

# Comparative Politics

## Lecture 5

The creation of the modern state

# What is a the “state”?

An entity that possesses a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. (Max Weber)

# What is a “state”?

Relatively centralized, differentiated organizations the officials of which more or less successfully claim control over the chief concentrated means of violence within a population inhabiting a large, contiguous territory. (Charles Tilly)

# Tilly's central thesis

- The state is best understood as a “protection racket”
  - It trades sells security in exchange for revenues

# Contractarian View of the State

- Cooperation (and, therefore, security) is difficult to come by without a third party enforcer.
  - Life without the state (I.e. in the state of nature) is “nasty, brutish, and short” (Thomas Hobbes).
- Citizens, therefore, cede the rights they possess in the state of nature to the government in return for a guarantee of protection.

# Tilly's argument differs from contractarian view in 2 ways

1. Contract is under constant renegotiation
  - a) Rulers are discriminating monopolists that attempt to deter entry from potential competitors
  - b) Citizens may or may not be able to exit
2. The dangers that citizens need to be protected from includes the coercive apparatus of the state

# War makes the state and the state makes war

- The need to compete with external rivals creates the pressure for rulers to raise revenues to fight wars.
- The need to extract a lot of revenues poses a problem for rulers. One solution to this problem is to eliminate internal rivals.
  - The elimination of internal rivals and development of the capacity to extract resources is the process of statemaking.

# In Tilly's words....

"pursuit of war involved them willy-nilly in extraction of resources for war making from the populations over which they had control and in the promotion of capital accumulation by those who could help them borrow and buy. Warmaking, extraction, and capital accumulation interacted to shape European State making. Power holders did not undertake those three momentous tasks with the intention of creating national states - (centralized, differentiated, autonomous, extensive political organizations.) Nor did they foresee that national states would emerge from war making extraction and capital accumulation.

## Cont....

“...instead, they warred in order to check or overcome their competitors and thus to enjoy the advantages of power within a secure or expanding territory. To make more effective war, they attempted to locate more capital. In the short run, they might acquire that capital by conquest, by selling off their assets, or by coercing or dispossessing accumulators of capital. In the long, run, the quest inevitably involved them in establishing regular access to capitalists who could supply and arrange credit and in imposing one form of regular taxation or another on the people and activities within their spheres of control.”

# What states do:

1. *War making*: Eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force.
2. *State making*: Eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories.
3. *Protection*: Eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients
4. *Extraction*: Acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities.

# Conclusion

This “predatory state” approach is instructive because it:

1. gives view of rulers as egoistic maximizing rational actors
2. shows how goal oriented behavior leads to changes in institutional environment
3. shows how changes in institutional environment might change behavior

In so doing, the approach is:

1. explains why units grew larger over time - increasing economies of scale in violence

And

2. has potential of explaining why rulers would share power and/or limit extraction