

The Paradox of Globalisation: Countering Terrorism in a Deterritorialised Global Sphere

Written by Hartmut Behr

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

The Paradox of Globalisation: Countering Terrorism in a Deterritorialised Global Sphere

<https://www.e-ir.info/2008/07/11/the-paradox-of-globalisation-countering-terrorism-in-a-deterritorialised-global-sphere/>

HARTMUT BEHR, JUL 11 2008

Globalisation is a complex and sometimes blurred term which needs clarification and specification. One approach to analyse global politics is to investigate the implications of political territoriality and deterritorialisation. Further approaches in this direction, which can be studied separately, though are interlinked with territoriality/deterritorialisation, focus on the study of transnationalising and denationalising processes as well as on implications of time-space compression. In this comment, I will consider some implications of territoriality (and deterritorialisation) as they affect global politics and as they impact states' policies towards global politics. A special emphasis will be put upon a security perspective, namely on transnational terrorism and subsequently on imperatives for counter-terrorism policies. Saying this, and investigating features of transnational politics and their impact of political territoriality under a security perspective, does not imply that all sorts of transnational politics, or transnational actors, would pose security threats; but rather that some of those actors do, such as transnational terrorist groups, while general features of transnationalisation (and deterritorialisation) apply to them.

The following considerations consist of three steps: *first*, it will be explained to what extent global politics can be described as deterritorialised politics. In order to do so, patterns of a traditional understanding of political territoriality must be elaborated which can then be contrasted with features of global politics. *Secondly*, the traditional understanding of national security and defence strategies shall be explored and compared to the features of deterritorial (global) politics. This juxtaposition results in the argument that traditional security and defence strategies do not match the deterritorial nature of global and transnational security (threats). The *third* step will conclude with new imperatives for countering deterritorialised threats, especially transnational terrorism.

(I)

The imagination that politics and political order have to be territorial and territorially fixed is one of the major ontological axioms of modernity. This imagination can be found in all modern state theories and philosophies (such as in Jean Bodin, Thomas Hobbes, Samuel of Pufendorf). Politics without territorial fixation, including clearly demarcated borders, appears unthinkable. The opposite is also true, namely that these principles cannot even be thought without territorial binding. There are four particular principles associated with political territoriality: these are sovereignty, integration of the political body, the function of borders for the existence and sustainability of political communities, and the provision and guarantee of security. These four principles have had an unbroken career as paradigms of modern statehood from the 16th century to the present-day. However, they experienced an ideological cementation with the advent of the nation state at the beginning of the 19th century (instructive here Max Weber, Rudolf Smend, and critically Georg Simmel), and, now, in the beginning of the 21st century, exist side-by-side with phenomena of deterritorialisation. This concurrency is, however, not only a parallel process of two patterns of political order (one territorial bound, the other deterritorial), but also creates tensions as in the realm of security where deterritorialisation affects the functioning of traditional (and territorial) security policies.

(II)

I will now focus particularly on security and the question of how the traditional understanding depends on territoriality.

The Paradox of Globalisation: Countering Terrorism in a Deterritorialised Global Sphere

Written by Hartmut Behr

From here, we can conclude some new imperatives for global security politics countering deterritorialised threats (below Part III).

The traditional understanding of (national or state) security is based on five assumptions of a territorial fixation and restriction of war, warfare and defence. These are: that (1) the threat arises from a territorially definable actor (i.e. a state); that (2) the threat's range is territorially limited; that (3) the threat is directed at a territorially determinable area with the aim of conquering and occupying it (i.e. a state); that because of these three assumptions (4) territory and the states' claim of territory are the final *causae belli*; that is why finally (5) security politics can be distinguished, according to an 'inside-outside'-logic, into territorially specified *external* and *internal* affairs and can be called *national* security. This territorial framework of national security is exemplified by two strategies, one political, the other military, which the US developed during the Cold War: 'deterrence' and, even more perspicuously, containment.

