity (Guneser 2021). It is non-linear, particular-oriented, inclusive and open to alternatives and hybridisation. Within it, each ethnic, religious and social community, at various scales, participates with its own organisational structure. Therefore, each national entity should aim to turn itself into a democratic nation, to form a confederation, which can be thought of as a kind of nation of nations (Öcalan 2014).

This understanding does not involve a dilution of cultural peculiarities in a post-national society. Öcalan (Öcalan 2017a, 51–52) is very clear about this point: 'religion, philosophy, mythology, science and various art forms

constitute the culture of a society. [. . .] Culture, in a narrow sense, represents the mindset of societies. Thought, taste and morals are its three fundamental issues'. The turning point is the aim to preserve and include diversity and multiplicity in a political project. The lens of a nation as mind and body suggests that the democratic nation must be understood in its political terms: not only as a state of mind, but also as a political architecture. Therefore, the democratic nation is 'a nation that unifies and governs all its members in democratic autonomous institutions. This is its defining quality' (Öcalan 2017a, 25).

The democratic nation is thus a mindset that finds its body in a system of democratic autonomy. Self-governance is the key to understanding the democratic nation. However, autonomy is not based on ethnic belonging, alone. Öcalan (2020, 318) envisages a counter-modernity based on networks of communities allied against monopolies, to combat 'rigid centralism and hierarchical chain of command in organisation and administration'. Theory and action as well as national liberation and socialist democratisation go hand in hand in outlining Öcalan's political system:

> Democratic confederalism offers the option of the democratic nation as the fundamental means for solving the ethnic, religious, urban, local, regional, and national problems that arise from modernity's monolithic, homogeneous, and monochrome fascist society model implemented by the nation-state. All ethnicities, religious views, urban, local, regional, and national realities have the right to take part in the democratic nation with their own identity and democratic federate structure. (Öcalan 2020, 357)

Nations within or Beyond the State? Mobility, Spatiality and Autonomy in Bauer and Öcalan

What shines through this brief exploration of Bauer's and Öcalan's thoughts on the subject is a substantial convergence on manifold aspects concerning nationalities. The similarities are multifarious, such as their conceptual separation of nation and state, their effort to save multiplicity and coexistence, a similar understanding of modern nation genealogy, as well as a generic socialist horizon in which inscribing the nations' cohabitation. Of course, simply conflating Bauer's concept of national cultural autonomy with Öcalan's notion of democratic nation would be a mistake. Nonetheless, 'NCA model [*ed*: national cultural autonomy] has striking similarities with the Democratic Confederalism introduced in Rojava' (Nimni 2018, 32). For example, Burç (2020) considers Öcalan's project an enlargement of Bauer's ideas, applying autonomy to other subjects of society, such as women. Bezwan (2018) highlights how Öcalan's democratic autonomy project adds some territorial dimension to Bauer's insights. Now, tracing all the similarities and divergences would require

much more than a single article. Thus, with the hope of stimulating further interest and research in the comparison between these two thinkers, here we propose three axes of analysis, which we found particularly fitting for the purpose: mobility, spatiality and autonomy. We chose these axes because they correspond to the primary features of the subject (the national character), the related territory (the spatial manifestation of the nation), and the consequent political combination. Therefore, we retain that they constitute a robust basis for the comparative analysis of their theoretical production, bearing in mind that the core of Bauer and Öcalan's theoretical endeavours focuses on forms of autonomy of national subjects from state authority.

We define mobility as an axis with an extreme of fixity and another of change, which we mostly apply to the definition of the national subject. We configure spatiality as an axis ranging between multiplicity and homogeneity, mainly referring to the nation's territorial dimension. Lastly, autonomy concerns the adopted solution and is an axis measuring the degree of decentralisation within society, between 'general' and 'specific'; in other words, autonomy refers to the type of relation occurring between state and society or political authority and nation. Keeping these axes separated from each other is just a heuristic device for comparison, as they are constantly intertwined and mutually integrated in their thought.

Mobility

Bauer and Öcalan's effort to separate nations from nation-states implies a methodological reverse, which assumes national identities, rather than the abstract geometrical state model, as its starting point. The first consequence emerging from this approach is the centrality bestowed on mobility against the static nature of the modern state (Farinelli 2019). Here, mobility is not simply the physical ability of people to move in the cartographic space but also a condition of variation throughout time. On the one hand, people may cross different territories during their lifetime without losing their national identity or they may coexist in the same geographic area along with other ethnicities. On the other hand, national characters are not essentialised and fixed features, but material products of history, always in a perpetual state of becoming.

