

The State and the Nation

Lecture for Human Biology Core

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Five Questions

- 1. What is a State?
- 2. How did the Modern State Emerge?
- 3. Why did it spread so ubiquitously?
- 4. Why did its boundaries coincide with that of nations?
- 5. How robust is the modern nation-state?

1. What is the modern state?

- “a complex set of **institutional** [*as opposed to ad hoc*] arrangements for rule operating through the **continuous** [*as opposed to governments*] and regulated activities of...occupants of **offices** [*as opposed to clientelism*]...reserv(ing) to itself the business of rule over a **territorially bounded** [*as opposed to a corporation*] society; it **monopolizes** [*as opposed to a market*]...all faculties [*for Max Weber, only that of violence*]...pertaining to that business...” (Gianfranco Poggi)

2. How Did the Modern State Emerge?

- A. Coercion Intensive Path [Tilly and Bates]
 - 1. Population growth in agrarian societies
 - 2. Migration to less productive lands, and economic decline w/ constant technology
 - 3. Tribal bands secure control over land and increase its productivity through specialization
 - 4. The richer they get, the more subject they are to predation from their neighbors or roving bands
 - 5. They agree to pay fees (taxes) to predator armies who are in a protection racket. This protection racket is the foundation of the modern state.

B. The Capital Intensive Path

- 1. Population growth draws people into coastal cities as traders;
- 2. Demand for peace governing separate lineages in these cities led to institutions such as the podestá in Genoa and the *doge* in Venice [Avner Greif]
- 3. Wealth of cities make them vulnerable to coercion intensive structures
- 4. There is a bargain that can be struck where hinterland leaders can tax cities in return for protection. To the extent that cities were the greater source of wealth, the path is capital intensive.

The Fundamental State Bargain

Taxes for Protection



Tax Department found inefficient



3. Why did it spread so ubiquitously?

- The national state could militarily defeat city-states and theocracies
- The maps of Europe provided by Tilly show the one millennium process of convergence of nearly all polities to that of the modern state.

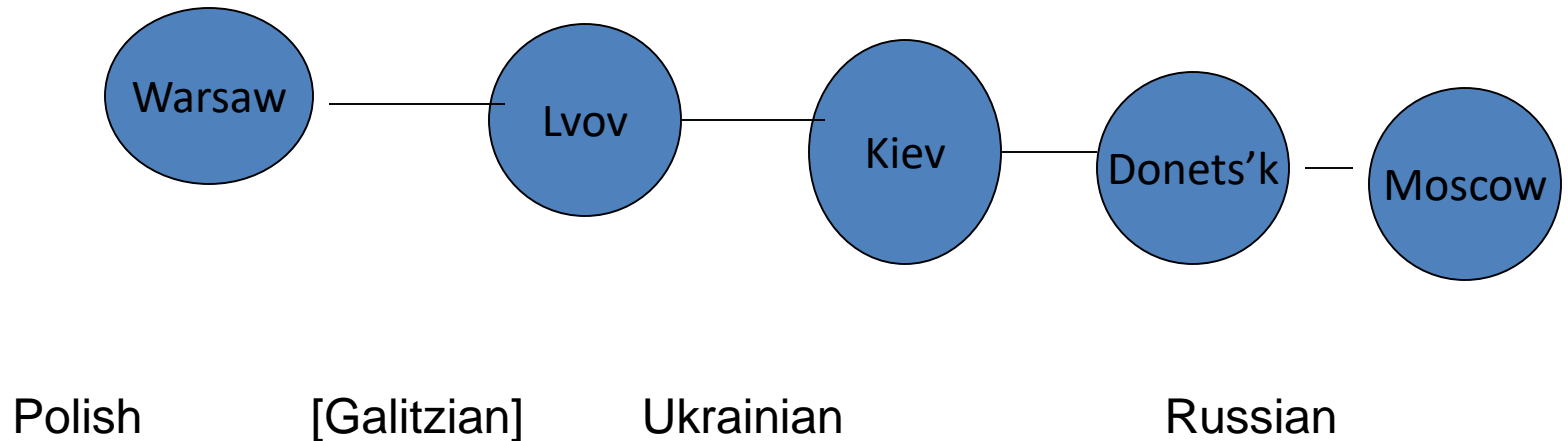
4. Why did the Boundaries of the State Coincide with those of the Nation: leading to “nation-states”?

