

State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples

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1 State formation and pathological homogenisation

Within the study of international relations surprisingly little attention has been paid to the relationship between strategies of pathological homogenisation and state formation. As a result key questions about the relationship between state formation, sovereignty, changing forms of political legitimacy and the building of collective identities – all areas that have recently received greater attention in international relations – have not been brought to bear on the treatment of those deemed ‘political misfits’.¹ Indeed, the targeting of minority groups for expulsion, or other even harsher measures, has until recently been seen as representing crises *within* states, and therefore beyond the provenance of international relations theory. Or, once refugees spill over state borders in large enough numbers, or atrocities reach a level which ‘shock the conscience of humankind’ and become potentially destabilising, they are regarded as examples of systemic breakdown, as anomalies which must be attended to at a practical level, but which require little further explanation.²

These processes, I contend in the following chapters, are an integral part of the state system, and practices of pathological homogenisation have, in part, *constituted* the states system, for it has been constructed in large measure on the exclusionary categories of insider and outsider. This is not to assert that the most extreme forms of mistreatment are in some way inevitable, only that they remain a possibility in a system which is based on a sharp distinction between insiders and outsiders. The assertion that the boundary of the state constitutes the only legitimate moral boundary (and hence it is logical that those who are outside the moral community, however defined, are owed no moral duties and may be removed from the state) only makes sense, and is only morally acceptable, if the ‘state monopoly over the right to define identity’ is accepted.³

¹ Aristide Zolberg, ‘The Formation of New States as a Refugee Generating Process’, in Elizabeth Ferris (ed.), *Refugees and World Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1985), p. 31.

² A recent exception to this is Jennifer Jackson Preece, *National Minorities and the European Nation-States System* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

³ Andrew Linklater, ‘The Problem of Community in International Relations’, *Alternatives* 15:2 (1990), 149.

While the assertion by elites that they have the right to define state identity has been characteristic of the system of states from its inception, there have always been limits to such claims. At the beginning of the twenty-first century it is clear that the state monopoly on the right to define legitimate identity is no longer unequivocally accepted. It is challenged by the international norms of legitimate state behaviour that have developed over the centuries in response to the most outrageous treatment of subjects and citizens. Such international standards have gained moral and legal force, particularly since the end of World War II. Yet despite the articulation of such norms, virulent exclusionary practices remain an attractive option to many regimes in the world today, as recent events in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere illustrate. Such practices provide a baseline of the most extreme claims that can still be made in the name of a unitary sovereign identity and highlight the problems faced by the international community in dealing with such behaviour.

This chapter lays the foundation for the further consideration of the role of pathological homogenisation in state-building and the development of international norms regarding such practices. It consists of three sections. The first considers the treatment of the state in mainstream theories of international relations and outlines an alternative approach that draws on critical and constructivist theories of international relations, emphasising the role of normative and ideational factors in the construction of the identities and interests of sovereign states and the shared social values of the 'society of states'. The second section surveys several prominent theories of state formation and examines how they account, if at all, for the pathological homogenisation that often accompanies state-building. The third section investigates the dimension of social life that is overlooked in most accounts of state formation – the role of culture and how this is bound up with the creation of legitimacy and changing criteria of collective identity.

State formation and international relations theory

The critical response to mainstream approaches to international relations

Mainstream theories of international relations take the identity of the state as given and explicitly bracket off consideration of the internal dimensions of state behaviour. For example, neorealist analyses deny the relevance of processes of state formation in understanding international politics. In this view, the anarchic structure of the international system drives states to pursue self-help in the absence of any supreme authority. In the classic

exposition of this view, Kenneth Waltz rejects 'second image' explanations which take the internal structure of the state into account and argues that the anarchical structure of the international system forces states to act in certain ways regardless of their internal arrangements.⁴

Thus state-building and the construction of identity within the state are not relevant from this perspective. As long as the basic functions of statehood are performed – a central government which has control over the means of violence, over a defined population and over a defined territory – then 'a state is a state is a state'.⁵ State interests are considered relevant but the most basic interests are assumed to be identical for all states and driven by the nature of the system: all states have an interest in survival in an anarchical system, which is best pursued through strategies of self-help based on zero-sum calculations. Neoliberal theorists, though interested in how states cooperate under anarchy, accept the realist model of states as self-interested, rational and unitary actors. As a consequence, they too explicitly bracket off the role of collective identity construction in state-building as they also take the identities and interests of actors on the international stage for granted.

