

CHAPTER 4

The nation-state

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Reader's guide

The most significant political units of the modern world are generally referred to as 'states' or '**nation-states**'. It is within and between states that contemporary political business is carried out. This chapter explains how this particular kind of political unit came into being and how it became dominant. It provides the conceptual and historical background for the study of many themes of comparative politics. We suggest that this chapter is read in combination with Chapter 24 on 'Globalization and the nation-state', which discusses some recent challenges to the dominance of this political unit.

Introduction

The comparative analysis of the arrangements under which political activity is carried out considers chiefly a multiplicity of interdependent but separate, more or less autonomous, units—let us call them polities. Polities differ among themselves in numerous significant respects, and entertain with one another relations—friendly or antagonistic—which reflect those differences. These exist against the background of considerable similarities. The most important of these qualify the polities making up the modern political environment for being called ‘states.’

The expression ‘state’ has been applied by scholars to polities which have existed in pre-modern contexts—say, to ancient Egypt, or imperial China. Here we suggest that ‘state’ is more appropriately used to designate the polities characteristic of the *modern political environment*, which came into being in Western Europe at the end of the Middle Ages, roughly between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries.

First, this chapter offers a general and streamlined portrait of the state—a concept that sociologists inspired by Max Weber might call an ideal type. It comprised a set of traits embodied in most states to a greater or lesser extent. Some significant contemporary developments within the modern political environment have brought into being polities to which some features of the portraits—for instance, *sovereignty* (see Chapter 24)—apply poorly, if at all. On this account, particularly in certain parts of the world some polities are designated, both in scholarly and in public discourse, as *failed states*.

As against these, the conceptual portrait that follows privileges what *proper states* are like. But even these embody to a different extent the portrait’s features, having acquired them through diverse historical processes.

KEY POINTS

- Most contemporary political units (polities) share features which justify calling them ‘states’.
- To that extent, they all constitute present-day embodiments of a kind of polity which first developed in the modern West. But such embodiments are realized in them to different extents and in different manners.
- Comparative politics considers both the constitutive features of the ‘state’ and the major steps in its development.

A portrait of the state

Monopoly of legitimate violence

States are in the first place polities where a single centre of rule has established (to a variable extent and manner)

its exclusive entitlement to control and employ the ultimate medium of political activity—organized violence—over a definite territory. Individuals and bodies operating within that territory may occasionally exercise violence, but if they do so without mandate or permission from the centre of rule, the latter considers that exercise illegitimate and compels them to ‘cease and desist.’¹

Territoriality

To qualify as a state the polity must not only effectively ‘police’ a given portion of the earth by overwhelming any internal challenges to its own monopoly of legitimate violence. It must also claim that portion, against all comers, as exclusively its own: must be able and disposed to defend it, patrol its boundaries, confront and push back any encroachment by other states upon its territory’s integrity, and prevent any unauthorized exploitation of its resources. Once more, the ultimate medium of such activities is organized violence.

The territory is not simply a locale of the state’s activities (violent or other), or its cherished possession. Rather, it represents the physical aspect of the state’s own identity, the very *ground* (this expression is itself a significant metaphor) of its existence and of its historical continuity. The state does not so much *have* a territory; rather, it *is* a territory (Romano 1947: 56).

Sovereignty

With reference to its territory, furthermore, the state establishes and practices its sovereignty—that is, holds within it (and thus over its population) ultimate authority. Each state recognizes no power superior to itself. It engages in political activity on nobody’s mandate but its own, commits to it resources of its own, operates under its own steam, at its own risk. It is the sole judge of its own interests and bears the sole responsibility for defining and pursuing those interests, beginning with its own security. Sovereignty also means that each state accepts no interference from others in its own domestic affairs.

Plurality

Thus, the modern political environment presents a plurality of territorially discrete, self-empowering, self-activating, self-securing states. Each of these presupposes the existence of all others, and each is in principle their equal, for it shares with them its own characteristics—sovereignty in particular. Since there does not exist a higher layer of authority over the states—an overarching political unit endowed with its own resources for violence, entitled to oversee and control the states themselves—these necessarily tend to regard each other as

potentially hostile, as constituting possible threats to their own security, and enter into relations with one another aimed in the first instance to neutralize those threats.

Relation to the population

States exercise rule over people and pursue policies binding on people. But states, though they sometimes project themselves as self-standing personified entities, are themselves *made of* people and operate exclusively within and through the activities of individuals. Thus, the existence itself of states involves a form of social inequality, a more or less stable and pronounced asymmetry between people exercising rule (a minority) and people subject to it (the great majority).

Such asymmetry is to an extent bounded and justified by the sense in which both parts to it belong together, and collectively constitute a distinctive entity—a *political community*. For this community the activities of rule represent a medium for coming into being, for achieving and maintaining a shared identity, for pursuing putatively common interests. As is the case for the territory, the relationship between the state and its population is not purely factual; the population is not perceived as a mere demographic entity, but as a people (or, as we shall see, as a nation). As such, it entertains a constitutive relation with the state itself.

All this, of course, lends itself to much ideological mystification. For instance, it induced Marx to speak of the nation as an ‘illusory’ community and to reject the view of the people or the nation as the source and/or carrier of the state’s sovereignty. But how illusory can you call a commonality in the name of which feats of great magnitude and significance have been accomplished (for good or for evil) throughout modern history?

KEY POINTS

- Internally, states possess a single centre of power that reserves for itself the faculty of exercising or threatening legitimate violence.
- A state does not respond to any other power for the uses to which it puts that faculty and others.
- The state uses organized violence to protect one portion of the earth which it considers its own territory. It claims exclusive jurisdiction over the population inhabiting that territory and considers itself as solely entitled to define and to pursue its interests.
- Externally, each state exists side by side with other states, all endowed with the same characteristics, and considers them as potential contenders, allies, or neutral parties.

A more expansive concept

A definition of the state in Weber’s *Economy and Society* stresses what I have said so far and introduces the points to be made in this section.

The primary formal characteristics of the modern state are as follows: it possesses an administrative and legal order subject to change by legislation, to which the organised activities of the administrative staff, which are also controlled by regulations, are oriented. This system of order claims authority, not only over the members of the state, the citizens, most of whom have obtained membership by birth, but also to a very large extent over all action taking place in the area of its jurisdiction. It is thus a compulsory organisation with a territorial basis. Furthermore, today, the use of force is regarded as legitimate only so far as it is permitted by the state or prescribed by it. (Weber 1978: 56)

This definition points to additional features of states active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—though of course individual states display them to a different extent and in different ways. This *diversity* is the main theme of the study of comparative politics.

