WARBURG LIBRARY COMMONS | SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

[https://commons.warburg.sas.ac.uk/downloads/8623hx72q]

Miglietti, Sara. *Sovereignty, territory, and population in Jean Bodin's République / Sara Miglietti.*

2018

Article

To cite this version:

Miglietti, S. (2018). Sovereignty, territory, and population in Jean Bodin's République / Sara Miglietti. *French Studies* , *72*(1), 17–34 .

Available at: https://commons.warburg.sas.ac.uk/concern/journal_articles/cz30ps64c

Date submitted: 2019-07-22

Copyright is retained by the author. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the User Deposit Agreement.

SOVEREIGNTY, TERRITORY, AND POPULATION IN JEAN BODIN'S *RÉPUBLIQUE*

Abstract

This article offers a reinterpretation of Jean Bodin's *Six livres de la République* (1576), a work that deeply transformed European political discourse at the time of the French Wars of Religion and that had important repercussions on the later 'reason of state' tradition. Highlighting the ties between Bodin's definition of sovereignty in Book 1 and his discussion of demographic growth and territorial expansion in Books 4, 5, and 6, the article shows that Bodin's critical contribution to early modern political thought, far from being limited to his reframing of the juristic concept of *souveraineté* or *maiestas*, extends to his novel understanding of the territory as a non-juridical 'political technology'. Through an examination of Bodin's work and its later reception, the article argues that Bodin's insights about territorial and demographic matters played a fundamental role in the early modern process of 'territorialising politics', by redefining the very terms in which the notion of 'territory' would be understood and discussed in the following decades.

Introduction

> La souveraineté est la puissance absoluë et perpetuelle d'une Republique […] il n'y a ny iurisconsulte, ny philosophe politique, qui l'ayt definie: iaçoit que c'est le point principal, et le plus necessaire d'estre entendu au traité de la Republique.[1]

[1] Jean Bodin, *Les six livres de la République/De republica libri sex. Livre I/Liber I*, ed. Mario Turchetti with Nicolas de Araujo (Paris: Garnier, 2013), 1.8.1, p. 444. All quotations from Book 1 of the *République/De republica* are taken from this edition, henceforth quoted as *Six livres*. All quotations from the remaining five books are taken from either the French edition of 1579 (Paris: Dupuys), henceforth quoted as *République*; or the Latin *editio princeps* of 1586 (Paris: Dupuys), henceforth quoted as *De republica*. Two abridged English translations of the *République* exist, one by M.J. Tooley (*Six Books of the Commonwealth*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1955) and another by J. Franklin (*On Sovereignty*, Cambridge: Cambridge

Rarely has a single sentence marked an author's destiny more strongly. It is essentially on account of these words, written in the dark days of the sixteenth-century wars of religion, that the French jurist Jean Bodin (1529/30–1596) earned his enduring place in canonical histories of political thought, where he consistently figures as one of the fathers of a 'modern' concept of sovereignty.[2] There is no denying that this concept occupies an important role in Bodin's thought. Sovereignty (*souveraineté*, *maiestas*) is the pivotal notion around which Bodin structures his political masterpiece, *Les Six livres de la République* (1576), self-translated into Latin in 1586 (*De Republica libri sex*); and in the passage quoted above, he clearly shows pride in stressing that no one before him had given this concept the

---

University Press, 1992), while in 1962 Kenneth D. McRae oversaw the reprint of the 1606 integral translation by Richard Knolles, based on a conflation of the French and Latin texts (*The Six Bookes of a Commonweale* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962]). To this date, the only complete modern edition of the *République* is Margherita Isnardi Parente's excellent Italian translation, based on careful comparison between various French and Latin editions (*I sei libri dello Stato*, 3 vols, Torino: UTET, 1964-1996; Vols 2 and 3 prepared in collaboration with Diego Quaglioni).

[2] See, for instance, J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1928); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); J. S. McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought* (London: Routledge, 2005); J.H. Burns with Mark Goldie (eds), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

attention it deserved. Bodin himself seems to tell us that his theory of sovereignty represents his most important breakthrough and the essential core of his legacy.

What is certain is that modern critics have often given disproportionate importance to the first book of the *République*, which contains the famous chapter 'De la souveraineté' (Chapter 9 in the 1576 *editio princeps*, Chapter 8 in all subsequent editions), while the remaining five books, which make up almost 80% of the entire work, have attracted considerably less attention.[3] Books 4, 5, and 6, where Bodin discusses crucial issues relating to territory, demographics, and territorial expansion, have been especially overlooked. Some scholars have gone so far as to actively deny the existence of a discourse about territory in Bodin's *République*: in the words of one renowned historian, this masterpiece of early modern political thought would indeed be 'notable for its utter lack of attention, and even mention, of territory'.[4]

---

[3] This critical imbalance is particularly evident in certain areas of scholarship, especially general and/or thematic histories of political thought, and the distorted image of Bodin's ideas and intentions that it fosters has often been noted and denounced by Bodinian scholars. The point was raised most recently by Diego Quaglioni in an unpublished communication on 'Cesare Vasoli e il rinnovamento degli studi su Bodin e il pensiero politico del Rinascimento', presented at the conference 'Cesare Vasoli tra Medioevo e Rinascimento' (Florence, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 6 June 2014).

[4] Thus Lauren Benton in her otherwise remarkable *A Search for Sovereignty. Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 287. Benton's view is echoed by Annabel Brett in *Changes of State: Nature and the Limits of the City in Early Modern Natural Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 170.

This article represents a first step towards rectifying this view. Moving from the assumption (increasingly well recognised among Bodinian scholars) that the *République* is and must be read as an organic whole,[5] the article proposes a reexamination of the work that weaves together Bodin's definition of sovereignty in Book 1 with his discussion of territory and population in Books 4, 5, and 6. The article is divided into three sections: while the first section shows that an isolated reading of Book 1 might give the false impression that Bodin does not pay particular attention to the physical territory as an object of statecraft, section 2 demonstrates that an holistic reading of the *République* allows us to appreciate the many important contributions that Bodin gave to emerging ideas of territory and population in early modern Europe. The conclusions bring further into focus the question of Bodin's legacy, with particular respect to the 'territorialisation' of early modern political discourse—that is to say, the identification of territory as a privileged locus of governmental action.[6] While it is generally assumed that these developments only took place much later and that Bodin's thought was largely marginal — if not opposed — to them,[7] this article argues that the

---

[5] For a similar perspective, see Marie-Dominique Couzinet, 'On Bodin's Method', in *The Reception of Bodin*, ed. by Howell Lloyd (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 39-66; Mark Greengrass, 'The Experiential World of Jean Bodin', in *The Reception of Bodin*, pp. 67-96.

[6] Stuart Elden, 'Land, Terrain, Territory', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34/6 (2010), 799–817 (801).

