TWO

State Formation

On 10 June 2004 elections took place in Britain for the European Parliament and local government. Both of these exercises in representative democracy had a history of low turnouts and voter apathy. During the run-up to the 2004 votes, a series of advertisements were placed in British newspapers by the Electoral Commission, the body that oversees the conduct of elections in the UK. Each advertisement drew attention to the effect of political decisions on a different aspect of daily life, including commuting, sport, food and having a night out. The last of these read:

> How politics affects your night out. It decides where and when you can buy an alcoholic drink. Says at what age you can buy an alcoholic drink. Sets the amount of tax that you have to pay every time you buy one. Decides where and when you can listen to music and whether it can be played live. Controls how loud that music can be and whether or not you're allowed to dance to it. Decides what is acceptable behaviour when you're under the influence and what is liable to get you arrested. Affects the number of police officers patrolling town centres at night. Says what substances are illegal and what will happen to you if you're caught with them. Decides what time trains and buses stop running and whether or not there will be a night service. Says how much you can legally drink and still drive home. Controls the licensing of taxis. Controls the licensing of doormen and bouncers. Decides how long you've got to finish that pint.

The aim was to persuade people (particularly young people) that political decisions matter to their lives and that it is worthwhile seeking to influence them through the ballot box. At the same time, the adverts illustrated to great effect how daily life is permeated by the institutionalized practices of the state, often in unrecognized ways. It is difficult, particularly in the most economically privileged parts of the world, to think of any aspect of life that is not touched in some way by the workings of the state. In this chapter, we explore how this has come about and what its implications are.

OVERVIEW

In this chapter, we consider the historical geographies which gave rise to the global system of modern states that we know today. We begin by looking at the relationships between space, place and the 'global jigsaw' of modern states. We then consider how to define the state before examining some of the main conceptual issues surrounding the state: the process of state formation, the relationship between 'high' and 'low' politics and the notion of sovereignty. We then discuss in more detail the processes that gave rise to the typical form of the territorial state. Two processes are emphasized: the preparation for and the waging of wars on the one hand, and the building of the administrative systems of the state apparatus on the other. We conclude by looking beyond Europe to consider some of the reasons why a political form which developed in one small part of the world has become the dominant system of territorial organization throughout the world.

States in space

A recurring theme

The state has been a central concept in political geography since German geographer Friedrich Ratzel wrote about the state as an organic, living entity in the nineteenth century. As a territorial form the state is the basic building block of the world political map. Traditionally, political geographers have emphasized the geographical form of states in absolute spatial terms – their borders, land areas, and even shapes.[1] They have also been interested in the forces which promote or disturb territorial integration within states ('centripetal' and 'centrifugal' forces, respectively) and territorial differentiation of states from their neighbours. This led to a focus on issues such as the role of transport and communications networks.[2]

Since the 1970s geographers' understandings of the state have taken new paths. Initially, ideas drawn from political economy (notably Marxism) provided conceptual tools to strengthen the rather descriptive approach of traditional political geography and to show how state policies, state elites and state finance were bound into the social relations of capitalism and processes of capital accumulation. More recently, political geographers have increasingly turned to social, political and cultural theory, and to concrete accounts produced by historical sociologists. A range of questions and issues have been newly highlighted (or revisited). These include questions of war, militarism and violence; of bureaucracy, organization and surveillance; of culture, discourse and meaning; and of authority, citizenship, rights and resistance. Our discussion of the state is divided into three chapters. In this chapter we look at the geographies of state formation. In Chapter 3 we focus on the changing

character of the welfare state, and in Chapter 4 we look at the geographies of democracy, citizenship and elections.

The global jigsaw

Despite challenges from transnational corporations, social and religious movements, global terrorism and non-governmental organizations, states remain the pre-eminent forms of political authority in the modern world. No agencies assert their power over us quite so insistently as the states in which we live. We will come back to the issues of power and authority later, but we need to begin with questions of definition.

We are all used to the political map of the world in which the land surface (with the exception of Antarctica) is completely divided up into the territorial areas called states. To be sure, there are a few blurred edges, especially where wars have left territorial disputes unresolved. In the vast majority of cases, though, we reside in places which are each clearly within the territory of one particular state, with clear boundaries separating it from its neighbours.

This situation seems so normal to us that it is difficult to imagine how things could be otherwise. The difficulty of thinking outside the framework of states is demonstrated in part by the problems in finding solutions to many territorial political conflicts. In Israel/Palestine, for example, two groups both claim the same territory, and both insist on their right to a state. Since, in our 'normal' way of thinking, no two states can occupy the same territory, it seems impossible to reconcile both demands simultaneously. In the modern world, achieving statehood has been made to seem the ultimate goal for any group defining itself as a nation. Yet there is nothing inevitable or natural about states. Like all human institutions they are products not of nature, but of social and political processes.

They are, moreover, extremely recent products. Human beings emerged some 400,000 years ago, but it was not until 8,000 years ago that anything that might be called a state appeared. And for most of the time since then, states of whatever form have only occupied a small part of the earth's surface. It is only in the last 300 years that distinctively modern states have developed and only in the last 50 years that the modern form of the state has become more or less universal.

Even today, the variety of state forms is quite large, and for most of the modern period the characteristics of different states have been highly diverse. So it is difficult, and in many ways downright misleading, to try to construct a theory of 'the' state. Such a theory depends on identifying the 'essence' of stateness, as it were. Because states are political and social institutions, they are in a continuous (albeit slow) process of change and mutation: if we define the 'essence' of the state in one place or era, we are liable to find that in another time or space something which is also understood to be a state has different 'essential' characteristics.

In order to avoid such 'essentialist' interpretations, we need to give due weight to historical and geographical differences in the nature of states. Rather than trying to find a central unifying principle that is shared by all states, we prefer to understand states as (1) complex networks of relations

among a (shifting) mixture of institutions and social groups, and (2) the product of their own processes of institutional development and historical change (as well as important 'external' influences).

States and geography

The geographical character of the modern state is evident in five of its distinctive features. First, we take it for granted that the territories of modern states are ordered by relatively precise boundaries. Their positions may be contested, but such disputes strengthen, rather than undermine, the principle that modern states are defined by clearly demarcated linear boundaries. The boundary dispute between India and Pakistan in Kashmir has made the India–Pakistan border elsewhere the focus for nationalist sentiment. The Wagah border crossing in Punjab (Figure 2.1) sees a daily evening display of ceremonial confrontation between the Indian and Pakistani border guards that attracts large crowds of spectators on both sides.

