

NOTES

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4. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, W. K. Marriott, trans. (New York: Knopf, 1992).
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2 STATES

KEY CONCEPTS

- The state is a central institution in comparative politics, as the centralization of violence over a territory.
- Regimes guide states by serving as the fundamental rules and norms of politics.
- Government is the leadership or elite in charge of running the state.
- Political legitimacy can take several forms: charismatic, traditional, and rational-legal.
- States can vary in autonomy and capacity, and this can shape their power at home and abroad.

We begin our study of the basic institutions of politics by looking at the state. This discussion is often difficult for North Americans, who are not used to thinking about politics in terms of centralized political power. Indeed, when Americans in particular think of the word *state*, they typically conjure up the idea of local, not centralized, politics.¹ But for most people around the world, "the state" refers to centralized authority, the locus of power. In this chapter, we will break down the basic institutions that make up states and discuss how states manage freedom and equality and distribute power toward achieving that authority. The chapter will define what states are and what they comprise, distinguishing a state from a government or a regime. We will also consider the origins of states themselves. For most of human history, politics was built on organizations other than states, and myriad forms of authority existed around the world. Yet now only states remain. Why? In other words, we can consider states as an effect—what caused them to come into existence?

Once we have discussed the nature and origins of the state, we will look at some different ways in which states can be compared. This discussion will include an analysis of different forms of legitimacy that give a state power and the actual levels of power itself. Can we speak of states as weak or strong? And if so, how would we measure that strength or weakness? To answer this question, we will make a distinction between state capacity and state autonomy, and how this might differ across cases and policy areas. Here, we consider states as a cause, in how they can shape other institutions. With these ideas more clearly in hand, we will return to our theme of individual freedom and collective equality and consider the future of the state itself.

Defining the State

What exactly do we mean by the term *state*? Political scientists, drawing on the work of the German scholar Max Weber, typically define the **state** in its most basic terms as the organization that maintains a monopoly of violence over a territory.² At first glance, this may seem to be a rather severe definition of what a state is or does, but a bit of explanation should help flesh out this concept. One of the most important elements of a state is what we call **sovereignty**, or the ability to carry out actions or policies within a territory independently from external actors or internal rivals. In other words, a state needs to be able to act as the primary authority over its territory and the people who live there, setting forth laws and rights, resolving disputes between people and organizations, and generating domestic security.

To achieve this, a state needs power, typically (but not only) physical power. If a state cannot defend its territory from outside actors such as other states, then it runs the risk that those rivals will interfere, inflicting damage, taking its territory, or destroying the state outright. Similarly, if the state faces powerful opponents within its own territory, such as organized crime or rebel movements, it runs the risk that its rules and policies will be undermined. Thus, to secure control, a state must be armed. To protect against international rivals, states need armies. And in response to domestic rivals, states need a police force. In fact, the very word *police* comes from the old French word meaning “to govern.”

A state is thus a set of institutions that seeks to wield the majority of force within a territory, establishing order and deterring challengers from inside and out. In so doing, it provides security for its subjects by limiting the danger of external attack and internal crime and disorder—both of which are seen as threats to the state and its citizens. In some ways, a state (especially a non-democratic one) is a kind of protection racket—demanding money in return for security and order, staking out turf, defending its clients from rivals, settling internal disputes, and punishing those who do not pay.³

But most states are far more complex than simply being an entity that applies force. Unlike criminal rackets, the state is made up of a large number of institutions that are engaged in the process of turning political ideas into policy. Laws and regulations, property rights, health and labor, environment and transportation are but a few things that typically fall under the responsibility of the state. Moreover, the state is a set of institutions (ministries, departments, offices, army, police) that society deems necessary to achieve basic goals regarding freedom and equality. When there is a lack of agreement on these goals, the state must attempt to reconcile different views and seek (or impose) consensus. And unlike a criminal racket, which people obey out of fear or pure self-interest, the state is typically valued for its own sake. The public views the state as legitimate, vital, and appropriate: Who can imagine politics without it? States are thus strongly institutionalized and not easily changed. Leaders and policies may come and go, but the state remains, even in the face of crisis, turmoil, or revolution. Although destruction through war or civil conflict can eliminate states altogether, even this outcome is unusual and states are soon re-created. Thus, the state is defined as a monopoly of force over a given territory, but it is also the set of political institutions that create standards through which conflicts related to freedom and equality can be resolved. It is, if you will, the machinery of politics, establishing order and turning politics into policy. Thus many social scientists argue that the state, as a bundle of institutions, is an important causal variable in such things as variations in economic development or the rise of democracy.

A few other terms that are often used with regard to political organization need to be defined here. Although often used interchangeably with the concept of the state, they are in fact separate institutions that help define and direct the state. First, we should make a distinction between the state and a **regime**, which is defined as the fundamental rules and norms of politics. More specifically, a regime embodies long-term goals regarding individual freedom and collective equality, where power should reside and how it should be used. At the most basic level, we can speak of a democratic regime or a non-democratic one. In a democratic regime, the rules and norms of politics emphasize a large role for the public in governance, as well as certain individual rights or liberties. A nondemocratic regime, in contrast, will limit public participation in favor of

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The State Is . . .

- The monopoly of force over a given territory.
- A set of political institutions to generate and carry out policy.
- Typically highly institutionalized.
- Sovereign.
- Characterized by such institutions as an army, police, taxation, a judiciary, and a social welfare system.

those in power. Both types of regimes can vary in the extent to which power is centralized and the relationship between freedom and equality. The democratic regime of the United States is not the same as that of Canada; the non-democratic regime of China is not the same as that of Cuba or Syria. Some of these regime differences can be found in basic documents such as constitutions, but often the rules and norms that distinguish one regime from another are unwritten and implicit, requiring careful study.

In other words, regimes are an important component of the larger state framework. Regimes do not easily or quickly change, although they can be transformed or altered, usually by dramatic social events such as a revolution or a national crisis. Most revolutions, in fact, can be seen as revolts not against the state or even the leadership, but against the current regime—to overthrow the old rules and norms and replace them with new ones. For example, France refers to its current regime as the Fifth Republic. Ever since the French Revolution overthrew the monarchy in 1789, each French republic has been characterized by a separate regime, embodied in the constitution and the broader political rules that shape politics. In another example, South Africa's transition to democracy in the 1990s involved a change of regime as the white-dominated system of apartheid gave way to one that provides democratic rights to all South Africans.

In some nondemocratic countries where politics is dominated by a single individual, observers may use the term *regime* to refer to that leader, emphasizing the view that all decisions flow from that one person. Or as King Louis XIV of France famously put it, *L'état, c'est moi* (I am the state). When the Bush administration spoke of its desire for "regime change" in Iraq and Iran, our broader definition can apply as well, because the objective was not simply to eliminate the leadership but to facilitate or install democratic institutions. This returns us to the question of cause and effect. Regimes can emerge through centuries of slow development but can also be the product of sudden revolutionary change. How

regimes become institutionalized is not clear; it is easy to write a constitution, as we saw in Iraq, but much harder to make it stick, especially if it is meant to displace a previous set of rules and norms and fundamentally transform politics. If anything, some political scientists have observed that regime change is most effective when there is a general public attachment to the state that can bind people together through such periods of transition.⁴

A Regime Is . . .

