

## CHAPTER 9

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# WAR, TRADE, AND STATE FORMATION

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

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ONLY a few decades ago the study of the state lay moribund in political science, banished to the realm of historical scholarship. Behavioralism, methodologically individualist in its epistemological approach, sought to understand the political process by micro-level analyses. Pluralism in turn extolled the virtues of an American polity in which social actors rather than governmental action accounted for political outcomes.

In reaction to those dominant perspectives some scholars called for a renewed interest in the role of the state and state formation (Nettl 1968; Tilly 1975). Political science, and particularly the subfields of comparative politics and international relations, embraced those calls with vigor. The scholarship examining the causal connections between state formation, regime type, and state failure is today so vast that any discussion must, by necessity, constitute a bird’s eye overview.

The scholarship on state formation has concentrated on several key features of the modern state, particularly its immense capacity to mobilize and tap into societal resources, and its ability to wield coercive force. In classic Weberian parlance, the state is that “compulsory political organization” which controls a territorial area in which “the administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order,” (Weber 1978, i. 54). Inevitably accounts stressing this feature of modern statehood focus on the importance of warfare and the monopolization of warfare by the state.

The Weberian definition also draws attention to related but distinct dimensions of state formation: the formation of a rationalized-legal administration; the rise of

extractive capacity by a central government; and the legitimacy of such authority. The modern state transformed personalistic rule and ad hoc justification of authority to depersonalized, public governance based on the rule of law (Collins 1986). With this transformation came the claim that government could, far more intrusively than pre-modern governments, regulate many aspects of social and political life. Its ability to mobilize populations for economic growth and warfare went thus hand in hand with its ability to raise revenue (Levi 1988; Webber and Wildavsky 1986). Logically, scholars who adopt those economic and administrative foci are particularly interested in tracing how the institutional structures of the state were affected by economic changes, such as trade and the advent of capitalism, and how the state in turn influenced class structure, capitalist development, and the provision of public goods (North 1981).

The formation of the modern state inevitably involved the creation of new legitimizations of authority and power. Nascent political elites in early states either displaced or sought to control kinship structures, ethnic ties, and religious authority and to forge a new identification with the authority of the state and the holder of public office (Anderson 1991). Modern states recast and channeled individual loyalties to the extent that modern states could affect every level of individual and social life—unlike the capstone governments of older polities which extended over vast geographic areas without affecting their societies in any great measure (Gellner 1983).

Besides an exponential increase in governmental capacity, modern states differ from precursors in another important way: modern state authority is defined uniquely as territorial rule with fixed geographic boundaries. Thus, at the crossroads of the study of international relations and comparative politics, another body of literature has focused particularly on the territorial aspects of modern authority (Kratochwil 1986; Ruggie 1986; Spruyt 1994). How did the notion of territorial, sovereign states displace authority structures that were universalistic in ambition (empires), based on theocratic justification (as the aspirations to forge a unified Christian Europe), or based purely on market exchanges (as trading city-networks)? This territorial aspect of statehood arguably preceded the other characteristics associated with modern states, as rational administration, fiscal ability, and national loyalty. Indeed, from purely a territorial perspective, states preceded nations and high-capacity modern administrations by several centuries.<sup>1</sup>

Inevitably the study of any one of these features of state formation will implicate other aspects. Monopolization of violence can only occur if governments are deemed at least partially legitimate. Moreover, the successful monopolization of violence itself will correlate with the ability of central governments to establish some modicum of efficient administration as well as the ability to raise revenue. Thus, while each aspect of statehood may be studied in its individual form as an ideal type, any analysis must involve other dimensions of state formation. As a consequence, regardless of the particular feature of the state that one wishes to study, causal explanations will inevitably have to account for the specific dynamics of warfare, economic transformation wrought by trade and finance, and ideological aspects of state legitimization.

<sup>1</sup> The territorial aspect of statehood is thus closely connected to the notion of sovereignty. See Benn (1967); Hinsley (1986). For a recent critique that the importance of sovereignty has been overstated, see Krasner (1999).

The particular modalities of state formation, in terms of its twin features (governmental capacity and territorial definition), will determine the type of regime. Some governments will try to mobilize their societies by contractual agreement or vest their claims to legitimacy in popular approval. Others might seek alternative modes of mobilization and support.

This essay makes several claims. First, a serious student of state formation, regardless of the geographic area of interest, should take European state formation as its referent point.<sup>2</sup> It is that particular conceptualization of authority that succeeded in displacing rival forms of political organization in Europe and which was then transplanted globally (Giddens 1987; Strang 1991). Moreover, methodologically, such a comparative study serves to demonstrate maximum contrast in values on the causal variable (van Evera 1997). State formation outside of Europe was greatly affected by external pressure, a vastly different international milieu (both in term of security and economics), and proceeded in a highly compressed chronology. Highlighting the key causal dynamics in the European case will thus serve to demonstrate how the external and the internal aspects of state development interacted in a vastly different manner outside of Europe.

Second, the study of European state formation serves as a useful template to generate causal hypotheses regarding regime development in general. Understanding how European state formation influenced the propensity for absolutist or constitutionalist forms of government will shed light on regime transitions elsewhere, particularly given the variation in historical trajectories. The variation on the independent variables, obvious when contrasting European and non-European cases, allows us to deductively generate rival expectations about state formation and regime type. For example, Lisa Anderson (1987) has taken such an approach to study state formation in North Africa and the Middle East. Victoria Tin-bor Hui has compared early imperial Chinese state formation with the European experience (2004).

Jeffrey Herbst (2000) is undoubtedly correct in asserting that the literature on state formation has focused excessively on the European experience. But even he bases his account of state construction in Africa by juxtaposing the African experience with European trajectories, and by utilizing theories of European state formation, such as those of Charles Tilly.

This chapter thus starts with a brief account of European state formation. It distinguishes the generative factors behind the transformation of late medieval forms of government to new types of authority from the selection and convergence among these distinct types.<sup>3</sup>

The essay then turns to a discussion of how the process of state formation had effects on the type of regime that emerged in various states. That is, while the next section of this chapter provides for an overview of how sovereignty and territoriality were established as key features of authority in Europe, the following section discusses how state formation implicated the rise of absolutist or constitutionalist forms of rule. The fourth part highlights how accounts of state formation in Europe currently inform the study of

<sup>2</sup> Two of the best overviews of European state formation are Badie and Birnbaum (1983) and Poggi (1978). For a more extensive discussion of state formation and regime type, see Bendix (1978).