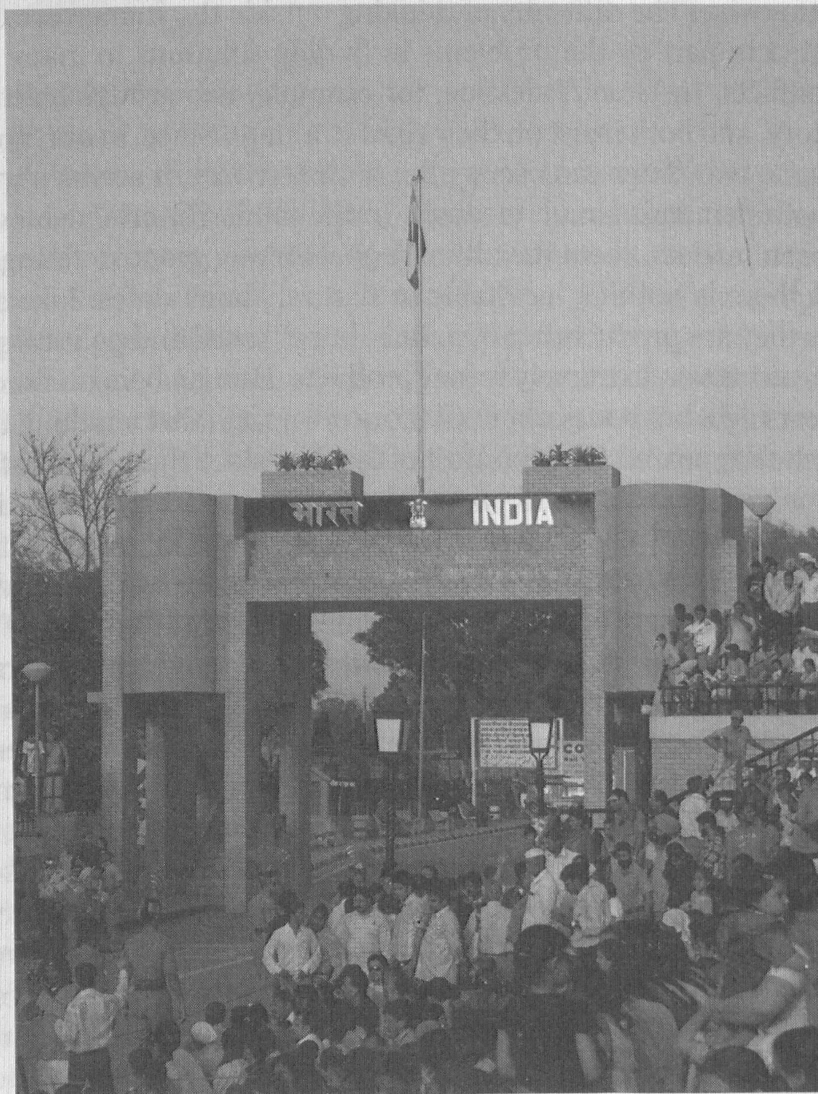

Figure 2.1 Spectators at the India–Pakistan border, Wagah © Joe Painter

But such boundaries are a fairly recent invention. The precise borders that emerge with modern states are associated with the capacity of states to spread their power relatively evenly throughout a territory. In earlier times, because of technical, resource and organizational limitations, state power tended to be much stronger in the centre of the territory than towards its edges. States had frontier zones, rather than borders, where the weak influence of one or more states overlapped, or state power petered out into areas not occupied by any state.[3] The neat boundaries of modern states, therefore, are symptoms of states' ability to 'project' their administrative capacity across the whole of their territories.

Secondly, most modern states occupy large territories, and seek to administer them through various systems of territorially organized institutions. These range from loose confederations at one end of the scale, through federal systems (such as those in Germany or the USA) and systems of regional and local government (city councils, for example), to local offices of the central state at the other end (such as a local tax office).

Thirdly, we need to consider the institutional geography of the state – offices, courts, parliaments, military bases, and so on must be located somewhere (and where they are located can make a difference to how they work and what effects they have). They also have social and symbolic geographies too. Parliament buildings, for example, embody certain meanings. They form part of various discourses, about state power, for instance, or 'democracy'. The Australian Federal Parliament in Canberra has a sloping grass roof so that members of the public can walk on top of the building (see Figure 2.2). The design is intended to symbolize the pre-eminence of 'the people' in the political system.

Fourthly, the apparatus of the state, spread throughout the territory, allows state organizations to monitor, govern and attempt to control the population.

Figure 2.2 Australian Federal Parliament, Canberra © Joe Painter

This capacity to keep an eye on what is going on depends both on the territorial reach of the state, and on what we might call the spatial density of the mechanisms and practices through which monitoring occurs. These include the *physical* surveillance of space by police and other state employees and, increasingly, electronic surveillance using cameras. Less obviously they also include technologies of record-keeping and data-gathering, through which the activities of the population are monitored either at the aggregate level or the individual level, through personal records relating to birth, marriage, death and a whole range of other aspects of our lives. It is no coincidence that the words 'state' and 'statistics' share the same linguistic root.

Fifthly, this monitoring activity has tended to increase over time.[4] However, it is never absolute (even in so-called 'totalitarian' societies). There are always gaps in the state apparatus in which resistance of various forms may develop — spaces of resistance, if you like. In the former Soviet Union there were networks of dissidents in which ideas and literature officially banned by the state were able to circulate (albeit in a highly restricted way), and in many countries state authorities either tolerate popular protest over a whole range of issues or do not have the resources to prevent it.

Finally, geography as *place* is significant in the formation of states. At particular times, dominant groups may pursue deliberate 'state-building' strategies (perhaps after independence from a colonizing state). In these circumstances, a discourse of the state as 'homeland' is developed as a means of legitimating the state.

States and state formation

Defining the state

It is famously difficult to define 'the state'. On the face of it, the term seems to refer to an institution or an organization, but no state consists of a single unified organization and once we start to look at organizations in detail, it is often difficult to work out which are part of the state and which are not. Another common approach is to define the state in terms of what it does – its functions. But here too there are problems. Almost all the activities undertaken by the state today could be performed by other agencies. Indeed, at one time or another most of them have been. In the past, providing education and health care, building roads, and even fighting wars have been private activities, and in many countries today there is a shift back towards private provision in these areas. It seems we can't draw a neat line between 'state' and 'society', because their organization and functions overlap.

It is also difficult to come up with a comprehensive theory of the state in all its forms. Political theorist Bob Jessop distinguishes between 'strong' and 'weak' theories:

> A strong theory would provide an integrated account of the state in terms of a single set of causal mechanisms. It would explain all the institutional and

> operational features of a state in a given conjuncture. Even with the best will in the world, however, a strong theory could not be constructed. For it is simply impossible methodologically to develop a single, all-encompassing theory of so complex an entity as the nation-state in all its historical specificity.[5]

Instead, Jessop suggests, attention should be focused on developing a 'weak' theory — a useful set of guidelines and principles which will assist analysis of particular states, but which do not assume that everything can be explained by a single set of mechanisms.