- Norms and rules regarding individual freedom and collective equality, the locus of power, and the use of that power.
- Institutionalized, but can be changed by dramatic social events such as a revolution.
- Categorized at the most basic level as either democratic or authoritarian.
- Often embodied in a constitution.

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To recap, if the state is a monopoly of force and a set of political institutions to secure the population and generate policy, then the regime is defined as the norms and rules regarding the proper relationship between freedom and equality and the use of power toward that end. To use an analogy, if the state is the machinery of politics, like a personal computer, then one can think of a regime as its software, the programming that defines its capabilities. Each computer runs differently, and more or less productively, depending on the software installed.

This brings us to a third term to add to our understanding of state and regime: *government*. **Government** can be defined as the leadership or elite in charge of running the state. If the state is the machinery of politics, and the regime its programming, then the government acts as its operator. The government may consist of democratically elected legislators, presidents, and prime ministers, or it may be leaders who gained office through force or other nondemocratic means. Whatever their path to power, governments all hold particular ideas regarding freedom and equality and attempt to use the state to realize those ideas. But few governments are able to act with complete autonomy in this regard. Democratic and nondemocratic governments must confront the existing regime in the norms and values of politics that have built up over time. Push too hard against an existing regime, and resistance, rebellion, or collapse may occur. For example, Mikhail Gorbachev's attempt to transform the Soviet Union's regime in the 1980s contributed to that country's dissolution.

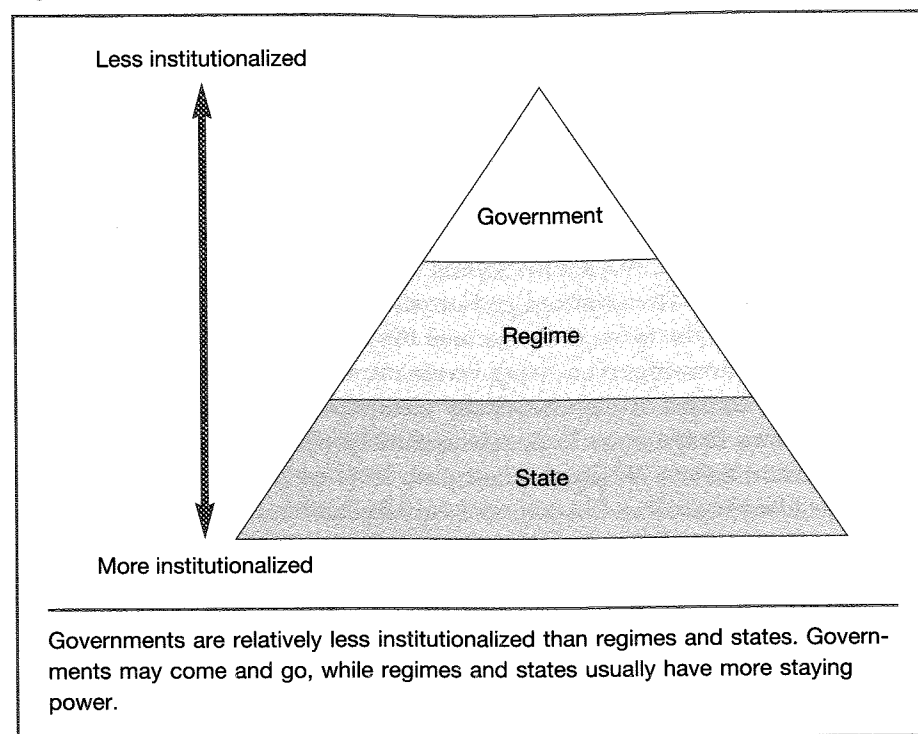
In part because of the power of regimes, governments tend to be weakly institutionalized; that is, those in power are not viewed by the public as irreplaceable, such that the country would collapse without them (Figure 2.1). In democratic regimes, governments are replaced fairly frequently, and even in nondemocratic settings, those who rule are continuously threatened by rivals and their own mortality. Governments come and go, whereas regimes and states may live on for decades or centuries with a great degree of continuity.

Finally, we have the term **country**, which can be seen as shorthand for all the concepts so far discussed—state, government, regime—as well as the people who live within that political system. We will often speak about various countries in this textbook, and when we do, we are referring to the entire political entity and its citizens.

Government Is . . .

- The leadership or elite in charge of running the state.
- Weakly institutionalized.
- Often characterized by elected officials, such as a president or prime minister, or unelected officials, such as in authoritarianism.
- Limited by the existing regime.

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Figure 2.1 STATE, REGIME, AND GOVERNMENT

The Origins of Political Organization

So far we have noted that modern politics is defined by states, which monopolize force and generate and realize policy. This political machinery is given direction by a particular regime and by the government in power. Governments generate short-term goals regarding freedom and equality, which are in part based on an existing regime that provides an institutionalized set of norms and values about politics. This combination, linking state, regime, and government, is relatively new in human history. This is not to say that there is no history of political organization. On the contrary, for thousands of years, human beings have formed collective groups, ranging from relatively simple and fluid gatherings to highly complex systems that incorporated hundreds of thousands or even millions of individuals and lasted for centuries. Complex political forms took root anywhere that people moved from nomadic to sedentary life. But as we look over the face of the earth in this millennium, we see that the various forms of political organization that dominated human history have for the most part disappeared. The globe is now clearly demarcated by only one type of political organization—the state—that has displaced

virtually all other political structures, and within the course of only a few hundred years. Every person and piece of habitable property on the face of the earth is the subject of some state.

But where did states come from, and why have they displaced all other forms of political organization? Why are there no longer parts of the world controlled by city-states, tribes, or empires? To answer this puzzle, we first need to go back into human history and discuss the origins of political organization. How human beings have come together and how they have organized their lives will also be a central issue later on as we look at the role of democracy and nondemocratic rule in the modern world. It would appear that states have been able to displace all other forms of political organization, in spite of the long history of these other forms. By understanding the origins and power of states, we can better grasp their functions in the modern world. We can also consider that just as human beings once existed without states, states might themselves be replaced in the future by one or more other forms of political organization.

Archeology and history tell us that human beings have long organized into political units, although our findings do not necessarily explain why humans organized in the first place beyond being in a small group. For political scientists interested in current affairs, this original motivation may be of little concern, but for anthropologists and others focused on human history and social evolution, the question is important. There are a number of competing explanations as to why humans organize beyond family or tribe. One important factor is probably environment and agriculture. Where people were able to domesticate plants and animals (a much more difficult process than one might imagine), they moved from a nomadic hunter-gatherer existence to one of sedentary living. Concepts that would have previously been meaningless, such as territory, crops, homes, and personal property, suddenly became life-or-death issues.

In addition, the rise of agriculture and domestication allowed for the creation of food surpluses, again a great change from the hunter-gatherer days. Food surpluses allowed for greater human specialization: some people could forgo farming and pursue other activities, such as making useful goods that could be exchanged for food and other items. But while agriculture and a sedentary existence created property and specialization, it also created, or at least increased, human inequality. In a system of greater specialization that relies on a wide array of talents, some individuals will clearly benefit more than others; wealth and power inevitably become unequally distributed.