- Three mechanisms:
- (1) State Rationalization
 - Max Weber
 - Like standardized (civil or common) law, or weights and measures, a common language reduces the costs of policing and administration
 - Eugen Weber “Peasants into Frenchmen”
 - Multi-lingual France until 1870s [la Marseillaise]
 - Undermined by conscription, and state control over education (1905)

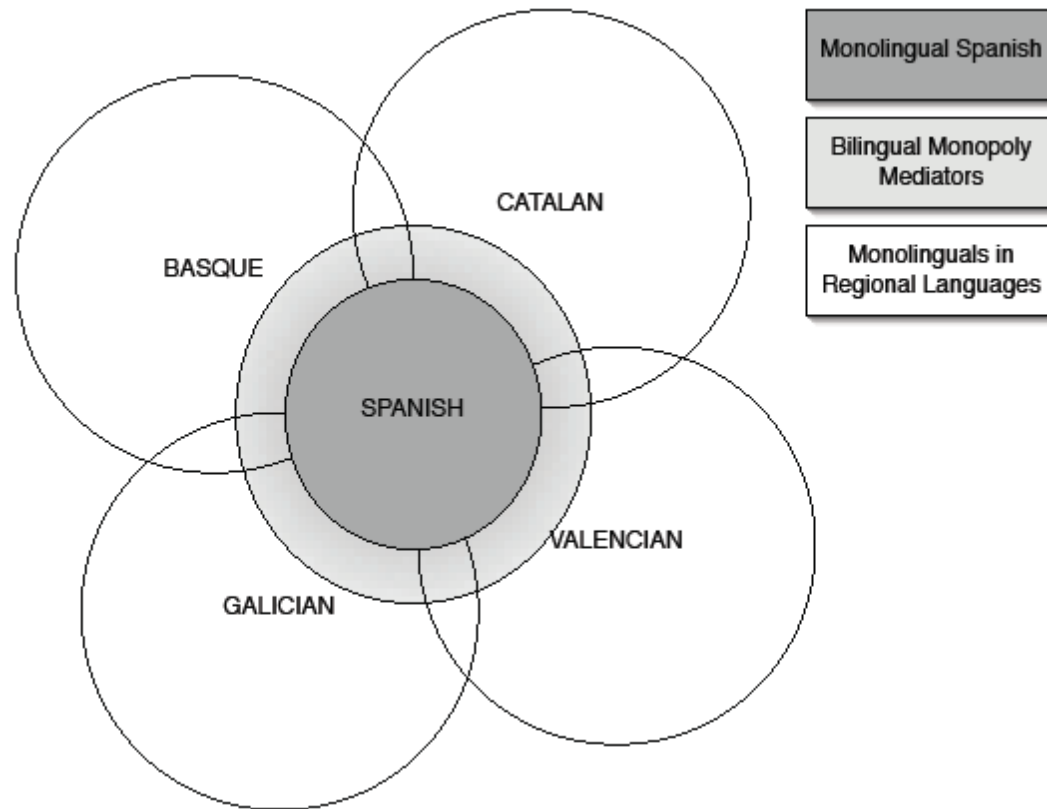
State Rationalization Illustrated

Slavic Language Zone

EASTERN SLAVIC LANGUAGE ZONE



(2) Popular Subversion of Local Cultures: de Swaan's "floral model"



(3) Diffusion

- Napoleon's "Levée en Masse" – raised an army of about 800,000 soldiers in less than a year. This was much larger than any army available to other European states, and laid the basis for Napoleon's domination of Europe.
- Induced "official nationalism" in Russia and nationalist ideologies elsewhere
- The "nation-state" becomes naturalized as a form of rule
- Even in the post-colonial world, "nation-building" is seen as a natural function of the state