In terms of mobility and definition of national traits, Bauer and Öcalan essentially converge. The former depicts a nation as an association of persons 'bound together by a community of fate into a community of character' (Bauer [1924] 2000, 117), while the latter defines it as 'a community of people who share a common mindset' (Öcalan 2017a, 24). Setting the focus on people rather than state territory allows them to emphasise the constructivist nature of nations and their actual complexities. They even agree on a certain degree of

voluntary approach to national affiliation, which would give a significant mobile character to the nationality's boundaries.

In so doing, the two thinkers outline a fundamental irreducible antinomy between state and nation. Both of them search for ways of political coexistence between nationalities and statist apparatuses, but the two terms remain conceptually distant. Whereas they acknowledge the role of the capitalist state in shaping the modern nation, which 'becomes the anchorage of state power in society and maps out its contours' (Poulantzas 2008, 67), Bauer and Öcalan also emphasise that something exceeds the mere identification of national identity with capitalist necessities of market homogenisation. This exceeding part becomes the key to disentangling the nation from the capitalist state and makes the former a fundamental unit of a socialist coexistence. If nations can be thought of as open, voluntary-based, always changing, hybrid, and people-focused, they can develop and structure themselves within but differently from the state. The exceeding part is therefore exactly what makes nations mobile and slippery as opposed to the static state.

So far, Bauer and Öcalan's understandings look almost convergent in outlining the nineteenth-century type of nation-building as their main object for criticism. In other words, what is at the centre of their analysis is the problematisation of the national subject in the geopolitical Westphalian model, which was born in Europe, and then exported to the rest of the world. Some authors underline the substantial linearity from the *cuius regio, eius religio* principle of the Peace of Augsburg (1555), its confirmation with the Peace of Westphalia (1648), and its redefinition of a de facto *cuius regio, eius natio* in the nineteenth-century nation-building (De Nuzzo 2019). But what is really at stake here is the homogeneity of state territory, which is the precondition for extreme violence. In line with Öcalan, Poulantzas (2008, 74) writes:

> Genocide becomes possible only when the national space is closed on foreign bodies within its very frontiers. Is this a symbolic image? Well, the first genocide of this century, that of the Armenians, accompanies precisely Kemal Ataturk's foundation of the Turkish nation-State, the establishment of a national territory on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, and the closure of the Golden Horn. Genocide and concentration camps are inscribed in one and the same space.

Spatiality

The former quotation leads us to the second axis of analysis, that of spatiality. Here, our main thesis is that behind Bauer and Öcalan's understanding of nationality and its relation with the state, we can glimpse a spatial logic of classical empires. Bauer writes at the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, trying to provide a model 'designed to manage ethno-national conflicts and prevent secession by offering national and ethnic

minorities constitutionally guaranteed collective rights, wide cultural autonomy and non-territorial self-determination' (Nimni 2005, 1). Öcalan found in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's collapse the historical rupture, which made Kurds become emarginate at their own homes,[4] thus framing the nation-state paradigm as a system of impossible multiethnic coexistence. A systematic analysis of the various institutional architectures of empires exceeds the objectives of this research (see Colás 2007); however, with classical empire, we mean a specific form of empire, which is simultaneously different from the nation-state's colonial imperialism (Colliva 2004) and the postmodern understandings of biopolitical capitalism (e.g., Hardt and Negri 2000; Tiqqun 2010). Classical empires are characterised by being multi-ethnic, multi-religious and plurilingual. Still, they especially configure their political spatiality as rough rather than smooth, in which a multitude of identities find their autonomous space within the imperial space (Colliva 2004).

Akkaya and Jongerden (2012) explain that the Kurdish democratic autonomy project, on the one hand, regards the organisation of people beyond the state, but on the other hand, necessitates establishing some kind of relation with the central political authority. The project would not be based on ethnicity or territory, but on 'regional and local structures which allow for the expression of cultural differences' (Akkaya and Jongerden 2012, 9). The cornerstone of the project consists of the balance between cultural and political autonomy and strategic issues – such as foreign affairs, the economy and defence – which would remain in the domain of the central government, while judicial responsibility would be shared between the central government and regional assemblies (Yadirgi 2017). Remarkably, the project recalls the Ottoman millet system, which was a specific type of indirect rule, based on territorial and non-territorial autonomy (Tas 2014).