When we compare these five territorial assumptions with characteristics of transnational security threats we learn that the traditional concept of security neither applies to these new threats nor can it provide effective strategies to cope with them. This failure is due to the deterritorialised character of those new threats. In contrast to the traditional conceptualization of security, transnational security is (perceived as) much more complex, heterogeneous, unpredictable, and unaccountable. The appearance of threats is perceived as unknown and non-anticipatable because the actors exerting the threats cannot be territorially identified anymore; power cannot be measured, and states' power interacting with transnational power, or *vice versa*, manifest as asymmetric power relations. The constructed security protection by territorial borders, which was never really total, is now even more limited and less effective: due to these new settings, transnational threats can be termed 'virtual'. This means that transnational threats are real, effective, and powerful, while, at the same time, they are not permanently present and visible. They appear and disappear, give the illusion of vanishing, when suddenly they reappear at different places – a situation which is ideal-typically epitomized by transnational terrorism. Empirical observations of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 illustrate the conceptual remarks above. However, the organizations applying terrorist violence had become increasingly transnational before these attacks; 9/11 was 'just' the most dramatic and visible epitome of a new pattern of globally coordinated terrorist activities. In a perversely perfect way they embodied and materialized all definitions of (postmodern) terrorist violence, such as threat communication, psychological warfare, targeting non-combatants, acting from an anonymous background, asymmetric power relations, and non-territorial conflict.

These characteristics demonstrate that traditional security assumptions fail when it comes to understanding and analyzing transnational conflicts and security threats. They also fail for the development of appropriate *counter*-strategies to prevent and defend against those threats and actors. But what are appropriate counter-strategies to fight transnational challenges and foremost terrorism?

(III)

The first conclusion to be drawn is that security strategies to counter deterritorialised threats have to overcome the territoriality of traditional security concepts. Deterritorialised security strategies have to be developed. Therefore, states have to adapt to the deterritorialised *logic* of transnational threats (and transnational politics in general). The most effective (and at the same time challenging) way to do so, is for states to build likewise transnational networks which will not be limited to territorialities of single states, but have a global dimension. Building transnational networks means foremost cooperating with non-state actors. Those networks can then be called counter-networks against transnational threats (or threat perceptions respectively). They transcend national territories and have global reach. Leaning towards Timothy Luke, these counter-networks can also be called "non-territorial communities of governance". This imperative appears to provide states with the power to control and monitor transnational security issues by developing them into powerful players in global politics *beyond* territoriality and enlarging their spheres of power into arenas which are not arrayed by, and based upon, state sovereignty.

Nonterritorial communities of governance appear as a form of public private partnership which are initiated and organised by states.. In order to effectively counter globally organized networks of transnational terrorism they have to encompass private actors from all areas which terrorist groups actually and potentially operate with. The aim of

The Paradox of Globalisation: Countering Terrorism in a Deterritorialised Global Sphere

Written by Hartmut Behr

this “brokering” is twofold: first to hamper terrorists by countering their activities so that they have limited, and at best no, possibilities to carry them out. Terrorist groups themselves depend upon cooperation and actors who are willing to cooperate with them. The second aim is, to integrate potential terrorist partners in those counter networks so that terrorist activists will not be able to recruit. This is a tremendous task and challenge for state-private counter-networks. The rationale of counter-networking does not, therefore, correspond to a linear logic, but consists in covering and monitoring a globally widespread ‘field’ of social and political activities to prevent those which harm state and human security and which violate the norms of international law. Ideal-typically, such prevention is pre-emption by disabling those actors from acting and unfolding their activities, i.e. absorbing their resources and potentials to act in the first place, by, according to the logic of counter-networking, isolating them from political and social interaction in all the fields of their activities. In one word, this form of counter-networking can be conceived as a *nonterritorial form of containment* (“containment” appeared as a likewise tremendous task and strategy when it was formulated by George F. Kennan in the late 1940’s, but proved to be feasible and successful).