Over the last two decades of the twentieth century mainstream approaches have been subjected to criticisms from a number of different perspectives. Once the state was 'brought back in' to both social theory and international relations theory in the 1980s, this opened up consideration of how states, rather than being pre-social 'facts', are constituted through social, political and cultural practices. From this perspective, the state is seen as a normative order, and it is intersubjectively constructed normative values that provide the unifying standards and symbols that legitimate authority and allow us to perceive the state as a unitary and sovereign actor. Thus, sovereignty 'is negotiated out of interaction within intersubjectively identifiable communities'⁶ and it is this institution which legitimates 'the state' as an agent in international social life. As Michael Walzer notes, unity can only ever be symbolised,⁷ but it is through the claim to sovereignty made on the state's behalf, and how this is articulated

⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979). The only unit level factors Waltz takes into account are the 'capabilities' of states, though he insists that the 'distribution' of capabilities, which matters most, is a systemic factor.

⁵ With apologies to Gertrude Stein.

⁶ Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, 'The Social Construction of State Sovereignty', in Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (eds.), *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 11.

⁷ Michael Walzer, 'On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought', *Political Science Quarterly* 82:2 (1967), 194.

and put into practice, both domestically and internationally, that a sense of unity is created.

Despite many differences, the various critical approaches to international relations all share a concern with how identities and interests are constructed, highlighting the importance of questions of inclusion/exclusion and identity/difference in international relations. Building on these insights, various constructivist scholars have investigated how normative change and identity construction proceeds 'on the ground'.⁸ Although constructivism is a loose term that covers many different approaches, most scholars associated with it share an interest in the empirical exploration of *how* identities are constructed, *how* culture matters and *how* this is relevant to international relations. As Martha Finnemore argues, '[s]imply claiming that norms matter is not enough for constructivists. They must provide substantive arguments about which norms matter as well as how, where and why they matter.'⁹ From this perspective, the re-reading of canonical texts and the critique of the assumptions of mainstream theories of international relations by critical scholars of international relations raise interesting and important questions, but historical and sociological work is necessary if they are to be answered. Below, I trace briefly how the state was 'brought back in' to international relations theory, and what contributions critical theory and constructivism have made to understanding the social construction of identities and interests.

From the early 1980s critical theorists began to question the assumptions underlying realist discourse as well as the conclusions that realists draw about international political life. Whether of the modernist or post-modernist variety, critical theorists questioned the sharp boundary that mainstream international relations draws between the domestic and international realms, and the assumption, particularly strong in American neorealism, that scholars of international relations should be engaged in value-neutral 'social science'.

An exemplar of early critical theory is Robert Cox's critique of realist discourse as ideology, which echoes the earlier Frankfurt School critique of 'traditional' theory based on a positivist social science which assumes that it is possible to accumulate knowledge about human society by the objective application of scientific method.¹⁰ Cox distinguishes between

⁸ Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, 'Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism', *European Journal of International Relations* 4:3 (1998).

⁹ Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 130.