[7] See, for instance, Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. by Graham Burchell, ed. by Michel Senellart (New York: Picador, 2007), p. 1 and 20-23 (where Foucault pinpoints the eighteenth century as the time in which the physical territory, or *milieu*, was turned into a field of governmental intervention); Romain Descendre, 'Raison d'État, puissance et économie. Le mercantilisme

Frenchman actually played a crucial role in the process of 'territorialising politics', as he redefined the very terms in which 'territory' was to be viewed and discussed in the following decades.[8]

The stakes of this reexamination are high. It is not just a matter of pointing out a gap in Bodinian scholarship or of reassessing a particular aspect of the Frenchman's reception in later periods. While these are certainly important aims of this article, its main goal is to clarify how Bodin negotiates the relationship between the 'juridical' and the 'political' in his understanding of sovereign power — in other words, to explain how Bodinian sovereignty actually *works*. Bodin's discussion of territory and population, as we shall see, plays a key role in this respect, as it allows us to appreciate how Bodin's abstract definition of sovereignty in 1.9 (1.8 in later editions) relates to his views on concrete governmental matters in other parts of the work. This article should then be seen as a first step towards a reconsideration of a much larger and more essential problem: that of the nature and functioning of Bodin's sovereignty — if not, perhaps, of sovereignty in general.

This is a vexing question in Bodinian scholarship, and one that has coloured understandings of Bodin's contribution to Western political ideas. A long-dominant (and still influential) interpretive tradition has stressed the juridical nature of Bodinian sovereignty to the point of denying that other, non-juridical kinds of discourses take place in the

---

de Giovanni Botero', *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 39 (2003), 311–21 (315); Romain Descendre, *L'État du Monde. Giovanni Botero entre raison d'État et géopolitique* (Geneva: Droz, 2009), pp. 213–44. For a different perspective, see Stuart Elden, 'How Should We Do the History of Territory?', *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 1/1 (2013), 5-20.

[8] Descendre, *L'État du Monde*, 213. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

République.[9] This view, however, can be challenged on several grounds. While it is not incorrect to say that Bodin's chief goal in the *République* is to rephrase the problem of 'the political' by putting the concepts of sovereignty and law at the centre of his analysis, we should not hastily conclude that the *République* as a whole does nothing more than this. As Thomas Berns has recently argued, Bodin is at once the 'first major thinker of sovereignty' as an essentially juridical form of exercising state power, and a theorist of other kinds of political strategies, which take place in the margins of the law, filling as it were its blind spots, and complementing the juridical approach of sovereignty through the non-juridical approach of 'governmentality'.[10] Berns shows that Bodin's meditation on the role of the intermediary bodies ('corps et collèges'), on the 'harmonic' distribution of offices and prizes, on *census* and censorship, as well as his insightful remarks on military strategy, trade, currency, and taxation, all testify to the presence of a substantial non-juridical strand of political reflection in the *République*. The same, this article argues, can be said of Bodin's discussion of demographic growth and territorial expansion, which unfolds throughout the *République* but becomes especially prominent in Books 4, 5, and 6, and which represents another major locus of Bodin's reflection on the 'governmental' side of statecraft.

---

[9] See, for instance, Descendre, 'Raison d'État, puissance et économie', which partly builds on previous work by Michel Senellart: *Machiavélisme et raison d'État* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989) and 'La Raison d'État antimachiavélienne. Essai de problématisation', in *La Raison d'État: politique et rationalité*, ed. by Christian Lazzeri and Dominique Reynié (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), pp. 15–42. Descendre himself, however, takes a different and more convincing stance in *L'État du Monde*, p. 178.

[10] Thomas Berns, *Souveraineté, droit et gouvernementalité. Lectures du politique moderne à partir de Bodin* (Clamécy: Éditions Léo Scheer, 2005).

Two concepts of city: the physical and the juridical in the République

The obvious place to start looking for Bodin's views on sovereignty, territory, and population is Book 1 of the *République*, where the Frenchman lays out the groundwork for what follows. This includes his famous definitions of state, sovereign power, family, citizen, and so forth; it also includes a clear distinction between two concepts of city — a physical concept, expressed by the word *ville* in the French edition and by the Latin term *urbs* in Bodin's self-translation of 1586; and a juridical concept, corresponding to the word *cité* in French and to *civitas* in Latin.[11] 'La ville ne fait pas la cité', says Bodin: spatial unity — the fact of living together in one place, which characterises the *ville* — is not relevant for defining the *cité*, which remains such even when its members are 'fort eslongnés les uns des autres et en plusieurs païs'. What instead constitutes the *cité* is a juridical fact: the fact that its members, no matter where they live, are all equally subject 'au commandement des seigneurs souverains et à ses edicts et ordonnances'. Conversely, where there is no such common subjection to a single sovereign, 'ce n'est point cité… ains c'est une pure anarchie', even if the physical city is 'bien bastie et murée, et qui plus est remplie de peuple'.[12]

---

[11] Such a distinction is not entirely original. It can be found, for instance, in Cicero's *Pro Sestio* (XLII.91) and in Leonardo Bruni's letters: *Epistularum Libri VIII* (Hamburg: Felginer, 1724), p. 85 (quot. in Descendre, *L'État du Monde*, p. 175). See also Brett, *Changes of State*, pp. 1–3. Bodin is not always scrupulous in his use of these terms: there is at least one case where he translates the French *villes* with the Latin *civitates* (*République*, 2.1, ed. 1579, p. 226; *De republica*, 2.1, ed. 1586, p. 180).

[12] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.6.8, p. 332.

The legal tradition in which Bodin was steeped made no clear distinction between different ways of referring to the city: the Italian jurist Bartolus of Sassoferrato (1314-1357), for instance, used *civitas* and *castrum* ('fortified place') as interchangeable terms.[13] Bodin, on the other hand, carefully distinguishes between a spatial and a juridical level of analysis. 'Le mot de cité,' he writes, 'est un mot de droit, qui ne signifie point un lieu ni une place, comme le mot de ville, que les Latins appellent *urbem, ab urbo, id est aratro*'.[14] In order to show that it is not merely a matter of words ('la difference ne gist pas en paroles simplement'), Bodin recalls that after defeating Carthage the Romans had promised the vanquished not to touch their *cité*: 'leur cité leur demeureroit, avec tous les droits, privileges et libertés dont ils avoyent tousjous usé'.[15] Hence, the Carthaginians were shocked and outraged when the Romans asked them to 'vuider et emporter de la ville tout ce qu'ils pourroyent', since the city was to be razed to the ground:

> Les habitants estonnés remonstrent que le senat les avoit asseurés que leur cité ne seroit point rasée. On leur dict que la foy leur seroit gardée de poinct en poinct; mais que la cité n'estoit pas attachée au lieu ni aux murailles de Carthage; ainsi les povres habitans furent contrains de sortir et abandonner la ville au feu qui y fut mis par les

[13] See Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013), p. 225.