The role of law

We begin by noting that *law*, understood as a set of general enforceable commands and prohibitions, has played a significant role in the construction and management of states. In all societies, law so understood has chiefly performed two functions: first, to repress antisocial behaviour; second, to allocate between groups or individuals access to and disposition over material resources. In the West, however, law has been put to further uses: *establishing polities, deliberating and pursuing policies, instituting public agencies and offices, and activating and controlling their operations.*

These uses of law developed first in the Greek *polis*, then in the Roman Republic and Empire. Subsequently, European polities maintained a connection with the realm of law: rulers were expected to serve justice, observe it in their own conduct, and enforce it in adjudicating disputes and punishing crimes. But for a long time the commandments in question were understood to express folkways and the moral values of religion. Local judges and juries were said to *find* the law, and were not meant to *make* it. Much less did the rulers do so. Instead, they mostly enforced the verdicts of judges and juries.

This arrangement subsequently changed. Rulers undertook to play a more active legal role. Increasingly assisted by trained officials, they began to codify local vernacular sets of customs and usages and to enforce them uniformly over the territory. Above all, they

asserted themselves as the source of a new kind of law—*public* law. This regulated the relations on the one hand between the organs and offices of the state itself, and on the other between the state and various categories of individuals and groups, generally asserting the supremacy of the former's interests over those of the latter.

Two later developments counterbalanced one another. On the one hand, it was increasingly asserted that *all law was such only in so far as it was produced by the state*, through special organs and procedures. Law had become, so to speak, the exclusive speech of the state. On the other hand, *the state declared itself bound by its own laws*. The activities of its organs and the commands of state officials were considered valid only if their content or, more often, the ways in which they were produced, conformed with some express legal principles, such as those contained in **constitutions**.

To an extent that varied in time and from region to region, the state—without ceasing to assert its own grounding in sheer might—became involved in producing and implementing (and, by the same token, complying with) arrangements expressed in legal instruments of diverse kinds: constitutions, statutes, decrees, judgments, ordinances, and by-laws.

Centralized organization

These instruments make up a more or less explicit and binding hierarchy of legal sources. Typically, the constitution lies at the top, by-laws stand lower than statutes, and so on. This is so in three closely related senses.

1. Higher sources authorize and place boundaries upon lower ones.
2. The products of lower sources can change without altering the content of higher ones, but can articulate and specify them in different and variable ways.
3. The verified contrast between the content of a higher source and that of a lower one invalidates the lower one. Special judicial organs are empowered to issue judgements of different scope or gravity. Higher ones may review and nullify or revise the judgements of lower ones.

Other aspects of the state reveal a preoccupation with unity and coherence, and express it through hierarchy. For instance, the monopoly in the exercise of violence has a legal aspect (Max Weber speaks of 'legitimate force'). But much more significant are its organizational components, summarized in the contemporary expression 'command, communication, and control', without which that monopoly cannot be secured.

Those components have sometimes a very loose relationship (if any) to legal constraints. The organizational blueprint of the state mostly reveals a *managerial rather than a legal* rationality. It is chiefly intended to make the

operations of all state agencies as responsive as possible to the directives of the political centre, and to render them uniform, prompt, predictable, and economical.

The distinction between state and society

The distinction between 'state' and '(civil) society', theorized by Hegel among others, is more or less expressly reflected in the constitution of several Western states. The state, in principle, is an ensemble of arrangements and practices which address *all and only* the political aspects of the management of a territorially bounded society. It represents and justifies itself as a realm of expressly political activities (legislation, jurisdiction, police, military action, public policy) complementary to a different realm—society—comprising diverse social activities not considered political in nature, which the state organs do not expressly promote and control. Individuals undertake those activities in their private capacities, pursue values and interests of their own, and establish among themselves relations which are not the concern of public policy.

Religion and the market

At the centre of society stand two sets of concerns which for a long time the state had considered very much as its own, but subsequently released from its control.

First, the state becomes increasingly secular. That is, it progressively dismisses any concern with the spiritual welfare of individuals, which previously it had fostered, mostly by privileging (and professing) one religion and associating itself with one church. (A critical reason for this development was the breakdown of the religious unity of the West caused by the Reformation.) Second, the state progressively entrusts to the two central institutions of private law—*property* and *contract*—the legal discipline of the activities which relate to the production and distribution of wealth, and which increasingly take place via the *market*.

However, one meaning of sovereignty is that the state's specific concern with external security and public order may override those of private individuals, especially in confronting emergencies. Furthermore, private activities are carried out within frameworks of public rules which the state is responsible for enacting and enforcing.

However, it is the state's prerogative to fund its own activities by extracting resources from the economy. Typically, the modern state is a 'taxation state': it extracts resources from the society's economic system chiefly by regularly levying moneys from stocks and flows of private wealth. Such levies, authorized by law and carried out by public officials, are compatible with the security of private property and with the autonomous operations of the market. The name itself of another subsidiary form of

extraction, the *public debt*, again suggests that compatibility: private individuals become creditors of the state. The significance of these phenomena, which are often the subject of controversy, has been argued by Stasavage (2011).

Various aspects of the *interaction* between the state's economic interests and the society's political interests are a constant component of modern social dynamics, often characterized by such expressions as *politics and the market*. What is characteristic of many *failed states* is the frequency and the extent to which the occupants of significant positions in the political system misappropriate, and put to their own advantage, enormous amounts of economic resources officially destined for public use. Sometimes its critics label this phenomenon—particularly evident in some parts of Africa—*kleptocracy*: that is, rule by thieves. But the phenomenon is present in other parts of the world. For example, in 2015, at the end of Cristina Kirchner's tenure of the Presidency of the Argentinian Republic, it was calculated that over its twelve-year duration her family's patrimony had increased eight-fold.

In the modernization of different societies, the distinction between state and society is accompanied by further processes of differentiation taking place within both realms. For instance, within the civil society there emerges a domain—science—which attends expressly and exclusively to the production and distribution of secular knowledge about nature, autonomously from religious authorities. Within the state itself, the so-called 'separation of powers' between the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive constitutes the outcome of a process of differentiation. The process also produces its effects in the context of the executive, with the development of bureaucratic systems of administration (see also Chapter 8). As a result, the state increasingly presents itself as a complex of purposely differentiated and coordinated parts, each designed to perform a specific task.

The public sphere

Behind these aspects of political modernization lies a further phenomenon—the formation of the '**public sphere**' as a kind of hinge between state and society. As if to balance and complement the extent to which the state monitors and assists the processes of the civil society, the subjects active in it acquire a capacity first to observe the activities of the state, then to communicate with one another about them, to criticize them, and finally to make significant inputs into them. This is only possible, at first, for the narrow portion of the population possessing the leisure and the necessary material and cultural resources.

But over time this portion grows, availing itself of such arrangements as the freedom of speech, of the press, of petition, of **assembly**, of association; of rules that require

some state organs to conduct their activities in public, exposing them to legitimate debate and criticism; above all, of the institutions of 'representative' government. Due to these in particular, the selection of the small minorities who directly and continuously operate some state organs comes to depend on registering the preferences periodically expressed by the much larger numbers of people making up the electorate.