Some have argued that we should see the state as an idea, a myth, or a symbolic construct, rather than a thing or an object. One difficulty with this proposition is that it might be taken to mean that the state is an illusion and does not really exist. Yet we can see the very real effects of the state all around us, particularly when we move from the territory of our own state to that of another. Suddenly we find ourselves subject to different laws, using a different currency, and without the rights and obligations accorded to us in our own state by our citizenship. Our passport may be stamped in the name of the state, if we infringe the law we may be arrested in the name of the state, if we travel we may use public transport provided in the name of the state, if we buy goods or services we use money issued in the name of the state, and so on. If the state is mere illusion how can it have such far-reaching effects?

Part of the answer is that 'myths', 'ideas' and 'symbols' are far from illusory. In fact, they are powerful and durable social phenomena. Through constant repetition and by being embedded in daily life, they organize thought and action in profound ways. Much of what we think of as the state's power 'over' us actually works *through* us because our habits and everyday behaviour have been gradually shaped through our upbringing, education and social interactions so that most of the time we act in accordance with the state's norms without much conscious effort. When we get in our car to drive to work in Britain, we don't need to deliberately remember to drive on the left of the road; we do so apparently without thinking about it. In most states the law requires drivers to keep to the right and when British residents drive in other countries they definitely do need to think carefully about which side of the road to use! Not all such social conventions are the effects of the state, of course. No law requires us to hold doors open for each other or to wait in line at a ticket booth. But many of our most routine and mundane activities do unintentionally reinforce the apparent existence of the state as an overarching provider of order in society.

The political theorist Timothy Mitchell has pursued this line of thinking about the state for a number of years. He suggests that the state is not only present in our thoughts and actions, but in a variety of material forms too:

> The importance of the state as a common ideological and cultural construct, I argue, should be grounds not for dismissing the phenomenon ... but for taking it seriously. ... A construct like the state occurs not merely as a subjective belief, incorporated in the thinking and action of individuals. It is represented and reproduced in visible, everyday forms, such as

> the language of legal practice, the architecture of public buildings, the wearing of military uniforms, or the marking out and policing of frontiers.[6]

In previous work one of us has suggested that the state should not be seen as an actual entity separate from the rest of society, but is better understood as an 'imagined collective actor', in whose name individuals are identified 'as citizens or subjects, aliens or foreigners', and which is 'imagined as the source of central political authority for a national territory'.[7] In the rest of this chapter (and the rest of the book) we will often have cause to refer to 'states' and 'the state'. This is partly a matter of convenience and partly because the writers we draw on use those words. As you read, however, bear in mind that, for us, 'the state' is not an object, an entity or a unified political actor. Rather, it is the name we give to the effect of the social process that make such an object, entity or actor appear to exist.[8] That may sound somewhat strange and elusive, but so, we think, is the state.

State formation as a social process

One of the benefits of defining the state as the effect of social processes is that it emphasizes the continual formation of the state over time. The state is constantly becoming. To begin with, the process of state formation was a by-product of other activities, which were not themselves intended to give rise to the state. However, once state institutions and practices start to emerge, once they gain their 'institutional materiality', they become the focus of attention. People start to pursue strategies in relation to the state. Such strategies never arise on a blank surface, however; there is always an historical legacy — a set of institutions and conventions inherited from the immediate past. These provide the resources with which actors pursue strategies for the future, but they also limit the range of options. On a day-to-day basis, change is often piecemeal rather than dramatic, although piecemeal changes can add up to complete transformations over a long period. Occasionally, in the cases of revolutions, previous structures may be almost wholly dispensed with, although even here it is likely that the revolutionary strategy itself will have been heavily conditioned by the previous forms which were the context for its development. For example, historians studying Russia have often remarked on the extent to which the Tsarist state influenced that established by the Bolsheviks, following the Russian revolution in 1917.

Bob Jessop draws out the basis for his weak theory of the state from the work of Michel Foucault and Nicos Poulantzas. From Poulantzas he takes the idea that the state is an 'institutional ensemble' — the mix of institutional forms and practices which Poulantzas calls the institutional materiality of the state. For Jessop, the state may be defined as 'a specific institutional ensemble with multiple boundaries, no institutional fixity and no pre-given formal or substantive unity'.[9] It implies that there is no inherent division of functions between state and non-state institutions, that states are multifarious in their activities and that there are gaps, both geographical and organizational, in the

extent to which society is 'penetrated' by the state, even in those functions for which the state is responsible.

Jessop has developed what he calls a 'strategic-relational approach' to the state along three axes. First, the state system is seen as a site of strategy; as the place, if you like, where political strategies 'happen'. However, access to this site is easier for some than for others, and the form of the state apparatus is more suited to some strategies than others. Secondly, the state 'is also the site where strategies are elaborated'. In other words, state officials and thus elements of the state apparatus act strategically in their own right. Jessop points out that this may mean that different parts of the state are operating according to different (and maybe even opposed) strategies, and that therefore the 'formal unity' of the state is not matched by a 'substantive unity'. Thirdly, the state apparatus and the conventional ways of acting of state officials and institutions are themselves the products of past strategies. 'Past strategies' may mean the strategies of previous state institutions and officials, or those of other political actors, in the economy, the wider society or the international arena.

Political strategies are important to state formation but they rarely turn out as expected. They are also multifarious. The development paths of modern states have not been unilinear. State formation should certainly not be seen as a process of steady development towards the modern form of the state. Along the road many other forms emerged, grew and declined: city states, absolutist monarchies, empires, satellites, religious governments and others rose and then, for the most part, fell. State formation is not a process in which a 'more effective', 'more democratic' or 'more enlightened' system of political administration arose inevitably from 'inefficient', 'despotic' or 'ignorant' predecessors. While medieval states were no doubt all of these things from time to time, modern states have hardly done away with all forms of domination, inefficiency and irrationality.

High and low politics

State security and social security

Before outlining some actual examples of state formation it will be helpful to add to the concepts of formal and informal politics, which we considered in Chapter 1. *High politics* refers to the politics of war, peace, diplomacy, the state's claim to sovereignty and constitutional change. It touches on the very existence of the state, and the ways in which it deals with threats to that existence. Its strategies commonly (though not exclusively) involve the people who occupy elite positions in the state apparatus. Since it is involved with the 'big' questions of the state's existence and broad organization, we might think of it as dealing with state security.

By contrast, *low politics* refers to more 'mundane issues' such as economic policy, public health, education, routine administration, welfare benefits and

environmental protection, the kinds of issues over which states rarely, if ever, go to war, but which today occupy a large part of their attention and resources. The strategies and practices concerned do involve state elites, especially in producing legislation, but are carried out overwhelmingly by the 'ordinary' personnel of the state — the junior civil servants, employees of municipal councils, teachers and social workers.