¹⁰ Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10:2 (1982), 128. Neither is such

‘problem solving’ and ‘reflective’ theories, arguing that the former is designed to make existing patterns work as smoothly as possible while the latter reflects upon theorising itself in order to consider the creation of alternative social frameworks. ‘Problem-solving’ theory is essentially conservative, Cox argues, as it accepts the status quo, whereas the theory that results from the reflective approach is critical in the sense that it steps back from the ‘prevailing order’ and asks how it came about. ‘It is directed towards an appraisal of the very framework for action, or problematic, which problem-solving theory accepts as its parameters.’¹¹

Cox argues that, contrary to the neorealist view that all states are functionally similar within the anarchical system of states, understanding international relations requires investigation of the different forms of state/society entities in history. He then goes on to focus on the role of production in state formation and the impact this has had on international relations, as social forces within states overflow state boundaries and the international system in turn acts back on states and their constituent societies. Although he makes a strong argument for reflective theory and for historical study of the constitution of states in the states system, his work is in the end another version of historical materialism, based as it is on the centrality of production. However, around the same time Anthony Giddens was arguing that a viable critical theory needs to be ‘post-Marxist’, and therefore able to recognise the shortcomings of Marxism as well as its strengths.¹² Given the complex nature of international relations, Giddens highlights the need for multidimensional accounts that recognise that there is no single dominant logic at work in the international system.

Echoing Giddens’ doubts about single logic explanations, Andrew Linklater argues that the Marxist emphasis on production and class highlights only one of a number of axes of inclusion and exclusion in the contemporary international system, including race, gender and religion. For Linklater, it is the identification of unjust forms of exclusion and identifying the immanent possibilities for more inclusive political communities that should animate critical theory. Thus, ‘in light of the wider human community’ critical theorists should problematise the exclusionary

objectivity completely desirable as it denies important dimensions of human social, political and cultural experience. Max Horkheimer, ‘Traditional and Critical Theory’, in Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Free Press, 1972). See also Craig Calhoun, *Critical Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 1–42; and Richard K. Ashley, ‘Political Realism and Human Interests’, *International Studies Quarterly* 25:2 (1981).

¹¹ Cox, ‘Social Forces’, 129.

¹² Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence: Volume Two of A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), p. 336.

practices through which state sovereignty has been constructed.¹³ To enquire into the justice of the criteria for membership within states, is 'to recognise that the nation-state is one of the few bastions of exclusion which has not had its rights and claims against the rest of the world seriously questioned'.¹⁴ Thus, rather than accepting the state as a given in international relations, Linklater argues that critical theory should question the interpretations of the state and sovereignty that are so often taken for granted in mainstream international relations.

However, the explicitly emancipatory normative stance of this form of critical theory has been met with some scepticism from critical scholars influenced by postmodern social theory. They regard the 'emancipatory project' of 'modernist' critical theory as masking yet another attempt to impose new 'truths', which they regard as a form of domination. Despite this, though, there are many points of convergence between modern and postmodern forms of critical theory. For example, Richard Ashley, who rejected his earlier work based on Frankfurt School critical theory,¹⁵ argues from a postmodern position (if that is possible) that it is the task of modern statecraft to defer the ever-threatening crises of political identity that face the modern state by constructing singular sovereign identities. It is only by deferring questions about such identities, he argues, that it has been possible to maintain a system of sovereign states, each of which is regarded as legitimate. This has entailed the displacement of threats to outside the state, constructing the external realm as fraught with danger. But the 'co-ordinated displacement of anarchic dangers [to the outside of the state]... is a task made ever more difficult to perform to the extent that the state system is universalised and to the degree that claims on space and time inscribed beneath the sign of man become ever more extensive'.¹⁶

Modernist critical theorists would have no disagreement with the substance of this argument that it has been the task of modern statecraft to impose a singular identity (and it is this that this study investigates), as they wish to challenge the definition of political community which remains bounded within the state. But Ashley is representative of the postmodern position when he asserts that the inscription of self-identity must *always* be defined at the expense of the other. The breakdown of received interpretations and the postmodern proliferation of meanings

¹³ Andrew Linklater, 'The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations Theory: A Critical-Theoretical Point of View', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 21:1 (1992), 93.

¹⁴ Linklater, 'The Question', 93. ¹⁵ Ashley, 'Political Realism'.