[14] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.6.7, p. 332. See Diego Quaglioni, '*Civitas*: appunti per una riflessione sull'idea di città nel pensiero politico dei giuristi medievali', in *Le ideologie della città europea dall'Umanesimo al Romanticismo*, ed. by Vittorio Conti (Firenze: Olschki, 1993), pp. 59–76.

[15] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.6.9, p. 336.

> Romains, qui n'en eussent pas eu si bon marché, si plustost les ambassadeurs eussent entendu la difference de ville et cité.[16]

As this sad anecdote shows, *ville* and *cité* are quite different things. Indeed, as Bodin goes on to note, 'la ville peut estre sans cité et la cité sans ville'. Now, since Bodin has defined sovereignty as primarily concerned with the juridical entity of the *cité*, rather than with the spatial entity of the *ville*, it would only seem natural that his attention in the *République* should focus on the 'cité sans ville' (such as Carthage was after its destruction by the Romans) as opposed to the 'ville sans cité'. This emphasis on a juridical concept of the city (*cité*), as opposed to one of the city as a physical space (*ville*), seems to confirm the idea, recently defended by some scholars, that Bodin is uninterested in the physical territory as an object of statecraft.[17]

At first sight, several elements appear to corroborate this view. The territory is not merely absent in this first book of the *République*; it is programmatically excluded from the preliminary discussion on state and sovereignty. Indeed, after confirming that 'ce n'est pas la ville ny les personnes qui font la cité, mais l'union d'un peuple sous une seigneurie souveraine',[18] Bodin points out that size (whether it be measured according to territorial extension or number of inhabitants) is completely irrelevant for qualifying a state as such:

> Comme le ciron ou la formi sont aussi bien nombrés entre les animaux comme les elephans, aussi le droit gouvernement de trois familles avec puissance souveraine fait

[16] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.6.9, p. 336.

[17] Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, p. 287; Brett, *Changes of State*, p. 170.

[18] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.2.3, p. 186.

> aussi bien une Republique comme d'une grande seigneurie […] un petit roy est autant souverain que le plus grand monarque de la terre […]. Et au contraire la plus grande cité ou monarchie et la mieux peuplée qui soit sur la terre n'est pas plus Republique ny cité que la plus petite.[19]

Hence, if one were to judge by Book 1 only, it would seem that Bodin has indeed no interest in the actual territory, as he actively discards its spatial and physical qualities in favour of its abstract, juridical dimension. One could certainly object that sovereignty, as we learn from the famous definition of 'state' in the opening chapter of the work, is exercised on both people and spaces: indeed, when Bodin says that 'Republique est un droit gouvernement de plusieurs mesnages, *et de ce qui leur est commun*, avec puissance souveraine',[20] he seems to be referring to those 'choses communes ou publiques' that are listed in the following chapter, and many of which are indeed physical spaces: 'le pourpris de la cité', 'les rues', 'les murailles', 'les places', 'les temples', 'les marchés', and so forth.[21] Such 'choses communes' are of the essence when it comes to defining the state, since 'outre la souveraineté, il faut qu'il y ait quelque chose de commun, et de public… car ce n'est pas Republique s'il n'y a rien de public'.[22] Nevertheless, the way in which Bodin chooses to describe these 'choses communes ou publiques' is, once again, strictly juridical. Even when the Frenchman is dealing with physical spaces, what matters to him is not the number, features or location of

[19] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.2.3–4, p. 186.

[20] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.1.1, p. 156. Emphasis added.

[21] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.2.5, p. 188. The Latin edition adds 'porticus', 'theatra', 'publica aedificia' and 'pascua communia' (Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.2.5, p. 189).

[22] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.2.5, pp. 188–190.

these spaces within the *ville*, but the fact that they are placed under a common authority and belong to the *cité* as a whole. In this respect, it is particularly meaningful that he would prefer the somewhat paradoxical phrasing 'pourpris de la *cité'* — possibly a tentative translation of Sextus Pomponius' definition of 'territory' in the Digest ('territorium est universitas agrorum intra fines cuiusque civitatis'[23]) — to a more consequent 'pourpris de la *ville'*.

The above conclusion — namely that Bodin takes no interest in territory as a physical space — is where an isolated reading of Book 1 of the *République* inevitably seems to lead us. Yet as soon as one steps beyond Book 1 to explore the five books that follow, one witnesses the progressive unfolding of a rich and nuanced discourse about territory that reveals the complexity of Bodin's conception of statecraft, as well as his own craftiness as a writer. Bodin's recurring strategy in the *République* is to take the very slender definitions provided in Book 1 and augment them in the following books, usually by reintegrating precisely the extra-juridical elements that he had previously discarded. In so doing, Bodin seems to point to the existence of a gap between the definition of sovereignty and its actual functioning. While defining sovereignty requires the expulsion of all extraneous elements in order for its juridical core to shine more brightly,[24] a much more nuanced and multifaceted approach is needed when it comes to discussing how a state should be run in practice, since actual governance involves activity on several levels, not all of which juridical. What Bodin

[23] 'The *territorium* is the sum of the lands within the boundaries of a *civitas*', D50.16.239.8 (translated in Elden, *The Birth of Territory*, p. 222).

[24] See Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.1.1, p. 156, and 1.6.11, p. 340; compare Jürgen Dennert, 'Bemerkungen zum politischen Denken Jean Bodins', in *Jean Bodin. Actes du Congrès international de Munich*, ed. by Horst Denzer (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1973), pp. 213–32.

leaves out on the preliminary level of definition (Book 1) is thus retrieved and potentiated once he sets out to analyse practice in more detail (Books 2 through 6).[25]

Several instances of this strategy come to mind. Bodin's revision of the standard definitions of 'citoyen',[26] 'République',[27] and 'souveraineté'[28] in Book 1 largely derives from a quest for essentiality ('il faut chercher en toutes choses la fin principale'), which leads him to leave aside elements such as wellbeing, happiness, social status, political participation, and mode of government ('gouvernement' or 'gubernandi ratio'). Indeed, a citizen is a citizen regardless of the role that he occupies in society; a state is a state no matter how rich, happy or large it is; a sovereign's legitimacy does not depend on how he uses his power, but on his titles to rule; and sovereignty, which is single and indivisible, excludes by definition the possibility of being shared. Nevertheless, all of the elements that Bodin leaves aside at this stage feature extensively in his subsequent discussion of governmental matters. Thus Book 2

---

[25] A larger problem should be raised here concerning the relationship between empirical description and norm, the universality of definitions and the relativity of practice, and so forth. Although this issue is still far from having received the attention it deserves, some helpful remarks can be found in Horst Denzer, 'Bodins Staatsformenlehre' and Kenneth D. McRae, 'Bodin and the Development of Empirical Political Science', both in *Jean Bodin. Actes du Congrès international de Munich*, pp. 233–44 and 333–42. Also see Pierre Magnard, 'Vérité et pluralisme chez Jean Bodin', in *Jean Bodin a 400 anni dalla morte. Bilancio storiografico e prospettive di ricerca*, ed. by Artemio Enzo Baldini (= special issue of *Il pensiero politico*, 30/2 (1997), pp. 267–75).

