Chapter 1[*]
Introduction

1 The Size and Number of States

Why do some political units fail and others persist? Under what conditions do some expand and others contract? In which periods should we expect universal empires and in which systems of states? This book answers these questions by explaining variation in the number and size of a basic unit of political life, the state.

An extensive historical, largely theoretical, literature has sought to explain the development of the modern state. From enlightenment political philosophers like Hobbes and Locke to twentieth century historical sociologists like Charles Tilly, in one form or another questions of state formation have fascinated social scientists of all stripes. Over the last half century, scholars of comparative politics, international relations, and sociology have sought an explanation of the origins of the modern "territorial" state in Western Europe and, comparatively, the absence of this constellation of political institutions in other parts of the world. More briefly put, this scholarship seeks to understand why large, centralized, states arose as the modal form of political organization in Europe.

Although descriptively rich and historically detailed, the extant literature on state formation leaves one wanting for both convincing theoretical explanations and the concomitant empirical tests needed to asses existing theories. Take as an example the well known Tillian dictum that "war made states (Tilly 1985)." This claim, exported to explain the development and underdevelopment of states and economies across the globe, is the closest the literature comes to an accepted conclusion.[1]

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[1]For examples of this see Hui (2005) on China, Centeno (2003) on Latin America, and Herbst (1990; 2000) on Africa. For a recent formal treatment of the relationships between war-making, state formation and economic development see Besley and Persson (2011) and for a cross-national comparison of cases in the developing world see

But even here there exists few, if any, explicit tests of this hypotheses against possible alternatives.[2]

These deficiencies reflect the tradeoff between the parsimony of analytic methods founded in simplifying economic assumptions and the desire for historical nuance. Given that the formation of the modern state was, indeed, a maddeningly complex social process with multiple and interacting levels of causation, the current status quo embodies an understandable choice in favor of nuance. A consequence of pursuing detail, however, is that we are left with theories whose predictions are less than precise and which are difficult or even impossible to empirically falsify. By moving slightly back in the direction of parsimony I gain analytic leverage on the question of the territorial state's origins and arrive at conclusions substantially different from dominant accounts. Namely, I find that before the French Revolution *changes in patterns of economic development not the scale, frequency, or costs of war, explain variation in the number and size of units within the European system.*

I advance this claim in three steps. First, I show that assertions of a military revolution in the costs and scale of warfare are either exaggerated or simply do not appear when confronted with systematic data analysis. Then, using new data describing the entire universe of European states I demonstrate that the predictions made by war-making theories of state formation regarding changes in the size and number of independent states simply do not materialize in the manner predicted.

Second I build on models of elections and industrial organization to create a theoretical framework that can explain observed patterns of state formation. This formal narrative shows that even in a world of anarchic competition between states patterns of economic geography can explain variation in the number and size of states. Unlike the sometimes abstruse logic of macro-sociological theory, I provide a micro-founded logic that yields a set of implications which can be readily brought to data.

The preponderance of this book is devoted to the third task, testing these predictions. This analysis represents the first set of statistical tests of theories of state formation that rely on systematically collected, large-N, data. In combination with a series historical case studies they provide evidence that changes in trade, commerce, and urban revival best explain patterns of state forma-

Taylor and Botea (2008)

[2]On the lack of empirical tests see Bates (2008). For two papers that use agent based methods to examine theories of state formation see Cederman (1997) and Boix, Codenotti and Resta (2011).

tion before 1790.

2 Advancing The Literature on State Formation

Without committing too much violence to existing theory, scholarship on the origins of the territorial state can be divided into two competing schools of thought. The first of these, what I will call the bellicist school, has its modern origins in the work of Charles Tilly though dates even earlier to German sociologists Otto Hintze and Max Weber. Scholars in this group view changes in war and war-making as having been determinative for the development the European system of states (Hintze 1906; 1975, Weber 1968, Tilly 1975; 1985; 1990).

For this group "war made states" through an explicitly Darwinian process. In their view large states could far easier raise the manpower and capital required to field the increasingly large standing armies and increasingly dear technologies of coercion necessary to survive an era of endemic warfare. In making these arguments the bellicist literature relies upon histories which describe a series of technological and tactic shocks to the scale and costs of war that forced armies comprised of increasing numbers of soldiers and ever more expensive armaments upon states (Roberts 1956, Parker 1976; 1996, Black 1991, Rogers 1995). Though a number of possible military innovations are identified, the general logic of these bellicist theories is that technological and tactical changes in the production of violence, by increasing the costs and frequency of war, selected those states most fit to survive, states of substantial geographic scale (Bean 1973, McNeill 1984, Tilly 1975; 1985; 1990). Here large states maintained an advantage in the form of substantial populations, larger tax bases, and greater access to natural resources. Because of these endowments the bellicists argue large states were more capable than their smaller counterparts of meeting these demands.