As in the case of formal and informal politics there is a degree of overlap between the two — they are not mutually exclusive. Thus the provision of social welfare may be used to assert the legitimacy of a state's claim to authority, while the 'protection' of state security commonly involves the routine monitoring of many more 'ordinary' people than is often realized. However, the high/low distinction is different from the formal/informal one. High politics involves informal politics (such as personal relations between heads of state) as well as formal politics (in the shape of diplomatic missions, constitutional commissions, and the like). Similarly, low politics involves the formal arenas of parliament and civil service, as well as informal politics within a council department or an educational institution.

From high to low

The balance between high and low politics has moved back and forth over time. During war, for example, high politics comes to the fore. Over a relatively long period, however, there has been a tendency for high politics to decline in importance relative to low politics, at least in the West. In premodern states, government was dominated by high politics. Rulers were concerned first and foremost with issues such as territorial conquest and expansion, securing the constitutional succession for monarchic dynasties and gaining wealth and prestige relative to other states. The daily lives of their subjects were of very little concern to them, at least by contrast with the situation today. Provided 'the masses' did not pose a threat to the state, they were, for the most part, ignored. With the emergence of the modern form of the state, in which the state becomes distinct from the person of the monarch, the balance began to shift. More and more states became concerned with the everyday affairs of their resident populations. To begin with, this was a by-product of the state's increased demand for resources with which to finance its own activities. Raising more taxes required more knowledge and information on the population and its activities, and this led to a growing tendency to keep tabs on what was going on 'at home'. At the same time, doing more to and for ordinary people required its own kinds of resources. These were not just a question of money, but also required new forms of technology, such as the means to collect and record data.

According to Michel Foucault, the idea of government was not originally associated with what we now consider to be 'politics'. Initially, 'government' referred to government of oneself — the exercise of self-control. The term then came to refer to government of the family or the household (by, for example, the father). Until the sixteenth century, Foucault suggests, the ruler of a state

was concerned with the preservation of the state, rather than with governing: 'to be able to retain one's principality is not at all the same as possessing the art of government'.[10]

The notion of government in its modern, political sense only arises when the management of the state comes to be understood in the same way as a father's management of a family. That is, that the governor (father) comes to be concerned with the ordering of the people, activities and things of the state (household) and with their interrelations. This is a different concern from simply ensuring the survival of the state or protection of the monarchy from overthrow. With the shift to what Foucault calls governmentality, the ruler of a state begins to take an interest in, and to pursue strategies towards, the people who live in the territory of the state, and their affairs, including economic activities, social norms, and so on. Previously, what the people did was of little concern to the prince unless they threatened the state. Central to this change was the identification of the people of the state *as a population*, which was understood as the proper focus of the art of government. For Foucault, the discourses and practices of 'governmentality' emerge during the sixteenth century together with the objects of government: the population of a particular territory.

The shift towards low politics involved increasing the 'density' of relations between state and society. In order to provide public health measures, mass education, environmental improvements and welfare benefits, the state has to penetrate society much more intensively, which requires additional resources of all kinds: staff, institutions, buildings, knowledge, systems of organization and frameworks of understanding. While states are in general more highly militarized than ever, there has been a relative shift away from high politics, with the decline of war-making as a routine activity, at least in the West. Wars continue to be fought from time to time, and the twenty-first century has seen a definite resurgence with the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. But in most Western countries the day-to-day role of states, and the expenditure of state revenues, has become dominated by low politics.

This shift is less marked in the Global South, where a much higher proportion of state resources and activities are commonly devoted to 'high' politics. This is in part a consequence of the smaller overall resources available to Southern states. Since state security (both material and symbolic) is widely regarded (by state elites) as the first priority, it is common for the first call on resources to be allocated to military and diplomatic activities. Where resources are limited, this may leave little for anything else. The absence of successful economic policies and the lack of social welfare provision, may, of course, exacerbate the threat to the survival of the government, or even of the state, from 'below'.

A growing concern with low politics is partly the product of strategies 'from above'. Tax-gathering, for example, both serves the immediate purposes of the state and involves 'low politics'. More often, however, it is the result of pressures, or responses to perceived threats, 'from below'. The long-term trend towards low politics developed especially strongly in the context of the dramatic industrialization and urbanization of the nineteenth century. These

changes produced large, impoverished urban populations (see Table 2.1), removed from many of the traditional ties of rural life and less able to rely on local sources of support. Living and working conditions were often dangerous and unhealthy. Such dramatic transformations gave rise to popular social movements which pressed for reforms and the provision of social welfare, health services and education. At the same time, regardless of the actual conditions in large cities, the urban poor were regarded by the wealthy and by the state as a source of disease, moral laxity and social unrest. The strategies of the poor and the fears of the rich constituted a pressure on the state for social reform which had not previously arisen. In addition, industrialization gave rise to a new set of social interests, of industrialists, capitalists and entrepreneurs, who were concerned that the state should turn its attention to economic matters and to trade policy. In the twin processes of industrialization and urbanization, therefore, lay the seeds of the two major concerns of twentieth-century 'low politics' in industrial economies: economic progress and social welfare.

Table 2.1 Urbanization in Europe west of Russia (after Tilly, 1990)

Year	People living in cities of 10,000 or more (millions)	Percentage of population living in cities of 10,000 or more
1590	5.9	7.6
1790	12.2	10.0
1890	66.9	29.0
1980	c.250	c.55

Claiming sovereignty

No higher authority?

In the modern world, states are the foremost claimers of authority, an authority which is simultaneously claimed to be legitimate. In other words, states claim to have the right to require residents of their territories to behave in certain ways and to refrain from certain activities, that is, to receive compliance. The fact that these 'rights' of the state are (within limits) more or less universally accepted in most states should not mislead us into thinking that they are absolute or can be legitimated in any permanent way. They remain claims and assertions, albeit ones which are conventionally accepted, both by residents and by other states. The discourse of 'sovereignty' raises the stakes still further. As Joseph Camilleri and Jim Falk argue:

> Sovereignty is a notion which, perhaps more than any other, has come to dominate our understanding of national and international life. Its history parallels the evolution of the modern state. More particularly, it reflects the evolving relationship between state and civil society, between political

> authority and community. ... [D]espite loose talk about the way it is acquired, lost or eroded, sovereignty is not a fact. Rather it is a concept or a claim about the way political power is or should be exercised.[11]

A claim to sovereignty is a claim to being the highest authority within an area, or over a particular group. When Paul Bremer, the Head of the US-led 'Coalition Provisional Authority' in occupied Iraq handed nominal control of the country to the Iraqi government on 28 June 2004, the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice passed a note to President George W. Bush that read 'Iraq is sovereign'. Bush scrawled 'Let freedom reign' across the note before returning it (Figure 2.3). Many critics have argued that the assertion of formal sovereignty contained in this now famous note is belied by the practical control over Iraqi affairs subsequently exercised by the occupiers.

Mr President,
Iraq is sovereign. Letter
was passed from Bremer at
10:26 AM Iraq time —
Condi

Let Freedom reign!