[26] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.6.11, pp. 340–42.

[27] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.1.4, pp. 162–64.

[28] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.8.1, p. 444.

introduces a vital distinction between 'form of state' and 'form of government', which allows Bodin to show not only how power can in fact be shared (on the practical level of government as opposed to the juridical level of sovereignty), but also that the way in which such power is used does matter and should indeed be taken into careful account in assessing the workings of a state.[29] An entire chapter (3.8) is then added from scratch to the Latin edition in order to elucidate the importance of social status ('ordres', or estates) in the life of any organised community. Considerable attention is also paid throughout the work to the citizens' happiness and wellbeing: indeed, on more than one occasion Bodin presents their 'vivre heureusement' as an ultimate touchstone of state success.[30]

The above considerations also hold true for Bodin's reflections on territory. In addition to a substantial portion of Book 5, Chapter 1 (the famous chapter on 'climate theory', itself all too often read in 'splendid isolation' from the rest of the work), there are several other places in the *République* where Bodin discusses issues that broadly relate to the physical territory, its ideal extension, and its relationship to the people who inhabit it, thus reversing the systematic disregard displayed in Book 1. The next section will examine some of these places in order to shed light on the role that territory and population play in Bodin's understanding of statecraft in action.

---

[29] See the distinction between 'monarchie royale', 'monarchie seigneuriale' and 'monarchie tyrannique' in 2.2–4, and the discussion of the three types of justice ('arithmétique', 'géométrique' and 'harmonique') in *République*, 6.6.

[30] See, for instance, *République*, 6.4 (ed. 1579, p. 962), where Bodin argues that monarchy should be preferred to aristocracy and democracy as it better promotes 'la seureté et vie heureuse des sujects' (an idea confirmed a bit further in the same chapter, under the heading 'Les subjects sont bien-heureux sous un grand monarque').

How big is good? Demographic growth and territorial expansion in the République

Reflecting in Book 1 on the conditions that allow states to thrive, Bodin writes:

> La republique doit avoir un territoire suffisant et lieu capable pour les habitans, la fertilité d'un pais assez plantureux et quantité de bestail pour la nourriture et vestemens des subjects: et pour les maintenir en santé, la douceur du ciel, la temperature de l'air, la bonté des eaux: et pour la defense et retraite du peuple, les matieres propres à bastir maisons et places fortes, si le lieu de soy n'est assez couvert et defensable.[31]

Bodin's self-translation of 1586 slightly but significantly altered this passage: the physical features listed in the French original are no longer presented in the Latin version as prerequisites without which no state can exist ('la republique *doit avoir*…'), but simply as contributing factors that promote collective wellbeing ('*Beatior tamen* futura civitas est, quae his aucta virtutibus, fundos habuerit ubertate fertiles, aut quantum satis est ad civium alimenta…').[32] Such a shift seems consistent with Bodin's general effort to distinguish what

[31] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.1.5, p. 168. See Elden, *The Birth of Territory*, p. 264. For its attention to concrete territorial features, this passage may be seen as a notable exception to the rule formulated above.

[32] '*However* that commonwealth will be *happier*, which in addition to these virtues will also have rich and fertile lands — fertile enough, at least, for the nourishment of the citizens …', *Six livres*, 1.1.5, p. 169. Emphasis added.

is essential for the very existence of a state from what is helpful but not strictly necessary (and thus superfluous on the definitory level). It is clear from the Latin edition that Bodin conceives of territorial extension as belonging to the latter category. Consequently, in the Latin edition the emphasis falls on qualitative, rather than quantitative, properties of the territory, such as the fact of being 'rich and fertile', or at least 'fertile enough for the nourishment of the citizens'.[33]

As for the original French passage, it is, upon a closer look, remarkably vague. 'La republique doit avoir un territoire suffisant', says Bodin, but exactly how much is 'enough' remains unclear. Of course, it can be conjectured that the answer will have to vary depending on the size of the population: the place has to be 'capable pour les habitans', which means of an adequate size for accommodating (and providing for) them all. By writing thus, Bodin was situating himself within a longstanding tradition of philosophico-political thought that inferred the ideal size of a state's territory from the desired size of the population, as opposed to calculating the optimal rate of demographic growth that a given territory is able to sustain. Although the end result is the same (namely, an equilibrium between territorial extension and demographic growth), the fact that this goal is pursued in opposite ways is not without importance. Richard Harrow Feen, who has identified insightful ideas on the balance between population and resources in Plato's *Laws*, has also observed that Plato's decision to set the number of households at 5040 was the result not so much of a concern for overpopulation as

[33] Bodin, *Six livres*, 1.1.5, p. 169. Elden makes a similar remark about Francis Bacon (*The Birth of Territory*, p. 288), but fails to note this point in his discussion of Bodin (p. 264).

of a desire to regulate inheritance in order to avoid economic disparity.[34] In Plato's model, the ideal number of households is fixed based on criteria that have nothing to do with the actual capacity of the territory to sustain them: the optimal size of the population is determined *a priori* and remains the same regardless of surrounding physical conditions. Similarly, the order in which Aristotle discusses the ideal size of the population and the optimal size of the territory in Book 7 of his *Politics* points to the priority of the former on the latter: population defines territory, and not the other way round.[35]

This was still the dominant way of thinking about demographic and territorial matters in the sixteenth century.[36] By the time Bodin was writing his *République*, however, the ancient Greek model prescribing relatively small cities and population control was increasingly challenged by a different paradigm, which regarded population growth as inherently good. The exact causes of such a shift from population control to 'populationism'

---

[34] Richard Harrow Feen, 'Keeping the Balance: Ancient Greek Philosophical Concerns with Population and Environment', *Population and Environment: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 17/6 (1996), 447–458: 451.

[35] See Aristotle, *Politics*, 7.4–5 [1325–1326]. Jeff Chuska rightly raises the problem of why 'Aristotle discusses the population size of the best regime before he considers its territory', but his answer is only partially convincing (*Aristotle's Best Regime: A Reading of Aristotle's Politics, VII.1–10* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000], p. 79).

[36] Compare for instance Francesco Patrizi, *De institutione Reipublicae libri IX*, 7.12 (Strasburg: Zetzner, 1594, p. 340). Machiavelli seems to innovate on this model: indeed, his discussion of territorial expansion in the *Discorsi* is at least partly inspired by non-demographic concerns, particularly by a meditation on the strategic necessity of 'expanding' for preserving one's own state (see *Discorsi*, 2.19).