To summarise, states, which are, on the one side, harmed in their security and security interests by deterritorialised threats (especially transnational terrorism), have, on the other side, to develop and further deterritorial politics by building transnational networks themselves in order to gain power in global politics. This constitutes the *paradox of globalization*: states have to promote a form of politics (namely deterritorial politics) which is not only contradictory to their own constitutive principles (namely territorial politics), but which further to this threatens a major aspect of their existence, namely security. However, this is solvable at a higher level: when states successfully gain power in global politics monitoring global politics in general, and countering transnational terrorism in particular, then the paradox can be overcome.

Conclusion

I want to conclude by flagging up an utmost important condition under which state-private cooperation has to operate. Since these kinds of networks aim to act in a deterritorialised, global sphere, there is neither national nor international law to regulate, to discipline and eventually to correct their actions. This problem arises since law itself is territorially bound and depends upon a clearly demarcated space (as can be derived from the mutually constitutive relation between sovereignty and territoriality). Therefore, in the absence of national and international law, those counter-networks have to strictly follow democratic values and principles of international law as indispensably self-binding regulations. Having this in mind, I conclude with four imperatives for state organised counter-networks against deterritorialised global security threats:

1. They have to be organised globally: in order to penetrate global terrorist networks and to counter the threat that their activities may arise at any time and any place, counter-networks should likewise have a global reach.
2. They have to encompass all fields of terrorist activities as well as the individuals and groups acting within those fields, including civil societies. The final aim is to erect a worldwide, up-to-the-minute and at-every-corner-presence for counter-networks and the agents affiliated with them. As impossible as this idea of ubiquity and omnipresence of anti-terrorism networks might practically appear, the affiliation of all individuals and civil society groups which could potentially affiliate with terrorist groups is according to the idea of competition for personnel (‘strategic network brokers’) the theoretical *rationale* (the logic) behind the strategy of counter-networking.
3. Counter-networks demarcate the realm of competition for personnel affiliated with its political goals and strategies: They constitute a new political field of state politics which, in distinction to traditional political spaces, is united and integrated by *functional* relationships instead of territorial borders.
4. Finally, the comprehensiveness and outreach of these counter-networks into civil societies require a strong normative framework based on the rule of law, democratic values and human rights: those counter-networks and state-private cooperation have to represent a normative framework of shared political goals and strategies based upon the common values of international law, and it offers a platform for likeminded actors to join. Thus, incentives are required for private actors to affiliate, or at least to sympathise with them. These incentives can be, for instance, all measures promoting the emergence of transnational societies (like cultural programmes, students’ and school

The Paradox of Globalisation: Countering Terrorism in a Deterritorialised Global Sphere

Written by Hartmut Behr

exchange programmes), economic cooperating, and trade facilitations.

Hartmut Behr is Professor of International Politics at Newcastle University. This comment is a shorter version of his article, "Deterritorialisation and Transformation of Statehood: The Paradox of Globalization", in: *Geopolitics* 3(2), 2008, pp. 359-382. See also the entry "Globalization", in: *Encyclopaedia of Geography*, ed. by Barney Warf (Sage Publication), forthcoming 2009.

About the author:

Hartmut Behr is Professor of International Politics at Newcastle University (UK). His areas of specialization are International Relations, Political Theory, Migration, and Critical European Studies. He is the author of *Zuwanderungspolitik im Nationalstaat* (1996), *Entterritoriale Politik* (2004), *A History of International Theory – Ontologies of the International* (2010), and *Politics of Difference – Epistemologies of Peace* (2014). He is the co-editor of the book series "Critical European Studies", *Routledge* and "Global Political Thinkers", *Palgrave*. He has published widely in journals such as the *European Journal of International Relations*, *Review of International Studies*, *Geopolitics*, *International Political Theory*, and *Zeitschrift fuer International Beziehungen*.