Figure 2.3 Note from Condoleezza Rice to President Bush

Source: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=browse_usc&docid=Cite:+17USC105

Modern states' claims to sovereignty are conventionally recognized by other states, although some states are not regarded as sovereign or legitimate by all others. For example, the state of Northern Cyprus is not recognized as *legitimate* by any European countries apart from Turkey, although it operates in most other regards as any other state. An institution would be entirely sovereign if there were no organization or institution which could require its compliance in any field of activity and if it were free to pursue its own policies unhindered, at least within its own territory. It is doubtful whether states have ever been sovereign in this sense. Today there are numerous challenges to the sovereignty of states.

First, the globalization of economic processes undermines the ability of the state to plan, steer and govern the 'national' economy. Increasingly, multinational corporations, international financial services companies and multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank have been able to take

decisions with little or no regard to the wishes of individual governments. The room for economic manoeuvre of governments and the scope for macroeconomic intervention has been significantly diminished.

Secondly, we have seen the growth of new forms of political authority and governmentality which operate alongside state governments. Many international political institutions are wholly intergovernmental, that is, they operate, at least in theory, on the basis of mutual agreement between participating states. The United Nations and its various agencies are perhaps the most developed example. In practice, however, power within intergovernmental organizations is often not distributed evenly between participants (as a result of the differential distribution of resources). In the case of the United Nations, for example, the role of the USA has been central to many of the policies it has adopted, particularly where military intervention in an individual state is concerned.

Thirdly, there are new forms of political authority which challenge the state's claims to sovereignty directly, because they are truly supranational in character. In contrast with intergovernmental organizations, supranational bodies have taken over from states certain functions which used to be fulfilled by individual governments. The most significant example of a supranational organization is the Commission of the European Union. In international trade negotiations it is the Commission, rather than European governments directly, which act on behalf of Europe.

Fourthly, the sovereignty of the state is challenged by international belief systems. In the past, this included communism, but the principal focus now is on the world religions. Many of the major world religions, including Judaism, Roman Catholicism and Islam, are able to exercise a degree of what is effectively political authority over at least some of their adherents which is separate from, and implicitly a challenge to, the sovereignty of states.

Origins of modern claims to sovereignty

The doctrine and discourse of sovereignty developed in Europe in tandem with the modern state itself. In Feudal Europe, power was in many ways highly decentralized. The broad normative and legal framework was regarded as fixed, and divinely ordained, rather than the product or possession of the 'government'. The monarch may have ruled by divine right, and been regarded as the ultimate temporal authority, but was almost wholly detached from the daily lives of ordinary people. Power was exercised through a highly hierarchical, but simultaneously decentralized, system. The local lord was a far more important (and powerful) figure in the everyday lives of villagers than their king or queen.

As the feudal system began to disintegrate, the power of monarchs was strengthened. The system of absolutist monarchies which came to dominate Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, saw the concentration of power (in principle, 'absolute' power) in the hands of the monarch. According to Anthony Giddens, however, unlike medieval monarchs, whose power was embodied in their very person, the sovereignty of absolute monarchs was, *in principle* at least, separable from the individual known as the sovereign. This allowed a shift, with the growth of a centralized state apparatus that extended

beyond the court, from the sovereign-as-monarch to the more impersonal 'sovereign state'.[12] This is neatly illustrated by the frontispiece to the book *Leviathan* (1651), written by the English political thinker Thomas Hobbes (see Figure 2.4). The image shows a monarch overseeing his kingdom wearing what looks like chainmail. On closer inspection the 'chainmail' turns out to be composed of tiny human figures: the subjects of the ruler.

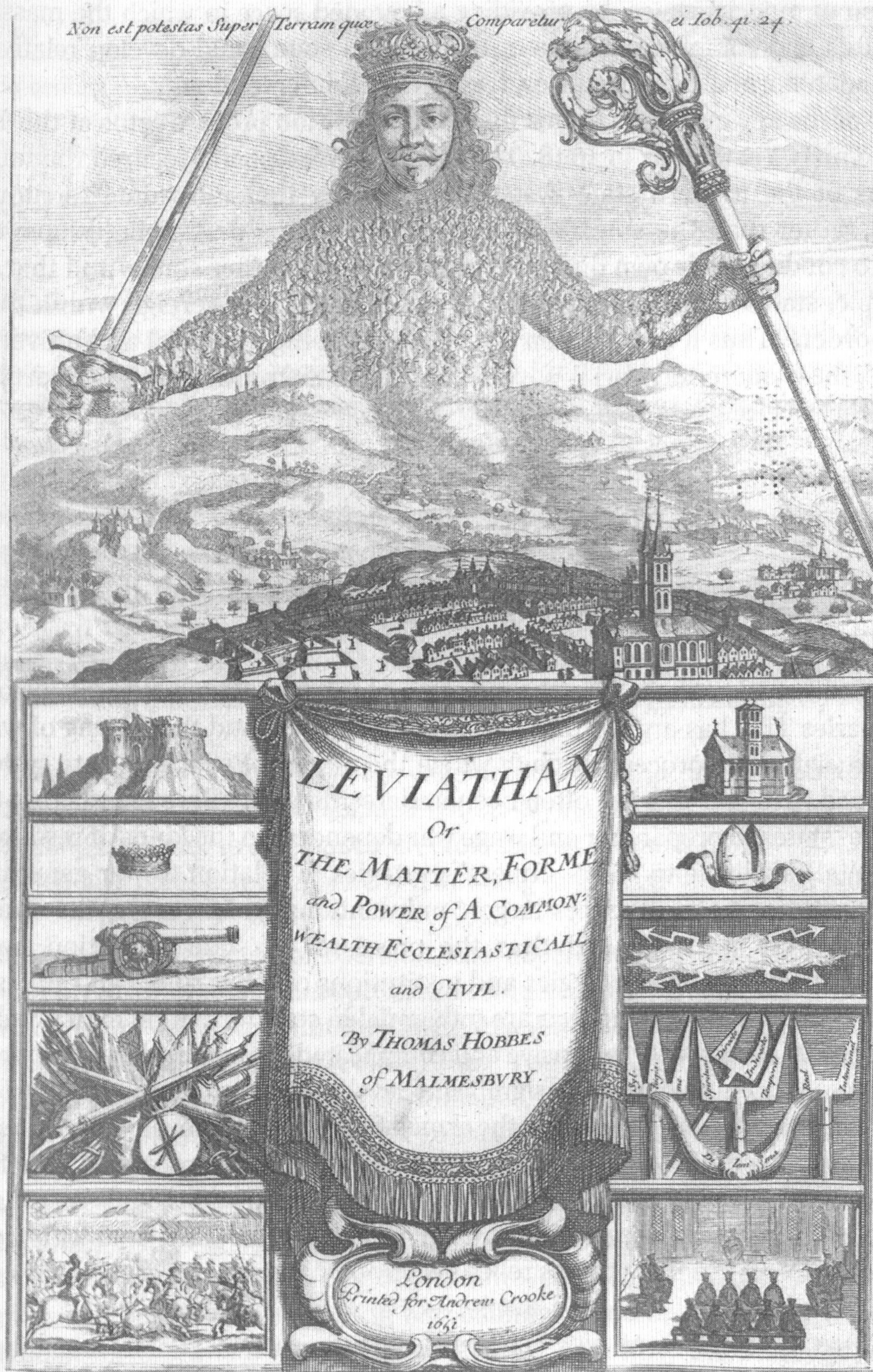

Figure 2.4 Frontispiece from *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes (1651)