At first, only a narrow minority within the population can form and express such preferences. Even as that minority grows, with the progress of **liberalism**, for a long time its rights remain limited by two qualifications: (1) material possessions (*census voting*) and (2) cultural attainments (*capacity voting*) (see also Chapter 5). We can characterize the progress of *democracy* as the progressive lowering and then elimination of these barriers. In the long run, the great majority of the adult population (mostly, until relatively recently, excluding women) acquires, through suffrage, an equal (though minimal) capacity to express political preferences and to impinge on the selection of governing elites and, via these, the formation and execution of public policy.

The new 'entrants into politics' are mobilized by expressly formed organizations—political parties (see Chapter 12)—which compete in order to determine directly who at a given time has the decisive say in legislative and executive organs, and indirectly the content of their activities. In this manner, public policy is increasingly the product of 'adversary politics', of a periodic, legitimate contest between parties for electoral support. The party which has failed in a given contest can publicly criticize the policies of the successful party, elaborate alternative policies, and seek success in the next contest.

The burden of conflict

Although we generally think of political participation chiefly as entailing a *vertical* flow of influence from the society at large towards its political summit, we should not forget the etymological meaning of 'participation'—*taking sides*—that points instead to a *horizontal* split, a division within the society itself. Put otherwise: through the public sphere the contrasts of opinion on political matters formed within the society map themselves onto the state, affecting the operations of its legislative organs and of those charged with the formation and **implementation** of policy.

Political alignments such as parties often derive their conflicting policy orientations from deep and longstanding *social cleavages* within the population (see Chapter 13). Some **cleavages** do not just represent different orientations of opinion concerning single issues, but also reflect serious cultural differences (say, between religious or linguistic groups), tensions between a country's centre and its periphery, ethnic differences, or sharp

class antagonisms. In the modern political vocabulary, the significance of such a threat is evident in such negative expressions as 'sectionalism', 'factionalism', 'partisan-ship', or 'interest', and in the contrasting emphasis on the necessity of protecting the state's 'unity' from such phenomena, appealing instead to the generality's 'loyalty', 'discipline', and 'spirit of sacrifice'.

Citizenship and nation

In most modern states, this threat is countered by two different and to an extent complementary strategies: **citizenship** and the nation.

Citizenship

The first strategy consists in the institution of citizenship, which finds its primordial expression in the dictum *all citizens are equal before the law*. Eventually, the principle came to signify the progressive inclusion of all individuals making up the people into a formally equal relationship to the state itself. Individuals placed under the same obligations and enjoying the same entitlements vis-à-vis the state were made to feel more equal to one another. Furthermore, their activities relating to the public sphere were put at the service of a new principle of equality, associated with the progress of democracy, and originally phrased as *one man, one vote*.

Under this principle, as we have seen, broader and broader masses of individuals entered the political process and made inputs into the state's activities via the electoral competition between parties. Those supported chiefly by economically disadvantaged strata promoted public policies that added to citizenship new entitlements towards the state. These, to an extent, reduced, or compensated for, economic inequalities generated among individuals by market processes and the resultant class cleavage.

However, this happened by mobilizing class contrasts, by making the processes of creation and distribution of wealth an object of public contention and of policy, no longer shielded from the state by the separateness of the economic realm and the autonomy of the market. The state acknowledged the significance of socio-economic cleavages and expressly worked to reduce it via the increasing operations of the **welfare state**. To this end it extracted from the economy greater and greater resources, and entrusted them to expressly created public organs, charged with both redistributing some of those resources and assisting the economy in producing further ones. This process, however, also produced negative effects, at any rate from the standpoint of the elites privileged by the workings of the economy—although often also elites, these variously benefitted from the growing involvement of the state in economic affairs.

Nationhood

The second strategy seeks to generate in the whole society, across the classes, a shared sense of solidarity grounded on nationhood. The political community typical of modern states understands itself as a *nation*. Most of the polities with which this book deals define themselves as nation-states; the relations of states with one another make up international politics; the pursuit of the national interest by each state is supposed to be the key rationale of those relations. Finally, **nationalism** is widely seen (for better or for worse) as a most significant determinant of political activity.

For all this, the concept of nation is notoriously hard to define. The etymology of the expression hints at a nation's origins in a shared biological heritage, for it has the same root as 'nature' and *nasci* (Latin for 'to be born'). And indeed some contemporary accounts of the concept, sometimes labelled 'ethnic', emphasize similarity (and continuity) of blood, attributing to the phenomenon of nationhood a primordial, biological origin. Although this emphasis is echoed in the ideologies of many political movements, it does not accord well with the fact that the reference to nationhood as a political value and the corresponding 'consciousness of kind' are by and large modern phenomena.

Reflecting this, most contemporary scholarly understandings of nationhood treat it as a response to, or a component of, other modern phenomena, such as industrialization, the diffusion of literacy, the emergence of media of communication addressing broader and broader publics, and indeed the state's need to generate at large a sense of identification with itself and of commitment to its interests. This view found exemplary expression in a statement the Italian statesman Massimo D'Azeglio made in 1861: 'We have made Italy, now we must make the Italians.' On this account, nations have recently been characterized as *imagined and socially constructed* communities (Anderson 1983) (see Box 4.1).

In this view, most nations have been brought into being by protracted, intense, diffuse communication processes, mostly activated by the state itself and carried out on its behalf, funded from the public purse, and carried out by modern intellectuals (historians, journalists, poets, musicians, teachers, political leaders). Their products are diffused by public education systems (whose audiences are to a various extent recruited through compulsion), and by symbolic practices promoted by the state (such as monuments, street names, public festivities, commemorations, and military parades). To the extent of its success, this operation sustains in the members of the public a sense of trust, mutual belonging, pride, and solidarity.

As a result of such socialization processes, a people who had lived for generations within the same framework of rule may come to share a value-laden, emotionally compelling image of its history and its destiny, a



BOX 4.1 DEFINITION Imagined communities

The nation is an 'imagined' political community.

- It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.
- It is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion human beings, has finite, if variable boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.
- It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born when Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely ordained hierarchical dynastic realm.
- It is imagined as a *community* because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived of as a deep horizontal comradeship.

Source: Adapted from Anderson (1983: 6–7).

sense of its own uniqueness and superior value. It comes to perceive itself as a distinctively significant, binding, active, collective entity. It generally identifies closely with the territory of the state, which it considers its own cradle and the material ground of its identity. Alternatively, it aspires to make the territory on which it resides the seat of a new self-standing state, intended to give political expression to its unity, to redeem its population from its painful and demeaning subjection to a state governed by foreigners. It may then happen that the emergence of a nation as a cultural entity *precedes* the formation of a state, intended to become the nation's own institutional container and give it political expression.

The emphasis on nationhood counteracts the tendency of the public sphere to project into the political realm divisions arising from the diverse, often conflicting, interests which motivate the activities of private individuals in the civil society. But the appeal to nationhood has also a more positive significance, which relates it to citizenship and the trend towards widening and enriching its significance.