The second group, what I call the "economic" camp, reemerged with the work of Hendrik Spruyt (Spruyt 1994*a*;*b*) and builds upon both the political sociology of Stein Rokkan and the economic history of Henri Pirenne. These theories see the development of the territorial state in some places (and its absence in others) as the consequence of variation in the dominant social coalitions that formed from changing patterns of trade and economic development (Eisenstadt and Rokkan 1973, Rokkan 1975; 1980, Rokkan and Urwin 1982, North and Thomas 1973, Anderson

1974). Broadly, these theories find that economic changes empowered new social groups relative to existing actors, allowing them to create and sustain independent political communities. Specifically, the re-emergence of the Eastern trade and the revival of urban life during the last half of the tenth century created in some places new commercial classes (Pirenne and Clegg 1937, Pirenne 1969, Lopez 1976, Cipolla 1994). Where towns formed and burghers could bargain for or force their rights upon princes and kings, smaller and more numerous political units came into existence. Common to these accounts is the idea that variation in the economic resources available to these groups explain the type and size of state capable of existing. Indeed, recent work has shown that geographically small and urban city-states could far easier and earlier construct financial instruments necessary to purchase the means of defense required to survive interstate competition (Stasavage 2011*a*;*b*).

A similar economic logic is used by Jeffery Herbst to explain the underdevelopment of states in sub-Saharan Africa (Herbst 1990; 2000). Here statelessness and weak control of territory are explained as a function of the economic incentives that leaders faced in establishing states. Because African geography constrained the development of large urban centers and allowed for easy exit of peripheral populations, would-be monopolists of violence had little incentive to capture and war over territory from which there was little to feasibly extract. Consequently, Weberian states existed only in the immediate urban hinterlands.

Up to this point previous attempts at evaluating theories of state formation have almost exclusively relied upon qualitative data or agent based simulation.[3] The consequence of the former, detailed in Chapter 2, has been a reliance upon historically "important" cases to describe patterns of state formation. Most scholarship, having drawn inferences about patterns of state formation from a set of well known cases, has disregarded the vast number of small and largely forgotten states which historically have constituted the preponderance of the international system. As such, many of the conclusions reached by this literature are biased. In order to avoid systematic distortions of this sort I have constructed a dataset, measured in five year panels, describing the size and geographic location of *every* European state between 1100 and 1790. With these data I am able to conduct the first systematic tests of theories of state formation.

[3]For examples of the latter see Cederman (1997) and Boix, Codenotti and Resta (2011)

2.1 The Evaluation of Bellicist Claims

The first empirical component of the book examines the claim that changes in war-making led to the consolidation and dominance of large territorial states. These arguments have two parts each of which I address separately. First I address the hypothesis that tactical or technological changes to the production of large-scale military violence led to increases in the costs and scale of warfare. Examining data from a series of cases most likely to have undergone these substantial changes, I show that the hypothesized effects either entirely disappear or are substantially attenuated when adjusted for inflation and population growth.

Next, I show that several commonly held beliefs linking changes in patterns of war to processes of state formation are likely unwarranted. I demonstrate that rather than declining over time as bellicist theories would predict - shrinking as the costs of war increased, the number of states was relatively constant over the period of inquiry. Then, I show that the "age of the territorial state," a period that historians locate between 1500 and 1800, did not exist. Once the entire distribution of states is considered I find that, in contrast to the predictions made by bellicist theories of state formation, the typical state *declined* in size during the period associated with the military revolution. Last, I show that the relationship between geographic scale and state survival is negative, the exact opposite of what martial theories of state formation predict. That is, small states survived at rates greater than larger states.

I conclude this portion of the analysis by noting the confluence of regional variation in the number and size of states and the reemergence of towns and cities during the first half of the last millennium. Within a highly productive and urbanized central band of geography running roughly from the Low Countries through the Rhineland and into Northern Italy the number of states increased and the typical state declined in size over time. However, outside of this central corridor the opposite occurred. In the periphery the typical state increased in size and total number of units declined.

2.2 A Theory of Economic Geography and State Formation

To make sense of this pattern I develop a game theoretic model of preindustrial state formation that simultaneously accounts for geographic and temporal patterns in the number and size of political units. Viewing states as wealth maximizing agents in competition with each other for control of valuable territory, I demonstrate that even when states exist in anarchic competition with each-other, economic geography, e.g. the spatial distribution of economic resources available to be plundered, has profound effects on the equilibrium number and size of independent units. I do this in two ways.

In the short run I treat the number and initial location of states as given. Taking location as given, states then divide their effort between the extraction of economic output and combat over territory from which economic output is extracted. Contrastingly, over the long run I assume states' capacities to produce military force are fixed and instead treat the number and location of states as being endogenously determined. In both models I obtain a common result: even in a world where states are involved in military competition for control of territory, states wealthier in per capita terms will be smaller.