(to be understood here simply as any 'doctrine that favours high population growth')[37] are not entirely clear, nor is it clear when the shift took place, although the common view that Bodin would have been the first to uphold populationist ideas is debatable to say the least.[38] Nevertheless, in Book 5 of the *République* Bodin does distance himself clearly from the ancient opinion (which he also ascribes to Thomas More) that population growth should be restrained by all possible means, including forced migration, abortion, and the prohibition of further urban development.[39] According to Bodin, such measures rest on the wrong assumption that a large population is a negative and dangerous thing, whilst in truth 'il ne faut jamais craindre qu'il y ait trop de sujects, trop de citoyens: veu qu'il n'y a richesse, ni force que d'hommes'.[40]

Since Bodin unequivocally endorses unrestricted population growth, it seems reasonable to assume that he should also be a strong supporter of territorial expansion. Indeed, if the territory has to be 'capable pour les habitans', as Bodin himself concedes, high demographic growth will require an expansionist policy to meet increased demand for space

---

[37] Yves Charbit, *The Classical Foundations of Population Thought: From Plato to Quesnay* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), p. 2.

[38] Charles Emil Stangeland's classic study *Pre-Malthusian Doctrines of Population* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1904) offers several good examples of populationist ideas before Bodin (see especially Chapters 1 and 3). In particular, Machiavelli clearly argues that political greatness cannot be achieved without a large population (*Discorsi*, 2.3).

[39] *République*, 5.2 (ed. 1579, p. 703).

[40] *Ibidem*. According to Bodin, 'la multitude des citoyens (plus ils sont) empesche tousjours les seditions et factions' instead of provoking them (*ibidem*).

and resources. Indeed, the direct proportionality between the size of a country and that of its population is explicitly theorised in a passage from Book 4:

> Or ces changemens [= disruptive constitutional changes] adviennent plustost, et plus souvent quand la Republique est de petite estendue, que s'il y a *beaucoup de pays et de sugets*: car une petite Republique est bien tost divisee en deux ligues: mais une grande Republique est plus malaisee à diviser: d'autant qu'entre les grands seigneurs et les petits, entre les riches et les pauvres, entre les meschans et les vertueux hommes, il s'en trouve grand nombre de mediocres, qui lient les uns avec les autres, par moyens qui tiennent des uns et des autres, et s'accordent avec les extremitez…[41]

This passage makes it clear that the 'petite Republique' is such not only for its small demographic size, but also for its 'petite estendue', thus signaling that territorial extension and population size go hand in hand.

However, things are less simple than at first glance. While Bodin is adamant about the benefits of a large population, his approval of territorial expansion is not as firm: the question is raised at various times in Books 4, 5, and 6, without a clear-cut decision being taken upon it. Bodin's uncertainty might well be due to the inherent complexity of the issue, which cannot be resolved on merely demographic grounds. As Bodin himself is well aware, a fully-fledged discussion of territorial expansion must pay attention to military matters (is it advisable to 'aguerrir les sujets'? What are the benefits and pitfalls of a standing army? Should professional troops be preferred over popular militias?), moral quandaries (is offensive war morally acceptable? Is justice compatible with expansionism?), and broader

[41] *République*, 4.1 (ed. 1579, pp. 534–5). Emphasis added.

political concerns (what impact does territorial expansion have on the expanding country? Does it promote internal unity or exacerbate existing tensions?). Machiavelli's famous remarks on the double-edged nature of expansion — which at the same time paves the way for states to achieve 'greatness' and accelerates the process of internal corruption that ultimately causes them to collapse— were also likely in the back of Bodin's mind as he meditated upon such issues.[42]

The often meandering discussions of territorial expansion in Books 4, 5, and 6 signal an intense effort to come to grips with the complexity of the issue while at the same time avoiding simplistic or single-sided solutions. A firm believer in the principle that 'les Republiques contraires les unes aux autres, ou bien fort differentes, doivent se regler par maximes contraires et differentes',[43] Bodin never seeks to reduce the multiplicity of the real to an artificial uniformity; rather, he strives to craft a theory flexible enough to accommodate a variety of real-life circumstances, which he explores at length in his treatise.

Thus, at 5.5, Bodin lends his voice to the (unnamed) proponents of a small, peaceful, and demilitarised state 'iouïssant d'un repos asseuré, et d'une paix sans ennemis, sans guerre, sans envie'.[44] Violence is certainly justified when it is used for self-defense 'en extreme necessité'; but expansionist wars ought to be avoided at all costs, since they spark off an endless chain of ambition and violence ('la cupidité n'a point de bornes, quoy qu'en

---

[42] See *Discorsi*, 1.6 and 2.19. For a discussion of Machiavelli's thoughts on territorial expansion and their impact on later thinkers, see Sara Miglietti, 'Debating Greatness from Machiavelli to Burton', in *Early Modern Philosophers and the Renaissance Legacy*, ed. by Cecilia Muratori and Gianni Paganini (Dordrecht: Springer, 2016), pp. 239–258.

[43] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579 pp. 747–8). Compare *République*, 2.1; 4.4.

[44] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, pp. 752).

apparence on promet se contenter, quand on aura conquesté un Royaume'). On the other hand, 'un petit prince, une petite Republique' enjoy a permanent state of happiness and 'contentement'. Such a state truly embodies the ideal of a 'Republique bien ordonnee', since its borders are defined by justice rather than force ('la pointe de la lance'). After laying out the reasons of one side, however, Bodin proceeds to present those of the other. According to the advocates of military discipline, it is essential to 'aguerrir son peuple' and 'duire les sugets aux armes, non seulement defensives, ains aussi offensives, pour faire bouclier aux bons, et rembarrer les meschans'. States, indeed, have a moral duty not only to defend themselves but to actively combat evil. Nothing is said about territorial expansion; however, the point made here about the legitimacy of offensive war is explicitly linked to the problem of expansion in a subsequent passage, which discusses the case of a famously small and long-lived state: the republic of Venice. Speaking of the latter, Bodin writes:

> S'il est ainsi, comme plusieurs pensent, que *la guerre ne se doit faire que pour avoir la paix*, et qu'il suffit pour rendre une Republique bien heureuse, de garder le sien, bien murir et fortifier ses places contre l'ennemi, jouïr du fruict de la paix, la Republique de Venize se pourroit dire bien-heureuse, ayant l'assiete de sa nature inexpugnable et ne se souciant pas beaucoup de conquester, ni alonger ses frontieres.[45]

[45] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 756). Emphasis added.