Earlier in this chapter, I considered citizenship as a set of arrangements for reducing the economic under-privilege of large social groups, and thus their material distance from privileged groups. But the effort to reduce greater socio-economic inequality can also impart more significance to nationhood itself. In the historical career of citizenship the rhetoric of 'one nation' has played at least as great a role as that of 'social justice'. In fact, the earliest modern state-wide 'welfare' policies, initiated by

Bismarck in nineteenth-century Germany, were probably inspired more by the first concern than by the second. And one may detect a connection between the burden and suffering that the state's military ventures imposed on a people, supposedly on behalf of the national interest, and the state's attempt to ease those burdens or compensate for those sufferings through *welfare* initiatives.

Although, I would argue, political power maintains its ultimate grounding in the exercise or the threat of organized violence, the latter ceases to manifest itself openly and harshly in everyday experience. Most of the people professionally involved in (so to speak) the business of politics no longer differ markedly (as they did in earlier stages of state development) in their attire, their posture, their speech, the ways they relate to one another and to other people, from individuals involved in commerce, management, or the liberal professions.

Today, most kinds of political and administrative activity are carried out in peaceable and orderly sites (legislative bodies, courts, public agencies of various kinds), where people generally talk politely to one another, consult and refer to documents, argue about solutions to problems, negotiate arrangements, express reasons for their preferences, put forward proposals. Even when superiors expressly give binding orders to their subordinates, they refer at most in an implicit, covert manner to the sanctions which would follow from disobedience, and those sanctions rarely entail the exercise or the threat of violence. The highest and most general legal commands—say, statutes—are expressed in highly codified sophisticated language. Lower-level commands (say, a fine or an order to pay tax) are only valid and binding if they refer to higher-level ones.

This does not mean that political activity has lost its ability to threaten or exercise violence. However, the personnel routinely involved in it are generally (not in times of war) a minority among the multitude of people carrying out the manifold political activities characteristic of a developed state.

Generally, only people serving in the police and the armed forces are authorized and expected to bear arms, to wear uniforms. *They* belong to bodies where an imperious chain of command obtains; harsh sanctions may be promptly inflicted on those members who disobey or disregard orders. Thus, the threat or exercise of violence is entrusted to specialized personnel and separated from the normal practices of political authority, both materially (for instance, soldiers reside in barracks) and symbolically (consider again the uniforms worn by members of the army and the police, their visible markers of rank).

Punishment is no longer inflicted on miscreants in public places, or in a particularly visible, dramatic, cruel manner. The most common among serious punishments—imprisonment—is mostly carried out in a routinized, silent, invisible manner, in separate buildings, often out of the public eye. And the decision to bring to

bear the means of violence on criminals or on enemies belongs in principle to political personnel not themselves directly involved in practising violence—judges, members of representative bodies, and top political officials.

This kind of ‘civilianized’ arrangement typically does not diminish the state’s capacity for organized violence, but increases it. Paradoxically (but this effect had already been theorized by Hobbes) the increase in the *potential* for violence is typically accompanied by a decrease in the entity of *actual* exercise of violence. As they go about the ordinary business of their lives, individuals may be spared the experience of fear by the very fact that the potential violence monopolized by the state becomes more, not less, fearsome.

The conceptual portrait recapped

The modern political environment is composed of a plurality of states sharing some formal characteristics. Thanks to its monopoly of legitimate organized violence, each state exercises sovereign power over a population which inhabits a delimited territory, and constitutes a political community, often referred to as a nation. The interactions between states are normally peaceable, but since they are not overseen and regulated by a superior power capable of imposing sanctions, they ultimately depend on the armed might that each state can bring to bear in order to contrast or overwhelm other states pursuing interests opposed to its own. Thus those interactions are highly contingent and may periodically be adjusted by the threat or exercise of military action between the states involved.

Over the course of the last two or three centuries, many states have, to a greater or lesser degree, acquired additional traits. Their internal structure is generally designed and controlled by the laws each state produces and enforces, which in turn regulate its own activities. These are very diverse, and are generally carried out by a number of organs and specialized agencies. They deal directly with matters the state considers to be of public significance, viewing other matters as the primary concern of (civil) society, pursued on the initiative of individual citizens.

However, some state activities, including the making of laws and their enforcement, lay down frameworks for the pursuit by individuals of their own private concerns. Furthermore, the institutions of the public sphere may empower individuals to form and communicate opinions on state policies, and to organize themselves in parties which represent the diverse (and often contrasting) interests within the society, select the personnel of various state organs, and mandate their policies.

In the course of the last two centuries, most states have conferred on the individuals within their populations a variable set of citizenship entitlements, beginning with those relating to the public sphere, and comprising claims to various benefits and services provided by the

state, ultimately funded from the proceeds of the state’s fiscal activities. The advance of citizenship has often entailed making a public issue of socio-economic differences between individuals, and committing state policy to their moderation. For this reason it has often been contested. One may consider the appeal to nationhood, and the state’s positive efforts to ‘push’ that appeal, as a way of curbing the divisive effects of the contests over the reach and content of citizenship entitlements.



BOX 4.2 DEFINITION Citizenship

So far my aim has been to trace in outline the development of citizenship in England to the end of the nineteenth century. For this purpose I have divided citizenship into three elements: civil, political, and social. I have tried to show that civil rights came first, and were established in something like their modern form before the first Reform Act was passed in 1832. Political rights came next, and their extension was one of the main features of the nineteenth century, although the principle of universal political citizenship was not recognized until 1918. Social rights, on the other hand, sank to vanishing point in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their revival began with the establishment of public elementary education, but it was not until the twentieth century that they attained to equal partnership with the other two elements of citizenship.

Source: Marshall 1950: 27–8.

KEY POINTS

- States differentiate between their political activities and those of the civil society (the pursuit of private economic interests and the expression of personal beliefs and values). They articulate themselves through legal instruments (constitutions, statutes, decrees, various kinds of rulings) into units operated by distinct bodies of personnel. In particular, they have entrusted practices concerning internal order and external defence to the police and the military.
- In the democratic state, decisions over state policies are the products of the peaceable competition between parties seeking to maximize their electoral support in order to occupy the top positions in various state bodies and to promote the interests of their supporters.
- Policies pursued by states since the middle of the nineteenth century have sought to moderate inequalities by assigning individual members of the population civil, political, and social rights—i.e. citizenship (see Box 4.2).
- To counter divisive tendencies between groups, states have undertaken policies intended to generate a sense of commonality—chiefly, a sense of national belonging.

State development

The features of the state presented in the preceding section are the outcomes of complex historical events (see Box 4.3). These differed not just in their location in space and time, but also in (1) the sequence in which they occurred, (2) the degree to which their protagonists expressly sought to produce those outcomes, (3) the extent to which the features agreed or conflicted with one another, and (4) the impact they had on the patterns of political activity of each state, its relations to the civil society, and its capacity to respond to new challenges.

Furthermore, as we have seen, all states-in-the-making operated in the presence of one another, which led some states to imitate some aspects of others, or, on the contrary, to emphasize their differences. This further complicated the historical processes. For instance, some states previously unified by the successful efforts of royal dynasties sought to strengthen their unity by promoting a sense of nationhood. Later, other states imitated such a nation-building project. Furthermore, populations which, despite being ruled over by foreign powers, had somehow acquired a sense of themselves as ‘nations without states’ sought to build states of their own. Thus, in some cases **state-building** preceded nation-building; in other cases, it was the opposite.