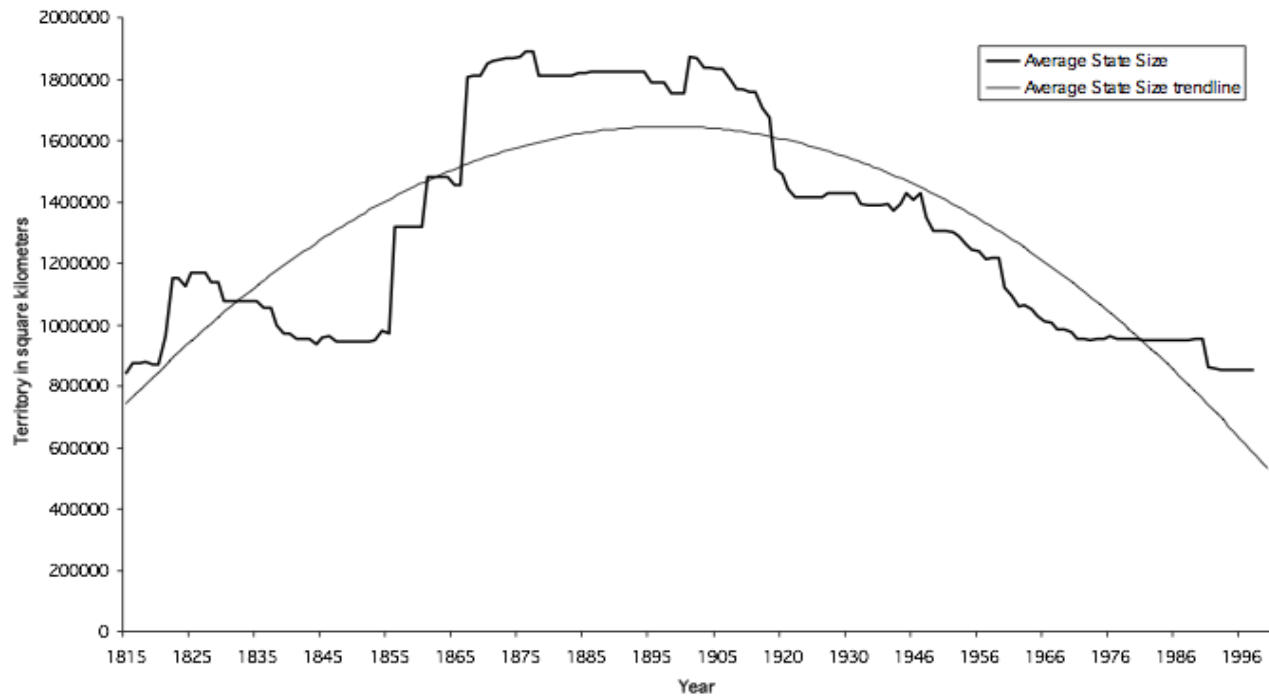
5. How Robust is the Nation State?

- 1. Decreasing returns to territorial control → the “incredible shrinking state”:
- In 1816, the average state was 832,000 square kilometers. By 1876, the average state had more than doubled in size to nearly 1.9 million square kilometers. Today, the average state has shrunk once again to approximately 854,000 square kilometers (Lake and O’Mahoney)
- Explained by the low returns to rulers of expansion and the low costs to separatists for security provision

The Incredible Shrinking State

(from Lake and Mahoney)

Figure 1
Average State Size, 1815-1998



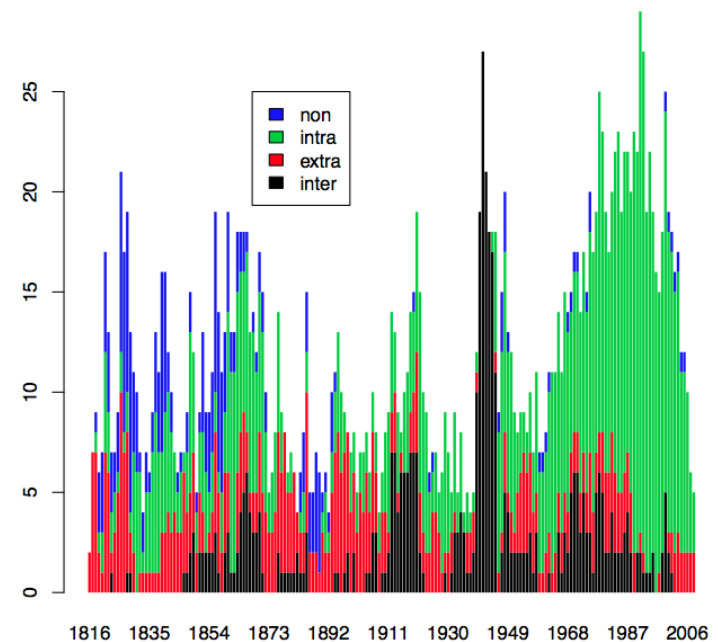
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Changed Security Environment

- Probability of Interstate War drops precipitously after WWII
- Boundaries no longer need protection, as war no longer is about territorial expansion of states
- With devolution, the linear miles of interstate borders increase, but with no implications for vulnerability of attack across borders (Alesina and Spolaore)
- Separatist movements no longer need to convince their constituencies that their national security would be threatened with independence

Types of COW war in current state boundaries, 1816–2008



Rise of Diasporic and Virtual Communities

- Social and cultural communities less tied to territory; cultures can thrive outside their home arenas
- Liberal states cannot escape multicultural recognition when demanded: #2 mother tongue in Brussels today (after French) is not Flemish but Arabic!
- Neo-trusteeship role for failed states
- Nation-states will be but one of several competing providers of security and collectors of taxes that make demands on future populations.

Conclusion: the Evolution of States and Nations

- 1. States evolved irrespective of cultures, but due to their advantages in providing security and collecting taxes
- 2. Those states that created nations became more powerful and more secure, diffusing the idea of a natural nation-state
- 3. With large states no longer advantaged in providing security, and national armies no longer a premium, the modern nation state is ending its period as the dominant model of rule.