¹⁶ Richard K. Ashley, 'Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 17:2 (1988), 259.

is to be celebrated, according to this view, rather than perceived as a problem to be solved by the imposition of a new sovereign – and inherently oppressive – voice, in the name of stability. This position rejects any projects that seek alternative forms of political community that are more inclusive, or which seek to articulate how the boundary between self and other can be negotiated in more respectful ways. The position that Ashley and others take renders the normative goal of devising alternative political communities inherently problematic as it means the assertion of yet another form of domination.¹⁷

But there is a contradiction here between the theoretical concern with how boundaries have been drawn at the expense of the other and the political reality of marginalisation. The reformulation of boundaries to mark out unjust categories of insiders and outsiders, as recently seen in Bosnia, for example, will be resisted from any critical (or liberal) perspective. But the celebration of marginality carries the danger of trivialising the concrete reality of those who are truly marginalised in the contemporary world system, which despite many changes is still a system of sovereign states. As Walzer points out, '[s]tatelessness is a condition of infinite danger',¹⁸ and though we may wish to contest the categories which make this so, the celebration of existence 'on the margins' overlooks the perilous political consequences of a truly marginalised existence for millions of people across the globe.¹⁹

Where Ashley argues that the crisis of representation uncovers the fact that all boundaries, normative or practical, are inscribed arbitrarily, modernist critical theorists contend that just as social practices and the normative structures they create are not unalterable, neither are they *totally* arbitrary. As Linklater argues, '[m]oral principles are neither immutable and universal nor are they arbitrary and groundless means of organising a meaningless reality'.²⁰ Thus despite the critiques of universalism as yet

¹⁷ On postmodern critiques of relations of domination at work in what has been accepted as reasonable, just, progressive, and so on, see Stephen White, *Political Theory and Postmodernism* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 7.

¹⁸ Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 32.

¹⁹ On the charge that postmodernism can mean a retreat from practical politics, see White, *Political Theory*, p. 21. White draws a distinction between the postmodern 'responsibility to the other' and the modernist 'responsibility to act'. On the problems faced by such positions of analysing 'the transformation of power and social structure as it bears on practical action in the modern world', see Calhoun, *Critical Social Theory*, p. 116.

²⁰ Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations*, 2nd edition (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 217. For a discussion of how postmodern international relations theorists draw parallels between the way in which the state and the discipline of International Relations both seek to impose sovereign identities, see Linklater, 'The Question', 88–92. In a critique directed at Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas argues that Foucault's failure to explain how normative choices could be validated through

another face of Western domination, modernist critical theory regards as valid a minimal universalism, which seeks to recognise cultural difference yet also recognises some shared principles of coexistence.²¹

As noted above, Linklater argues that critical theory should seek to go beyond the Marxist emphasis on class-based exclusion. Notions of legitimate inclusion and exclusion, he argues, are ‘constitutive not only of society in the abstract but of individual and collective identity’.²² As the rationales of various forms of inclusion and exclusion come under scrutiny Linklater identifies three dimensions of such an inquiry. These are ‘normative, concerning the philosophical justifications for excluding some persons from particular social arrangements while admitting others; sociological, concerning the workings and maintenance of systems of inclusion and exclusion; and praxeological, concerning the impact of systems of inclusion and exclusion on human action’.²³ Taking these questions as a starting point, this study traces the development of changing criteria of inclusion and exclusion in a number of states. At the sociological level, I take seriously Linklater’s injunction to inquire into the ‘origin and development’ of modes of inclusion and exclusion. At the praxeological level I address the pressing problem of the gap between changed norms of acceptable state behaviour and what action can be taken when states clearly abrogate these norms. This is complex, for as Finnemore notes, there may be ‘tensions and contradictions among social values’.²⁴ This problem is addressed in chapter 6. For the moment, it is the sociological dimension, ‘concerning the workings and maintenance of systems of inclusion and exclusion’, to which I now turn, and which brings constructivism into play.