<sup>3</sup> For a more extensive discussion, see Spruyt (1994); Tilly (1990).

state development in newly emerging countries, and identifies particularly intriguing avenues for further enquiry. The manner in which non-European regions diverged from the European experience profoundly affects their contemporary status as effective or failed states, and the likelihood that democratic transitions will be successful.

## 2 CAUSAL DYNAMICS OF STATE FORMATION

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### 2.1 War Making as Generative Cause

Early state formation in Europe correlated with changes in the frequency and modes of warfare (Bean 1973; Tilly 1975). Starting roughly in the early fourteenth century, military developments began to disadvantage the mounted cavalry and challenge the social and political organization of feudalism.

First, massed infantry (at battles such as Courtrai) and English longbow archers (as at Agincourt) booked resounding successes against heavy cavalry. Thus, relatively unskilled troops of socially low position could, with the right organization and if sufficient in number, defeat more highly skilled knights. The result was a shift to the greater use of infantry soldiers which individually were less expensive to equip than mounted knights. By some calculations, the costs of equipping a knight with armor and horse required roughly the labor of 500 commoners. However, given the larger aggregations of fighting men that were required for successful combat, the new military style required overall greater outlay. Whereas armed feudal service was based on personal ties (resembling a form of artificial kinship) and for a relatively short period of time (forty days per year was the norm), the emerging style of warfare called for larger numbers of paid troops. At the end of the Hundred Years War, the French thus moved towards a standing army.

The successful deployment of massed infantry was followed by the introduction of gunpowder. Given the rudimentary arms of the time, its effects were first felt with the introduction of siege artillery (McNeill 1982). Even in its nascent form such artillery proved capable of destroying the most advanced fortifications of that time, as demonstrated by the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Advances in artillery thus sparked a defensive reaction towards building ever more advanced and thus more expensive fortifications, employing the *trace italienne*.

All these developments in military technology in turn necessitated greater centralization, administration, and central revenue.<sup>4</sup> Such revenue could be gained by internal mobilization and taxation. Alternatively, rulers could pursue territorial conquest and geographic efficiencies of scale.

Military developments thus begot institutional innovation. Institutional innovation in turn corresponded with greater effectiveness on the battlefield and the opportunity to

<sup>4</sup> The historical record is clear on this point; for a brief synopsis, Ames and Rapp (1977); Bean (1973). Rasler and Thompson (1985) demonstrate how war making led to state expansion in the modern era.

expand one's realm. This in turn ratcheted up competition among rival lords and kings making the successful conduct of war the key feature of early modern administration. Between 1500 and 1700 many of the great powers were continuously at war or on a war footing (Parker 1979, 1988).

Charles Tilly (1985) has compared this process of state formation to a protection racket. While various lords competed for the loyalty (and thus revenue) of their subjects, kings tended to be the most efficient providers of protection and thus displaced lesser lords, leading to the Weberian characterization of the state as having a monopoly on violence. Tilly's account thus melds a description of a broad exogenous change—the change in the nature of warfare—with a contractarian explanation for the rise of central authority. Central authority provided protection in exchange for revenue.

Tilly is no doubt correct in arguing that early states devoted most of their revenue to waging war (see, for example, Brewer 1989). Moreover, his account is particularly appealing in providing a methodological individualist explanation, a micro-level account, for a larger structural, macro-level phenomenon. Many other accounts working in a similar vein have contented themselves with descriptive narratives chronicling the evolutionary progress to the modern state. Not only does Tilly's account provide for a plausible explanation it also logically entails that the modalities of contracting between subjects and ruling elites should lead to different forms of authority, which Tilly rightly noted in his earlier work (1975) and for which he tried to account in his later book (1990).

Yet several problems remain with accounts stressing solely the importance of warfare. Some historians, particularly those associated with the Princeton school pioneered by Joseph Strayer, locate institutional innovation before the great revolutions in military technology (Strayer 1965). Norman administrative structures and French royal practices met with considerable success during the thirteenth century. Clearly the subsequent process of state development had many more centuries to come, but it does raise questions regarding military changes as the primary or only dynamic.

Second, the contractarian account does not fully convince. Tilly argues that kings were the most efficient providers of protection, but if subjects (consumers) were indifferent between the providers for protection, one would expect many warlords to have been able to rise to kingship given the weak position of kings. (If kings were already more powerful than the other lords, the explanation would be tautological and insufficient.) Yet historically this seldom occurred. Dynastic lineages were quite durable. In other words it leaves the attraction of the king as contractarian party to provide protection or other public goods unexplained.

Finally, Tilly alternates between an explanation based on relative factor endowments and a coalitional explanation of political strategy. Polities endowed with capital (urban centers) forced political elites to enter into contractual arrangements with the cities. Towns were not inclined to surrender their liberties and revenues to authoritarian rule, and thus capital-intensive mobilization occurred in north-western Europe and northern Italy. Tilly then classifies mobilization in areas lacking rich capital endowments as coercive. In so doing he assumes that areas rich in either labor or land would both show a similar political strategy of mobilization along authoritarian lines. Empirically,

it might be the case that aspiring political elites forged alliances with landowning aristocracy, as happened with the Prussian Second Serfdom (Rosenberg 1943–4). Theoretically, however, one need not a priori preclude an elite–peasant bargain against landowners if labor were abundant. Indeed, to some extent North and Thomas’s (1973) and North’s (1981) account of the decline of the feudal order is based on a shift in relative factor endowments diminishing the ability of landowners to coerce the peasantry. Put another way, concluding that capital abundance might correlate with constitutionalist government, does not logically require one to conclude that capital scarcity must correlate with coercive forms of rule.

## 2.2. Economic Transitions and the Rise of Trade as a Generative Factor

A rival account acknowledges the changes in the military milieu of the late medieval period, but stresses instead the economic changes that marked the end of feudalism and the gradual emergence of politically consolidated states and incipient capitalism. These economic changes pre-dated the military revolution of this period, and made possible the subsequent emergence of large-scale mercenary warfare. This economic perspective on the rise of the territorial state can in turn be distinguished in neo-Marxist views and neo-institutionalist analyses.