The study of comparative politics necessarily simplifies these complex phenomena, for instance by stressing



BOX 4.3 DEFINITION Patterns of state formation

We can distinguish at least five paths in state formation.

1. Through *absolutist kingship* which obtained independent power by building up armies and bureaucracies solely responsible to monarchs (e.g. France, Prussia).
2. Through *kingship-facing judges and representative bodies* (and, within them, eventually political parties) which developed sufficient strength to become independent powers (e.g. England, Sweden).
3. State formation from below through *confederation or federation*, intended to preserve some degree of autonomy for the constituent ‘states’ and a general emphasis on the division of power within the centre through ‘checks and balances’ (e.g. Switzerland, US).
4. State formation through *conquest and/or unification* (e.g. Germany, Italy).
5. State formation through *independence* (e.g. Ireland, Norway, and cases of break-up of empires: Habsburg and Ottoman empires).

Source: Adapted from Daalder (1991: 14).

either differences or similarities between units. It contrasts states built early, in late medieval or early modern Europe (for instance, England or France), with others built during later stages of modernization (for instance, in the second half of the nineteenth century, as in the case of Germany or Italy). It distinguishes states built upon successful conquest (for instance, England) from those owing their existence to the breakdown of larger polities (for instance, contemporary Serbia or Ukraine).

This section of the chapter distinguishes three main phases within the story of state formation and development, which unfolded first in Europe, then extended to polities established elsewhere by European powers (for instance, North America), and later encompassed other parts of the world. However, the way in which it is narrated here chiefly reflects the European experience. Even in this context the succession of phases suggested purposely abstracts from a huge variety of events, incidents, and episodes which a properly historical treatment would have to reconstruct.

Consolidation of rule

We can label the first phase, which takes place largely between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries, ‘consolidation of rule’. During this phase, with different timings in different countries, a decreasing number of political centres each extend their control over a larger and larger portion of Europe. Each typically broadens the territorial reach of its own monopoly of legitimate violence and imposes it on other centres. The political map of the continent becomes simpler and simpler, since each centre now practises rule, in an increasingly uniform manner, over larger territories. Furthermore, these tend to become geographically more continuous and historically more stable—unless, of course, they become themselves objects of further processes of consolidation.

Sometimes these are peaceful. For instance, the scions of two dynasties ruling over different parts of Europe marry, and the territorial holdings of one spouse become welded to those of the other. However, consolidation is mostly the outcome of open conflicts between two centres over which one will control which territory. Such conflicts are mostly settled by war, followed by the winner conquering and forcibly annexing all or part of the loser’s territory. ‘States make war,’ as someone memorably put it, ‘and wars make states’ (Tilly 1990: 42).

However, waging war requires a financial capacity to muster resources—troops, officers, hardware—and deploy them against opponents, making them prevail in the clash of arms against the resources wielded by the enemy. Very often, military innovation confers an advantage to larger armies and fleets, which can wage war over more than one front, and become internally differentiated into ‘services’ performing distinct complementary military tasks. But such armies and fleets can only be afforded

by rulers who marshal larger resources, which in turn requires raising troops from larger populations, tapping the wealth produced by larger territories. This premium on size is a strong inducement to consolidation.

But the recourse to war, however frequent throughout European history, is intermittent. When weapons are silent, however temporarily, resources of a different nature come into play. Often, political centres intent on consolidating rule do this in response to an appeal for peace, which recurs most frequently in European history, often voiced by religious leaders. Each centre seeks to prove itself by establishing its control over a larger territory, thus putting an end to rivalries between lesser powers which would otherwise occasion war. This does not always involve prevailing over those powers in battle. Diplomatic action, alliances and coalitions, the ability to isolate opponents or to make them accept a degree of subordination, and sometimes the recourse to arbitration by the empire or the papacy also play a role.

Besides, military activity itself requires and produces rules of its own, the very core of an emerging body of law seeking, more or less successfully, to regulate aspects of the relations between states. Another significant part of such law makes conflict over territory less likely by laying down clear principles for succession into vacant seats of power, which generally make the exclusive entitlement to rule dependant on legitimate descent. Other developments contribute to the same effect, which we might call 'pacification'. In particular, advances in geography, in the measurement of terrain, and in cartography allow the physical reach of each centre of rule to be clearly delimited by geographical borders, often determined by features of the terrain. It remains true, as Hobbes put it, that states maintain towards one another, even when they are not fighting, 'a posture of warre'. But they partition the continent of Europe, and later other continents, in a clear and potentially stable manner.²

Rationalization of rule

There is often an overlap between the processes of consolidation in the first phase of state formation and development, and the processes of a second phase, which I label the 'rationalization of rule'. Consolidation, we have seen, produces larger, more visible, and stable containers of state power; **rationalization** bears chiefly on the ways in which such power is exercised. We can characterize such ways by distinguishing in turn three aspects of it: (1) **centralization**, (2) hierarchy, and (3) function. Let us take them in turn.

Centralization

In consolidating and then exercising rule, rulers largely availed themselves of the cooperation of various subordinate but privileged power-holders—chiefly, aristocratic

dynasties, towns and other local or regional bodies, bishops, and other ecclesiastical officials. Often that cooperation was granted only after the subordinate powers had been forced to renounce some of their privileges—in particular, especially as concerns aristocrats, that of waging private wars.

All the same, their later cooperation generally had to be negotiated, since the privileged powers maintained a degree of autonomous control over various resources, and managed them in the first instance on their own behalf. They could be induced to do so on the ruler's behalf only under certain conditions, sanctioned by tradition or by express agreements between themselves and the ruler. For instance, the cooperating lesser powers would extract economic resources from the local population under their jurisdiction in order to convey them to the ruler. But they would do so only if they had given their consent to the purpose to which the ruler intended to commit those resources. They often kept a fairly large part of those resources for themselves, and controlled locally the ways in which the remainder of them were managed and expended in their respective part of the territory.

Obviously, such arrangements considerably limit the rulers' freedom of action, their ability to lay down policy for the state as a whole and have it promptly, reliably, and uniformly implemented over the whole territory. They make the conduct of political and administrative business discontinuous and sometimes erratic, since who is charged with it at a given time—in particular, qua head of an aristocratic lineage—depends on the vagaries of hereditary succession, and often has no particular inclination or capacity for that business. Even the cooperation granted, as we have seen, by constituted collective bodies (the so-called 'estates') tends to give priority to their particular interests, and thus to preserve traditional arrangements, beginning with their autonomy. This makes it difficult for the ruler to coordinate and render predictable the practices of the several powers interposed between himself at the top and, at the bottom, a territory made larger by consolidation and its population.