Does Bodin agree with this description of Venice — so rich, it should be noted, in Machiavellian echoes?[46] It is difficult to say. In a Latin addition to 6.4 that considers two other aristocratic city-states, Sparta and Geneva, Bodin does seem to endorse their strategy of concentrating on 'domestic discipline' and refusing to expand. He notes that when the Spartans drifted away from this principle and began to 'covet foreign kingdoms', they ended up losing their own. The Genevans, on the other hand, 'do not desire that which is of others; they let the military art be neglected, and reckon themselves well-advised if they can protect their state (which is almost entirely contained within the city walls) and take good care of themselves'.[47]

Does this mean that small states are generally longer lived than large ones? Not necessarily. Bodin might find it 'unsurprising' that 'l'Aristocratie des Venitiens, Rhagusiens et Luquois, a duré quelques siecles, veu qu'ils ne s'adonnent aucunement aux armes, et n'ont rien plus en recommandation que la traffique et l'interest';[48] however, the smallness of Venice was described in the *Methodus* as a hindering rather than a helping factor. Contrasting

---

[46] On the longevity of Venice, specifically discussed in the light of territorial and demographic matters, see *Discorsi*, 1.6. Machiavelli also frequently combines the case of Venice with that of Sparta and the Swiss city-states, in the same way as does Bodin.

[47] 'Eo tamen aristocratiae statu Lacedaemonii annos circiter quingentos summa cum militaris ac domesticae disciplinae laude floruerunt. Sed cum alienis imperiis inhiare coepissent, suum amiserunt. At Genevates non modo aliena non expetunt; quippe qui artem imperatoriam desertam esse patiuntur: ac praeclare secum agi putant, si imperium, quod pene iisdem finibus quibus urbis moenia, circumscribitur, tueri, ac sibi cavere possint' (*De republica*, 4.1, ed. 1586, pp. 708–9)

[48] *République*, 6.4 (ed. 1579, p. 955).

the tiny lagoon republic with the 'kingdom of the French, unlimited by narrow swamps and extending far and wide', Bodin concluded that the longevity of Venice was to some extent inexplicable and 'contrary to nature', while the fact that France 'had flourished through incredibly glorious deeds for twelve hundred years' was 'in line with nature'.[49] Also, as seen above, Bodin regarded small states as more vulnerable to civil strife, whereas he thought that a large population could prolong the lifespan of a state by acting as a stabilising force. He also reckoned that small states were more at risk from external threats, since invading armies could subdue them more easily on account of their modest size:

> car la proximité du lieu donne appetit à l'ambition de s'emparer de l'estat d'autruy, auparavant qu'on y puisse remedier. Dequoy il ne se faut pas esmerveiller, car ceux de qui la mer, les montagnes, les deserts inhabitables, ne peuvent arrester le cours d'ambition et avarice, comment se contenteroient-ils du leur, sans entreprendre sur leurs voisins, quand les frontieres s'attouchent, et que l'occasion se presente? Et cela

[49] *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, trans. by Beatrice Reynolds (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 273 ('Ita nostrorum hominum plerique Rempublicam Venetorum tandiu, id est, annos circiter DCCC stetisse mirantur, quia id fit repugnante natura… regnum vero Gallorum non angustis paludibus contentum, sed longe late patens, cum incredibili rerum gestarum gloria MCC annos floruisse non mirantur; quia nihil naturae congruens mirum debet videri': *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, 6.270, ed. by Sara Miglietti [Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2013], p. 576). On Bodin's shifting views on Venice, see Cesare Vasoli, 'Venezia, Bodin e il *Colloquium heptaplomeres*', in *Mito e antimito di Venezia nel bacino adriatico (secoli XV–XIX)*, ed. by Sante Graciotti (Roma: Il Calamo, 1997), pp. 117–136.

> est d'autant plus à craindre, quand la Republique est petite, comme celle de Rhaguse, de Geneve, de Lucques, qui n'ont qu'une ville, et le territoire fort estroict: celuy qui aura gaigné la ville, gaignera l'estat: ce qui n'advient pas és grandes et puissantes Republiques qui ont plusieurs provinces et gouvernemens: car l'un estant pris, est secouru des autres, comme plusieurs membres d'un puissant corps qui secourent les uns les autres au besoin.[50]

Nevertheless, in this very passage where he criticises the defensive policies of small republics such as Venice in the light of a quasi-Machiavellian imperative to 'expand or die',[51] Bodin's description of the neighbours' insatiable 'ambition' and 'greed' seems to reveal some degree of moral disapproval of expansionist policies. So whose side is Bodin really on?

A clear-cut answer to this question cannot be found, for the question itself is, in a sense, *mal posée*. Bodin's exclusion of territorial extension from his definition of the state in Book 1 is a telling signal that territorial size has no intrinsic value in his eyes: as he points out again in Book 4, 'il ne faut pas mesurer la vertu au pied des richesses, ni la perfection d'une Republique à l'estendue de pais'; and he offers the example of the Romans, who 'ne furent plus puissans, ni plus riches, ni plus grands que sous l'Empire de Trajan… et neantmoins l'ambition, l'avarice, les voluptez et delices avoyent tellement vaincu les Romains, qu'ils n'avoyent rien que l'ombre de l'ancienne vertu'.[52] Territorial extension counts little both on the level of definition and on that of moral judgment: even the smallest state is still a state,

---

[50] *République*, 4.1 (ed. 1579, p. 536).

[51] The necessity of expanding ('ampliare') for maintaining ('mantenere') is theorised by Machiavelli in *Discorsi*, 2.19.

[52] *République*, 4.1 (ed. 1579, pp. 508–9).

and it can very well be a 'virtuous' one. The decision on the 'optimal' size of a state must therefore be taken on different grounds. For Bodin, the matter becomes one of sheer, non-evaluative realism. The question that needs to be posed is not 'What *is* best?' but rather 'What *works* best?'; and the answer will vary from case to case, since 'what works best', as we shall see, ultimately depends on the constitutional form of the state in question.

Applying his methodological relativism to the problem of territorial expansion, Bodin argues that expansionism is indispensable for popular states, perfectly suitable for monarchies, but unimportant and to some extent counterproductive for aristocracies: as he neatly summarises at the very end of Chapter 4, Book 6 ('De la comparaison des trois Republiques legitimes'):

> tout ainsi donc que les subjects sont bien-heureux sous un grand et puissant monarque, s'il a tant soit peu la justice devant les yeux: aussi un petit estat est bien seant à une seigneurie aristocratique, et maintient plus heureusement les subjects, que ne feroit un povre tyran.[53]

Once again, military, moral and political considerations come together in Bodin's meditation on this complex matter. History shows that, without the constant pressure of external wars, popular states quickly fall prey to civil strife: expansionism thus acts a sort of relief valve that allows to avoid 'les inconveniens… ausquels l'estat populaire de sa nature est suget' by channeling the excess energies towards the outside.[54] Following Machiavelli,

---

[53] *République*, 6.4 (ed. 1579, p. 969). This passage is thoroughly revised in the Latin edition (*De republica*, ed. 1586, p. 716).

[54] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 760).