Neo-Marxists and neo-institutionalists are in broad agreement with regard to economic change being the causal factor behind the demise of personalized feudalistic rule. From the eleventh century on, a variety of factors eroded the economic foundations of feudalism and precipitated the beginning of early (merchant) capitalism. They differ, however, in the role played by the state in this process.

(Neo-)Marxist analyses and neo-institutionalists concur on the rise of trade as a harbinger of early capitalism (Anderson 1974*a*, 1974*b*; North and Thomas 1973).<sup>5</sup> Urbanization and the growth of trade led to the emergence of a social group that was politically and socially disadvantaged in the feudal structure. These burghers (burghers, from which bourgeoisie) made their living by production and trade and thus stood outside the traditional barter, personalized exchange that formed the basis of the feudal economy. Indeed, burghers were politically free from servile bonds unlike the peasantry (city air makes free, as the medieval adage had it).

In the neo-Marxist account, however, the state performed the role of arbiter of class tensions. The advent of early capitalism thus dovetailed and necessitated the growth of a state apparatus. A royal–urban alliance, and in some cases a royal–peasant alliance, brought the feudal, decentralized order to its end.

Neo-institutionalists recognize the role of urbanization and the emergence of new economic groups that opposed the existing feudal order. However, the state does not act in a predatory fashion, as an agent of the ruling class (the emerging bourgeoisie), but emerges out of contracts between ruler and subject, and the ruler’s desire for personal gain, by maximizing societal welfare.

<sup>5</sup> In historical scholarship, this argument was popularized as the Pirenne thesis (Pirenne 1952).

Douglas North and Robert Thomas (1973) pioneered such explanations, suggesting that changes in weather, agricultural innovations (such as crop rotation and the deep plough), increased trade flows, diminished invasions, and demographic shifts altered the relative power of social groups possessing land, labor, and capital. These environmental shifts thus transformed the balance between the factors of production. The resulting change in relative bargaining power of the various factors in turn influenced political outcomes. Thus, the decline of population following the plague of 1353 (and there were numerous outbreaks of the disease) created a supply shortage of labor, enhancing the bargaining position of the peasantry vis-à-vis the possessors of land (the aristocracy). This eroded the feudal economy based on indentured agriculture.

A more fully articulated neo-institutionalist perspective emerges in North's later work (1981, 1990). This perspective takes an explicitly contractarian approach. The ruler exchanges protection for revenue. Efficiencies of scale in the provision of this public good lead to consolidation in one provider. Secondly, the ruler acting in this monopoly position allocates property rights to maximize the revenue of society at large, and, by taxation, thus yield more revenue for the individual ruler. However, the ruler's monopoly is not absolute. Rivals within the state might emerge as more efficient (or less extortionist) providers of public goods. Or rival states might provide exit options to the constituents (North 1981, 23).

Neo-institutional explanations thus emphasize a potential communality of economic interests between the monarchy and the emerging mercantile groups. As far as military protection goes mercantile groups would be indifferent between who provided protection. However, kings were more attractive as contracting parties than local feudal lords, given efficiencies of scale. Moreover, mercantile groups favored greater standardization of weights, measures, and coinage; the weakening of feudal obligations; clearer definition of property rights; and written legal codes. Given royal interests in maximizing revenue, such standardization, monetization of the economy, and legalization of royal rule (by the introduction of Roman law) were as dear to the king as they were to urban interests.

Neo-institutional accounts, therefore, share the neo-Marxist interpretation of a royal-urban alliance as a key explanation for the emergence of more rationalized, centralized, and territorially defined rule. It differs in placing less emphasis on the state as a coercive mechanism to remedy the inefficiencies of feudalism and repress the labor force. It stresses instead the role of the state as an institutional solution to the transaction and informational hurdles that hampered the feudal economy.

### 2.3 The State as Ideological Revolution

A third account of early state formation places particular emphasis on ideology. The move towards depersonalized, rationalized administration could only occur against the backdrop of a dramatic shift in collective beliefs.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand this entailed

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Corrigan and Sayer (1991). Pizzorno (1987) suggests the state assumed many of the ideological roles claimed by institutionalized religion.

the emergence of a sense of individuality. Thus Macfarlane's (1978) observation regarding the emergence of individualism in twelfth-century England has an important bearing on the rise of early capitalism (and the early state). John Ruggie (1993) has similarly noted the changes in perception giving rise to a sense of mechanical, ordered structure. Changes in artistic perception coincided with, and were indicative of, changes in perceptions of right political order—an order which could emerge by rational design rather than religious mandate. Rather than presuppose a contractarian environment, an examination of ideological shifts clarifies the conditions under which humans came to understand themselves as atomistic individuals (rather than members of larger social entities), and how they came to see themselves as contracting parties of ruler and subject (rather than being part of some preordained order).<sup>7</sup> What methodological individualist accounts take as a given (in either seeing war or economic changes as altering the terms of the contract between rulers and ruled), ideological reflections pry apart and problematize.

The emergence of the early state, consequently, meant that the feudal collective consciousness was abandoned. In classical feudal theory, political order was modeled on that of heaven (Duby 1978). As such, a tri-level political order was the most desirable. At the pinnacle stood “those that prayed.” Those that fought, the military aristocracy, should serve those that prayed. Peasants and commoners, “those who worked,” in turn were inferior to both of the other castes and occupied the lowest rung. The notion of territorial authority based on contract challenged such concepts of preordained station.

The emergence of individual states also challenged the notion that Europe, being the domain of Christianity, should constitute one political community. In the feudal perspective the pope as its leader would be served by the vicar of God, the emperor, who formed the sword and right hand of the spiritual elements.

In practice, however, the centuries-long conflict between emperor and pope, and the subsequent victory of monarchy over either of those two conceptualizations, meant that the religious views of a theocratic imperial Europe came to naught. The territorial conceptualization of authority won out over alternative logics of legitimization. States emerged out of the stalemate for European dominance of emperors and popes.<sup>8</sup>

### 3 DIVERSITY AND SELECTION

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Any generative account of institutional change runs the risk of functionally linking, in a post hoc manner, causal explanations of institutional demise to the specific institutional outcome that is the focus of that particular scholar. But in liminal

<sup>7</sup> Neo-institutionalists as North (1981, 45–58) also draw attention to ideology, but do so largely from a functional perspective, seeing ideology as a device to overcome collective action problems, rather than as creating preferences and identity.