This result occurs in the immediate term because wealthier states face a steeper trade-off in the use of resources for conquest. That is, the marginal unit of effort devoted by advantaged states to conquest brings in increasingly small amounts of economic resources. In contrast, for disadvantaged states every additional unit of effort devoted to combat brings in increasingly more resources. As a consequence, the points at which the two states are indifferent between devoting effort to extraction or conquest varies with the initially disadvantaged state being willing to devote more effort to combat than its wealthy counterpart. That is, states disadvantaged in production have a comparative advantage in conquest. With this result I fill a theoretical blind-spot that previous accounts do not explain, providing an explanation for why wealthy, small, states, capable of purchasing coercive means, failed to expand despite a clear ability to wield sufficient military force.

In the long run, when the number of states is not fixed, the behavior of existing states is disciplined by the possible formation of new independent political units on their territory. When

the costs of forming an independent state are sufficiently high then existing states will be able to thwart the formation of new states. However, conditional on these costs being low, new states will form - but only in the most productive places, e.g. those locations that will yield the greatest payoff from achieving statehood. Latent political groups will not be willing or capable of forming in places that do not provide them the material resources needed to sustain themselves in competition with other states.

The model I present differs from existing formal treatments in two ways. First, it differs from the class of models that seek to explain the size and number of states (Friedman 1977, Bolton, Roland and Spolaore 1996, Bolton and Roland 1997, Alesina and Spolaore 1997; 2005*a*;*b*; 2006). Instead of viewing these outcomes as the product of an optimization problem facing a social planner, decisive voter, or autocrat I more realistically treat these outcomes as the consequence of anarchic competition wherein combat between states determines territorial boundaries. By treating the optimal size of states as a choice made by some decisive actor, even sometimes in the shadow of interstate competition, previous models fail to treat the number and size of states as outcomes directly determined by conflict. Borders, for most of history have been the product of costly competition between states rather than a choice made by a planner, voter, or autocrat weighing welfare gains and losses of changes in size.

Second, unlike formal models of state formation that allow for the development of states in anarchic competition (Skaperdas 1992, Konrad and Skaperdas 2005, Hirshleifer 2001), this model explicitly considers the spatial component of statehood. Although these models treat the number of states as the outcome of a violent processes, the competition they describe is not geographically bound. These models view the economic prize latent states attempt to claim as being amorphously defined in space. In them states simply fight over some pie that is divided amongst a number of agents through some sort of grand melee. This disregard of the territorial nature of state formation is similarly unrealistic. States fight other states for control of specific, territorially fixed, resources. The framework I develop combines the anarchic-competitive nature of interstate competition found in the models presented by this second group with the spatial component of the first group. In bringing these features together I show that even when the states exist in military competition with

each-other, economic constraints affect the number, size, and location of units.

2.3 Testing the Theory's Empirical Implications

The next portion of the book evaluates the empirical implications this theory. I begin this task by showing that in the places where urban life reemerged during the first half of the last millennium, in the places where towns and cities formed, more and smaller states formed. Using paleo-climatic data describing historical variation in the propensity of some places to grow cereals like wheat, foods that can most easily sustain large populations, I am able to show with an instrumental variables approach that the relationship between urban growth and political fragmentation is causal. In demonstrating this, I show that one of the main predictions of the model holds. That is, in those places with the greatest economic surplus, in this case measured by cities, the greatest number of states formed. The prosperous European core became increasingly urban and, because of this, increasingly politically fragmented. In the periphery the opposite occurred, retarded economic development prevented the fragmentation of political rule.

In order to flesh out with historical detail the causal mechanisms described in my theoretical model I conduct a set of paired case studies comparing a set of French counties to the city-states comprising the Lombard League. This historical analysis charts the economic and political histories of these two groups of polities, highlighting their similarities prior to the commercial revolution and demonstrating that as the communes in Northern Italy became increasingly prosperous, local groups were able to draw upon resources unavailable to their French counterparts and were therefore more capable of constructing themselves as new, independent, states.

Next I test the claim that changes in the relative economic productivity of states causes their boundaries to expand or contract. To do this I exploit the rapid collapse of the Latin Empire in 1261 as an economic shock to Mediterranean trading states and show that, as predicted, the borders of these traders expanded relative to non-traders following this change in their productive capacities. That is, the boundaries between trading states and non trading states expanded to enlarge traders relative to the counter-factual control set of borders shared by dyads of non traders and dyads of traders. I then conduct a short case study of the Venetian oligarchy that demonstrates

that territorial expansion was an active choice in response to their declining comparative advantage in trade.

3 Why Study Premodern State Formation?

As an object of inquiry the number and size of states over the roughly seven hundred years preceding the French Revolution might be outside the norm for twenty-first century political science. Indeed, one cannot run a randomized control trial or conduct a survey experiment to learn about processes of state formation. However, an understanding of the macro-historical forces by which states were formed is fundamental to our understanding of contemporary politics. In this section I consider just the greatest, longest lasting, consequences of pre-modern state formation.

I begin with present day variation in cross-national incomes. Jones (2003) and more recently Rosenthal and Wong (2011) have argued that existence of many competing units (as opposed to an encompassing empire) contributed to long term patterns of economic development and explains why the industrial revolution occurred in Europe and not China. In these arguments competition between political units produced checks upon any one state's ability to expropriate and, moreover, forced institutional and technological innovation ultimately leading to intensive growth.