Bodin concludes that popular states should not only not fear to 'aguerrir les sugets', they should in fact do so systematically, since arming the people is their best chance of survival.[55]

Kings, however, should be more careful. While a large kingdom brings glory and wealth,[56] monarchs should avoid arming all civilians without distinction: it is safer for them to opt for a professional army of native citizens, to be kept at the periphery of the country (as did Augustus) or outside its borders (as do the Swiss).[57] Bodin illustrates this point by arguing that all the best-organised states train part of their own people to be 'gens de guerre', submitting them to a strict discipline from their earliest youth and rewarding them with land and privileges.[58] Should up to one third of a state's budget be employed to fund the 'gendarmerie', Bodin feels that this would be money well spent.[59] While insisting that a 'prince genereux' will not engage in offensive wars out of sheer thirst for power,[60] Bodin acknowledges that territorial expansion is at times a fundamental need of the state — and

---

[55] See *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 770). This is in line with what Machiavelli writes in *Discorsi*, 2.30. However, Machiavelli's conclusions are meant to apply to both monarchies and democracies, whereas Bodin draws a sharp distinction between the two.

[56] This was a recurrent commonplace in humanist literature on the state: see for instance Leonardo Bruni's *Historiae Florentini Populi* (6.4) and the comments offered thereupon by James Hankins ('A Mirror for Statesmen: Leonardo Bruni's *History of the Florentine People*', online publication, Harvard University, http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:2958221, last accessed 2 July 2017).

[57] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 760).

[58] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, pp. 770–772 and 777).

[59] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 777).

[60] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 766).

fundamental needs of the state are, in his perspective, good enough reasons to do things that would not be justifiable otherwise.[61] Besides, monarchies led by a capable ruler are better placed to expand than popular states, since the strong leadership ensured by a single commander-in-chief is a key factor of military success.[62]

As for aristocracies, they are the least disposed towards expansion. The presence of a small number of rulers makes it unwise for aristocracies to have a large population, since the people could easily outnumber and overthrow those in power, especially when the latter are themselves in competition with each other (as Bodin feels is so often the case).[63] However, a large population is essential for expanding,[64] unless one decides to have recourse to allies or foreign mercenary troops.[65] But neither of these scenarios is ideal, since the state — as Machiavelli had already argued — should aim at being self-sufficient from a military standpoint.[66] Aristocracies are thus uncomfortably wedged between the necessity of expanding to survive (highlighted at 4.1) and their structural inability to do so safely.

The demographic dilemma thus seems resolved. A balance between territorial extension and size of the population is achieved in all cases: while kingdoms and

---

[61] 'Necessité est un ennemy invincible' (*République*, 5.5, ed. 1579 p. 770); 'Necessité […] n'a point de loy' (*République*, 4.3, ed. 1579, p. 642).

[62] See *République*, 6.4 (ed. 1579, p. 961).

[63] See for instance *République*, 6.4 (ed. 1579, p. 959 and 962–3).

[64] See *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 768).

[65] Bodin considers the possibility of 'aguerrir les seigneurs seulement', but concludes that 's'il n'y a que les seigneurs aguerris, ils seront bien tost defaits, et causeront un changement necessaire de leur estat' (*République*, 5.5, p. 763).

[66] See *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 763 and 774–775). Compare Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, 2.20.

democracies can, and in fact should, engage in expansionist wars to release the pressure of demographic growth, aristocracies offer a more static picture, since their small population makes it at the same time impossible and unnecessary (at least from a demographic standpoint) to expand. Even in the case of monarchies and democracies, however, territorial expansion at the expense of the neighbouring countries might not always be a viable course of action. In all such cases, Bodin recommends an alternative way, once again drawn from past historical experience, of meeting the state's need for increased space and resources. When confronted with the pressure of an exceptional and unsustainable demographic growth, both the Greeks and the Romans had had recourse to colonisation: by sending out colonies, they not only 'chassoyent de leur païs les povres, les mutins, les faineans'; they also allowed those 'dead branches' to take root and thrive in a more fertile soil.[67] In addition to this, the settlers guaranteed a stronger presence in the newly conquered territories than military garrisons could ever have ensured.[68]

Colonialism had yet another advantage in Bodin's eyes: it enabled a nation to enjoy all the benefits of expansion while bringing the costs of war as far away as possible from the homeland. In this respect, too, the ancient Romans offered a particularly virtuous example, since their large numbers and impeccable military discipline allowed them to 'aller au païs des ennemis faire la guerre, ayans tousjours en Italie des magazins d'hommes d'armes, s'ils perdoyent la bataille: et s'ils avoyent la victoire, ils gaignoyent le païs, sur lequel, et au despens duquel ils faisoyent la guerre'.[69] The Romans were also aware that any successful colonial enterprise requires the state to determine exactly of how many citizens it can deprive

[67] *République*, 6.2 (ed. 1579, p. 862).

[68] *République*, 6.2 (ed. 1579, p. 862).

[69] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 768).

itself. For Bodin, the Roman magistracy of *censura* served precisely this purpose, allowing the state to know 'le nombre des sugets' and 'combien on en pourroit tirer, fust pour aller en guerre, fust pour demeurer, fust pour envoyer en colonies'.[70] In expressing his wish that this exceedingly useful magistracy be reactivated in contemporary France, it cannot be excluded that Bodin may have been thinking, among other things, of long-term prospects of colonial expansion.[71]

Conclusions: sovereignty, territory, and population after Bodin

Two opposing and complementary instincts inhabit Bodin's *République*: the definitory and the operational. Understanding how these two instincts cooperate in the text and in the larger economy of Bodinian sovereignty has been the fundamental problem of this article. The provisional results achieved here seem to confirm Michel Foucault's hypothesis of a two-tiered nature of sovereign power, which he made forty years ago in his series of

[70] *République*, 6.1 (ed. 1579, pp. 836–7).

[71] A complete study of Bodin's views on colonial expansion remains to be done. Helpful remarks can be found in Giuliano Gliozzi, *Adamo e il Nuovo Mondo. La nascita dell'antropologia come ideologia coloniale: dalle genealogie bibliche alle teorie razziali (1500–1700)* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1977), pp. 326–65; Frank Lestringant, 'Du Bartas entre Du Plessis-Mornay et Jean Bodin: à propos des *Colonies*', in *Du Bartas, 1590–1990. Actes du colloque international d'Auch–Le Bartas–Pau. 6–8 Avril 1990*, ed. by James Dauphiné (Mont-de-Marsan: Editions InterUniversitaires, 1992), pp. 297–314; Joyce E. Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier 1500–1676* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 126–7.

lectures on 'Security, Territory, Population' at the Collège de France. According to Foucault, there exists a gap between the 'idea' of sovereignty, namely the principle according to which sovereignty is theoretically constructed, and 'the effective, real, daily operations of the actual exercise of sovereignty' ('l'exercice de la souveraineté dans son déroulement effectif, réel, quotidien').[72] While the definition of sovereignty excludes the people from its horizon and concentrates on an abstract territory — one that is not defined by physical properties such as fertility, elevation or extension, but by the juridical fact of being under the rule of one sovereign[73] — the actual functioning of sovereignty involves constant attention to the population and to its relationship with the physical territory.[74] There is thus a hiatus between the definition, or, rather, the self-representation of sovereignty, and the way in which sovereign power actually works.