To remedy this situation, rulers progressively dispossess the existent individuals and bodies of their faculties and facilities they had employed in their political and administrative tasks.³ They put in place alternative arrangements for performing both those tasks and those required by new circumstances. Instead of relying on their former cooperators, they choose to avail themselves of *agents and agencies*, i.e. individuals and bodies which the rulers themselves select, empower, activate, control, fund, discipline, and reward. In other terms, rulers build *bureaucracies* (see Box 4.4).

In principle, this process could greatly increase the hold upon social life at large of the political centre, enable the ruler to exercise power in an unbounded, arbitrary, and despotic fashion, and expose all those subject to it to



BOX 4.4 ZOOM-IN The bureaucratic state

Where the rule of law prevails, a bureaucratic organization is governed by the following principles.

1. Official business is conducted on a continuous basis.
2. There are rules in an administrative agency such that (1) the duty of each official to do certain types of work is delimited in terms of impersonal criteria, (2) the official is given the authority necessary to carry out his/her assigned functions, and (3) the means of compulsion at his/her disposal are strictly limited.
3. Official responsibilities and authority are part of a hierarchy.
4. Officials do not own the resources necessary for the performance of their functions, but are accountable for their use. Official and private affairs are strictly separated.
5. Offices cannot be appropriated by their incumbents in the sense of private property that can be sold or inherited.
6. Official business is conducted on the basis of written documents.

Source: Bendix (1960: 418–19).

extreme insecurity. In fact, the previous cooperators who objected to the ruler's new arrangements often raised complaints to that effect, sometimes with considerable justification. But more often their objections simply reflected their attachment to their previous privileges. We would not characterize this phase as 'rationalization of rule' if its chief import had been solely to unbind rule.

It is a feature of 'the European miracle'—the title of the book by Jones (1981)—that this phase of state-building has two apparently contrasting aspects. Rulers do come to oversee, control, and to an extent manage social life at large in a more and more intense, continuous, systematic, purposive, and pervasive manner. However, to be legitimate, rule must appear to be oriented to interests acknowledged as general, and be exercised in a more and more impersonal and formal manner. The notion of *raison d'état* conveys both aspects. It asserts that the might and security of the polity are a general and paramount interest whose pursuit may occasionally override all others. But that interest is to be sought through self-conscious deliberation, grounded on an assiduous, detached monitoring of circumstances.

In fact, the rationalization of rule itself is part of a broader process of rationalization of social existence at large. Each major sphere of society (beginning with the three already mentioned: politics, economy, and religion) becomes the exclusive concern of a different institutional complex—a distinctive ensemble of arrangements, personnel, resources, principles, and patterns of activity.

This allows (and perhaps demands) each concern to be pursued in such a way as to maximize a distinctive goal: respectively, the might and security of the state, the profitability of economic operations, and the individual's prospects of spiritual salvation.

Hierarchy

In the political context, rationalization changes the basis of the routine exercise of power: the public understanding of its nature, its objective, its boundaries. As we have seen, that basis was traditionally constituted by the *rights and perquisites* of a number of privileged individuals and bodies (see Chapter 8). The new basis consists in the *duties and obligations* of individuals (we may label them 'bureaucrats' or 'officials') appointed purposefully to established offices. Their political and administrative activities can be programmed from above by means of express commands. Those issuing such commands can reward those to whom they are issued if they comply with them, and punish them if they do not. The commands themselves have two critical characteristics: (1) they tend to be general, i.e. they refer in abstract terms to a variety of concrete circumstances; (2) their content can legitimately change, and thus respond to new circumstances (see Box 4.4).

For this to happen, the new ensembles of individuals who carry out political and administrative activities—the bureaucratic units—must be hierarchically structured. At the bottom of the structure, even lowly officials are empowered to impart commands (issue verdicts, demand tributes, conscript military recruits, deny or give permissions) to those lying below the structure itself. However, those officials themselves are supposed to do so in compliance with directives communicated to them by superiors. These monitor the activity of their direct subordinates, verify their conformity with directives, and if necessary override or correct their orders. This arrangement, replicated at various levels within the whole structure, establishes an ordered array where higher offices supervise, activate, and direct lower ones. In a related hierarchical arrangement, lower offices *inform* higher ones—make suggestions on how to deal with situations—and higher ones *make decisions* and transmit them downwards to lower ones for implementation.

As already indicated, law plays a significant role in structuring these arrangements for rule. First, as we have seen, law itself is a hierarchically structured set of authoritative commands. Second, law can be taught and learned, and the knowledge of it (at its various levels) can determine, to a greater or lesser extent, the content of the agents' political and administrative operations.

This second aspect of the law points to a broader aspect of the rationalization of rule—the growing role of *knowledge* in the government and administration of the state. As rulers increasingly dispense with the

cooperation of privileged individuals and bodies, the agents who replace them are largely chosen on account of what they know, or are presumed to know, and by their having earned academic degrees and passed selective tests. Agents are expected to orient their practices of rule less and less to their own individual preferences or to local particular tradition and lore, and more and more to expressly imparted and learned systematic knowledge. Legal knowledge is the prototype of this, especially on the European continent, but it is increasingly complemented and supplemented by different kinds of knowledge—for instance, those relevant to equipping armies and waging war, building roads and bridges, charting the country, collecting statistical data, keeping financial accounts, minting money, policing cities, and safeguarding public health.

Function

Another principle structuring the centralized system of offices is *function*: the system is internally differentiated in order to have each part deal optimally with a specific task. To this end, the system parts must possess materially different resources—not only various bodies of knowledge, acquired and brought to bear by appropriately trained and selected personnel, but artefacts as diverse as weapons at one end and printing presses at the other.

For all its diversity, the whole structure is activated and controlled not only by knowledge but also by *money*, another public reality distinctly connected with rationality, chiefly acquired through taxation. Traditional power-holders had usually engaged in collaborating with rulers' material and other resources from their own patrimony; their collaboration was self-financed and unavoidably self-interested. Now, agencies operate by spending public funds allocated to them by express periodic decisions (budgets) and are held accountable for how those funds are spent. Office-holders are typically salaried, manage resources that do not belong to them but to their offices, and, as they comply with their duties, are not expected to seek personal gain, except through career advancement.⁴

To the extent that it is rationalized, the exercise of rule becomes more compatible with the individuals' pursuit of their interests within the civil society. From the perspective of those individuals, rule exercised by officials appears more regular and predictable, and occasional deviations from rules can be redressed. Rulers are interested in increasing the resources available to the society as a whole, if only to draw upon them in funding their political and administrative activities. But to this effect they must respect the requirements of the country's economic system, at best protect or indeed foster its productive dynamic, which rests increasingly on the market. To this end, again, the extraction from the economy of private resources by the state increasingly takes place chiefly by means of taxation.

The security of those resources and of their employment must be sustained by guaranteeing, through appropriate legislation and the machinery of law enforcement, the institutions of private property and contract. But other social interests and cultural concerns, not just economic ones, also benefit from the limits that rationalized rule sets on its own scope and from the arrangements it makes in order to recognize and protect the autonomy of civil society.

