

### Agenda

- What is a state?
- Variations in state strength
- Why have a state: Hume vs. Hobbes
- Democracy

### What is a state?

State = the standing institutions of political authority, such as the bureaucracy. A typical state has the power to:

- coerce (i.e., military and police)
- extract resources (i.e., some sort of tax system)
- provide basic services (currency, public health, law enforcement, infrastructure, education, etc.)
- legitimate its existence and actions (propaganda, official religion, etc.).

### States stronger or weaker across space

- What might a weak state not be able to do?
- Example: Africa, after dark

### States gotten stronger or weaker over time?

States not the main source of authority in much of the world, or over time

### Physical manifestations of state

- Asia, Peru, Mexico: ceremonial cities
- Other wooden structures that didn't survive; states that didn't survive
- Athens had a recorder; most of state was dissolved into society
- For Europeans, Doge's Palace was a place where permanent, salaried officials were doing official-like things (enforcing policies, collecting money, counting it, inspecting shipments, taking bribes, etc.)
- City-state was nicely compact, urban

### What states do

Lots of variations in states out there; some can do a lot, some can't do much. What might a weak state not be able to do?

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| State      | The standing institutions of political authority.  |
| Government | The individuals who occupy positions of leadership within the state.   |
| Regime     | The set of rules, norms, and institutions governing who has access to state power and how that power is exercised. |

### What factors might affect state formation?

- War
- Geography and topography
- Leadership
- Conjunctural
- Structural constraints (Migdal)
- Changes in technology

- Economic technologies (Engels, Wittfogel)
- Communications technology
- Military technology (Dahl):
- Administrative technology
- Technology could be imported
- State building responding to economic complexity (Skowronek, Migdal, etc.)
- Resources
- Colonialism
- Absorption into new empire
- Population – economies of scale
- Population density

### **Thomas Hobbes**

- Men are naturally rather equal
- Conflict is inevitable and natural for at least three reasons:
  1. Competition: People become enemies and go to war when they want the same good
  2. Diffidence: This creates a security dilemma
  3. Glory: Some solely will fight solely for the purpose of conquest, want recognition
- Unless there is a common power, “keeping company” with others only brings grief not pleasure
  - In the absence of such a common power, people are in a state of war
  - Need for common power to “keep them in awe”
  - No justice, no concept of justice, until we have a political society and a single source of authority. [Contrast with Hume, who says that the desire for justice is one of the reasons for the creation of political society]
  - [No distinction is drawn between society and political society]

Main reasons for establishment of society

- Security concerns (mainly from other men)
- Desire for economic development, specialization, etc.
- People naturally want to be left alone or seek dominion over others.
- We all give up our rights / freedom in exchange for security and (greater) prosperity
- No inherent social impulse here, or at least not one that exercises a restraining influence
- No force to normative or social sanctions

State-building for Hobbes

- 1<sup>st</sup> step: agree to no cruelty to others
- 2<sup>nd</sup> step: agree to be governed by common power

Who is right?

- They agree on war as proximate cause
- Does Hume really understand collective action problems, or does he just see the world as a giant assurance game?
- Hobbes doesn't recognize social impulse, moral faculties

### **David Hume**

Three reasons why society arises:

1. Necessity (presumably, from security, need for economies of scale, etc.)
2. Natural inclination (people are social creatures and want to live in proximity to each other)
3. Habit (people socialized into a society tend to continue it)

- After they have a society, they seek to have justice in it (the overriding goal)
- We seek institutions that prevent us from being carried away by passions and short-term interests and to force us to consult our own “real and permanent interests”
- Once we get institutions to ensure obedience, we develop a habit of obedience to magistrates or to law

Actually, though, he says, government doesn't really start this way. It actually starts “more casually and more imperfectly”

- War is impulse. In war, it's more obvious and important who should be leader, and it's crucial to have a leader to give you “unanimity and concert”
- So people get a war leader. If war is regular and continuous, they get used to obeying him. If his son also good, government continues
- Eventually, he gets a supply of revenue. Then he uses the revenue to reward and punish. Now his **authority becomes generalized**.

Discussion of how **need for obedience** gives rise to tension between **liberty** and **authority**. These must be balanced.

- In practice, total authority impossible
- Liberty secured by “partition of power among several members” who must act by “general and equal laws”
- But even with such liberty, authority is essential to existence of liberty
- Thus, the tension between authority and liberty only makes sense in a context of **political society**. So we need to pay attention both to the **preservation of liberty** and to the **institutions of authority**.

#### **Karl Marx's view of state?**

- Committee of the ruling class
- Took his class structure from England, peasantry from France, state from Germany
- Does this model work? Might there be conflict within ruling class?
- Need for some sort of state autonomy to manage competing interests