These processes affect modern development outcomes in other ways. Although many social scientists treat political boundaries like any other "exogenously" fixed geographic feature, they are, in fact, anything but. Like most institutions borders are determined by the strategic choices of political actors. Moreover, like many other political institutions borders have lasting economic consequences. For example, merely by existing political boundaries form barriers to trade, create transaction costs, and determine the size of markets (North 1990).

Less obviously, even seemingly fixed geographic features like access to coastline, features which are believed to have large and lasting effects on development (Sachs and Warner 1997, Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2004) are determined by state formation processes. For example, the fact that Holland was an "Atlantic trader" was endogenous to the ability of the Dutch to claim independence, an ability that I will show is a function of later capacity for economic development. In other words, latent political groups are, in part, driven to form as states by the economic incentives

that natural geography provides.

In addition to direct effects on growth, the origins of both parliamentary government and systems of public debt are found in the size of political organization during the early-modern era (Stasavage 2011*a*;*b*). Moreover, the incongruence of state and nation, the violent consequences of which have been felt throughout the twentieth century, are a function of the political boundaries constructed in the period prior to the advent of modern nationalisms. In this way, understanding the development of the territorial state between 1100 and 1790 yields an explanation for why Germany and Italy were late to form and, as such, provides insight into conflicts that result from late development.

The last section of this book is devoted to demonstrating the persistent effects of early-modern political fragmentation by focusing on two outcomes. First, I show that even after controlling for a host of political and economic confounders the incidence of territorial disputes between states throughout nineteenth and twentieth centuries was correlated with the historical border density. Next, I focus on the effects of political fragmentation on the emergence of unified national markets. Exploiting the random timing of natural leader deaths that led to the unification or disunion of polities, I show that before the French Revolution the existence of political boundaries caused prices for a host of goods to diverge across cities, divergences that persisted well into the nineteenth century.

Beyond studying history for its own sake and apart from investigating the past in order to foster a better understanding of how we arrived at the world we live in today, we can learn much about the actions of contemporary political actors by exploring the history of premodern European states. Although many non-European states have developed under the boot of imperialism and in the shadow of the Cold War, in many parts of the world the constraints and impediments that state-makers continue to face are analogous to those that Europeans came up against hundreds of years ago. Not to foreshadow this book's conclusions but with little contortion one can read many of my results as support for materialist accounts of civil conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 2004, Ross 2004, Miguel, Satyanath and Sergenti 2004, Fearon 2005, Boix 2008). Indeed, I will show that economic incentives - "greed" - have conditioned the willingness of political entrepreneurs to seek

independence across time.

4 What States Are (And Aren't)

Now I turn to the task of defining which political organizations do or do not constitute states, an endeavor which will inform the theoretical and statistical analysis contained in this book. Accomplishing this undertaking in a manner concurrently satisfying to comparative political scientists, scholars of international relations, sociologists, and economists is near impossible. Indeed, for every book or article written on state formation there exists nearly as many conceptualizations of statehood and, not infrequently, these distinctions lead to incompatible and conflicting theoretical and empirical conclusions.[4] This is a result that occurs not because of variation in data quality or empirical approach but because of this crucial difference in the understanding of the state.

With this in mind, what is a positivist scholar of state formation to do? I begin constructing a definition of statehood by recognizing two often opposing constraints. The first is that any definition should satisfy the greatest possible fraction of social scientists' abstract theories of the state. That is, it would serve as an ideal type to which observed polities could be compared. Secondly, in making these comparisons the such a definition should provide an intuitive coding scheme leading to a straightforward operationalization of observed political units as states or non-states. In combination the right definition would capture entities recognized as states in a systematic way enabling replicable statistical analysis. I divide this task in two, first I outline a satisfying theoretical definition of the state and then I construct a set of observable criteria by which it can be operationalized, thus producing a useful coding scheme that will inform my empirical analysis.

To construct a workable definition I return to Weber's treatment of states as political communities that "(successfully) claim a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory (Weber 1972)." So to reflect empirically observable phenomena rather than a non-existent ideal type, I alter this definition in two important ways. I define states as *the organizations that maintain a quasi-monopoly of violence over a fixed territory.* That is, states are the organizations that have a clear preponderance of the coercive means over some geographically defined unit.

[4]For an excellent historiographical review, much of which this section draws upon, see Davies (2003)

I have done away with the requirements of legitimacy and of a strict monopoly over the use of force. The notion of legitimate government is nearly impossible to measure and is itself a contested theoretical concept.[5] Moreover, because no state in human history has ever maintained a true monopoly over the use of force, I do away with this overly stringent requirement. Even the strongest states face regular incursions and rivals to their exclusive control of violence.