This time period is when political organization most likely had its beginning. As societies grow larger, more specialized, and more unequal, they require new mechanisms to handle disputes. Those with economic surpluses seek to protect their riches from theft. Those without surpluses seek a greater

share of the group's resources. And both fear attack by outside groups or internal competitors that might covet their lands, crops, and homes. Because of such human innovations as agriculture, the very concepts of individualism versus the collective, of freedom versus equality, probably first arose. Who gets what? Who has the right to do what? And how should these decisions be made and enforced? Having to confront and reconcile freedom and equality in turn raised questions about where power should reside and toward what end. Political organizations formed to reconcile these competing demands and concerns. Once humans could conceptualize the idea of fairness, politics emerged.

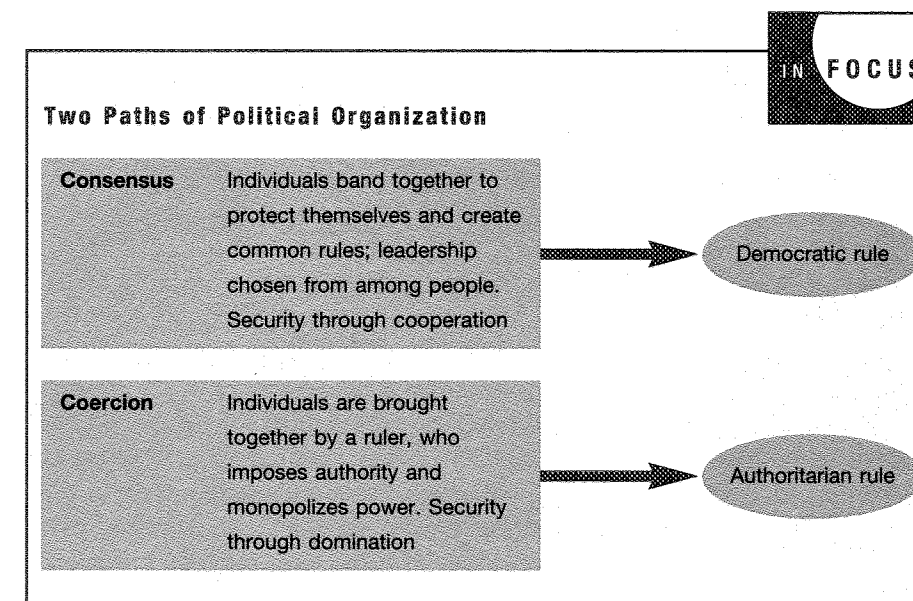
Organizations could settle or prevent disputes between individuals, generating early notions of law and justice. Political organizations could also establish rights, punish those found guilty of breaking rules or violating others' rights, and raise a force capable of resisting outside attack. To carry out these activities, though, political organizations required revenue, creating the need for taxation. Clearly, then, many of the elements of modern politics emerged in the distant past, over and over again, around the world.

One thing that remains unclear, however, is whether these political organizations emerged through consensus or through force. In other words, did political systems develop because some people managed to impose their will on others, installing themselves as chiefs or kings and using violence to impose their will? Or did people willingly form political systems as a way to overcome the anarchy that would otherwise result in a world that lacked central authority? In the absence of evidence, philosophers have long debated this issue. Some, like the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, believed that human beings voluntarily enter into a "social contract" or agreement among themselves to create a single political authority to overcome anarchy, where neither freedom nor equality is ensured. In return for giving up many of their rights, people gained security and a foundation on which to build a civilization. In contrast, Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that human beings were in essence "noble savages" whose lives were compassionate and egalitarian. It was rather civilization, and the rise of the state, that corrupted this life by institutionalizing a system of inequality. Each of these competing visions provides a different interpretation of civilization and political organization, though both emphasize that states must be subject to the people, and not the other way around.

For a long time scholars have assumed that Rousseau's vision of human political development was more accurate than Hobbes's vision of "a war of all against all," and that people lived in relative harmony and equality until technological innovation created more sedentary, more unequal, and more violent lives. In addition, Rousseau's vision often argued that the consequent

shift to political organization was largely consensual, a response to these new challenges. More recent research, however, indicates that neither is correct. Pre-state societies were very likely more violent than states in the present. By one estimate, up to a quarter of the population died at the hands of others. States appear to have emerged out of this constant warfare as one set of individuals gained the upper hand over others; at the same time, state coercion also promised an end to endemic violence, which provided a form of legitimacy. Whereas we once speculated that technical innovation, civilization, and human political organization were the sources of violence, it now appears to be the opposite.⁵

Through this mixture of coercion and consensus, complex organizations began to emerge about 8,000 years ago in the Middle East, bearing the political hallmarks of politics that exist to this day, such as taxation, bureaucracy, laws, military force, and leadership. Some of these political units were relatively small, such as the city-states that emerged in ancient Greece some 2,700 years ago. In other cases, large and highly sophisticated empires emerged, as in China, South America, the Middle East, and Africa. Across these political systems, economic relations were based on agricultural production, with more specialized goods and trade as secondary activities. And unlike in modern countries, the borders of these early political systems were often undefined. Beyond their authority, large portions of the inhabited world possessed no form of complex political organization that would resemble a modern state.⁶



The Rise of the Modern State

This diversity of political systems eventually gave way to the modern state, which first arrived in Europe. Why the modern state first emerged in Europe and came to dominate the world is uncertain, but it may in part be due to historical chance and the curious advantage of backwardness. Two thousand years ago, Europe, like other parts of the world, was dominated by a single large empire—in this case, the Roman Empire. Spanning thousands of miles across western Europe to North Africa and Egypt, the Roman Empire developed a highly complex political system that tied together millions of people and generated an advanced infrastructure of cities, laws, trade, knowledge, and roads. After a thousand years, however, the Roman Empire eventually declined, succumbing to the pressures of overexpansion and increased attacks by rival forces. By the fifth century C.E., Rome itself was sacked by invaders.

As the Roman Empire collapsed, the complex political institutions and the other benefits that had extended across its territory largely disappeared, particularly in western Europe (Figure 2.2). The security generated by imperial

control evaporated, replaced by roving bands of marauders. Roads and the other basic forms of infrastructure that people depended on eroded. Rules and regulations fragmented and lost their power. The knowledge and technology accumulated under the empire was lost or forgotten, and the advanced system of trade and travel between communities came to an end. Much of Europe reverted to anarchy, entering the period commonly known as the Dark Ages, from about 500 C.E. to about 1000 C.E. Europe's rise to power was thus not preordained; as China, the Middle East, and South America each experienced a period of growth and innovation, Europe experienced decline and decay.