Similar to the Habsburg Empire's concept of *Nationalität* (nationality), the millet system outlined a fluid space of multiplicity, diversity, and heterogeneity within a broader political entity. The spatial trait which both Öcalan and Bauer vehemently oppose is state homogeneity. Their intellectual effort is directed against homogeneity, which is the necessary precondition of the eliminatory nature of the modern nation-state (Bezwan 2018).

Which institutional forms are equipped to contrast spatial homogeneity? The two best examples are federations and empires, which both present a similar structure and multiple nationalities (Beaud 2018). In spatial terms, we could consider federations as forms of consensual empires, and even the European Union has been framed so (Zielonka 2006). However, the federative option is still based on a territorial paradigm, similar to colonial empires, while classical empires include a certain degree of non-territorial recognition of belonging and autonomy. As highlighted by Bauer, nations would be entitled to some forms of jurisdiction, regardless of any territorial construction – this is

the core of the 'personality principle'. Here, the mobility axis intersects the spatiality one, outlining different shades of autonomy.

Autonomy

After defining nations as fixed/static or mutable/moveable, and outlining the spatiality as homogeneous/smooth or heterogeneous/rough, the third axis for the comparison concerns the types of autonomy, that we set as ranging between general and specific. With the term *general*, we mean a diffused autonomy within society, concerning various and always-growing domains; while *specific* refers to the autonomy relegated to predefined subjects, such as nations, religions, or territorial entities and limited to single domains, such as cultural affairs.

Leaving aside the actual Kurdish self-ruling territories, if we focus solely on the writings of Öcalan we can argue that he essentially agrees with Bauer's personality principle. Indeed, he writes that the effort of forming a democratic nation 'is not limited to a specific space and denotes the unity and solidarity of those who share the same cultural identity, even if they do not live within the same borders' (Öcalan 2020, 304). However, the notion itself of democratic nation integrates different ethnicities, groups, tribes, peoples and even families into the new 'identity of nation of nations – the common über-unit of nations' (Öcalan 2020, 183–84). Here, Öcalan seems to suggest a twofold interpretation of the notion of national identity. On the one hand, he envisages a political supranational identity, which binds together different ethnic groups. On the other hand, local national identities survive and are even encouraged to thrive within the new national belonging. Divergences with Bauer look here more terminological than substantial. For the Austrian thinker, the supranational level is covered by the political nature of the state, while at its inside different nations coexist with their own specific identities, but loyal to the political authority.

However, this is also an issue where we find a noteworthy divergence between Bauer and Öcalan. The former is pre-eminently concerned with nationalities within the given state, while the latter develops a concept of autonomy that regards much more than national identities.

Limiting our focus on the national issue, we can say that, in a nutshell, the core of Bauer's framework is the juridical autonomy of national associations in the domain of cultural affairs. Öcalan instead goes beyond this and expands the principle of democratic autonomy to the whole society.

According to the Kurdish leader, the principle of autonomy should be generally applied to moral and political communities, including the domains of politics, economy, religious affairs and even self-defence. Here, Öcalan's thought diverges from that of Bauer. The centrality given to the role of self-defence makes some authors wonder if his idea of autonomy should be

considered within or beyond the state (Türk 2022), and others underline some ambiguities regarding the electoral strategy and the armed insurgency (Leezenberg 2016). Here a legitimate question arises: should the principle of self-defence be applied within the democratic nation, too? According to Öcalan, the principle of self-defence within the broader democratic autonomy framework must be interpreted as the defence of a democratic society from 'the attacks and exploitation of capital and power monopolies' (Öcalan 2020, 191), which are primarily embodied by the nation-state. By contrast, the concepts of democratic nation and democratic autonomy are developed as a form of conflict-solution system. Therefore, self-defence should be thought of as concerning the whole democratic society, rather than single ethnic groups.

In terms of analytical comparison between Bauer's national cultural autonomy and Öcalan's democratic nation, even this principle of self-defence suggests that the major difference lies in the fact that according to the Kurdish thinker, the notion of autonomy is much broader than just the domain of cultural affairs applied to the national group. In Öcalan's (2020, 259) words, '[e]ach community, ethnicity, culture, religious community, intellectual movement, economic unit, etc. can structure and express itself autonomously as a political unit'. Accordingly, what emerges in Öcalan is a radical alternative *beyond* the state, whereas Bauer's insights may find some tenuous legitimacy even *within* the institutional framework of contemporary states (for a contemporary assessment of the applicability of Bauer's model within liberal democracies, see: Nimni 2005, 2007).