Constructivism: the social construction of identities and interests

Critical theory of the Third Debate, had ‘a distinctive metatheoretical or quasi-philosophical profile’, focusing on ‘the epistemological, methodological and normative assumptions and implications of dominant rationalist theories. In comparison, little effort was made to apply the conceptual and methodological apparatus of either modern or postmodern critical theory to the sustained empirical analysis of issues in world politics.’²⁵ Constructivism takes up this neglected dimension of the critical project.

communicative means, meant that the dimensions of social interaction that are not simply reducible to power relations were ignored. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 253. See Calhoun, *Critical Social Theory*, pp. 97–131, for a discussion of these points.

²¹ Linklater, *Men and Citizens*, postscript. ²² Linklater, ‘The Question’, 82.

²³ *Ibid.*, 78. ²⁴ Finnemore, *National Interests*, p. 82.

²⁵ Price and Reus-Smit, ‘Critical International Theory’, 262–3.

Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit identify three core aspects of the constructivist approach. Like critical theorists of the Third Debate, constructivists pay attention to the ‘importance of normative or ideational structures as well as material structures’; they assert that ‘identities constitute interests and actions’; and that agents and structures are mutually constituted.²⁶ Thus, to the constructivist ‘social realities are as influential as material realities in determining behaviour. Indeed, they are what endows material realities with meaning and purpose. In political terms, it is these social realities that provide us with ends to which power and wealth can be used.’²⁷ From a constructivist perspective, understanding the construction of identities and interests is the key to understanding political action and change in the international system. Thus constructivists seek to trace how intersubjectively constituted identities at both the domestic and international levels translate into political action. Furthermore, identities themselves come out of and are rearticulated in political practice – they are both motivations for, and outcomes of, action. Social agents and social structures are viewed as mutually constitutive, so as Alexander Wendt argues, while social structures influence the identities and actions of agents, ‘social structures are only instantiated by the practices of agents’.²⁸

Wendt draws a helpful distinction between the corporate and social aspects of state identities but he then goes on to argue that although corporate identities do indeed have histories, ‘a theory of the states system need no more explain the existence of states than one of society need explain that of people’.²⁹ He argues that the domestic aspect of state identity construction can be bracketed off, as it is the interaction of states with other already existing states which constructs the social identity of states. This view rests on an isomorphism which assumes that individuals in society and states in the states system can be treated as like units, but the very fact that the corporate identity of the state is just that – corporate – and not an individual identity, means that we need to look at how this identity is constructed, how the ‘we’ to which Wendt refers is constituted and maintained. In this respect, Wendt’s systemic constructivism differs little from the way mainstream theories of international relations bracket off identities and interests.³⁰ As a consequence, his

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 266–7. ²⁷ Finnemore, *National Interests*, p. 128.

²⁸ Alexander Wendt, ‘The Agent–Structure Problem in International Relations Theory’, *International Organization* 41:3 (1987), 359.

²⁹ Alexander Wendt, ‘Collective Identity Formation and the International State’, *American Political Science Review* 88:2 (1994), 385.

³⁰ Wendt has reasserted this view more recently. Although he extends the discussion of collective identity to include ‘type’ and ‘role’ identities this does not solve the problem

conception of the relationship between agents and structures is ‘relatively narrow’, and his model of world politics remains static in the absence of any ‘non-systemic sources of state identity – such as domestic political culture’.³¹ This reliance on the systemic level alone undermines Wendt’s constructivist approach so that he is only marginally better equipped to explain the constitution of states or the states system than neorealists.³²

However, drawing on the distinction Wendt makes between the corporate and social aspects of state identities, we may characterise the use by political elites of pathological homogenisation in state formation as a means towards the goal of ‘corporate state identity construction’, and the development of international norms as a form of ‘societal state identity construction’.³³ In direct contrast to Wendt, though, I argue throughout this book that the corporate and social aspects of state identity stand in a dialectical, mutually constitutive relationship. One crucial aspect of this relationship is investigated in the following four chapters, in which I trace the construction of corporate state identities, and how the practices by which corporate identities are constructed also constitute the boundaries between states as moral boundaries. In these practices, elites draw on the cultural and symbolic resources of their time and place in order to recast and reinvent collective identities within the state.