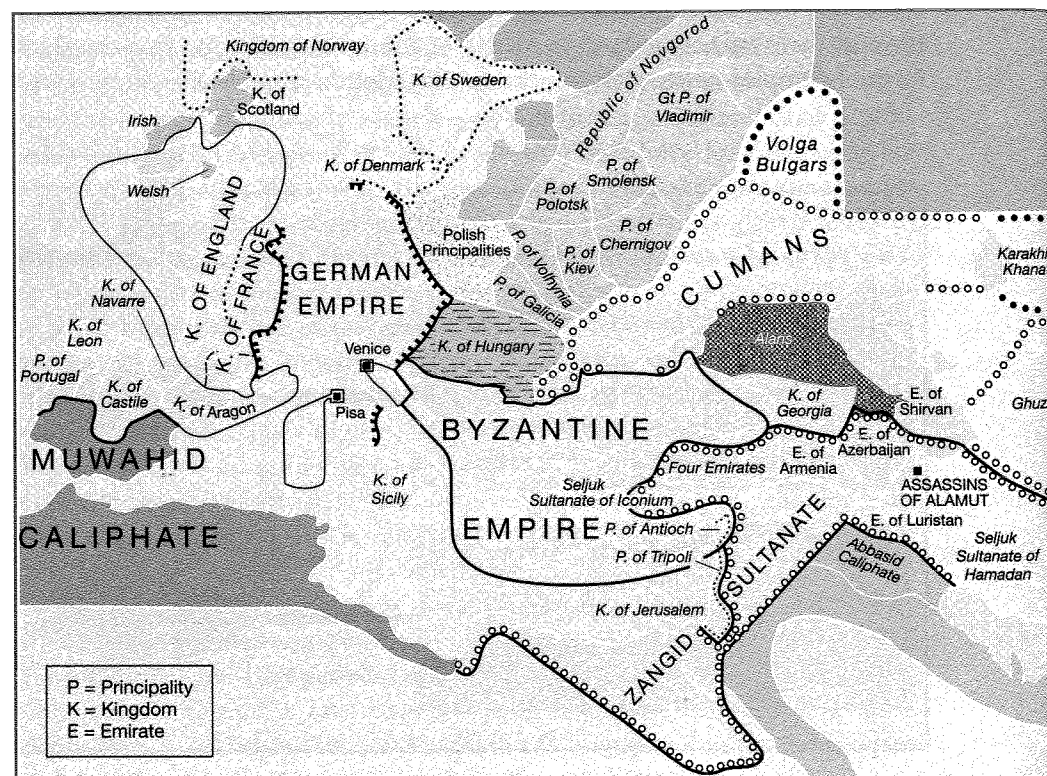
Yet paradoxically, this period of dramatic decline and anarchy appears to have set the stage for the creation of the modern state. As the sociologist Charles Tilly has noted, in Europe's highly fragmented, unstable, and violent environment, new political organizations began to develop, in constant competition with their rivals.⁷ In some cases, these were simply marauders who realized that they could earn a better living by controlling and taxing one group of people rather than by constantly pillaging from place to place. Warlords staked out relatively small areas of land that they could easily defend and consolidated control over these regions, fighting off rival groups. In other cases, the people banded together themselves to fight off rival groups. As Tilly and others have concluded, the modern state emerged from or in reaction to what was essentially organized crime, with armed groups staking out turf, offering protection, and demanding payment in return.

The constant warfare among these numerous rivals seems to have generated a kind of rapid organizational evolution. Groups that could quickly adapt survived while less successful groups were conquered and disappeared. Rapid development was thus encouraged by a highly competitive and fluid environment.

Not only history but also geography has played a role in the rise of the modern state. The physiologist Jared Diamond has argued that Europe's close proximity to Asia and the Middle East provided benefits in the form of new plants, animals, and technical innovations that were unavailable to peoples in the Americas or Africa. At the same time, Europe's diverse geography hindered political centralization under a single language or culture.⁸ Even at the height of the Roman Empire, much of central, northern, and eastern Europe had lain beyond the Romans' reach. Contrast this with China, where political power was centralized and institutionalized already by the third century C.E. Because China was more politically stable and lacked the kind of competitive environment seen in Europe, over time its institutions grew inflexible and resistant to political, economic, or technological change.

Out of the constant warfare of the Dark Ages emerged a new form of political organization—the state—that possessed three important advantages over

Figure 2.2 EUROPE IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY



alternate forms. First, states encouraged economic development. Before and during the Dark Ages, most Europeans lived under an economic system based on subsistence agriculture. Property such as land tended to be monopolized by those in power rather than by those who worked it. Warlords could tie the people to the land (serfdom) and extract their labor and levy heavy taxes on those who produced nonagricultural goods. However, such economic conditions were counterproductive for society as a whole: individuals had little incentive to produce if the fruits of their labor were simply taken by others. Those rulers who created laws, regulations, and infrastructure that permitted and respected private property and individual profit, however, found that production grew, giving the ruler more resources to tax or borrow (and with which to make war). Property rights thus became a hallmark of state development.⁹

A second advantage emerged when some rulers similarly encouraged technological innovation as a means of increasing their own economic and military power. As with private commerce and trade, rulers recognized that new technologies would also stimulate economic development by providing new goods and services. When technological innovation was harnessed to commerce, economic development expanded dramatically. Technological change was thus viewed by some rulers not as a threat to their power but as a means to expand it. Many of the advantages that made Europe powerful as it set off to conquer the world—gunpowder, advanced mathematics, modern map-making, paper, astronomy—originated in other parts of the world. But the Europeans absorbed these innovations and put them to new use. What mattered most was not who had discovered these things but rather how these discoveries were encouraged or used. Whether this application of innovation was primarily a function of intense European competition or certain particular values among Europeans is still a source of intense and bitter debate (see Chapter 3).¹⁰ Whatever the reason, technological innovation, combined with the state's willingness to tolerate or encourage private enterprise, set the stage for modern capitalism—a system of private property, free markets, and investment in the pursuit of wealth.

A third advantage came about through the creation of domestic stability, increased trade and commerce, and the development of infrastructure whereby the state assisted in the homogenization of peoples who were originally quite different from one another. The fact that people could travel more freely within the territory of their state encouraged interaction and the development of a shared culture. The state, through printed documents, education, and legal codes, also contributed to the standardization of language. People in Europe began to see themselves as belonging to a common ethnic identity that comprised shared cultural values. Instead of identifying primarily with their trade, clan, religion, or town, people began to see themselves as English or French or German. Ethnicity proved to be a powerful asset to the state, for

it in turn fostered nationalism—a shared political identity. This will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Although the modern state offered all these advantages, by around 1500, states covered only 20 percent of the globe, the rest belonging to alternative forms of centralized organization or none at all. But this was soon to change. Well organized and armed with technological advances, growing national identity, and economic resources, the states of Europe began to rapidly accrue power. As economic power grew, so did the ability of the state to manage ever greater numbers of people and ever more territory. Increased finances and state organization also allowed for the development of major militaries. Possessing the ability to conquer and control larger pieces of land, states began to defeat and absorb their European rivals. Spiritual rivals also fell by the wayside. The Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), in part a struggle between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, culminated in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Under this treaty, the authority of the pope over Europe's people was radically curtailed. Without this rival spiritual authority, states were free to direct religion within their own territory, subordinating the spiritual to the political. State sovereignty as we understand it today is often dated from the Treaty of Westphalia.