Of crucial importance to this process was the emergence of a number of absolutist states *together* and the resulting development of the *interstate system*. Since sovereignty can't be grounded in any absolute foundations, it is constructed in practice through a system of mutual recognition. A state's claim to sovereignty is 'made to stick' as it were by showing that other states regard it as a legitimate claim. In one sense, this is a circular exercise, since those acknowledging the claim have an interest in getting their own claims recognized. Nonetheless, it has provided the preconditions for the hugely powerful system of territorial administration of modern states, by providing a bounded space in which the massive apparatus and complex practices of the modern state could develop relatively free, under 'normal' circumstances, from external intervention.

One of the key moments in this mutual recognition process came at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. The Treaty of Westphalia secured the foundations of the modern state system by agreeing that individual territorial states, rather than the empires of which they were a part, should have the right to conduct their own diplomatic relations with other states, and that, in principle, states should be regarded by other states as sovereign within their own borders. Thus it can be seen that far from being a natural and universal 'norm', the modern territorial 'sovereign' state is the product of quite particular historical circumstances.

Rulers, resources and wars

State formation as the product of war

The Treaty of Westphalia was the outcome of warfare. The historical sociologist Charles Tilly has argued that preparations for war and the waging of wars were crucial to the process through which the modern European state system developed, and that this has often been underestimated. Tilly suggests that the ability of states to prepare for and wage war depended on the kinds of resources (or capital) available to rulers. Rulers' strategies in relation to war generated state institutions and practices largely unintentionally. Moreover, the strategies that were pursued, and thus the processes of state formation, were strongly affected by the strategies and institutions of other rulers and states.[13]

Preparing for, and waging, war are influential in state formation for a number of reasons. Making war is expensive and complicated. It requires large resources of people and equipment and significant levels of organization. It therefore requires taxation, recruitment into the armed forces and the development of new institutions. According to Tilly, these form the core of the process of state formation. In addition, 'successful' wars may increase the territorial possessions of rulers, and start to demarcate the more precise boundaries associated with modern states. Of course this process relies heavily on *coercion* rather than *consent*:

> Why did wars occur at all? The central, tragic fact is simple: coercion *works*; those who apply substantial force to their fellows get compliance,

> and from that compliance draw the multiple advantages of money, goods, deference, access to pleasures denied to less powerful people.[14]

The extent of war during the period of the emergence of modern states was dramatic (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Temporal extent of war between great powers (after Tilly, 1990)

Period	Number of wars	Proportion of period war underway (%)
16th century	34	95
17th century	29	94
18th century	17	78
19th century	20	40
1901–75	15	53

Wars are expensive, requiring the maintenance of large armies which are not engaged in production, and the acquisition of equipment, much of which has to be continuously replenished. Paying for all this involves taxation (in a broad sense), or borrowing against future taxation. Certain forms of taxation, such as direct and arbitrary collection of money or goods (which Tilly calls 'tribute'[15]), can be garnered by *ad hoc* and coercive means. More systematic and dependable taxation regimes require organization and monitoring of the population, and a monetary economy.

In addition, the armed forces had to be organized and managed, and as warfare itself became increasingly large-scale and complex, so too did military organizations. According to Christopher Dandeker, the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries saw a revolution in military organization:

> The state transformed military organization from a system comprising autonomous, largely self-equipped mercenary formations, employed by contracting captains, to one based on professional servants of the state, disciplined in a bureaucratic hierarchy and owing allegiance to the state alone.[16]

Despite the importance of coercion, the dependence of the war-mongering states of early modern Europe on the wider economy and society for the *resources* for war, forced their ruling elites into relations of strategic alliance and compromise with other social groups. These other groups were often pursuing very different interests and strategies, but they were sometimes able to secure their aims in a process of negotiation with the dominant elite:

> In fact, rulers attempted to avoid the establishment of institutions representing groups outside their own class, and sometimes succeeded for considerable periods. In the long term, however, those institutions were the price and outcome of bargaining with different members of the subject population for the wherewithal of state activity, especially the means of war. Kings of England did not *want* a Parliament to form and assume ever-greater

> power; they conceded to barons, and then to clergy, gentry, and bourgeois, in the course of persuading them to raise the money for warfare.[17]

These processes and strategies resulted in the emergence of state institutions from which developed modern states. Among the key institutions involved were treasuries, state banks, taxation departments, diplomatic corps, military administration, military academies, armies and navies, and, as a product of bargaining with other social groups, (partially) representative institutions, such as parliaments. These organizations formed the cores of the apparatuses of modern states. On the whole, none of them was established *in order deliberately to construct* modern states — for one thing the idea would have made little sense to those involved at the time. Rather, they were the by-products, the unintended consequences of strategies pursued for other reasons, most notably the preparation for, and waging of, wars.

The character of states: variations, then convergence

During the middle ages the political map of Europe was both fragmented and complex. Hundreds of rulers governed a multifarious patchwork of statelets, cities, dukedoms, principalities, caliphates and larger empires. Within the largest units (such as the dynastic empires) dozens of local potentates pursued their own interests and strategies largely independently from those of their ultimate overlords.[18] As state formation proceeded through the pursuit of war, different states developed in very different ways. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, states had become much more alike. While significant differences remain, modern states have much more in common with each other in terms of their activities and forms of organization, than did their early modern ancestors. This process of differentiation and then convergence is central to Charles Tilly's account of state formation.

The resourcing of armies and wars through various forms of taxation over a sustained period depended upon the ability of the economy to generate sufficient production to maintain not only the general population, but also the military activities of the state. According to Tilly, this means that the capacity of states and their rulers to pursue militarist strategies was heavily influenced by the reciprocal relationship between *coercion* and *capital*. We have already seen the importance of coercion, but it was the various different ways in which coercion combined with the availability of capital that led to variation in the character of states.

Geography, in the form of the spatial structure of the relations between capital and coercion, was of crucial importance. According to Tilly, the means of coercion were characteristically mobilized by states and their rulers. Capital, by contrast, was concentrated in cities: the home of banks, merchants, traders, markets and craft workers. Cities were in many respects rivals to the emerging states. Cities had their own institutions and resources, and were concerned above all with production and trade, rather than war and the acquisition of territory. In some cases, they formed states in their own right – city-states. In

others, they existed more or less uncomfortably *within* the territories or spheres of influence of emerging states.