<sup>8</sup> Not coincidentally the Investiture Struggle empowered territorial kings (Tierney 1964).



moments when old orders are shattered and space opens up for institutional innovation, agents rarely agree on the type of innovation they should bring about. Individuals have diverse preferences. They might be risk averse, or ignorant of the long-term consequences of their choices. Initial choices might have unintended consequences in the long run (Thelen 2004).

Thus generative accounts of state formation require some account for selection among the diversity of agent choices. At the sunset of the feudal order various alternative forms for structuring political authority were possible, as Tilly (1975) noted. The imperial claim to reconstitute a hierarchically governed European space surfaced in various guises. German emperors claimed to revive the Roman Empire. Later, Spanish rulers sought to expand their authority under the imperial banner with similar theocratic ambitions. Such theocratic claims were only gradually set aside by agreements as the Treaty of Augsburg (1555) and the Peace of Westphalia (1648).

Additionally, city-states, city-leagues, loose confederal entities (such as the Swiss federation), and odd hybrid states (such as the Dutch United Provinces) held center stage throughout late medieval and early modern European history.<sup>9</sup> Such authorities often held competing claims to rule over a given geographic space. For example, many cities throughout northern Europe held dual allegiance to the territorial lord in their vicinity and the city-leagues of which they were members.

The explanations for the convergence to a system of sovereign entities, which claimed exclusive jurisdiction within recognized borders, tend to parallel the analytic approaches of the end of feudalism. Accounts focusing on changes in military affairs tend to emphasize selection. Neo-institutionalists in turn stress the efficiency of institutional design, combining selection mechanisms with individual preferences. Those stressing ideational changes draw attention to sovereignty as a social construct.

Thus, accounts that stress the importance of war emphasize selective mechanisms in Darwinian terms. Indeed, some of these views lean towards strong-form selection. Given a particular environment selection will be harsh, trending towards convergence on a singular surviving type. Sovereign, territorially defined organization with strong central administrations thus defeated and eliminated less efficient and less effective forms of governance. In the study of international relations, realists tend to favor this view of environmental selection, although they may blend such agent-less accounts with intentional mimicry of successful practice and socialization (Waltz 1979).

Strong-form selection, however, is a rarity even in biology. Odd types and less efficient designs often continue to exist in niches. So too, multiple institutional forms often exist side by side in the political realm. Path dependence, entrenched interests, and jury-rigged institutional solutions that agents devise in the face of challenges to the existing institutions, all militate against simple selective mechanisms.

<sup>9</sup> In an interesting article Knudsen and Rothstein 1994 argued that Denmark and Scandinavia differed from both the "Western" mode of state formation (based on strong urban centers and free peasantry) and the "Eastern" mode (based on weak towns and serfdom), presenting us with two hybrid types. In a bold claim Putnam (1983) argues that the medieval development of Italian city-states explains many of the institutional features of the Italian landscape today, suggesting that scrutiny of past state development sheds light on the present.

Consequently, neo-institutionalists often blend selective mechanisms and deliberate agent choices. Rather than simply note the competitive advantage of states they ask why such advantages existed in the first place, or why certain polities did not opt for more efficient arrangements, as, for example, by changing manifestly inefficient property rights. Neo-institutional explanations thus account for the advantage of sovereign territorial organization in terms of its success in reducing transaction and information costs, and the provision of public goods in general (North 1981; Spruyt 1994). The system of sovereign, territorial states did not emerge simply by blind selection but equally by individual choices. Rulers were cognizant of their limitations to rule, given exit options for their constituents. Internal and external rivalry also led rulers to opt for more efficient designs. They made conscious decisions to delimit spheres of jurisdiction in domestic and international realms.

Finally, perspectives that emphasize sovereign territoriality as an ideational construct tend to sociological and anthropological explanations for why this form displaced rival types. Sociological institutionalism, in particular, sees the convergence toward the state as a process of mimicry and social imprinting (Thomas et al. 1987). Polities tend to interact with like types of government. At the same time newly emerging polities will style themselves self-consciously to conform to the existing “organizational field” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). The existing set of practices is taken for granted by those wishing to be deemed legitimate states.

## 4 STATE FORMATION AND REGIME TYPE

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Competition, individual strategic choice and mimicry affected not only the displacement of non-territorial forms of rule, but they also had a direct bearing on the types of regimes that emerged. Variation in intensity and modes of warfare, as well as the differential impact of trade and modernization, affected the development of absolutism and constitutionalism.

As Otto Hintze (1975) noted, frequent and intense warfare will tend to correlate with authoritarian government. The need to mobilize resources by the state will lead to a high degree of government intervention in society. Frequent geopolitical conflict will require manpower and financial resources in order to secure the survival of the polity. Rather than rely on militias and incidental service, the state will prefer to develop standing military forces.

Those military forces, however, can serve a dual purpose. Not only will they serve to protect the state from external enemies, they can be used to repress internal dissent. Thus, frequent and intense warfare will give birth to a garrison state, justified by external threats, but equally capable of stifling constitutionalist movements. The Prussian Great Elector and the Junkers forged their alliance in reaction to the mortal

threats posed by Sweden, Austria, and Russia, but equally used this coalition to establish a Second Serfdom without constitutional guarantees (Rosenberg 1943–4).

Hintze also noted that land-based forces had different internal effects than naval forces. Those polities that were fortunate enough to have geographic advantages and who could rely on maritime power for their external defense (such as Britain) need not suffer the same fate as countries that needed to maintain large standing armies. Although the government might still require considerable burdens from the population in terms of taxation, naval forces could not be as easily deployed for internal repressive purposes. Heavy taxation would thus have to be obtained by consent rather than coercion.

Charles Tilly (1990) and Brian Downing (1992) have expanded on these insights. Tilly observed that the ready availability of financial resources might mitigate the tendency towards absolutism. Although all European states were heavily involved with frequent, organized warfare from roughly the late fifteenth century onward (Parker 1988), garrison states only emerged where urban centers were poorly developed. Although, as noted earlier, Tilly confuses his descriptions of political strategies with a description of relative factor endowments, he is correct in noting the relative absence of absolutist forms of government on the European core axis that ran roughly from the European north-west to northern Italy. The states that formed this core axis had strong urban communities whose consent was required for war. Thus, these polities emerged as constitutionalist forms of government.