The expansion of rule

In the third phase, states display a dynamic which we may label the 'expansion of rule'. For centuries, the activities of each state had been oriented to two main concerns:

1. On the international scene, it sought chiefly to secure itself from encroachments on its territory by other states and on its ability to define and pursue its own interests autonomously.
2. Within its territory, it was committed to maintaining public order and the effectiveness of its laws.

In the second half of the nineteenth and through much of the twentieth century, however, states brought their activities of rule to bear on an increasingly diverse range of social interests.

Essentially, the state no longer simply *ordains* through legislation the autonomous undertakings of individuals and groups or *sanctions* their private arrangements through its judicial system. Increasingly, it *intervenes* in private concerns by modifying those arrangements or by collecting greater resources and then redistributing them, more to some parties than to others. Also, it seeks to *manage* social activities according to its own judgements and preferences, for it considers the outcome of those activities as a legitimate public concern, which should reflect a broader and higher interest (such as the promotion of industrial development, social equity, or national solidarity).

The expansion of rule modifies deeply the relationship between state and society of the previous phase. On this account, we can classify most of its explanations according to whether they locate the main source of the drive to expand in the state itself or in society.

The former accounts occur in various versions:

1. First, they impute to the state's administrative machinery an inherent tendency to grow, to avail itself of more resources, to take charge of more tasks, and to address more numerous and diverse social interests, instead of leaving them to the market or to the autonomous pursuits of individuals and groups (see Box 4.5).
2. Or, second, they may see the main reason for state expansion in the dynamics of representative democracy and of adversary politics. Putting it simply, it



BOX 4.5 ZOOM-IN Wagner's law

Consider the following scattered indication of the validity of Wagner's Law, according to which government spending tends to rise faster than the growth of the national economy as a whole. In the UK, government spending accounted over time for the following percentages:

Year	%
1890	8.9
1920	20.2
1938	30.0
1960	36.4
1970	43.0
1981	50.3
1983	53.5

Similarly, in the US the amount of government (federal, state, and local) spending as a proportion of the net national product almost tripled between 1926 and 1979. For all OECD countries over the period 1953–73 the average of the national product accounted for by government spending rose from 34 to 39 per cent.

Source: Poggi (1999: 109).

pays for a party out of power to increase its support by promising, if voted into power, to devote more public resources to this or that new state activity, and thus advance the interests of social groups responding to its appeal. Typically, it is parties of the left which have successfully played this card, and made new use of state activity and state expenditure to reduce the disadvantages inflicted on their supporters by market processes.

3. This interpretation fits closely with a third one, which imputes the expansion of the state chiefly to phenomena located in the society side of the state–society divide. Here, underprivileged groups stand to gain most by state expansion, and thus invoke it and favour it, through their suffrage or by other forms of **mobilization**.
4. However, according to a fourth interpretation, many aspects of state expansion support directly or indirectly, rather than correct and counteract, the workings of the market economy in the interest primarily of firms and employers. For instance, some colonial ventures of European states favoured major economic forces seeking privileged access to the raw materials, manpower, and market opportunities that they saw in foreign lands, or seeking profit from the supply to the state of military and naval hardware. Furthermore, for

over a century now, many public resources have been committed to educational activities, which deliver to the labour market employees equipped with the diverse qualifications and skills the economy needs. In the second half of the twentieth century the state often underwrote, on behalf of firms and thus primarily of employers, substantial research and development costs to sustain advanced and profitable production processes and to fund innovation in them.

More widely, this fourth interpretation attributes much state expansion to the fact that, left to itself, the market often does not generate enough demand for industrial products to sustain capital investment, a reasonable level of employment, and thus domestic demand for industrial products. From this perspective, the main beneficiaries of state expansion are, in the end, the more established and privileged social groups.

In fact, the frequently evoked imagery of states expanding by considering as their own social tasks previously performed by autonomous social forces, and usurping society, is sometimes misleading. Many of the activities carried out, well or otherwise, by the expanding state, respond to *novel* needs, potentialities, and opportunities generated by ongoing social developments, such as the demographic explosion, urbanization, increasing literacy, mass motorization, further industrialization, and growing complexity of society itself. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, Durkheim had argued, in opposition to Spencer, that in the process of modernization the development of the private realm also requires the development of the public one.

Whatever the reasons for it, state expansion entails a growth in three interdependent aspects:

- the *fiscal take*, i.e. the portion of a country's yearly product extracted and managed by the state;
- the degree of *internal differentiation* of the organizational machinery of the state;
- the *total number of individuals* whom those units employ, and who possess increasingly varied qualifications and skills.

The last two phenomena not only displace the line between state and society, but also affect deeply the state itself, which increasingly resembles an ever-growing poorly coordinated ensemble of increasingly diverse units. The ordinary political processes—the articulation of collective interests via the parties and their periodic electoral competition, the determination of the executive by majorities, and the formation of policies through the interplay between the executive and parliaments—can less and less effectively activate and steer an administrative machinery so vast, expensive, complex, and diverse.

Much in political decision-making and in the subsequent administrative activity responds to the interests of the units themselves, or those of the specific, often

narrow, sections of society they cater to, rather than expressing a political project reflecting a comprehensive view of the society as a whole. Thus, the administrative machinery becomes *overloaded* by multiple, ever-changing, conflicting demands. Furthermore, components of it are 'captured' by powerful and demanding social forces, and serve their needs rather than those of the public at large. All these phenomena make it more and more difficult for the political elites themselves to design and put into effect the policies for which the electorate has expressed a preference.

These phenomena manifest themselves in most contemporary states, but they do so to a different extent and in diverse ways. As the subsequent chapters show, one of the major tasks of the study of comparative politics is to establish empirically, and to account for, the variations present in the contemporary political environment, both in those manifestations and in the responses they find in the political authorities, the parties, and the **social movements**.

KEY POINTS

- One can distinguish, within the historical career of the modern state, three main phases which different European states have followed in somewhat varying sequences.
- *Consolidation of rule*: within each larger part of the continent (beginning with its Western parts) one particular centre of rule asserted its own superiority, generally by defeating others in war, subjecting the respective lands to its own control, and turning them into a unified territory.
- *Rationalization of rule*: each centre of rule increasingly relied on functionaries selected and empowered by itself, expressly qualified for their offices, and forming hierarchically structured units, within which their careers would depend on the reliability and effectiveness of their actions.
- *Expansion of rule*: states progressively took on broader sets of functions, in order both to confront social needs generated by ongoing processes of economic modernization and to respond to demands for public regulation and intervention originating from various sectors of society. They added new specialized administrative units and funded their activities by increasing their 'fiscal take' from the economy.

Conclusion

It can safely be assumed that the vast majority of this book's readers live in a political environment which resembles more or less closely the portrait of 'the state' given in this chapter, and whose institutions and practices bear traces of the developments sketched in the

last section. For this reason, those readers—whatever their feelings about the state of which they are citizens, and however they position themselves vis-à-vis the particular government which runs it—may take for granted its main features, including the fact that they are able, among other things, to study scientifically that state itself and to compare it with others. However, this chapter, and others in this book, is intended to challenge the assumption that such matters can indeed be taken for granted.