European states now began to expand their economic, technical, and military powers beyond their own shores. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Spain and Portugal took control of large parts of the Americas, while the Dutch, French, and British expanded state power into Asia. By the nineteenth century, nearly all of Africa had similarly been divided up among European states and incorporated into their respective empires.

The organizational structure of the state was thus imposed around the world by force. Yet as European control receded in the twentieth century, the structure of the state remained—indeed, states grew in number as these lands and peoples gained sovereignty. Although peoples all around the world resisted and eventually threw off European domination, they viewed the state as a superior—or at least inevitable—form of political evolution, and they adopted it for their own purposes. The world thus became a world of states. States set forth international boundaries and established international rules and were the primary actors in domestic and international politics around the world. Countries like India or Nigeria might throw off colonial rule, but they retained and expanded the state institutions originally imposed by imperialism.

The rapid spread of states may be viewed as the triumph of a form of organization that was able to destroy other political rivals, no matter how sophisticated. But this has not come without cost. Whereas Europe took several hundred years to create the modern state, much of the world has been forced to take up this form of organization more quickly, adopting these institutions out of necessity or force. Yet the historical paths of Africa, Asia, and

TIME LINE / POLITICAL ORGANIZATION IN EUROPE	
10th–9th centuries B.C.E.	Greek dark ages
8th–7th centuries B.C.E.	Beginning of Greek city-states; centralization of political power in Europe
6th–5th centuries B.C.E.	Establishment of Roman republic; first development of democracy in Athens
2nd–1st centuries B.C.E.	Roman conquest of Greece
1st–2nd centuries C.E.	Roman Empire expands across Europe and into the Middle East; zenith of centralized imperial power in Europe
3rd–4th centuries C.E.	Internal decline of Roman Empire; beginning of European Dark Ages; development stagnates
5th–6th centuries C.E.	Rome sacked by the Visigoths; widespread strife among competing European warlords
7th–8th centuries C.E.	Muslim armies enter Spain; Islamic world grows in power during a period of innovation and expansion
9th–10th centuries C.E.	Viking raids across Europe
11th–12th centuries C.E.	European crusades into Middle East; warfare begins to consolidate Europe into distinct political units
12th–13th centuries C.E.	Period of rapid innovation and development: mechanical clock invented; paper, compass adopted from Asia and the Middle East
14th–15th centuries C.E.	Voyages of exploration and early imperialism; early European states centralize; Islamic world stagnates
16th–17th centuries C.E.	Scientific revolution; modern states develop; modern identities of nationalism and patriotism develop

South America were radically different from those of Europe. Many of these new states have lacked the resources, infrastructure, capital, and organization that much older states developed over a thousand years. Consequently, these newer states often face significant challenges, such as establishing sovereignty over territories where a multitude of peoples, languages, religions, and cultures may coexist—problems that most European states solved only over the course of centuries and at the cost of many wars, revolutions, and lives.¹¹ For better or worse, although Europe no longer directly rules over much of the earth, it has left us with the legacy of the state itself.

Comparing State Power

It is clear from the preceding discussion that political evolution has been a lengthy and somewhat arbitrary process. Where conditions allowed for human beings to settle permanently, complex forms of political organization emerged, with features that reflect basic aspects of modern politics: freedom, equality, and the allocation of power. But only over the past few centuries has the modern state taken shape, forging new political, economic, and social institutions that have made it so powerful. States quickly eradicated all other forms of political organization and laid claim to all corners of the earth.

Still, not all states are the same. As we have already observed, some states are powerful, effective, prosperous, and stable; others are weak, disorganized, and largely incapable of effective action. Moreover, a single state can have a commanding presence in one area but appear ineffectual in another. What explains this range? How do we understand differences in what we might call “stateness”—variations in the quality or powers of states? To answer this question and make effective comparisons, we need a few more conceptual tools with which to work.

Legitimacy

The first concept to address is that of legitimacy. **Legitimacy** can be defined as a value whereby something or someone is recognized and accepted as right and proper. In other words, a legitimate institution or person is widely accepted and recognized by the public. Legitimacy confers authority and power. In the case of states, we know that they wield a great deal of coercive force. But is that the only reason that people recognize their authority? In fact, many people obey the law even when the threat of punishment is slight. Why? They view such behavior as “the right thing” to do. We may pay our taxes, stand at the crosswalk, or serve in the military not because of fear of punishment or a personal benefit but because we assume that the state has the authority to ask these things of us. As states provide security, they can engender a sense of reciprocal responsibility to the state. Legitimacy thus creates power that relies not on coercion, but on consent. Without legitimacy, a state would have to use the continuous threat of force to maintain order—a difficult task—or expect that many of its rules and policies would go unheeded. Legitimacy is therefore a critical component of stateness.

How then does a state become legitimate? Let us turn again to Max Weber, who argued that political legitimacy comes in three basic forms: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal.¹² Traditional legitimacy rests on the idea that someone or something is valid because “it has always been that way.” In other words, this legitimacy is built on the idea that certain aspects of politics are to

be accepted because they have been accepted over a long period of time. In some way, they are seen as inseparable from the identity of the people themselves. **Traditional legitimacy** often embodies historical myths and legends as well as the continuity between past and present. Rituals and ceremonies all help to reinforce traditional legitimacy by providing actions and symbols that are ancient, unique, and dramatic. One good example is the legitimacy accorded to a long-standing monarchy, where a particular family holds the office over generations. However, the example of a monarchy may also connote that traditional equals outdated. Yet even modern institutions, like an elected office or a regime, can develop traditional legitimacy if in place long enough. In short, traditional legitimacy is a system built on history and continuity. The longer a traditional political system has been in place, the more institutionalized it becomes, as it has the weight of history on its side. Change becomes difficult to imagine if an institution has existed “since time immemorial.”

Charismatic legitimacy is in many ways the very opposite of traditional legitimacy. When we use the word *charisma* in everyday conversation, we usually are describing someone who is good-looking or perhaps a witty conversationalist. But in politics, charisma means much more. Rather than relying on the weight of history and the continuity of certain roles or values, charismatic legitimacy is based on the power of ideas, or what is sometimes called “the gift of grace.” Charisma is typically embodied by one individual who can move the public through these ideas and the manner in which she or he presents them. Some individuals possess a certain magnetism that binds who they are to what they say. Jesus and Muhammad are perfect examples of charismatic figures who could gather huge followings through the power of their ideas. In a more modern and more sinister example, Adolf Hitler was a charismatic figure, whose power with ideas and language brought about world war and genocide.

As you can imagine, charismatic legitimacy is not institutionalized and thus is fairly tenuous, since it commonly dies with the individual who possesses it. But charismatic legitimacy can be transformed into traditional legitimacy through the creation of rituals and values that are meant to capture the spirit and intent of the charismatic leader’s power. Religions, monarchies, even constitutions and regimes can be examples of this. Weber called this kind of institutionalization “the routinization of charisma.”