Downing rightly adds that other intervening variables might affect the causal relation between war and regime type. The availability of external capital (through colonies, or allies), as well as geographic features that facilitate defense (the Swiss mountains, for example), may complicate the picture. Defense of the state, even if surrounded by belligerent actors, need not necessarily lead to a garrison state. Rather than internal mobilization the state may secure its existence by judicious management of its external relations.

Downing's account thus draws attention to how warfare and economic milieu intertwine to affect regime type. Where trade flourished urban centers were vibrant. This allowed the state to raise large sums of capital for warfare, while at the same time the strong urban centers demanded participation in how this money would be allocated.

War making and economic transition interacted also with the creation of early capitalism by mercantilist practices. Although Machiavelli realized (and before him Cicero) that money was the sinews of power, power in turn provided one with markets and commodities. War making and economic change thus pointed towards greater government intervention and absolutist rule in the classical mercantilist style. Indeed, all states, including Britain and the Netherlands (the later champions of liberal trade), engaged in such mercantilist practices during their formative phase.

The particular timing of state development may further affect the impact of external competition on regime type. Taking Germany and Russia as templates, Gerschenkron argued that late state formation required not merely the centralization of political authority and definition of territorial boundaries, but also an activist

government to catch up with more advanced economies (Gerschenkron 1962). Modernization from the “top down” thus correlated with authoritarianism.

Taking his cue from Gerschenkron and Hintze, Thomas Ertman (1997) submits that geopolitical competition, combined with the periodization of state building, sheds light not only on regime type but also on the state’s administrative infrastructure. The latter can be patrimonial or administrative-bureaucratic. The timing of the onset of competition and the pre-existing strength of local assemblies affect subsequent outcomes on regime type and administrative structure.

All things being equal geopolitical competition prior to 1450 should lead to patrimonial administration and absolutism in Latin Europe, but constitutionalism and patrimonialism in Britain, due to the strength of local assemblies. With the later onset of geopolitical competition and strong local assemblies in Hungary and Poland, we should expect bureaucratic constitutionalism in Eastern Europe. However, this did not happen, says Ertman, due to the independent effect of parliament, reversing the expected outcomes in the British and East European cases.

His discussion usefully opens up the analysis beyond regime type or administrative structures. However, one may wonder whether the account succeeds. Thus whereas Tilly, Hintze, Downing, each in their own way, try to account for the relative strength of local assemblies, Ertman takes this variation as a starting point, and then argues that this variation in turn had subsequent effects on the emergence of absolutism versus constitutionalism. However, when he introduces the strength of parliament as having an independent effect on the outcomes observed the account gains a tautological flavor.

Finally, neo-institutional accounts of state formation have also weighed in the discussion of state formation and regime type. Neo-institutionalists suggest that less hierarchical regimes have salutary internal and external consequences. Internally, less hierarchical governments tend to foster economic development when the government has credibly tied its own hands (North and Weingast 1989). Since entrepreneurs need not fear government predation, their private incentives to pursue economic gain parallel public objectives. Externally, governments that tie their own hands can more credibly commit to international obligations. Since the sovereign is accountable to its domestic public it cannot retreat from international agreements (Cowhey 1993; Martin 2000). Democratically accountable governments thus have a competitive advantage over rival types.

Neo-institutionalists in a sense thus reverse, and alter, the causal linkage of conflict and regime type. Whereas Hintze, Downing, and others focus on the consequences of warfare on regime type, neo-institutionalists might well concentrate on the effect that regimes have on rulers’ ability to mobilize society for war. Thus rulers that are constitutionally bound might be more able to raise revenue from their population, or from other states, in times of war (D’Lugo and Rogowski 1993). Similarly, given audience costs and their ability to credibly commit, democratic regimes make states more attractive as allies and trading partners.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On the relevance of audience costs for credibility, see Fearon (1994).

## 5 STATE FORMATION AND STATE FAILURE IN THE MODERN ERA

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The literature on state formation in Europe thus presents a variety of analytic angles to clarify how sovereign territoriality became the constitutive rule for the modern state system, why some states developed as constitutional or absolutist regimes, and how some states created rational administrative structures which others lacked. However reflecting on the European historical trajectory generates theoretical lenses through which to view contemporary developments elsewhere. Nowhere is this more pertinent than in the newly independent states that emerged in the latter part of the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, since the end of the Second World War the number of independent states has multiplied almost fourfold. Decolonization in Africa and Asia created new entities in the shadow of erstwhile maritime empires while the end of communist domination in Eastern Europe and the fragmentation of the USSR added another two dozen polities in the 1990s. While the new polities have emerged in a state system in which the adherence to the principle of sovereign territoriality is a *sine qua non* for international recognition, these new states face a dramatically different environment than the early European actors.

Consequently, most of the independent states that emerged in the twentieth century readily accept territorial sovereignty as a constitutive rule of international relations (although it is perhaps challenged by certain religious principles in Islam). State capacity and rational, bureaucratic administration, however, have been found critically wanting, burdened as many of these states are by patrimonialism, weak economies, and rampant organized corruption. This weak administrative infrastructure has affected their ability to monopolize the means of violence within their borders; their ability to develop viable domestic economies; and their ability to provide public goods to their populace. Combined with borders that have been superimposed on heterogeneous populations, rulers inevitably lack legitimacy.

### 5.1 The Changed Security Environment

The new states of the post-1945 era emerged in a completely different security environment than the states of early modern Europe. Rather than emerge out of the cauldron of geopolitical conflict that for centuries typified the European landscape most of these entities gained independent status by fiat. Even in the USSR, conflicts that emerged in

<sup>11</sup> There is also a growing body of literature that has started to examine non-European state formation prior to European colonial expansion. Tin-bor Hui (2004) thus argues that state formation during China's Warring States period (656–221 BC) looked markedly different than war making and state making in Europe. Carolyn Warner notes how some states in West Africa had emerged as viable territorial entities with considerable state capacity before European encroachment (Warner 1998).

the wake of the Union's collapse were primarily conflicts within the newly independent states, secessionist conflicts, not inter-republic wars.<sup>12</sup>

Many of these states consequently acquired independence after colonial powers withdrew and by subsequent international recognition, but they did not undergo the process that accompanied traditional state formation (Jackson 1987). Although some colonies fought wars of liberation, compared to the centuries of European geopolitical strife, these wars did not require long-term mobilizational strategies. As a result, these nationalist conflicts did not enhance state capacity. In the words of Joel Migdal, while the governments of such newly independent countries affect many spheres of social life, they lack the ability to direct these societies. Weak states confront strong societies (Migdal 1988).