In short, we can highlight that the most important divergences between Bauer and Öcalan are to find along the axis of autonomy. The much broader theorisation of autonomy in Öcalan, differently from the Austrian thinker, involves other fields beyond nationality, i.e. gender, and questions the nature itself of the centralised state. For the Kurdish leader, the state inevitably produces marginalisation and discrimination, and therefore even the Kurds themselves should not pursue the goal of their own independent nation-state. Although Bauer employs the term 'state' to refer to the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire and remains sceptical towards the nation-state, he never pushes himself to envision a quasi-anarchic confederative form of government, as Öcalan does.

Conclusion

In this article, we have undertaken an analytical comparison between the works of two prominent authors, Otto Bauer and Abdullah Öcalan, who devoted their intellectual efforts to comprehending the complexities of the national question and sought to develop effective solutions to mitigate inter-ethnic conflicts and prevent the subjugation of minority communities by

dominant majorities. In so doing, we have bridged political theory with geographic and geopolitical scholarship, with the aim to emphasise the multi-scalar dimension of the question of nation and the related degrees of autonomy.

Rather than exploring similarities and differences in detail, we have presented the core of their thought and then we have proposed three axes of analysis and comparison between them, with the nation-state as the reference point. The three axes – mobility, spatiality, autonomy – outline multiple potential convergences or differences. We have highlighted the existence of an essential convergence in many aspects.

First, both Bauer and Öcalan frame nations as products of history and in a perpetual state of becoming. Furthermore, they agree with the personality principle, for which members of a nationality can enjoy the national cultural rights disjointed from his or her territorial dimension. This principle is particularly important today, given the increased mobility of people around the globe, within and across national borders. Such a condition is a direct challenge to the principle of fixity inherent to the nature of the nation-state and its spatiality.

Second, the two thinkers envisage some form of imperial spatiality. Behind their democratic and even socialist aims, it is clearly possible to glimpse the spatial logic of classical empires, with their precarious balance between unity and multiplicity. Even more than federal states – which are based on a territorial principle – the multiplicity within classical empires regards territories as well as people communities, who are entitled to rights and autonomous juridical powers. This is evident in Bauer's will to save the Austro-Hungarian ethnic coexistence; and it is even more explicit in Öcalan (2020, 304), when he explains that '[t]he Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Persian-Sasanian, and Arab-Abbasid Empires considered the existence of hundreds of different political-administrative units as their raison d'être – as long as these entities recognised the legitimacy of the emperor or the sultan, of course'. Bauer and Öcalan converge on the same worry about the nation-state's homogeneity, which is the conceptual core of potential inter-ethnic atrocities. Although democratic states guarantee safety and rights to all their citizens, the spatial logic of the modern nation-state always tends to demand fixity and homogeneity, showing friction and resistance in front of multiplicity and variety.

Third, both Bauer and Öcalan recognise that some degree of autonomy from the centralised political power is necessary to preserve both multiplicity and mobility throughout space and time. Although substantially similar in demanding cultural autonomy for nationalities, Öcalan thinks of the notion of autonomy with a much broader scope than what Bauer does. The latter, indeed, is almost focused only on the relation between ethnic groups within a unitary state, although he envisages internal democracy within national

associations and even a certain degree of voluntary belonging. For this reason, we have identified this type of autonomy as 'specific'. By contrast, the Kurdish leader envisions a form of autonomy that we have termed 'general', as it encompasses several aspects of society, including various differences that extend beyond ethnicity, such as gender distinctions. In other words, Öcalan's autonomy is general because it is the cornerstone for democratisation and liberation of the whole society from capital and monopolies of power, whereas for Bauer the cornerstone is the class struggle led by the working class, and autonomy is a specific component of it, in order to keep an ethnically-diverse proletariat united, towards the establishment of a plurinational socialist state.

As outlined in the article's introduction, our primary objective was to revive the relevance of Öcalan and Bauer's ideas in contemporary debates on ethnic, cultural and national plurality, and to present a fresh comparative analysis of these two seminal thinkers. Accordingly, our focus was to identify both convergences and divergences in their perspectives on select issues that remain crucial in today's discussions surrounding the crisis of the nation-state and its potential solutions. Our analysis of the thoughts of Öcalan and Bauer serves to illuminate one of the hidden layers of the national dimension: a realm where identities are forged, devoid of exclusive, immutable and standardised attributes, but rather marked by the embrace of differences, diversities and ongoing evolution. Yet, the present work also represents an open invitation for further research on how Bauer and Öcalan's insights can inform novel political solutions to the growing social and political problems arising from global migration, inter-ethnic conflicts and even inter-state wars. Therefore, this work should be viewed as an invitation to engage with and expand upon the ideas presented here.