States and their rulers relied to a greater or lesser extent on the resources which cities could provide. The precise balance varied, and Tilly identifies three contrasting trends in state development: capital-intensive, coercion-intensive and an intermediate 'capitalized coercion' path. These alternatives were not deliberate strategies, but represented the response of states to the different environments in which they found themselves.

In the capital-intensive mode, 'rulers relied on compacts with capitalists — whose interests they served with care — to rent or purchase military force, and thereby warred without building vast permanent state structures'.[19] By contrast, where coercion dominated, 'rulers squeezed the means of war from their own populations and others they conquered, building massive structures of extraction in the process'.[20] The intermediate path involved aspects of each, and included 'incorporating capitalists and sources of capital directly into the structures' of the state.[21] According to Tilly, examples of the first approach include Genoa and the Dutch Republic, of the second Brandenburg and Russia, and of the third, France and England.

In due course, however, the loose federations of city-states at one end of the scale and the massive tribute-taking empires at the other both lost out to the 'intermediate form' – the modern state:

> Which sort of state prevailed in a given era and part of Europe varied greatly. Only late in the millennium did national states exercise clear superiority over city-states, empires, and other common European forms of state. Nevertheless, the increasing scale of war and the knitting together of the European state system through commercial, military, and diplomatic interaction eventually gave the war-making advantage to those states that could field standing armies; states having access to a combination of large rural populations, capitalists, and relatively commercialized economies won out. They set the terms of war, and their form of state became the predominant one in Europe. Eventually European states converged on that form: the national state.[22]

Tilly's work shows how different relationships between capital and coercion shaped different state forms. However, the cultural aspects of state formation were also important, as Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer argue in their book, *The Great Arch* (1985).[23] What does it mean to say that state formation is cultural? First, it implies that it is a symbolic as well as organizational or material process. State institutions and practices embody a wide range of meanings, in their buildings, spatial arrangements, discourses, flags, costumes, ceremonies and routine activities. A be-robed and be-wigged judge symbolizes something different from one wearing a business suit. The elaborate ceremonials of the British monarchy carry a different set of coded meanings from the more austere rituals of a federal republic such as the USA. A conscript army *means* something different from one made up of volunteers. A parliament which meets in an ancient and grand palace is

governing (symbolically) in a different way from one which meets in a purpose-built, modern office building.

Secondly, it implies that the production of meaning is central to the progress of state development. The state is not only a set of institutions, but also a set of understandings – stories and narratives that the state tells about itself and which make it make sense (in particular ways) both to its personnel and to the general population. These might include myths and legends, the 'official history' of the state, or fictions and dramas which represent the state, its people and its government in particular (usually heroic!) ways. In a related vein, Mark Neocleous has analyzed how the state has at various times been imagined as a body, a mind and a personality.[24]

Thirdly, state activities are 'performed' by the actors involved. State bureaucrats behave in bureaucratic ways because they have an understanding of what it is that bureaucrats do, with which they try to 'fit in'. Armies, police forces, tax inspectors, administrators, teachers and politicians all work with a set of cultural codes about what it is to be a soldier, police officer, tax inspector, and so on.

Crucially, these aspects can vary markedly between different states as their formation progresses. Even modern state institutions, such as parliaments or bureaucratic departments, which may seem organizationally similar, may have very different effects and roles as a result, in part, of the different discourses, symbols and performances embedded within them. According to Corrigan and Sayer, it is these cultural differences which account for much of the distinctiveness of the English state as it developed from the middle ages onwards. Among other things, they emphasize the discourses of the state and its role in moral regulation as key aspects of its cultural formation. The discourses of the state are multiple (and sometimes contradictory). They include legislation, court judgments, inquiries, regulations, official reports, histories, educational material, public pronouncements and political arguments. The work of Corrigan and Sayer suggests that, over time, these discourses, through their rhetorics, characteristic language and symbolic content, serve to mould the state as a series of cultural forms.[25]

'Moral regulation' refers to the processes by which the state tries to represent itself as the neutral guardian and protector of a unified 'whole' people, which is actually a heterogeneous mixture of different and often conflicting social groups and interests. The state tries to 'pull together' and integrate society, in part by representing itself as the embodiment of society. How often, for example, do we hear journalists speak of 'the British' or 'the Americans' or 'the Chinese' when what they actually mean is 'the British government' or 'the US administration' or 'the Chinese authorities'? The widespread confusion of states with their populations is evidence of the success of state strategies in trying to represent themselves as normal and natural expressions of a 'homogeneous' and 'united' people.

Administrative power and state apparatus

Power and information

Administrative power is central to modern states. It began with the development of writing, and the use of recorded information in traditional states. In

pre-modern societies, technological and resource limitations prevented the large-scale storage of detailed information. Nonetheless, the fact that some kind of recording was undertaken was a key breakthrough. Writing and information storage and retrieval allowed a gradual shift away from power as the immediate expression of the will of the monarch and towards power as the capacity of institutions to co-ordinate large-scale resources for strategic objectives. As Antony Giddens writes:

> As good a single index as any of the movement from the absolutist state to the nation-state is the initiation of the systematic collection of 'official statistics'. In the period of absolutism, such data-gathering was particularly concentrated in two areas, at least as regards the internal affairs of states. One was that of finance and taxation, the other the keeping of population statistics – which tended, however, until the eighteenth century to be localized, rather than centralized. ... The official statistics that all states began to keep from about the middle of the eighteenth century onwards maintain and extend these concerns. But they also range over many sectors of social life and, for the first time, are detailed, systematic and nearly complete. They include the centralized collation of materials registering births, marriages and deaths; statistics pertaining to residence, ethnic background and occupation; and ... 'moral statistics', relating to suicide, delinquency, divorce and so on.[26]

The sociologist Michael Mann has drawn a useful distinction between *despotic power* and *infrastructural power*.[27] Despotic power refers to the power of state elites to do things without reference to the rest of society. As Mann graphically puts it:

> Great despotic power can be 'measured' most vividly in the ability of all those Red Queens to shout 'off with his head' and have their whim gratified without further ado – provided the person is at hand.[28]

By contrast, infrastructural power is the ability of the state to 'penetrate' society and reach out across geographical space to influence events throughout its territory. States which were despotically strong, but infrastructurally weak, had great powers over life and death in theory, but did not possess the logistical means to carry them out. Where states have great infrastructural power, but limited despotic power, they typically have huge bureaucracies reaching into every part of the land, but are unable to use them to produce rapid or effective results. Mann identifies a range of types of state depending on the combination of infrastructural and despotic power (Table 2.3).