Interstate war, in general, is increasingly considered an aberration. The international community considers war an illegal means of pursuing foreign policy objectives (Zacher 2001). Thus, the United Nations only legitimizes force under specific conditions. Furthermore, for much of the Cold War the bipolar environment stifled conflict. Many wars of the post-1945 era were internal conflicts, or conflicts between the lesser powers. In addition, nuclear weapons and the balance of power made great power conflict unwinnable. Finally, territorial aggrandizement has become more difficult and is no longer a prerequisite for the accumulation of wealth (Spruyt 2005).

For these reasons, warfare has declined in frequency and has become virtually obsolete in Europe and the Americas. Arguably, the likelihood of interstate war, although not improbable in Asia and Africa, has declined even there. The lack of frequent, intense conflict has retarded the development of strong states in regions such as Africa (Herbst 1989). Given a low population density and high costs of creating an administrative infrastructure, pre-colonial African states largely concentrated state resources in a key core area with state control receding further away from the core. Boundaries were permeable. The current international system, however, recognizes the imperially imposed borders to mark the extent of (ascribed) state authority. African political elites have embraced these borders in an attempt to expand their own power and mediate external pressures. Tellingly, Herbst criticizes this artificiality: "the fundamental problem with the boundaries in Africa is not that they are too weak but that they are too strong" (Herbst 2000, 253).

In some areas the state lacks a monopoly of violence altogether. Instead, multiple groups vie with each other for internal control of the state (Reno 1998). Some of these groups might provide some public goods, resembling the beginnings of proto-states in late medieval Europe. "Shadow states" thus emerge in lieu of recognized public authority. In many cases, however, rulers tend to pursue more particularistic gains favoring narrow clienteles or ethnic communities. Warlordism, trafficking in drugs or conflict diamonds, and ethnic conflicts emerge in their wake.

The absence of an actor who holds a monopoly on the legitimate exercise of force has led to the introduction of private actors who possess means of violence (Singer 2003). As Avant (2005) points out, the consumers and suppliers for these private

<sup>12</sup> The former Yugoslavia or India and Pakistan might be construed as exceptions.

actors come from a wide array of actors. Thus, whereas European states saw a gradual monopolization of violence and the gradual eradication of armed private actors (Thomson 1989, 1990), some areas in Africa are witnessing the opposite trend.

The internal features of weak and failed states might contradict some expectations from international relations. Whereas this literature has largely studied patterns of international interaction by examining developed states, weaker states in the developing world might not follow expected patterns of balancing and bandwagoning (David 1991; Lemke 2003).

## 5.2 The Economic Environment and Late State Formation

These newly emerging states also face a different economic environment than early European states. Not only has the direct link between warfare and state making been severed, but it has weakened the traditional mercantilist junction of state making and modernization. The barriers to interstate war thus hinder the ability of emerging states to create, and mobilize, consolidated internal markets, and at the same time pursue state revenue by external aggrandizement.

Mercantilist state making has been further impeded by the spread of liberal capitalism. American hegemony explicitly yoked the creation of the Bretton Woods system to the denunciation of mercantilist practice and imperial preference. While primarily intended to delimit the protectionist and interventionist practices of the European great powers, this subsequently had consequences for their erstwhile colonies.

Globalization of trade and capital markets has also led to pressures for convergence. If strong states, such as France, had to give way due to international capital flight in the early 1980s (Garrett 1992), such constraints must hold a fortiori for less developed countries. How much latitude states still have to pursue neo-mercantilist strategies and thus link economic development and state making, as late developing European states could (Gerschenkron 1962; Hall 1986), is an ongoing matter of debate. Arguably the East Asian states succeeded in state development because they found means to utilize protectionist measures and industrial policy to their benefit (Johnson 1982; Amsden 1989; Deyo 1987). Richard Stubbs (1999) submits that the East Asian states managed to develop during the Cold War by a classical linking of preparation for war (due to the communist threat) and economic development (partially with support of American capital and aid.). Neo-mercantilist economic policy, state development, and authoritarian government went hand in hand. Indeed, there is some evidence that the more successful developing states in the 1990s, such as China, resisted the "Washington consensus" that preached the virtues of less government intervention and liberal trade (Wade 2003).

Given the apparent success of the East Asian "tigers" one inevitably must ask why state making and interventionist economic policy making did not lead to state capture and rent seeking by elites in that region, and why the developmental state has had less success elsewhere (Haggard and Kaufman 1995). In comparing two Middle Eastern states (Turkey and Syria) with South Korea and Taiwan, David

Waldner claims that premature incorporation of popular classes during the state-building process had an adverse effect on economic development (Waldner 1999). South Korea and Taiwan, by contrast, managed to hold back participation and distributive pressures. Thus rather than see differential external factors as causes for successful economic takeoff and state formation, this alternative line of enquiry explains variation by different internal trajectories of coalition building.

Other newly emerging states have followed alternative paths of economic mobilization. In the standard European developmental path, internal mobilization for war and economic development often meant a tradeoff for the ruler between mobilization and participation. In common parlance, taxation required representation. Absolutist rulers could only circumvent the connection by making potential opponents of royal centralization tax exempt. The lack of taxation of the aristocracy thus correlated with the absence of effective parliamentary oversight in pre-revolutionary France, Spain, and Prussia.