My definition of states as quasi-monopolists of violence recognizes the fact that political communities which reasonable coders would identify as states existed before juridical notions of sovereignty. As Weber does, I define states by their means, cognizant of the fact that legal claims to domination have throughout history coexisted with other forms of traditional and charismatic rule. This is to say that states were not formed at Westphalia nor Augsburg but were at best recognized within a new legal framework. I do not claim that juridical statehood is unimportant for the study of politics but, rather, that such a coding scheme would fail to capture political organizations like France, Venice and England let alone older entities like the Roman or the Han Empires that existed as coercion monopolizing entities long before 1648 or 1555.[6] In the words of historian H. J. M. Claessen, we have no reason to consider "the realm of the Aztecs, the Mongol Empire,...or the late Roman empire qua political structure as qualitatively different from, say, France, Spain or England in the fifteenth century. They were all states, varying from early to mature (quoted in Skalník 1989 p. ix)."

How might one distinguish the presence of a quasi-monopoly of violence from its absence? I provide three empirically observable criteria by which we distinguish states from non-states.

1. **Direct Military Occupation**

   If a political unit is militarily occupied by a foreign power, according to my coding scheme it ceases to exist as an independent state. Similarly, if a political unit successfully conquers a piece of territory, this newly occupied territory is treated as a part of the conquering state. For example, when the Ezzelino or Pallavicini families were able to effectively wield military

[5]For a discussion on the contested notion of state legitimacy see Beetham (1991), O'Kane (1993), Beetham (1993), Simmons (1999)

[6]See Krasner (1999) for a more complete discussion of internal control, external recognition, and Westphalian sovereignty as useful analytic tools

control over several Italian city-states I code the amalgamation of these units as a single state. Analogously, when military orders like the Teutonic Knights or the Knights Hospitaller conquered well defined territories these new units are coded as independent states. Similarly, when the Castilian-Aragonese state drove the Moors from Grenada, the Emirate of Grenada ceases to be coded as an independent state and its territory gets coded as part of Castile.

2. **The Capacity To Tax**

Expropriative power, the ability to take from another that which she owns, is the coercive authority most associated with statehood. Formal expositions of states as wealth maximizing actors, as "stationary bandits" or organized criminal organizations, underscore this crucial aspect of state violence: states "steal" from those they govern. Moreover, the ability to extract is the key feature of state power driving several recent and influential theories of political transitions (Boix 2003, Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). In these theories it is precisely the ability of the state to extract that actors - economic classes in these models - enter into conflict to control. As such, I take the capacity to tax as evidence of the state's quasi-monopoly of coercion. So, for example, when Worms (1184) or Lubeck (1226) demonstrably gained rights to collect taxes and tolls within their boundaries I code them as independent states.

3. **A Common Executive**

Recognizing that many states during the time period studied were "composite" entities, composed of political units which maintained semi-independent bureaucracies, parliaments, and other separate political institutions (Nexon 2011), I treat those sharing a common executive as a single state. Coding states this way treats the holdings of Imperial families as a common state rather than distinct units. So, for example, all of the territory held by the head of the Wittelsbach family - at various points including the Counties of Holland, Hainaut and Zeeland, as well as the Duchies of Jülich and Berg - all get coded as a single state. However, as the family split territory amongst its various cadet branches - first between the Bavarian and Palatinate and then the numerous further divisions - each is treated as a distinct state. However, when, as in 1777 the Bavarian line died out and merged with the Palatinate branch

they again get treated as a single state.

Based upon these criteria we arrive at a clear coding scheme for which political units constitute independent states and which do not. If all three criteria are met I treat political units as independent states. If they are not, I do not. This further allows flexibility in later empirical analysis by allowing for less strict coding schemes where we can asses the empirical results using permutations of the three criteria. Moreover, this scheme enables us to better characterize historical "alternatives" to the state. In doing so, we see that these alternatives are not really alternatives to the state at all but, instead, reflect variation in the geographic scale of political organization. This is to say, if what distinguishes various forms of states, e.g. leagues or city states, from modern territorial states is the degree to which they centralize political authority, my coding scheme captures this type of fragmentation of rule.

5 Alternatives to the State

Spryut (1994*b*) identifies three "alternatives" to the state: feudalism, the Holy Roman Empire, and leagues of city-states, each of which he argues represent institutional arrangements fundamentally different from states. While these arrangements may represent ways of organizing a polity, a great deal of recent historical scholarship on political organization in the medieval world confirms that, although there was substantial variation in the institutional makeup of political life before 1500, states were the dominant form.[7]

Following Reynolds (1997) I seek to disabuse the reader of the notion that "only modern states are true states." As encouragement in this direction, I show that each of Spruyt's proposed alternatives can be accommodated within my framework and are, analogous (though imperfectly so) to contemporary institutional forms we understand as non-states. That is, I show that these alternatives are not truly distinct forms of political organization but, instead, represent institutions actively constructed by states.