In contrast to the first two forms of legitimacy, **rational-legal legitimacy** is based not on history or rituals (as in the case of traditional legitimacy) or on the force of ideas (as in charismatic legitimacy) but rather on a system of laws and procedures that are highly institutionalized. Leaders or political officials are legitimate by virtue of the rules by which they come to office. Moreover, people abide by the decisions of these actors because they believe that the rules the leaders enforce serve the public’s interest. In this case, it is not the person who is important or even that individual’s particular values or

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Three Types of Legitimacy

Type	Characteristics	Example
Traditional legitimacy	Built by habit and custom over time, stressing history; strongly institutionalized	Monarch (Queen Elizabeth)
Charismatic legitimacy	Built on the force of ideas and the presence of the leader; weakly institutionalized	Revolutionary hero (Vladimir Lenin)
Rational-legal legitimacy	Built on rules and procedures and the offices that create and enforce those rules; strongly institutionalized	Elected executive (Barack Obama)

ideas, but the office he or she holds. The office is legitimate, rather than the person in it. Once that person leaves office, he or she loses authority.

As you have probably already guessed, the world of modern states is built on a rational-legal foundation. States rely on bureaucracies, paperwork, and thousands of individuals to make daily decisions on a wide range of issues. Ideally, the public accepts these decisions as the proper way to get things done, and they presume that these decisions are reasonably fair and predictable. For example, if there are elections, they accept the outcome even if their preferred candidate loses, and they obey those who won. The 2000 presidential election in the United States is a perfect example of rational-legal legitimacy. After weeks of bitter disputes over who had actually won the election, the Supreme Court’s intervention effectively ended the battle, and the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, agreed to abide by the outcome. In spite of denunciations by some that the election was illegitimate, the majority of Americans accepted George W. Bush as their president, even if they had not voted for him (and the majority of voters had not). What’s more, legitimacy is not confined to political actors within the state; our own individual legitimacy comes from a rational-legal foundation: our driver’s licenses, identification numbers, passports, or voter registration cards all confer a certain form of authority and power that flows between citizen and state.

Note, however, that just because the rise of modern states was built on a rational-legal legitimacy, that doesn't mean that traditional or charismatic legitimacy has disappeared. In almost any country, one can distinguish stateness by looking at the mix of legitimacy across these three sources. Political leaders in many countries throughout modern history have wielded a great deal of charismatic power and have sometimes become the centers of large "cults of personality," which we will explore further in Chapter 6. These cults portray the leader as the father (or, occasionally, the mother) of the nation and imbue him or her with almost superhuman powers. Charismatic leadership, and the power that it places in the hands of one individual, can corrupt, but some charismatic figures have dramatically changed the course of politics for the better: Mohandas K. Gandhi, in India, or Nelson Mandela, in South Africa, for instance. Barack Obama clearly rose out of nowhere to become president of the United States through charisma, not his experience.

Traditional power can similarly be found in a wide variety of circumstances. The United Kingdom, Japan, Sweden, and more than thirty other countries still have monarchs. Although the powers of most of these monarchs are now quite limited, they remain important symbols and attract national and sometimes even international attention. Canada and Australia retain the British monarchy as their head of state, even though it exercises no real authority and is part of its colonial past. Rules and regulations can also eventually take on a kind of traditional legitimacy if they function for so long that people can't imagine doing things any other way. The U.S. Constitution, for example, is not only a set of rules for conducting politics; it is also considered a sacred symbol of what makes the United States unique and powerful. Is the difficulty in modifying the U.S. Constitution due to the procedures involved, or has there developed over time a resistance to tinkering with this "sacred" document? If the latter is true, then it is not simply rational-legal legitimacy but also traditional legitimacy that binds American politics together.

To summarize, a central component of stateness is legitimacy. Traditional legitimacy stresses ritual and continuity; charismatic legitimacy, the force of ideas as embodied in a leader; rational-legal legitimacy, laws, and rules. Whatever the form or mixture, legitimacy makes it possible for the state to carry out its basic functions. Without it, states find carrying out these tasks very difficult. If the public has little faith in the state, it will frequently ignore political responsibilities, such as paying taxes, abiding by regulations, or serving in the armed forces. Under these conditions, the state has really only one tool left to maintain order: the threat of force. Paradoxically, then, states that use the most coercion against their citizens are often the most weakly institutionalized states, for without violence, they cannot get the public to willingly comply with the rules and duties set forth.

Centralization or Decentralization

In addition to varying in the kind and level of political legitimacy they enjoy, states also vary in their distribution of power. As we noted in Chapter 1, individual freedom is typically associated with the decentralization of power whereas collective equality is typically associated with a greater centralization of power.

State power can be centralized or decentralized in a couple of different ways, the first of which is the dispersal of power within the state itself. Under **federalism**, significant powers, such as taxation, lawmaking, and security, are devolved to regional bodies (such as states in the United States, *Länder* in Germany, or provinces in Canada) that control specific territory within the country. These powers are defined within the national constitution and therefore are not easily constricted or eliminated by any government. Here the argument is that federalism helps represent local interests as well as check the growth of central power (which is viewed as a threat to democracy). In contrast, **unitary states** invest most political power at the national level, with limited local authority. The central government is responsible for most areas of policy. Territorial divisions within unitary states (such as Japan or France) are less important in terms of political power. The perceived advantage of a unitary state is that local interests can be represented without recourse to regional bodies and that federalism tends to weaken state efficiency by dispersing power among many local authorities.

In recent years there has been a greater tendency toward decentralization in many states, something we will speak to at greater length in subsequent chapters. This process, called **devolution**, has become popular for a number of different reasons. In some cases, devolution has been viewed as a way to increase state legitimacy by vesting political power closer to the people, a concern as states have grown larger and more complex over time. In other cases, devolution has been seen as a way to resolve problems like ethnic or religious differences by giving certain groups greater autonomy. Often this does not lead to outright federalism but nevertheless a significant movement of power downward from the central state. We will speak more about devolution in subsequent chapters.

Power, Autonomy, and Capacity

Another way in which we can measure stateness is in the relationship between the state and other states and domestic actors. At the most basic level we can make a distinction between **strong states** and **weak states**. Strong states are those that are able to fulfill basic tasks: defend their territory, make

and enforce rules and rights, collect taxes, and manage the economy, to name a few. In contrast, weak states cannot execute such tasks very well. Rules are haphazardly applied, if at all; tax evasion and other forms of public non-compliance are widespread; armed rivals to the state, such as rebel movements, organized crime, or other states, may control large chunks of territory or the economy. State officials themselves, having little faith in their office or responsibilities, may use their jobs simply to fill their own pockets through corruption and theft. In turn, economic development is certain to be much lower as a result of this unstable political environment. In general, weak states are not well institutionalized and lack authority and legitimacy. At an extreme, the very structures of the state may become so weak that they break down to a large extent. This is commonly termed a **failed state** (see Table 2.1).¹³ Afghanistan prior to 2001 was commonly viewed as a failed state, with no real sovereign authority, even in the hands of the Taliban; in many ways, Iraq remains a failed state, one that effectively collapsed in the aftermath of invasion and now has only limited power and must be backed up by international force.