Some of the newly independent states that possess considerable natural resources, however, can obtain resources without making such tradeoffs. Rents accruing from natural resources, particularly in natural gas and oil, allow governments to provide essential public goods, or side payments to potential dissidents, without having to make concessions. The rentier state literature thus argues that rentier economies show an inverse correlation with democracy (Anderson 1986; Chaudhry 1997; Dillman 2000; Karl 1997; Vandewalle 1998). The standard rentier argument was developed with particular reference to the Middle East, but the argument has been applied to other states as well. Intriguingly, the notion of rents might also be extended to other export commodities, or even foreign aid.<sup>13</sup>

But there is some debate whether rentier states inevitably lead to societal acquiescence. In one perspective, rentier economies might generate the very conditions that precipitate dissidence. Because governments selectively allocate rents to select groups, the presence of considerable financial resources makes it worthwhile for the excluded group to mobilize its constituency to challenge the existing authority (Okruhlik 1999).

In another intriguing line of enquiry, some scholars have examined the relation between economic context and the state through formal models. This has yielded interesting observations with regards to efficient state size and the number of states in the international system. Alesina and Spolaore (1997) start from the premiss that public goods provision is more efficient in larger units. Thus, a fictitious social planner could maximize world average utility by designing states of optimal size with an equilibrium number of units. Several factors, however, will offset the benefits of large jurisdictions. First, heterogeneous populations will make uniform public goods provision more costly. Second, given diverse preferences and the declining efficiency of provision the further one resides from the center of the country, democratic rulers will not be able to create optimal redistributive systems as efficiently as rulers who can unilaterally maximize utility. Third, an international liberal trading scheme will decrease the costs for small jurisdictions.

<sup>13</sup> For a good overview of some of this literature, see Cooley (2001).



They have extended this line of analysis to the provision of security as a public good (Alesina and Spolaore 2005). A geopolitical hostile environment creates benefits for large jurisdictions, as security provision will be more efficient. With declining international competition such benefits will recede and the number of nations will expand.

International relations scholars have made similar observations, albeit from different analytic perspectives. Michael Desch (1996) thus argued, following realist views in international relations scholarship, that the durability of alliances and territorial integrity were heavily dependent on the presence of external threat. Events since the end of the Cold War seem to have borne such expectations out. Moreover, if Alesina and Spolaore are correct, the attempts to foster democratic regimes in many of the new states will not necessarily lead to economically efficient outcomes. Finally, their analysis comports well with Herbst's (2000) argument. The artificial borders of many African states, which thus comprise many diverse ethnic communities, have coincided with inefficient economic outcomes and the suboptimal provision of public goods.

### 5.3. Legitimizing the State in Newly Emerging Polities

The preceding observations have serious consequences for rulers seeking to legitimize their rule and the existing territorial borders. The ideological legitimization of the sovereign, territorial state in Europe involved a threefold process. First, it required the triumph of rule based on territoriality. The idea of a theocratic, universalist non-territorial organization based on a Christian community had to be displaced in favor of territorial identification. Already by the fourteenth century kings had started to challenge papal claims to rule. And by the sixteenth century, by the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, territorial rulers came to determine the dominant religious identification of their state.

Second, the state had to contend with alternative forms of identification and loyalty—ethnic community, clans, kinship structures, and trans-territorial loyalties (as with feudal obligations). National language, public education, compulsory military service, and other strategies were enlisted to “forge peasants into Frenchmen” (Weber 1979; Posen 1993). The emergence of national armies and citizenship went hand in hand. In exchange for public goods provision and protection, citizens had to do more than pay taxes; they had to serve with life and limb to defend the national community (Levi 1998). The creation of a nation to identify with the particular territorial space, consequently, involved a destruction of local variation and identification and a reconstruction of a national citizen.

Third, in the process of contractual bargaining or even by coercive imposition of authority over time, the state acquired a taken-for-granted character. The greater the contractarian nature of the state, the greater the ability of the state to acquire legitimacy. But even authoritarian states, once they had attached legitimate rule to the disembodied state, rather than a particular dynastic lineage, could count on popular support in moments of crisis, such as war.

Few of these processes are at work in the newly independent states of the last decades. Territorial identification has not uniformly displaced trans-territorial affinity based on language and religion. For example, whether the idea of territorially demarcated authority is compatible with theocratic organization in the Muslim world still remains a matter of debate (Piscatori 1986). The interplay of trans-territorial claims to rule varies by historical legacy, the particular manifestation of the dominant religion on the ground, and even individual rulers' calculations. Even within the same country territorial rulers themselves have at particular junctures championed trans-territorial affinities while their successors denied such claims. In Egypt, Nasser invoked pan-Arab loyalties, while Sadat proved more an Egyptian nationalist. While many Middle East rulers (Gause 1992) have largely abjured the trans-territorial claims of their early independence, the legitimacy of their authority remains contested.

The newly independent states of the former Soviet Union have not been immune either. Some scholars have suggested an attraction of pan-Turkic identification (Mandelbaum 1994). Others see legitimization problems which look similar to those of the Middle Eastern states given the tensions between secular rulers, often the direct heirs of the Communist Party cadres, and religious authorities.

In many newly independent states local affinities of tribe, ethnic community, clan, and kin dominate any sense of national citizenship. In the Middle East and North Africa, states such as Tunisia and Egypt, which were historically relatively autonomous entities prior to colonial subjugation, have had a longer track record of melding local identity with territory (Anderson 1987). Other states, such as on the Arabian peninsula, have had to contend with various alternate loci of identification, some of which were fostered by colonial rule. Similarly, in the newly independent states of Central Asia, traditional loyalties, like clan networks, continue to provide means of representation vis-à-vis state authorities as well as means for demanding state distribution towards such networks (Collins 2004).

This pattern holds equally in Africa as in many states of Asia. Even where nationalist elites gained their independence by force of arms rather than by metropolitan retreat, these elites have not always been successful in creating a national identity. For instance, although the Indonesian army obtained considerable popular support in its struggles with the Dutch, the national project has largely been seen as a Javanese one. Ethnic and regional tensions have thus resurfaced in such places as Borneo, Atjeh, and Ambon.

In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet area as well, nationalist elites have had mixed success. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia dissolved altogether, while Romania, Hungary, and many of the former Union republics continue to face multiple challenges. Within the former Soviet Union, the Baltics, who could fall back on a prior historical legacy of independence, have fared better in muting virulent tensions.