International norms do indeed arise out of the social interaction of states, but Wendt ignores the fact that it is through this interaction that the society of states evolves standards of legitimate corporate state behaviour.³⁴ International society thus plays an active role in state-building, as international principles of legitimate state action define, in part, how corporate state-building *should* occur. What is more, this is a two-way relationship. As the criteria of political legitimacy within states have changed, and with them the domestic principles which underpin *corporate* identity construction, so too have the international principles that structure the state system. As chapter 6 explains, international norms that set the standard of legitimate state behaviour can be understood as both a *response to* corporate state-building and *part of* societal state-building.

of his bracketing off of corporate identity in my view. See Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 193–245.

³¹ Price and Reus-Smit, ‘Critical International Theory’, 268.

³² It is worth noting that Wendt is probably the only systemic constructivist. This is an important point given that he is often taken as representative of constructivism as a whole, when most constructivists differ from him in regarding the domestic and international aspects of world politics as mutually constitutive.

³³ Wendt, ‘Collective Identity Formation’, 385.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State, and Symbolic Exchange* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 5.

The empirical focus of much constructivist scholarship draws criticism from some critical theorists. They argue that constructivism forgoes a reflectivist orientation and becomes another form of ‘problem solving theory’ that is positivist, or at least overly rationalist. However, this project begins from the proposition that it is possible to pursue a more empirically based form of scholarship without losing or betraying a critical purpose.³⁵ It is constructivism that provides an approach through which the difficult questions posed by critical theory – questions about the construction of moral community through practices of inclusion and exclusion – can be investigated at the level of political action in a system of sovereign territorial states.

Theories of state formation

While international relations scholars have largely ignored processes of state-building, this is not true of scholars in other fields. Historical sociologists and institutional economists have devoted considerable attention to such processes. Unfortunately, though, they have tended to marginalise questions of homogenisation, and have neglected the role of culture and identity in state-building. The following section examines how materialist, institutionalist and power-based approaches account for early modern state formation and then goes on to briefly survey rational choice accounts of contemporary ethnic violence which, although not explicitly concerned with state-building, inevitably deal with ethnic violence in the context of state collapse and reformation.

Materialist explanations

Materialist explanations of state formation, such as that presented by Immanuel Wallerstein, treat the state as functional to the development of the capitalist world system. Wallerstein argues that the initial thrust of the fifteenth-century ‘restorers of order’ came out of the crisis of feudalism as they responded to the recessions, famines and plagues that beset Europe in the fourteenth century. By the fifteenth century widespread economic tightening resulted in peasant rebellions and internecine warfare, including wars amongst the nobility. Weakened by this, the nobility looked to kings to restore and maintain order.

While Wallerstein characterises the disorder of the fourteenth century as the outcome of economic pressures, the fifteenth-century construction

³⁵ See Price and Reus-Smit, ‘Critical International Theory’, for an overview of the different views in this debate. Also see Ted Hopf, ‘The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory’, *International Security* 23:1 (1998).

of what was to become a new order – involving neither the total collapse of the world-economy or its transformation into a world-empire³⁶ – is understood as a prerequisite of economic resurgence. ‘The capitalist world-economy seems to have *required* and *facilitated* this secular process of increased centralisation and internal control, at least within the core states.’³⁷ Thus ‘strong states’ were necessary for economic development and so we see the rise of centralising, mainly absolutist states in the early modern period. That states and the states system were seen as functional for economic resurgence and the growth of the world-economy is considered explanation enough, with Wallerstein adding little more to explain these developments.

In the early modern era, European monarchs strengthened their states, and their own position within them, through a number of means, including ‘bureaucratization, monopolization of force, creation of legitimacy, and homogenisation of subject populations’.³⁸ Increased bureaucratisation meant that economic policy decisions needed to be mediated through state structures. Thus by the sixteenth century, Wallerstein argues, kings fulfilled the role of ‘managers of the state machinery’.³⁹ These ‘managers’ handled the processes of decision-making that became increasingly necessary as states became increasingly autonomous in the pursuit of their interests. States became ‘actors with a special ability to pursue their economic ends’. Statism, the ‘claim for increased power in the hands of the state machinery’,⁴⁰ was the prevailing ideology of this world-economy.