[7]For example, see Given (1990), Campbell (2000), Innes (2000), Wickham (2005), Maddicott, Palliser and Campbell (2000)

5.1 Feudalism

Consider the following:

> *A system of government based upon a hierarchy of legal status wherein some levels of the hierarchy maintain rights to govern in some policy dimensions and other levels maintain rights in some over some other subset of the policy space. These overlapping jurisdictions, though legally defined, are often ambiguous and consequently result in competing claims of authority.*

One could read this as a reproduction of historian Joseph Strayer's understanding of feudalism, the basic characteristics of which is "a fragmentation of political authority, public power in private hands," existing only when "rights of government (not mere political influence) are attached to lordship...(Strayer 1956; 1965)." Similarly, one could view this hypothetical as a restatement of William Riker's definition of federalism "as a political organization in which the activities of government are divided between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions (Riker 1964)."

Though these strict definitions of feudalism and federalism lack the ambiguity and conflict over authority provided by my hypothetical, in reality both institutional arrangements are (were) characterized by substantial contestation between the various claimants to power. Just as the various component units of the United States fought a civil war over, essentially, the locus of political authority, military conflict between lord and vassal - kings and dukes - was not infrequent in feudal society. Still it is clear that the fragmentation of authority does not prevent us from identifying modern federal polities like the United States as a single state.

Why then is it that some classify feudal polities as something completely distinct from modern states? A likely answer is that for modern federal polities most social scientists can clearly identify the level of a given legal hierarchy at which the preponderance of de facto coercive capacity rests. For many feudal polities this is a far more difficult task, not because of any substantive difference but because the data needed to asses the medieval world is less readily available. The result is that these same social scientists end up describing feudalism as a fundamentally different institutional arrangement than that of statehood I have outlined.

Indeed, the very concept of feudalism has been treated by many historians of the medieval world as an improper catch-all describing an inexact and inaccurate description of political, social, and economic institutions - each of which displayed substantial variation across time and space (Brown 1974, Reynolds 1994, Bisson 1994). In the language of English legal historian F.W. Maitland, "feudalism is an unfortunate word," given the "impossible task" of amalgamating and describing a set of widely variegated social institutions. As such, the concept should, in the least, be modified in favor of analysis and description of the particular institutions subject to inquiry. Following this logic, I take the study of political authority in the medieval world as an independent line of inquiry not dissimilar from the study of political authority in later periods. Using the same approach to identify those political communities that maintain a quasi-monopoly over the means of coercion we can identify states in the medieval era as we do in the modern era. The difficult task is to collect the appropriate data to properly identify at which level of feudal hierarchy this quasi-monopoly was maintained.

Lest one believe in taking this approach I am committing an anachronistic misdeed, note that feudalism itself is as a post-hoc concept conceived of by eighteenth century legal scholarship, appearing first as "la féodalité" in the Comte de Boulainvillier's *Histoire des anciens Parlements de France* in 1737. Rather than following the convention of a commonly used but anachronistically defined term, in treating states as defined by observed coercive abilities I arrive at an object that is consistently measured across time and, moreover, which still captures the fragmented nature of authority that many contend typifies of feudal society.

With this framework in mind the question becomes empirical. For example, although in a nominal sense the King of England, by virtue of his holdings in Normandy and Aquitaine, was the seigniorial inferior to the King of France, the question of England's statehood is defined by the his ability to coerce relative to all others over some span of territory. This can be evaluated using the existing historical record. In this instance it is obvious that the English Kings held the quasi-monopoly of violence over both Normandy and Aquitaine through least through the fourteenth century - it taking the Hundred Years war and subsequent direct military occupation by the French to drive the English from these territories. Similarly, once having identified the relevant units for

all of Europe one can then classify each as an independent state (or not) based upon the same criteria.

5.2 The Holy Roman Empire

Universal empires like the Holy Roman Empire differ from states in the manner by which they make claims of authority across geography (Spruyt 1994*b*; p. 102). These empires viewed themselves as the singular entity with the right to govern the world or some subset of it, Christendom for example. They often reinforced these claims by combining secular rule with religious authority with the Emperor as head of both empire and church. By this logic the relationship between universal empire and territory differed from that of states in that they did not recognize boundaries of authority. If you rule over all of Christendom or all of the world, territorial borders are meaningless. Though the Emperor may have had factual limits to their power, they still denied, in a conceptual sense, the right of others to rule.

This distinction between states and the Holy Roman Empire is flawed for two reasons. First, a classification scheme that rests on *claims* to rule rather than empirical evidence about the true distribution of power would lead to often perverse and empirically inaccurate codings. Second, it is clear that the Emperor and his contemporaries were quite aware of the geographic limits of the Empire's territorial rule. Within the Empire Imperial rule was bounded geographically in both de jure and de facto terms. Moreover, in similar ways the Empire's external boundaries were constructed to define the limits of Imperial rule.