This article has uncovered a similar dynamic in Bodin's discussion of territorial and demographic matters in the *République*. While any attention to the physical territory is deliberately absent from Book 1, which is meant to provide slender definitions for the conceptual vocabulary of the *République*, the final three books of the work contain a rich and complex discussion of the relationship between population growth and territorial expansion

---

[72] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 11.

[73] 'Sovereignty over an unpopulated territory is not only a juridically and politically acceptable idea, but one that is absolutely accepted and primary' (Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 11; in the original French, this sentence reads: 'l'idée d'une souveraineté sur un territoire non peuplé est une idée juridiquement et politiquement non seulement acceptable, mais parfaitement acceptée et première'). For a helpful clarification of the concept of 'territory' and other related concepts, see Elden, 'Land, Terrain, Territory'.

[74] Compare Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 68.

which testifies to Bodin's level of engagement with such questions. Such a dynamic is doubly significant: first, because it demonstrates Bodin's effort to think about sovereignty both on the level of abstract definition and on that of concrete governmental practice; second, because it exemplifies Bodin's frequent strategy of tackling complex questions from multiple perspectives. In order to solve such a challenging and longstanding problem as the optimal size of a state, Bodin avails himself of all his juridical, moral, military, constitutional, economic, and geographical knowledge, carefully weighing the matter by means of both rational arguments and historical examples. Just as he seeks to reconcile theory and practice (the 'abstract' sovereignty of Book 1 and the 'operational' sovereignty of the following books), Bodin strives to think state power in its twofold dimension of juridically legitimate domination (*i.e.* sovereignty) and monopoly of force.

While Book 1 of the *République* establishes an equivalence between state power and 'puissance souveraine', thus seemingly defining power in a strictly juristic way, the remainder of the work stands to show that force is for Bodin just as essential a component of power as formal legitimacy. The former may in fact override the latter in certain cases, as we read in one of the chapters that deal more directly with the issue of territorial expansion (5.5): here Bodin, clearly mindful of Machiavelli's lesson, writes that 'celuy est maistre de l'estat qui est maistre de la force'.[75]

In light of the above, it seems necessary to reassess recent interpretations that have too hastily rubbed out force from Bodin's conception of state power, thus not only misrepresenting Bodin's own thought, but also drawing questionable conclusions about his positioning with respect to both earlier and later authors. For instance, it has been argued that Giovanni Botero's *Reason of State* (1589) should be read as a systematic attempt to think

[75] *République*, 5.5 (ed. 1579, p. 774).

state power outside of the juridical model of sovereignty, specifically using Machiavelli and the Italian humanist tradition against Bodin.[76] Now, while there is strong evidence that Botero conceived his deeply influential treatise on statecraft as part of a larger 'political and strategic effort made by the Roman church to contrast Bodin's theory of sovereignty',[77] the notion that Botero succeeded in proposing a radical alternative to Bodin's doctrine of the state is at the very least debatable.

The claim that Botero's thoughts on territory and population were among his most original contributions to the anti-Bodinian campaign underway seems particularly misconceived. By basing 'a large part' of his political thought 'on the conditions, causes and consequences of demographic growth',[78] Botero was certainly moving a step beyond Bodin, who had discussed the topic at length but without ever elevating it to the status of a foundational issue. He was not, however, moving *against* Bodin, whose *République* actually provided the Italian Jesuit with a wealth of historical information and perceptive insights for his own reflections *On the Causes of the Greatness and Magnificence of Cities* (1588), itself a manifesto of unrestricted population growth.[79] As we have seen, Botero's efforts to

[76] See Descendre, 'Raison d'État, puissance et économie', p. 317.

[77] Descendre, 'Raison d'État, puissance et économie', p. 313. On the vicissitudes of the *République* in late sixteenth-century Rome, see Michaela Valente, 'The Works of Bodin under the Lens of Roman Theologians and Inquisitors', in *The Reception of Bodin*, pp. 219–35, which helpfully cites most existing bibliography on this topic.

[78] Descendre, 'Raison d'État, puissance et économie', p. 314.

[79] See Miglietti, 'Debating Greatness from Machiavelli to Burton'.

reconceptualise the relation between territory and population through what one scholar has called a 'territorialisation of politics' find precise parallels in Bodin's earlier work.[80]

The supposed gulf between Bodin and Botero's political outlooks may also be reappraised by looking at their respective views on the relationship between state, power, and law. This article has shown that Bodin's doctrine of the state was open to all those non-juridical dimensions that Botero would place at the heart of his own political proposition: from geography and economy to urban sociology and military strategy. Like Botero, furthermore, Bodin was fully sensitive to the Machiavellian discourse of *forze* (military forces) and to the problem of 'power relationships',[81] as his reflections on how power *de facto* can supersede power *de iure* clearly demonstrate. Rather than proposing a radical alternative to Bodin's model, it seems that Botero was working to change the latter from within, building on Bodinian foundations to develop his own 'Christian' doctrine of the reason of state. Later authors from all four corners of Europe would further seize on Bodin's legacy — not infrequently through Botero's intermediary — to think about statecraft in both its ordinary and extraordinary forms.[82]

---

[80] Descendre, 'Raison d'État, puissance et économie', p. 315.

[81] Descendre, 'Raison d'État, puissance et économie', p. 317. A convincing reappraisal of the relationship between Machiavelli, Bodin, and Botero is in Descendre, *L'État du monde*, pp. 78–87 and 195–202.

[82] Artemio Enzo Baldini, 'Botero e la Francia', in *Botero e la 'Ragion di Stato'*, pp. 335–59; Yves-Charles Zarka, 'État et gouvernement chez Bodin et les théoriciens de la raison d'État', in *Jean Bodin: nature, histoire, droit et politique*, ed. by Yves-Charles Zarka (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), pp. 149–60; Luc Foisneau, 'Sovereignty and Reason of

This network of complex and often unexpected ties that link Bodin to his intellectual posterity only becomes visible when we move beyond an isolated reading of Book 1 of his *République* to reappraise the work in its entirety. This article has shown that a holistic reading of Bodin's *République* not only sheds light on neglected aspects of Bodin's own work, but also allows us to situate it more effectively in the context of later developments and to better appreciate the broader theoretical *enjeux* that are at stake in Bodin's thought. By placing as much importance on the non-juridical aspects of a state's life as on its legal foundations, Bodin's *République* paved the way to a strand of political reflection that, willingly or not, fed on its unique insights at the very same time as it struggled against its 'heretical' author.

State: Bodin, Botero, Richelieu and Hobbes', in *The Reception of Bodin*, pp. 323–342: 324; Miglietti, 'Debating Greatness from Machiavelli to Burton'.