Wallerstein’s characterisation of the relationship between the economic and the political, reflected in his portrayal of the development of the world-economy and the formation and consolidation of states within this, gives deterministic precedence to economic factors. In this account political action takes place within the framework provided by states, which were formed in response to the needs of the world-economy, and which are structured differently according to their place in this world-economy. This economically reductionist account does not adequately reflect the complex inter-relation of the political and economic factors. It gives a very thin account of the political and strategic dimensions of the international system, and virtually ignores the cultural dimension of states and the system of states, consigning them all to the category of ‘superstructural’.

³⁶ ‘World-economies have historically been unstable structures leading either towards disintegration or conquest by one group and hence transformation into a world-empire.’ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 5.

³⁷ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. 1 (San Diego: Academic Press, 1974), p. 136, emphasis added.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 136. ³⁹ *Ibid.* ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

In his more recent work, Wallerstein continues to characterise the world-economic system as one in which decisions made on a world scale are economic, and political decisions are relevant only to the 'smaller structures' of states and the states system which exist within the framework provided by the world-economy.⁴¹ In a nutshell, for Wallerstein: 'The interstate system is the political superstructure of the capitalist world-economy and was a deliberate invention of the modern world.'⁴² Contrary to Wallerstein's argument, though, the 'small structures' of states did not develop only as a function of the world-economy. Rather, they developed through the transition to a new form of political organisation which restructured relationships – economic, political, cultural and social – both within these new political units and between them.⁴³

Wallerstein does refer to the process of homogenisation, but in his account the homogenisation of populations, and the forced displacements which often attended it, are seen as functions of the demands of the growing world-economic system. Within this system, Wallerstein argues, it was in the economic interests of the monarchs to have 'ethnic' homogeneity amongst certain strata. Wallerstein dismisses the role of beliefs and ideas in historical change. For example, the role of religion within the emergent Spanish state is regarded as a legitimating rationalisation for economically determined action. While it may have been internalised by the actors, he argues, 'religious enthusiasm' was a rationalisation of economic interests. Because he regards belief systems as superstructural, there is no investigation of the relationship between this belief system and the construction of interests.

The decision to forcibly assimilate, expel or exterminate certain groups in the name of a homogenised identity cannot be explained purely in terms of the pursuit of material benefits. In all the cases examined in this study, decisions were made to target groups for expulsion or extermination in the knowledge that this would entail economic, and certainly in the later cases, political, costs. Wallerstein claims that the expulsion of the Jews of Spain in 1492 was part of an offensive across centralising states to push

⁴¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System* (Cambridge University Press, 1991). In particular see the chapter entitled, 'National and World Identities and the Interstate System'. Also see Immanuel Wallerstein, 'Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World System', in Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity: A Theory, Culture and Society Special Issue* (London: Sage, 1990).

⁴² Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture*, p. 141.

⁴³ As Zolberg argues, '[t]he system could not have gotten off the ground without the force Europeans could muster as a consequence of their achievement of a mode of political organisation that antedated the formation of the capitalist world economy'. Aristide Zolberg, 'Origins of the Modern World System: A Missing Link', *World Politics* 33:2 (1981), 262.

Jews into peripheral areas. He argues that the Jews of Spain played a role analogous to that of the urban bourgeoisie in other countries, and that non-Jewish merchants saw them as competitors, landowners saw them as creditors, and both groups put pressure on the Catholic Monarchs to expel them.⁴⁴ This does not, however, adequately account for the expulsion, as it does not explain why the monarchs allowed conversos (converts to Christianity from Judaism) who were in the same economic niche as the Jews, and who were able to 'prove' they were genuine converts, to stay. Nor does it account for the subsequent expulsion of conversos from the Church and positions in the bureaucracy. As chapter 2 demonstrates, these expulsions cannot be understood without some reference to the cultural context of the time, a context in which religion played a central role.