However, speaking of states as merely weak or strong fails to capture the complexity of state power. In fact, we run the risk of a tautology (something that can't be disproven) if we simply argued that if a state can do something it must be strong and if it can't it must be weak. American elected officials can wage large-scale wars around the globe but can't ban handguns, whereas for Canada just the opposite would be true. Which one, then, is weak or strong? Comparative politics thus further builds on the categories of weak and strong states through the use of two other terms: capacity and autonomy. **Capacity** is the ability of the state to wield power in order to carry out the basic tasks of providing security and reconciling freedom and equality. A state with high capacity is able to formulate and enact fundamental policies and ensure stability and security for both itself and its citizens. A state with low capacity is unable to do these things very effectively. High capacity requires not just money but also organization, legitimacy, and effective leadership. Roads get paved, schools get built, regulations are created and followed, and those who break the law are punished.

In contrast, **autonomy** is the ability of the state to wield its power independently of the public or international actors. In other words, if an autonomous state wishes to carry out a policy or action, it can do so without having to consult the public or worry about strong public or international opposition that might force it to reverse its decision. A state with a high degree of autonomy may act on behalf of the public, pursuing what it believes are the best interests of the country, irrespective of public opinion. A state with a low degree of autonomy will act largely at the behest of private individuals, groups, or other states and will be less able to disobey the public will or the demands of well-organized groups.

Table 2.1 Top Twenty Failed States

Rank	Total	Country	Indicators of Instability											
			Demographic Pressures	Refugees and Displaced Persons	Group Grievance	Human Flight	Uneven Development	Economy	Delegitimation of State	Public Services	Human Rights	Security Apparatus	Factionalized Elites	External Intervention
1	114.2	Somalia	9.8	9.8	9.5	8.3	7.5	9.4	10.0	10.0	9.9	10.0	10.0	10.0
2	113.0	Sudan	9.0	9.6	8.8	8.8	9.3	7.3	10.0	9.5	9.9	9.8	9.9	9.9
3	112.5	Zimbabwe	9.7	9.0	10.0	10.0	9.6	10.0	9.5	9.6	9.8	9.5	9.3	7.0
4	110.9	Chad	9.1	9.2	9.7	7.8	9.1	8.3	9.7	9.4	9.5	9.8	9.8	9.5
5	110.6	Iraq	9.0	9.0	9.8	9.3	8.5	7.8	9.4	8.5	9.6	9.8	9.8	10.0
6	106.7	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	9.6	9.2	8.8	7.9	9.0	8.3	8.3	9.1	8.9	9.6	8.6	9.4
7	105.4	Afghanistan	9.1	8.9	9.5	7.0	8.1	8.5	9.2	8.3	8.4	9.6	8.8	10.0
8	104.6	Ivory Coast	8.5	8.3	9.5	8.4	8.0	8.5	8.9	7.8	9.0	9.2	8.9	9.7
9	103.8	Pakistan	8.0	8.6	9.5	8.1	8.8	6.2	9.5	7.1	9.5	9.6	9.8	9.1
10	103.7	Central African Republic	9.0	8.8	8.9	5.5	8.8	8.4	9.2	8.6	8.7	9.4	9.4	9.0
11	101.8	Guinea	7.9	7.4	8.5	8.3	8.6	8.6	9.7	9.0	8.9	8.4	8.6	7.9
12	100.3	Bangladesh	9.8	7.1	9.7	8.4	9.0	7.1	9.1	7.8	8.0	8.3	9.6	6.4
12	100.3	Burma	8.5	8.5	9.5	6.0	9.0	7.6	9.5	8.3	9.9	9.3	8.7	5.5
14	99.3	Haiti	8.5	4.2	8.0	8.0	8.2	8.3	9.0	8.8	8.9	8.9	8.9	9.6
15	97.7	North Korea	8.2	6.0	7.2	5.0	8.8	9.6	9.8	9.6	9.7	8.3	7.6	7.9
16	96.1	Ethiopia	8.9	7.5	7.8	7.5	8.6	8.2	7.9	7.5	8.5	7.5	8.9	7.3
16	96.1	Uganda	8.7	9.3	8.3	6.0	8.5	7.6	8.3	7.9	7.9	8.1	7.8	7.7
18	95.7	Lebanon	7.2	9.0	9.4	7.1	7.4	6.3	8.0	6.7	7.0	9.3	9.4	8.9
18	95.7	Nigeria	8.2	5.1	9.4	8.2	9.2	5.9	8.9	8.7	7.5	9.2	9.3	6.1
20	95.6	Sri Lanka	7.0	9.0	9.8	6.9	8.2	6.0	9.2	6.6	7.5	9.3	9.5	6.1

Note: Indicators are on a scale of 1–10, with 10 the most severely unstable.

Source: www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4350&page=1.

Each of these concepts helps us to evaluate different states in terms of power. Strong states with a high degree of capacity and autonomy may be able to execute major policies relatively easily. A case in point is China's construction of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest such project, despite the technical challenges, enormous cost, and widespread international criticism for its possible environmental impact. High capacity and autonomy, however, may come at the expense of individual freedom. States with a high degree of capacity but lower autonomy may have widespread powers but at the same time these powers are subject to public authorization and oversight. The United States and Canada are good examples of this, further reinforced by their federal structure. Individual freedom may be high, and this can also constrain central authority and consequently hinder national policy making. States with high autonomy but low capacity, meanwhile, may have few limits on their decision making but lack the ability to realize those policies effectively. Russia may fall into this category; during the last decade the state has become more centralized and autonomous, but it still lacks a great deal of capacity in promulgating and enforcing regulations and rights. Finally, states may lack both autonomy and capacity. This is true of many less-developed countries, such as in Africa, where states have been "captured" by dominant elites or groups and are largely unable to fulfill some of the most important national tasks, such as encouraging economic development or ensuring public education. Failed states are extreme examples of situations in which autonomy and capacity have left the state.

In short, speaking of state power in terms of autonomy and capacity can help us better understand stateness: what states are and are not able to do, and why. However, even when we speak of autonomy and capacity, we should note that within these two areas individual states may vary widely depending on the issue or area at hand. An observer of China may conclude from that country's rapid economic development or ability to censor the Internet that this state enjoys high autonomy and capacity. However, China's corruption, proliferation of underground religions, widespread disregard of regulations, and numerous public protests indicate that its autonomy and capacity are in many areas circumscribed. In contrast, North Korea and Iran suffer from limited economic development but can master nuclear technology—no small feat. Autonomy and capacity thus are useful concepts for comparing states but depend on the issue or task at hand.

Finally, we are left some big questions: Why are some states more centralized or decentralized? Why do they have more or less capacity or autonomy? Some of the answers lie in history, particularly the nature of international threats and how this affected the relationship between taxation (to pay for those wars) and representation (to have some say in how the state conducts itself). For more recently founded states, however, this long histor-

State Autonomy and Capacity

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	High Autonomy	Low Autonomy
High Capacity	<p>State is able to fulfill basic tasks, with a minimum of public intervention; power highly centralized; strong state.</p> <p>Danger: Too high a level of capacity and autonomy may prevent or undermine democracy.</p>	<p>State is able to fulfill basic tasks, but public plays a direct role in determining policy and is able to limit state power and scope of activity.</p> <p>Danger: State may be unable to develop new policies or respond to new challenges owing to the power of organized opposition.</p>
Low Capacity	<p>State is able to function with a minimum of public interference or direct control, but its capacity to fulfill basic tasks is limited.</p> <p>Danger: State is ineffectual, limiting development, and slow development may provoke public unrest.</p>	<p>State lacks the ability to fulfill basic tasks and is subject to direct public control and interference—power highly decentralized among state and nonstate actors; weak state.</p> <p>Danger: Too low a level of capacity and autonomy may lead to internal state failure.</p>

ical explanation is not particularly useful. How do you build a state so that it is viable? Is there an ideal mix of legitimacy, centralization, autonomy, and capacity? Scholars and policy makers are still debating these issues, something we will return to in later chapters.