Notes

1. Rojava means west and sunset in Kurmanji, a Kurdish dialect, and refers to the Western Kurdistan, in North-East of Syria. As a consequence of the civil war, which erupted in 2011 in the Arab country, the Kurds established the Autonomous Administration of North-East Syria, based on the principles of democratic confederalism.
2. The survey included only the nationality of the respondent's nation-state, thus excluding pride in minority nationalities, which would likely have pushed the value further up.
3. In the original Turkish text, the words used to express 'religious community' are *dinî cemaatin*, literally meaning 'religious congregation'. Nonetheless, we opted for keeping the official English translation made by the 'International Initiative – Freedom for Öcalan', despite an overuse of the term 'community' for all types of human groups may be misleading. We retain that the translators aimed at emphasising the role of community as a more bottom-up form of gathering and sense of belonging compared to the nation-state.
4. Until 1991, Kurds were reported in official statistics as 'mountain Turks' (Sagnic 2010).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This research received no funds.

ORCID

Francesco Ventura http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0796-0595

References

Akkaya, A. H., and J. Jongerden. 2012. Reassembling the political: The PKK and the project of radical democracy. *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online] 2012. 14: 10.4000/ejts.4615

Alış, A. 2012. No theory for the Kurds? The Kurds and theories of nationalism. In *Challenging capitalist modernity I: Alternative concepts and the Kurdish quest* , ed. Network for an Alternative Quest, pp. 48–52. Cologne: International Initiative.

Amin, A. 2002. Ethnicity and the multicultural city: Living with diversity. *Environment and Planning A* 34 (6):959–80. doi:10.1068/a3537.

Anderson, B. 1996. *Imagined communities*. 2nd ed. New York: Verso.

Antonsich, M. 2009. On territory, the nation-state and the crisis of the hyphen. *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (6):789–806. doi:10.1177/0309132508104996.

Antonsich, M. 2018. Living in diversity: Going beyond the local/national divide. *Political Geography* 63:1–9. doi:10.1016/j.polgeo.2017.12.001.

Archibugi, D. 2004. Cosmopolitan democracy and its critics: A review. *European Journal of International Relations* 10 (3):437–73. doi:10.1177/1354066104045543.

Bauer, O. [1908] 2016. Remarks on the question of nationalities. In *Austro-Marxism: The ideology of unity*, ed. M. E. Blum and W. Smaldone, pp. 281–294. Leiden: Brill.

Bauer, O. [1924] 2000. *The question of nationalities and social democracy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Beaud, O. 2018. Federation and empire: About a conceptual distinction of political forms. *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 16 (4):1199–206. doi:10.1093/icon/moy103.

Berger, M. T., and H. Weber. 2006. Beyond state-building: Global governance and the crisis of the nation-state system in the 21st Century. *Third World Quarterly* 27 (1):201–08. doi:10.1080/01436590500370095.

Bezwan, N. 2018. Addressing the Kurdish self-determination Conflict: Democratic autonomy and authoritarianism in Turkey. In *Democratic representation in Plurinational States: The Kurds in Turkey*, ed. E. Nimni and E. Aktoprak, pp. 11–39. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-01108-6_4.

Bieber, F. 2018. Is Nationalism on the rise? Assessing global trends. *Ethnopolitics* 17 (5):519–40. doi:10.1080/17449057.2018.1532633.

Bloemraad, I., A. Korteweg, and G. Yurdakul. 2008. Citizenship and immigration: Multiculturalism, assimilation, and challenges to the nation-state. *Annual Review of Sociology* 34 (1):153–79. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134608.

Bookchin, D. 2018. How my father's ideas helped the Kurds create a new democracy. *The New York Review of Books*. Accessed November 16, 2022. https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/06/15/how-my-fathers-ideas-helped-the-kurds-create-a-new-democracy/

Bookchin, M. 1982. *The ecology of freedom: The emergence and dissolution of hierarchy*. Palo Alto: Cheshire Books.

Brenner, N., B. Jessop, M. Jones, and G. MacLeod. 2008. Introduction: State space in question. In *State/Space: A Reader*, ed. N. Brenner, B. Jessop, M. Jones, and G. MacLeod, pp. 1–26. Berlin: Blackwell. doi:10.1002/9780470755686.ch1.