In his treatment of the Holy Roman Empire Bryce makes the distinction between territory held 1.) allodially by the Emperor 2.) by other actors (princes, bishops, dukes , etc.) but still within the Empire. 3.) foreign kingdoms that paid some nominal recognition to the Emperor and 4.) the rest of the world. He, just as contemporary political actors, distinguishes between areas of direct imperial control, direct princely control, and all other places (Bryce 1920; p. 202). Indeed, for almost a millennium, one would only have to read the inscription on the walls of the town of Rendsburg, located on the banks of the Eyder - *Eidora Romani Terminus Imperii*[8] - to recognize

[8]"The River Eyder is the Border of the (Holy) Roman Empire."

the very real geographic limits of the Holy Roman Empire. These were limits actively constructed by political actors, this particular boundary having been created by King Harold "Bluetooth" of Denmark and Emperor Louis the Pious at Metz following Harold's conversion to Christianity in 826 (Turner 1872; p. 195). This act established the boundary between Denmark and the German Empire, a border which lasted nine hundred and eighty years until Holstein's cession to Denmark following Napoleon's breakup of the Empire.

With respect to the known internal geographic limits of Imperial rule, it is clear that Emperors and other actors within the Empire would regularly inherit, disinherit, and sell territories immediately under their control, taking on or losing along with title the right to govern and collect taxes. To conduct this type of transaction it is necessary to have fairly well defined notions of the rights that are being gained or lost as well as the boundaries of over which these rights are defined. So, when the house of Luxembourg acquired the Kingdom of Bohemia in 1309 it retained rights to govern, principally to collect revenue, over a precisely defined piece of geography. Similarly, In 1411 when Emperor Sigmund gave Brandenberg to Fredrick the sixth Margrave of Nuremberg in exchange for past monetary support, an exact financial value of 400,0000 Hungarian gold gulden was placed on the transaction (Carlyle 2008; p. 154).

Formal internal distinctions between nominally enfiefed territories and the boundaries associated with these places further demarcated the limits of political rule within the Empire. By the end of the thirteenth century an increasing number of these units acquired de facto independence from Imperial rule to such a degree that even petty magnates who previously swore "fealty to only God and Emperor eschewed themselves equally of both powers" maintained "full jurisdiction... rights of legislation, privileges of coining money, levying tolls and (collecting) taxes (Bryce 1920; ch. xiv)." They were, by my definition, independent states. Indeed, "along the Rhine even the Lord of a single tower was often almost an independent prince (ibid)."

Concurrent with the achievement of de facto statehood these units were afforded a legal status within the Empire that recognized the right of allodial holders of territory to act as-if sovereign over their lands. The first of these legal acts the *Confoederatio cum Principibus Ecclesiasticis*, issued in 1220 by Emperor Fredrick Barbarossa, recognized the legal rights of ecclesiastical princes

to govern independently of the Emperor. Subsequently, this new legal class was extended to include all territorial lords in 1232 with the *Statutum in Favorem Principum*. There is little doubt that the creation of a new legal status for these units allowed them to behave in new ways, often contrary to interests of the Emperor. Despite the new institutional advantages created by these legal reforms, these changes occurred, for the most part, as a response to de facto shifts in power and were not their independent cause.

In summation, the Holy Roman Empire - both internally and externally - had well recognized boundaries that reflected the true distribution of coercive power as well as contemporary actors' perceptions of this distribution. As such, for the Holy Roman Empire, using the historical record, we can properly classify its constituent units as states.

5.3 City States and City Leagues

There is little doubt that city states maintain the key feature of Weberian statehood, the quasi-monopoly of coercion, differing only from modern states in geographic scale. Still, even on this last measure many units typically classified as city-states were quite large. The area controlled by Venice, for example, was in the top decile of state sizes from 1400 onward. Nevertheless, during the late mediaeval and early modern periods only some of these small states could independently wield substantial military power. Where these small political communities could not project considerable force they formed leagues to jointly provide protection

Although leagues like the Hansa were far more than a loosely bound affiliations of towns centered around the regulation of trade they did not represent a fundamentally unique and alternative to the state. In other words, although there is little doubt that these confederations of cities and towns represented adaptations to pressures of war and the expansion of trade, they do not represent a conceptual substitute to statehood. Instead, they more closely resemble modern day international organizations in that they were a rational and cooperative response of states facing anarchy (Axelrod and Keohane 1985, Keohane and Martin 1995, Oye 1986).

First, consider the activities that leagues undertook: the provision of collective security and the creation of enlarged markets. These aims are exactly the type of quasi-public and club goods

that liberal-institutionalist scholars of international relations ascribe to international organizations (Kehoane 1984, Abbott and Snidal 1998, Lake 1996, Koremenos et al. 2001). Just as twentieth century states rationally constructed international organizations like the World Trade Organization or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to promote goals like free and trade and collective security, the cities and towns of the Hansa and other leagues, under the constraint of anarchy, created institutions to promote similar economic and political goals.

Second, consider the difficulties leagues faced at creating compliance amongst their members. Although many leagues could raise revenue and punish non-compliant members, in general these powers were limited and were closer to those of international organizations than to those of independent states. Indeed, many international organizations maintain formal measures for dispute resolution. For example, the WTO and International Criminal Court each provide its membership with a series of institutionalized procedures that take on a legal form and which are intended to punish non-compliance. The creation of constraining institutions like these is simply the rational response to the absence of third party enforcement in the international arena. However, although they existed, these mechanisms of compliance, as they are for modern international organizations, were quite limited. That is, like modern day international organizations, leagues facilitated cooperation among members through reputational mechanisms (Ewert and Selzer 2006, Greif, Milgrom and Weingast 1994).