In Sum: Studying States

This chapter began by defining the state as a monopoly of force but also as the institution charged with transforming freedom and equality from ideas into concrete action. The kinds of decisions made toward this end, however, are shaped by regimes and governments. Regimes are the fundamental rules and norms of politics, providing long-term goals regarding individual freedom and collective equality and the location and use of power toward those goals.

STATENESS AND
THE CASE OF IRAQ

For tragic reasons, Iraq is an excellent example of many of our considerations regarding the nature of states. In the run-up to the war with Iraq, many supporters of the invasion spoke of regime change, believing that a rapid invasion was possible that would essentially “decapitate” the leadership and regime, allowing for an occupying force to install a new regime and government within a relatively short period of time. However, this assumption was predicated on the belief that the state would remain intact—the leadership may fall, but civil servants would head back to work once the smoke had cleared. But this assumption proved incorrect for several reasons. First, it underestimated the extent to which state capacity and legitimacy had eroded under Saddam Hussein and international sanctions since 1991. When the war began, the state quickly failed, leaving in its wake anarchy. This was compounded by the actions of the Coalition Provisional Authority, which further hastened state collapse by marginalizing Iraqis as important players in reconstituting the state and dissolving the Iraqi military. Some of these failures can be traced to American political culture—inasmuch as Americans think about the state, they view it as a necessary evil that must be constrained, not a set of institutions vital to security and prosperity. The question now is how one coaxes a state back into existence after it has been razed: restoring a monopoly of force through military and police, creating laws and regulations that are respected and enforced, and generally creating enough autonomy and capacity so that the state is sovereign, effective, and responsive to the needs of its citizens. There is no simple blueprint for how to do this, especially in the absence of security.

Governments, in contrast, are those political elites in charge of running the state. Influenced and constrained by the existing regime, they attempt to formulate policy regarding freedom and equality that may then be executed by the state. These represent the most basic facets of states everywhere—and indeed, states are everywhere. Although similar political organizations have existed for thousands of years, only within the past few centuries did states arise in Europe and quickly come to dominate the globe. States are the main political players in the world today.

The universal presence of states, and variations in their stateness, compels comparativists to find some way to study and evaluate them. One way is by assessing their legitimacy; different kinds of legitimacy—traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal—all create their own kinds of authority and power. The other is by assessing the actual dispersal of power itself; states may be weaker or stronger, with more or less capacity and autonomy, depending on

how power is distributed within the state and between the state and the public. Too much power in the hands of the state risks tyranny; too little power risks anarchy. Finding the right mix is not simply a technical question but one that shapes how states and societies reconcile freedom and equality. This debate over freedom and equality, then, ranges far beyond the boundaries of the state itself. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, it is influenced by society, through ethnic and national identity, culture, and ideology; by economic institutions and the interaction between states and markets; and by democratic and nondemocratic practices.

Since the dawn of human civilization, people have relied on some form of political organization to construct a relationship between individual freedom and collective equality. For the past few centuries, modern states have been the dominant expression of that relationship. We might thus conclude that states now represent an end point in human intellectual and organization evolution. But why should this be so? It seems logical that in future new forms of political organization will displace states, just as states displaced empires, city-states, and other institutions. Perhaps challenges to states—environmental, economic, or cultural—will overwhelm many, and they will revert to empires, city-states, or warlordism. Or perhaps technological innovation will make old forms of political centralization weak or irrelevant, binding humans in communities where sovereignty is virtual, not physical. Perhaps the core debate over freedom and equality that has stretched over millennia will be reconciled once and for all, changing the very nature of politics as we understand it. These questions may seem unanswerable, more amenable to fortune-telling than to research. But as we shall see, they lie at the heart of ideas and conflicts that have transformed the world in the past and may dominate our future.

NOTES

1. In the United States, the word *state* refers to the federal structure of regional government. As a result, for Americans, the word *state* conjures up the idea of local government, whereas for political scientists (and most people around the world), the word *state* refers to national, not local, organization. This confusion stems from U.S. history. During the period of revolutionary struggle and the creation of a federal system, the former British colonies in America viewed themselves as independent political units—in other words, as states. With the creation of a federal system of government, however, their individual powers were subordinated to a central authority. The United States of America, in other words, eventually became a system of national government, with the term *state* left as a remnant of that brief period when these units acted largely as independent entities.

2. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Muenchen, 1921), pp. 396–450.
3. This idea has been developed by Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and T. Skopol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 169–191.
4. Zackary Elkins and John Sides, "Can Institutions Build Unity in Multiethnic States," *American Political Science Review*, 101, no. 4 (November 2007), pp. 693–708.
5. See Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); also Jared Diamond "Vengeance is Ours," *New Yorker*, 21 April 2008, pp. 74–87.
6. S. E. Finer, *The History of Government from the Earliest Times, Vol. 1, Ancient Monarchies and Empires* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
7. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States: 990–1990* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1990).
8. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: Norton, 1997).
9. Mancur Olson, "Democracy, Dictatorship, and Development," *American Political Science Review*, 87, no. 3 (September 1993), pp. 567–576; see also Margaret Levy, "The State of the Study of the State," in Ira Katznelson, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 40–43.
10. For the cultural explanation, see David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: Norton, 1999).
11. Stephen Krasner, "The Case for Shared Sovereignty," *Journal of Democracy*, 16, no. 1 (2005), pp. 69–83.
12. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, trans. and eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 77–128.
13. Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

3 NATIONS AND SOCIETY

KEY CONCEPTS

- Ethnic identity defines how individuals identify with their community.
- National identity binds people through common political aspirations such as sovereignty.
- Citizenship and patriotism define our emotional and legal relationship to the state.
- Ethnic and national conflict can stem from clashes between these different identities and their goals.
- Political attitudes are views regarding the pace and scope of any political change.
- Political ideologies are specific values held by individuals regarding the fundamental goals of politics.
- Political culture constitutes the basic norms for political activity in a society.

Society is a broad term that refers to complex human organization, a collection of people bound by shared institutions that define how human relations should be conducted. From country to country and place to place, societies differ in how individuals define themselves and their relationship to one another as well as their relationship to government and the state. These relationships are each unique; for all the surface similarities that may exist between societies, each country views itself and the wider world around it in a distinct way. These differences make comparative politics a rich field of study but also a frustrating one, as social scientists seek to find similarities that are often few and far between.

In this chapter, we will look at the ways in which people identify themselves and are identified, both as individuals and as groups, and how these identifications relate to politics and the state. We will start with the concepts of ethnic