Burbano De Lara, F. 2015. Todo Por La Patria. Refundación y Retorno Del Estado En Las Revoluciones Bolivarianas. *Íconos - Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 52 (52):19–41. doi:10.17141/iconos.52.2015.1670.

Burç, R. 2020. Non-territorial autonomy and gender equality: The case of the Autonomous administration of North and East Syria-Rojava. *Filozofija i Drustvo* 31 (3):319–39. doi:10.2298/FID2003319B.

Casier, M., and J. Jongerden. 2012. Understanding Today's Kurdish movement: Leftist heritage, martyrdom, democracy and gender. *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [online] 2012. 14: 10.4000/ejts.4656

Colás, A. 2007. *Empire*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Colliva, P. 2004. Impero. In Il Dizionario di Politica, eds., N. Bobbio, N. Matteucci, G. Pasquino, pp. 460–64. Torino: UTET.

Creveld (Van), M. 1999. *The rise and decline of the state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511497599.

Crouch, C. 2017a. Neoliberalism, Nationalism and the decline of political traditions. *The Political Quarterly* 88 (2):221–29. doi:10.1111/1467-923X.12321.

Crouch, C. 2017b. Political identity and the new nationalism. *Aspen Review Central Europe 1/2017*. https://www.aspen.review/article/2017/political-identity-and-the-new-nationalism/.

Crouch, C. 2018. *The globalization backlash*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Custodi, J. 2021. Nationalism and populism on the left: The case of Podemos. *Nations and Nationalism* 27 (3):705–20. doi:10.1111/nana.12663.

Custodi, J., and E. Padoan. 2022. The nation of the people: An analysis of Podemos and five star movement's discourse on the nation. *Nations and Nationalism*. 29 (2):414–31. online first. doi:10.1111/nana.12865.

Delay, G. 2018. The Kurdish fight against ISIS: Realising the virtual Kurdistan through factionalized politics in a fragmented homeland. In *Non-state armed actors in the Middle East: Geopolitics, ideology, and strategy*, ed. M. Yesiltas and T. Kardas, pp. 77–95. Cham: Palgrave McMillan. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-55287-3_4.

De Nuzzo, C. 2019. The two dimensions of the border: An empirical study France–Italy. In *Migration, borders and citizenship between policy and public spheres*, ed. M. Ambrosini, M. Cinalli, and D. Jacobson, pp. 163–93. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

D'Eramo, M. 2009. Chissà Se Capiranno. In *Comunità Immaginate*, ed., B. Anderson, pp. 7–16. Roma:Manifestolibri.

Dinc, P. 2020. The Kurdish movement and the democratic federation of Northern Syria: An alternative to the (nation-)state Model? *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 22 (1):47–67. doi:10.1080/19448953.2020.1715669.

Dunn, J. 1994. Introduction: Crisis of the nation state? *Political Studies* 42 (1):3–15. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.1994.tb00002.x.

Eger, M. A., and S. Valdez. 2015. Neo-nationalism in Western Europe. *European Sociological Review* 31 (1):115–30. doi:10.1093/esr/jcu087.

Ehrkamp, P. 2005. Placing identities: Transnational practices and local attachments of Turkish immigrants in Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31 (2):345–64. doi:10.1080/1369183042000339963.

Farinelli, F. 2019. Cittadinanza, Spazio, Confini. La Natura Della Modernità. *Semestrale Di Studi e Ricerche Di Geografia* 31 (2):19–31.

Gerbaudo, P. 2017. *The mask and the flag: Populism, citizenism and global protest*. London: Hurst.

Gerber, D., and S. Brincat. 2018. When Öcalan met Bookchin: The Kurdish Freedom movement and the political theory of democratic confederalism. *Geopolitics* 26 (4):973–97. doi:10.1080/14650045.2018.1508016.

Gingrich, A., and M. Banks. 2006. *Neo-nationalism in Europe and beyond: Perspectives from Social Anthropology*. London: Berghahn Books.

Graeber, D. 2020. Öcalan as thinker: On the Unity of theory and practice as form of writing. In *Building free life: Dialogues with Öcalan*, ed. International Initiative,pp. 167–90. Oakland: PM Press.

Guneser, H. 2021. *The art of freedom: A brief history of the Kurdish liberation struggle*. Oakland: PM Press.

Habermas, J. 1999. The European nation-state and the pressures of globalization. *New Left Review* 235 (May/June):46–59.

Hammy, C., and T. Jeffrey Miley. 2022. Lessons from Rojava for the paradigm of social ecology. *Frontiers in Political Science* 3 (January):1–13. doi:10.3389/fpos.2021.815338.