The following statement by a notable German social theorist, Heinrich Popitz (1925–2002), entails such a challenge.

The history of society shows only rare instances where the question 'how can one lay boundaries around institutionalized violence?' has been confronted in a positive and viable manner. Essentially, this has happened only in the Greek *polis*, in the Roman republic and a few other city states, and in the history of the modern constitutional state. And the answers given to that question have been astonishingly similar. The principle of the supremacy of the law and of the equality of all before the law (the Greeks named it *isonomia*). The notion that the making of norms by the state encounters limitations (fundamental rights). Norms assigning different competences to various political organs (division of powers, federalism). Procedural norms (decisions by collective bodies, their public nature, appeals to and review by higher organs). Norms on the occupancy of offices (turn-taking, elections). Finally, norms concerning the public sphere (freedom of opinion, freedom of association and assembly). The similarity, or indeed the commonality among such answers suggests that there are systematic solutions of the problem, how to limit institutionalized power and violence, and that these solutions, although they presuppose certain premises if they are to hold, can to an extent hold across different contexts—as different, say, as city states and those ruling over extensive territories. (Popitz 1992: 65)

Popitz's statement suggests some comments.

1. Although I have treated 'the state' as essentially a modern phenomenon (and its development as the chief political dimension of the broader phenomenon of modernization), some of its distinctive institutional arrangements had already manifested themselves in antiquity, as well as in the Middle Ages.
2. Both the earlier and the later (modern) arrangements appear at first as part of a distinctive Western story, for they originated in Europe and were subsequently transposed to parts of the rest of the world conquered and colonized by European powers, especially in North America and Australia. (However, the US was the first place where a peculiar arrangement,

federalism, was more expressly and successfully experimented with, and it served as a model for further experiments—see Chapter 11.) Since then, some arrangements of this nature have become common to polities operating across the globe, although in different modes of interpretation and **implementation**. Sometimes these modes superficially imitate those of the more established states, but actually characterize the political units employing them as *failed states*.

3. The arrangements mentioned by Popitz, singly and together, succeed in an intrinsically difficult job—limiting, constraining, and 'taming' institutionalized political power.

This last point suggests a further consideration, left implicit in Popitz's statement. Such success cannot be taken for granted. It is a matter of degree, for it requires overcoming a built-in tendency of political power to grow upon itself, to escape limits and constraints, to 'go wild' as it were—a tendency that can manifest itself in many circumstances and in many ways. In fact, some states which shared the characteristics mentioned in the first section of this chapter have not presented all those mentioned in the second section, which have appeared in later phases of political modernization and which (in the author's personal judgement) go a long way towards 'civilizing' the state itself.

For instance, the Tsarist Empire refused to endorse many characteristic institutions of the constitutional, liberal, democratic states of Western Europe. Worse, even states which at a given point exhibited all those characteristics subsequently veered away from constitutionalism, **liberalism**, and democracy, and underwent

institutional changes generally associated with the notion of 'totalitarianism'—as happened in the twentieth century in Italy and Germany (see Chapter 6). And even some of the constitutive features of states listed in the first section, such as 'sovereignty', are currently put under stress by a number of developments—for example, those associated with 'globalization' or with the formation of transnational polities (see Chapter 24).

Even apart from such dramatic developments, the liberal-democratic states themselves differ from one another in many relevant respects. For instance, some impart a centralized and some a federal structure to the relations between the state's political centre and its political periphery. States differ in the extent to which they have broadened and enriched the entitlements of citizenship, or in the extent to which and the manner in which a given state seeks through its policies to support and plan the development of its national economy, as against leaving such development entirely to the workings of the market. The size of the so-called 'public sector' of the economy, and the way in which it has been managed, again have differed from state to state, as have their respective taxation policies.

These and other issues have often been fought over in significant lasting confrontations between parties and between sectors of opinion, and their settlement has been more or less stable, creating affinities or contrasts between states. Besides being the themes of public life, those issues constitute the main topics of the scholarly study of politics, whether focused on a particular state or on the diversity and similarity between states. The latter, of course, is the main concern of this book as a whole.

Questions

Knowledge based

1. What is civil society?
2. Do nations create states or vice versa?
3. What is meant by 'sovereignty'?
4. What part did military force play in the making of European states?
5. How do states typically acquire the economic resources they use?

Critical thinking

1. How can one explain the fact that members of a state's population progressively acquired rights vis-à-vis the state?
2. What part did law play in the development of the modern state?
3. For what reasons did rulers establish bodies of officials appointed and empowered by themselves?
4. What is meant by 'consolidation of rule'?



Further reading

Elias, N. (2000) *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell 1st edn 1938). The second large volume of this impressive work deals with the 'sociogenesis of the state'.

Lachmann, R. (2010) *States and Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press). A valuable interpretation of many phenomena considered in this chapter, mostly from a perspective at some variance from that adopted here.

Poggi, G. (1978) *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press). A compact and accessible statement, ranging from the Middle Ages to the contemporary era.

Tilly, C. (ed.) (1975) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press). A very influential collection of major contributions to its theme, including its military, fiscal, and economic aspects.

Weber, M. (1994) 'Politics as a Profession and Vocation' (1919), in *Weber: Political Writings*, ed. P. Lassman and R. Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 309–69. A compact but most illuminating and provocative discussion of the nature of politics and the modern state by one of the most significant modern social theorists.



Web links

<http://www.pipeline.com/~cwa/TYWHome.htm>

Webpage about the Thirty Years' War which gave rise to the modern states after the Peace of Westphalia (1648).

<http://www.arcaini.com/ITALY/ItalyHistory/ItalianUnification.htm>

Webpage about Italian unification, independence, and democratization.

<http://www.americancivilwar.com>

Webpage about the American Civil War.



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For additional material and resources, please visit the Online Resource Centre at:

www.oxfordtextbooks.co.uk/orc/caramani4e/



Endnotes

¹ One often speaks, today, of 'failed' states (see Chapter 25).

² The same rules of delimitation apply to the sea.

³ However, they mostly do that without depriving those individuals and bodies of their private resources and their status advantages.

⁴ Since not only more significant faculties and responsibilities correspond to higher offices, but also greater material and status rewards, the hierarchical structure we have talked about also constitutes a career system. It is a ladder which office-holders can climb to satisfy their legitimate ambitions.

CHAPTER 5

Democracies

Aníbal Pérez-Liñán

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Reader's guide

Democracy is the most legitimate form of government in our contemporary era, but the meaning of democracy is still highly contested. This chapter explores the defining elements of modern democracy and traces the origins of this form of government. It also describes different models of democracy (presidential and parliamentary, democracies oriented towards consensus or majoritarian rule), and it analyses the conditions—economic and political, domestic and international—that allow some countries to become democratic but preserve others under the rule of dictatorships. It finally discusses the future of democracy, and the challenges that lie ahead for new generations of citizens.