Surveillance

Those of us who live in modern states with a high degree of infrastructural power would find it very difficult, probably impossible, to pursue our everyday lives entirely independently from the state. The state monitors our births,

Table 2.3 Despotic and infrastructural power (after Mann, 1988)

	Infrastructurally weak	Infrastructurally strong
Despotically weak	Feudal	Bureaucratic
Despotically strong	Imperial	Authoritarian

marriages and deaths, our work and income, our child-rearing, our health, our housing, transport and travel, our education, our entitlement to public assistance, our political activities, our law-breaking and much else besides. Some of this information is held anonymously, but much of it is in named records. Electronic information storage has greatly expanded the ability of states to keep tabs on its population. Most information-gathering is not undertaken by specialized 'security services'. Instead, it is the by-product of a huge range of routine daily interactions between people and state institutions.

Geography is crucial to the state's capacity to undertake such routine surveillance. Surveillance requires a high level of infrastructural power, and it thus depends on a spatially dense and comprehensive set of institutional practices through which whole populations, from Miami to Seattle and from Lands End to the Orkneys, can be drawn into the knowledge circuits of the state. The 'institutional materiality' stretches the state's practices throughout its territory, usually through a spatially dispersed network of offices, courts, registries and agents. Although the coverage is never complete, this allows the expansion of state power away from the centre and right up to the boundary, giving us the sharply-drawn borders of modern states.

Administrative power is also expressed through 'internal pacification'. In traditional states, the centre had very little capacity to suppress internal dissent or unusual behaviour. Giddens mentions two developments which led to an increased emphasis on the state suppression of what gradually came to be defined as 'deviance'.[29] First, the growth of a large class of landless and dispossessed people led to rural unrest, poverty and rapid urban growth. Secondly, the state became increasingly concerned with the separation and treatment of specific social groups constructed as 'deviant' or 'abnormal'. These included those suffering from mental distress (the 'insane'), those with certain diseases, those committing criminal offences and those regarded as immoral or morally degraded, such as prostitutes and unmarried mothers. These twin shifts produced further parts of the state apparatus: the police, the internal security forces and 'carceral' institutions, such as prisons, workhouses and mental institutions, each with its own distinctive geography.

The spread of modern states: statehood as aspiration

State formation is not a neat process. Modern states are the products of centuries of sporadic, *ad hoc* developments and unintended consequences. War and the resourcing of war has been a key influence. So too has the growth of administrative power, both through surveillance and population

monitoring on the one hand and through the emergence of strategies for internal pacification and social control on the other. These processes have all involved particular uses of space and the production of spaces, and all of them involve cultural as well as political, economic and military transformations. During the twentieth century they spread across the world as the idea of the nation-state took on global significance.

The worldwide spread of modern states was intimately tied to European imperialism and colonialism. For one thing, during the rise of Europe's overseas empires, the imperatives and cultures of imperialism were of great importance in conditioning the formation of states in Europe. Then, during the period of decolonization, the territories and administrative apparatuses bequeathed to the newly independent areas by the departing imperial powers were central to the formation of states in the Global South.

Colonialism influenced the development of states throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. Imperial administrations operated in territories that had been mapped out through the processes of colonization. Territorial boundaries were partly the product of conflict between imperialist powers over territory, partly the results of conflicts between colonizers and the colonized, and partly a consequence of the imperialists' desire to organize space to facilitate the exploitation of resources.

With eventual decolonization, the newly independent states stepped into the administrative map of the colonizers, even though it rarely bore much relationship to the social or political geography of the pre-colonial societies. They also inherited state institutions that were culturally alien and had been designed for the twin purposes of subduing the local population and facilitating the transfer of resources to the metropolitan core. While this legacy hardly provided a propitious start for many newly independent states, there was in practice little that they could do other than adopt the model of the modern state.[30] As we have seen, though, the elaborate edifice of the modern state is expensive. Supporting it has sometimes added to, rather than solved, the economic difficulties of poorer countries. The failure of many states in the South to secure 'development' has often produced cycles of political instability with more liberal regimes being succeeded by more authoritarian ones and vice versa. Political geographer Ron Johnston suggests that this is because the difficulties of generating economic 'development' lead to a loss of legitimacy of the existing form of government and political instability, which allows a 'dictator' to take power on the basis of promises to restore order and encourage investment. The repression involved leads to a loss of legitimacy for the new regime and, eventually, a return to democracy.[31]

The political scientist Jean-François Bayart takes a rather different view of states in the Global South. Focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, he counsels against seeing states in the Third World as inherently unstable, weak, ineffective and corrupt.[32] Such images, he suggests, are both offensive and inaccurate. African states are not 'failed' versions of European states, fatally undermined by a combination of indigenous inadequacy and the global economic order. Rather, African politics and state formation must be understood in their own terms and be seen as ordinary and human, not as pathological deviations from some Western norm or ideal.

At the same time, it is unlikely that any society could avoid the general model of the modern state — bureaucratic, territorial, complex and militarized — since the pressures which generated it in Europe have to some extent become global in their scope.[33] The importance of Bayart's work is to point out that within this general model, states in different societies can take very different forms, and that those forms have to be understood as the products of their own histories and trajectories.

The *idea* of the modern state has also taken strength from another great movement of the twentieth century: nationalism. The anti-imperialist struggles which led to the creation of independent states were one form of nationalism and led in some cases to what has been called 'flag nationalism' or 'state nationalism': the attempt to develop a sense of nationhood and national belonging on the basis of nothing more than residence in the same state's territory. Other nationalisms, grounded in various constructions of ethnic identity, pursue the ideal of the modern state understood as a nation-state. In such campaigns, a discourse of statehood is developed in which the 'destiny' of the 'nation' is presented as dependent upon achieving statehood — a territorial space in which the 'community' of the nation can govern itself. Such arrangements are mythical of course — as we have seen, the actual processes of state formation are not quite like that. But they are also extremely powerful, as the nationalist war in the former Yugoslavia, which began in 1991, attests. These issues are pursued in more detail in Chapter 7. Next, though, we turn to the changing geographies of a particular form of the modern state: the welfare state.

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Further reading

A good account of the modern state is provided by:

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Geography's changing understanding of the relationship between state and society is surveyed in:

Painter, Joe (2005) 'State: society', in Paul Cloke and Ron Johnston (eds), *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography's Binaries*. London: Sage. pp. 42–60.

Charles Tilly's arguments about capital and coercion are set out in:

Tilly, Charles (1990) *Coercion, Capital and European States: AD 990–1990*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bob Jessop's influential strategic-relational approach to the state is set out in a series of books and papers, including:

Jessop, Bob (2008) *State Power: A Strategic-Relational Approach*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Finally, if you want to follow up our own approaches to the geography of the state in more detail you might be interested in:

Painter, Joe (2006) 'Prosaic geographies of stateness', *Political Geography*, 25: 752–74.

and

Jeffrey, Alex (2006) 'Building state capacity in post-conflict Bosnia and Hercegovina: the case of Brčko district', *Political Geography*, 25: 203–27.