Hardt, M., and A. Negri. 2000. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press. doi:10.4159/9780674038325.

Hobsbawm, E. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*. 2nd. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK. 1992. 10.1017/CCOL0521439612

Irmak, S. 2015. Bakûr: From state to democracy. In *Challenging capitalist modernity II: Dissecting capitalist modernity - building democratic confederalism*, ed. Network for an Alternative Quest, pp. 290–98. Cologne: International Initiative.

Jongerden, J. 2015. Colonialism, self-determination and independence: The new PKK paradigm. In *Kurdish Issues: Essays in honor of Robert W. Olson*, ed. M. M. Gunter, pp. 106–21. Costa Mesa: Mazda.

Jongerden, J. 2022. Reverse discourse, queering of self-determination, and sexual ruptures: Abdullah Öcalan, the Kurdistan workers party, and the problem of the nation-state. *Geopolitics*. 28 (5):1920–41. online first. doi:10.1080/14650045.2022.2088363.

Jongerden, J., and M. Knapp. 2016. Communal democracy: The social contract and confederalism in Rojava. *Comparative Islamic Studies* 10 (1):87–109. doi:10.1558/cis.29642.

Kaiser, R. 2002. Homeland making and the territorialization of national identity. In *Ethnonationalism in the contemporary world: Walker Connor and the study of Nationalism*, ed. D. Conversi, pp. 229–47. London: Routledge.

Koefoed, L., and K. Simonsen. 2011. 'The stranger', the city and the nation: On the possibilities of identification and belonging. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 18 (4):343–57. doi:10.1177/0969776411399343.

Komun Academy. 2020. Liberating the Middle East from the nation-state. *Komun Academy*. Accessed 15 December 2022. https://komun-academy.com/2020/07/02/liberating-the-middle-east-from-the-nation-state/.

Lecours, A. 2012. Sub-state Nationalism in the Western World: Explaining continued appeal. *Ethnopolitics* 11 (3):268–86. doi:10.1080/17449057.2010.507114.

Leezenberg, M. 2016. The ambiguities of democratic autonomy: The kurdish movement in Turkey and Rojava. *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea* 16 (4):671–90. doi:10.1080/14683857.2016.1246529.

Leitner, H. 2012. Spaces of encounters: Immigration, race, class, and the politics of belonging in small-town America. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102 (4):828–46. doi:10.1080/00045608.2011.601204.

Leitner, H., and P. Ehrkamp. 2006. Transnationalism and migrants' imaginings of citizenship. *Environment and Planning A* 38 (9):1615–32. doi:10.1068/a37409.

Lenin, V. 1914. The right of nations to self-determination. *Marxist Internet Archive*. Accessed 20 November 2022. https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/

Loew, R. 1979. The Politics of Austro-Marxism. *New Left Review*. 17–20. https://newleftreview.org/issues/I118/articles/raimund-loew-the-politics-of-austro-marxism.

Matin, K. 2019. Democratic Confederalism and societal multiplicity: A sympathetic critique of Abdullah Öcalan's state theory. *Geopolitics*. 26 (4):1075–94. online first. doi:10.1080/14650045.2019.1688785.

Milačić, F., and I. Vuković. 2018. The rise of the politics of national identity: New evidence from Western Europe. *Ethnopolitics* 17 (5):443–60. doi:10.1080/17449057.2017.1333313.

Munk, R. 1985. Otto Bauer: Towards a Marxist theory of Nationalism. *Capital & Class* 9 (1):84–97. doi:10.1177/030981688502500104.

Munk, R. 2010. Marxism and nationalism in the era of globalization. *Capital & Class* 34 (1):45–53. doi:10.1177/0309816809353482.

Nimni, E. 1991. *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical origins of a Political Crisis*. London: Pluto Press.

Nimni, E. 2000. Introduction for the English-Reading Audience. In *The question of nationalities and social democracy*, ed. O. Bauer, pp. xv–xlv. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Nimni, E., ed., 2005. *National Cultural Autonomy and its contemporary critics*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203506486.

Nimni, E. 2007. National–cultural autonomy as an alternative to minority territorial Nationalism. *Ethnopolitics* 6 (3):345–64. doi:10.1080/17449050701487363.

Nimni, E. 2018. Liberal nation states and the antinomies of minority representation: The impact on the Republic of Turkey. In *Democratic representation in Plurinational States: The Kurds in Turkey*, ed. E. Nimmi and E. Aktoprak, pp. 11–39. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-01108-6_2.