For example, with respect to generating revenue, like modern international institutions, leagues could not directly tax. Instead they relied upon the voluntary compliance of individual member cities to obtain revenue. Typical of these organizations, lacking a third party enforcement mechanism the Hansa could at most expel member cities who failed to comply with calls for revenue and other league-wide policies (Fink 2011). The absence of third party enforcement is similarly evidenced in leagues' conduct of military affairs. The Hansa and other leagues were certainly capable of projecting military force, fielding armies able to do combat with large territorial states like Sweden, England, Denmark, and Holland. For example, at the height of its powers the Swabian league could support armies rivaling those of any major power. In 1385 it raised an army of more than 12,000 infantrymen and 1,200 calvary (Laffan 1957). However, this capacity towards arms is

not different from those of collective security organizations like NATO or the Warsaw Pact. And like these organizations the ability of leagues to wage war was similarly circumscribed by their inability to coordinate.

When, for example, the Hansa waged war against the Danish Crown in 1360 it could not compel all of its member states to participate in the conflict (Dollinger 1970; p. 70). In the Swabian league's defeat at Doffingen in 1388 we find further evidence that leagues were analogous to institutions composed of independent states with limited third party enforcement. In this battle, because the consent of the forty-odd commissioners (representatives of the individual cities) was necessary to execute any tactical maneuver, coordination on the battlefield was made so difficult that the allied Lords the league was opposing were able to emerge victorious despite substantial numerical inferiority (Zimmermann 2009).

In summation, leagues were the rational response of independent states to economic and military changes taking place during the late middle ages. Independent city-states created this new institutional arrangement to provide club and quasi-public goods like collective security and to facilitate economic exchange. However, just as with any international institution, and despite the construction of measures to punish defection, the members of leagues faced an inability to commit to the provision of the very public goods that they were intended to produce.

With little doubt leagues, city-states, and universal empires represent distinct institutional configurations. However, by treating them within the same conceptual framework I am capturing the key feature that distinguishes each these from the others; the degree to which they monopolize violence. In other words, the coding scheme I have produced captures the ways in which these institutions represent centralized versus fragmental political authority.

6 The Plan of the Book

Besides presenting an accurate account of European state formation this book provides a template for conducting analytical history. It does this by bringing together the simplifying impulses of a formal historical narrative with an empirical strategy designed to systematically identify both the causal relationships and the mechanisms tying theory to outcome. By centering the empirical

component of an analytic narrative within the framework of causality and coupling it with "thick" descriptive analysis of historical events I provide a much more complete test of the historical claims than previous work has done. It is organized in three sections.

The first section is divided into two chapters and is devoted to the evaluation of bellicist theories of state formation. Chapter 1 assesses the hypothesis that technological and tactical innovations led to increases in the costs and intensity of warfare and shows that these claims are greatly exaggerated. Then, Chapter 2 presents a dataset describing the size and location of every state in Europe between 1100 and 1790. Using these data to describe patterns of state formation across time and region, it then suggests that bellicist theories alone cannot account for the observed data. That is, I show that theories of war-making by themselves are insufficient to explain observed patterns of preindustrial European state formation.

Over four chapters the next section develops and tests my theory of state formation. The first chapter in this section present a simple game theoretic model of state formation from which two main empirical implications are drawn: First, states will form more frequently and be, on average, smaller in the most economically productive places. Second, the decision to allocate resources towards expansion is a function of the relative advantages states have in producing economic output; for states advantaged in production the marginal unit of effort devoted to conquest brings in relatively less output than that for their disadvantaged counterpart. As such, they will devote less effort to conquest and be smaller.

Chapter 4 tests the theory's first implication by using the random ability of some places to feed large populations as an instrument to identify the causal effects of urban growth on political fragmentation. Then to show that this causal relationship operates via the mechanisms proposed by the model in Chapter 5 I conduct a set of case studies comparing a group of French counties to similar North Italian city-states, exploring in detail how the behaviors undertaken by the actors and groups represented in the model match those of their analogous historical counterparts. The last chapter in this section, Chapter 6, tests the second implication of my theory, exploiting random closings of the Dardanelles, showing that trading states expand relative to non-traders following these as-if random trade shocks.

The last section of this book explores the consequences of historical political fragmentation for two contemporary outcomes. In Chapter 7 I examine the effects of historical boundary density on the incidence and intensity of territorial conflict during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Chapter 8 I explore the consequences of fragmented political authority on the development of unified markets. Using historical price data and exploiting the random timing of deaths resulting in the unification or dissolution of polities, I show that the existence of political boundaries caused divergences in prices, effects which lasted into the nineteenth century. Last, I conclude.

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