As said, these states emerged due to a mixture of imperial collapse, metropolitan withdrawal, international delegitimization of empire, and nationalist resistance. In very few instances were elites involved in contractarian bargaining with social actors. Nationalist alliances were often agreements of convenience rather than durable quid pro quo exchanges as in European state formation. The internal features of successful

state making were absent and thus logically the means through which rulers could justify their authority.

This is not to say that national elites in all newly emerged states are doomed to failure. Although public goods provision might be suboptimal in heterogeneous populations, and although there are reasons to fear deleterious overall effects of ethnic diversity on economic growth, strategic choices to mitigate the effects of ethnic cleavages can bear fruit. For example, there is some evidence that nation-building efforts in Tanzania, despite a highly heterogeneous population, and despite limited resources, have met with considerable success. In Tanzania, the government chose a national language policy, reformed local governments following independence, distributed public expenditures equitably, and adopted a national school curriculum. As a result public school expenditures show far less correlation with ethnicity and the nation-building project as a whole has been relatively successful. In Kenya, conversely, public goods have been distributed far less equitably and nation building has stalled (Miguel 2004). Taking Tanzania as a “less likely case” for successful nation building, given its low level of economic development and its ethnic diversity, suggests that deliberate state strategies might yield modest success even under difficult circumstances.

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## 6 INSTITUTIONAL LEGACIES OF EMPIRE

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There is, given the observations above, a broad consensus that late state formation outside of the Western experience, and particularly in the developing countries, occurs in a vastly different environment and will thus diverge from the European model. In addition to a different geopolitical and economic milieu, the newly independent states differ from the European trajectory in that many of them emerged in the wake of imperial disintegration and retreat. The study of emerging states thus sparked enquiry into the institutional consequences of imperial rule.

The former Soviet space and Eastern Europe have proven particularly fertile ground for comparative political studies. Given the relative similarity of background conditions (particularly in the former USSR), these states lend themselves to cross-case analyses regarding institutional choice and the consequences of institutional type (Laitin 1991; Elster 1997). What kinds of institutions emerged during this third wave of democratization? With scarcely more than a decade gone by, it appears evident that many polities in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have opted for strong presidential systems (Easter 1997).

One hardly needs to mention that the consequences of presidential and parliamentary systems remain a matter of debate within the comparative politics literature. Those in favor of parliamentary forms of government argue that presidential systems lend themselves to abuse of power and are poorly equipped to deal with multiethnic societies (Lijphart 1977; Linz 1996; Skach and Stepan). Presidential systems will thus be prone to

eroding democratic rights and to limiting parliamentary opposition. Conversely, others argue that parliamentary systems might be as prone to abuse and winner-take-all policies as presidential systems (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997). Comparative study of these states in the years ahead will be a fruitful avenue of enquiry to test these rival arguments.

Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics also provide a laboratory for the study of economic transition. Shortly after independence, proponents of “shock therapy” held sway.<sup>14</sup> Economists suggested that a successful, rapid transition to a capitalist system was feasible. Subsequent analysis, partially on the basis of comparisons with Western European state formation and economic development, remained far more skeptical. Political and social conditions that had accompanied takeoff in Western Europe seemed absent. Paradoxically, states which seemed to have inherited fewer institutional and material resources from the USSR, such as the Ukraine, proved to be more successful in their transition than Russia itself, which could build on the state capacity left from the USSR (Motyl 1997).

Finally, this region has provided generalizable theoretical insights about institutional arrangements and territorial fragmentation. Valerie Bunce suggests in her comparative analysis of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and the USSR that civil–military relations and ethnofederal institutions are key elements that may contribute to territorial dissolution (Bunce 1999).<sup>15</sup> More recent research, however, suggests that ethnofederal solutions might not have such adverse consequences and might be able to deal with heterogeneous populations. A balance between the core region and other units might be critical for the stability of the ethnofederal arrangement (Hale 2004).

The Soviet ethnofederal system also had some unique features that contributed to its demise. The Soviet titular elite policy officially linked particular nationalities to territorial entities but also created incentives for the agents (the titular elites) to disregard commands from the principal (the Communist Party), particularly when oversight mechanisms declined while at the same time rewards from the center diminished. Steven Solnick utilizes such a principal–agent framework to contrast Chinese territorial integrity during its economic transition with the collapse of the USSR (Solnick 1996).<sup>16</sup> Randall Stone (1996) has argued that lack of oversight and information problems plagued principal (USSR) and agents (the East European states) as well—seriously distorting their pattern of trade.

Finally, scholarship has also turned to the question whether colonial legacies show commonalities across time and space, despite widely divergent historical and cultural trajectories. A growing body of research has started to compare the states of Central Asia and African states (Beissinger and Young 2002; Jones-Luong 2002). These states share various features in common that do not bode well for their subsequent development. They share poverty, a history of institutionalized corruption, patrimonial institutions,

<sup>14</sup> One such proponent was Anders Aslund (1995).

<sup>15</sup> Other accounts that look at the particular nature of Soviet ethnofederalism are Brubaker (1994); Roeder (1991); Suny (1993).

<sup>16</sup> For another account using a neo-institutionalist logic, see Nee and Lian (1994).

and weak state development due to imperial domination. Nevertheless some of these states have embarked on modest democratic trajectories (such as Kyrgyzstan) while others remain authoritarian (such as Uzbekistan). Similarly, some sub-Saharan states show modest economic success (such as Botswana) while others evince abject failure (such as Zimbabwe). Cross-regional comparison, therefore, might allow greater specification of the causal variables for state failure, economic takeoff, and democratic reform.

To conclude, the study of the state is alive and well. Indeed, there has been a dramatic revival of studies of state formation, the linkage between state formation and regime type, as well as of state failure. It is also clear that subfield boundaries fade into the background in the study of such substantive macro-level questions. While the integration of subfields has been most manifest within comparative politics and international relations, other subfields may contribute greatly as well. American politics, in its nuanced understanding of institutional choices and their consequences, can shed light on how electoral reforms might enable or constrain economic growth and democratic reform. Questions of citizenship, identity politics, and legitimacy inevitably involve political philosophy.

Aside from multidisciplinary, the study of the state must be historical. For better or for worse, it is the European state system which has been superimposed on the rest of the world. The differences in historical environment and the divergent trajectories not only shed light on the problems confronting the newly independent states of the last half-century, but possibly point the way to remedies which might start to address the dire effects of state failure.

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