Nimni, E., and E. Aktoprak, eds., 2018. *Democratic representation in Plurinational States: The Kurds in Turkey*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-01108-6.

Nussbaum, M. C. 1996. *For love of country?: A new democracy forum on the limits of patriotism*. Boston: Beacon.

Öcalan, A. 1999. *Declaration on the democratic Solution of the Kurdish question*. Neuss: Mesopotamian.

Öcalan, A. 2005. "Declaration of democratic Confederalism in Kurdistan." Free Media Library. https://web.archive.org/web/20160929163726/http://www.freemedialibrary.com/index.php/Declaration_of_Democratic_Confederalism_in_Kurdistan.

Öcalan, A. 2011. *Democratic Confederalism*. Cologne: Transmedia.

Öcalan, A. 2013. *Il PKK e La Questione Kurda Nel XXI Secolo*. Milano: Punto Rosso.

Öcalan, A. 2014. *La Road Map Verso i Negoziati*. Milano: Punto Rosso.

Öcalan, A. 2015. *Civilization: The Age of Masked Gods and disguised kings. Manifesto for a democratic civilization*. Vol. 1 Porsgrunn: New Compass Press.

Öcalan, A. 2016. *Oltre Lo Stato, Il Potere e La Violenza*. Milano: Punto Rosso.

Öcalan, A. 2017a. *Democratic Nation*. Cologne: Transmedia.

Öcalan, A. 2017b. *War and peace in Kurdistan: Perspectives for a political solution of the kurdish question*. Cologne: Transmedia.

Öcalan, A. 2017c. *Capitalism: The Age of Unmasked Gods and Naked Kings. Manifesto for the Democratic Civilization*, Vol. 2. Porsgrunn: New Compass Press.
Öcalan, A. 2020. *The sociology of freedom: Manifesto of the democratic Civilization*. Vol. 3 Oakland: PM Press.
Olivieri, V. M. 2015. Sub-state Nationalism in Spain: Primers and Triggers of Identity Politics in Catalonia and the Basque country. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38 (9):1610–26. doi:10.1080/01419870.2015.1009480.
Paul, T. V., G. J. Ikenberry, and J. A. Hall, eds., 2003. *The nation-state in question*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. doi:10.1515/9780691221496.
Poulantzas, N. 2008. The nation. In *State/Space: A Reader*, ed. N. Brenner, B. Jessop, M. Jones, and G. MacLeod, pp. 65–83. Malden: Blackwell. doi:10.1002/9780470755686.ch4.
Ruiz Casado, J. A. 2020. Articulations of populism and Nationalism: The case of the Catalan independence movement. *European Politics and Society* 21 (5):554–69. doi:10.1080/23745118.2019.1686945.
Sagnic, C. 2010. Mountain Turks: State ideology and the Kurds in Turkey. *Information, Society & Justice* 3 (2):127–34.
Shahvisi, A. 2018. Beyond orientalism: Exploring the distinctive feminism of democratic confederalism in Rojava. *Geopolitics*. 26 (4):998–1022. online first. doi:10.1080/14650045.2018.1554564.
Tas, L. 2014. The myth of the ottoman millet system: Its treatment of Kurds and a discussion of territorial and non-territorial autonomy. *International Journal on Minority & Group Rights* 21 (4):497–526. doi:10.1163/15718115-02104003.
Tiqqun. 2010. *Introduction to Civil war*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
Türk, H. B. 2022. Nationalism, history and civilization in Öcalan's thought. *National Identities* 24 (3):287–302. doi:10.1080/14608944.2021.2011849.
Ventura, F. 2022. *Radicalising Homeland: Agency, Temporality and Spatiality in Kurdish Freedom Movement's Representations of Kurdistan*. Ph.D. Thesis, University College Dublin. http://hdl.handle.net/10197/13170.
Ventura, F. forthcoming. Diaspora as socio-material assemblage: Political agency in the Kurdish Freedom Movement's Representations of Homeland. *Global Networks* doi:10.1111/glob.12460.
Wimmer, A., and N. Glick Schiller. 2002. Methodological Nationalism and beyond: Nation-state building, migration and the Social Sciences. *Global Networks* 2 (4):301–34. doi:10.1111/1471-0374.00043.
WVS. 2022. *7th Wave of the World Values Survey*. Accessed November 16, 2022. https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp.
Yadirgi, V. 2017. *The political economy of the Kurds of Turkey: From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Zielonka, J. 2006. *Europe as empire: The nature of the enlarged European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/0199292213.001.0001.