The same point can be made for the three other cases of pathological homogenisation considered in this book, all of which demonstrate that a narrow, economically deterministic conception of interests cannot explain the choices made by different regimes to forcibly homogenise their populations. Why, then, was a homogenised population deemed desirable as sovereign states emerged from the breakdown of heteronomous and imperial structures of authority? To answer this question a different understanding of 'interests' that recognises that they can be constructed in different ways, is necessary. This allows consideration of how the perceived need for an unambiguous unitary identity could become the highest priority of state-builders, despite the economic and political costs this might entail. This question will be taken up at greater length in the section below on the role of culture in political life, and will be returned to in each of the case studies on pathological homogenisation.

Institutionalist accounts

From an institutionalist perspective, state-building in early modern Europe is understood as the expression of the dominant forms of institutional rationality. Institutional accounts have much to tell us about the choices that state-builders made with regard to property rights and the sort of states that resulted from these choices. Like Wallerstein, institutionalists take the interests of state-builders for granted, assuming that leaders were motivated solely by the desire for economic gain. But, once again, this cannot explain the policies of pathological homogenisation pursued by state-builders, who either overlooked the economic costs of their policies, or made their decisions in the full knowledge that

⁴⁴ Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, pp. 147–8.

they might entail high costs. To explain such decisions we must look at the social and cultural dimensions that institutionalist accounts, resting on the assumption of all interests as economic interests, largely ignore.

Douglass North and Robert Thomas argue that the modern state became the most viable form of political and economic organisation because it was the most efficient provider of private property rights.⁴⁵ In the earliest phases of state formation, military capacity was the most salient means of consolidating power. However, as rulers engaged in internal pacification and external expansion via war and dynastic marriage,⁴⁶ they needed increased revenue to maintain themselves, and they chose different options to do this. The key to the different paths of development in early modern Europe is the deals rulers struck to raise revenue: the concessions they made, who they made them to and how they made them.⁴⁷ Thus, the institution of private property rights developed out of the trading of privileges for revenue that occurred between rulers and their subjects, in particular the nobility and the rising merchant class.⁴⁸ Those rulers who instituted and enforced private property rights allowed economic efficiency and growth and provided a model of success, while those who continued to support monopoly rights blocked innovation, efficiency and longer-term growth. For example, England and the United Provinces became successful capitalist states, while the early front runners, such as Spain, declined because of the institutional choices rulers made. Thus, for North, the very early period of state formation prepared the ground for the later struggles over control of the institutional *form* of the state, which occurred in the seventeenth century, leading to the institutionalisation of private property.

North's *Structure and Change in Economic History* highlights how institutional forms can change. He focuses on the relationship between motivated individuals and changing social structures.⁴⁹ It is institutions which

⁴⁵ Douglass C. North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History* (Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁴⁷ Douglass C. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), pp. 66, 141.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11. North identifies limitations in both neoclassical and Marxist explanations of structural change, arguing that neither approach accounts for important dimensions of human activity. On the one hand neoclassical economic theories assume that individuals will act out of easily defined and calculated self-interest and cannot explain altruistic behaviour. On the other hand Marxism makes assumptions about the identity of groups in the form of class, and does not account for the problem of free riders: those who do nothing to initiate or support change but stand to benefit from it. Too many free riders can undermine or block change that other actors are working towards.

mediate between agents and structures, he argues, as they serve to constrain the self-interested maximising behaviour of individuals. It is these 'constraints that make possible human organisation by limiting certain types of behaviour'.⁵⁰ In this view, rules and regulations are devised to constrain behaviour that works against the interests of principal actors. North includes the general ethical context as well as codified rules, so that ethical norms function to reduce 'enforcement costs'.⁵¹ This is based on the assumption that in the absence of constraining institutions, individuals will engage in self-interested maximising behaviour. There has to be, 'some degree of individual restraint from maximising behaviour . . . hence the enormous investment that is made to convince individuals of the legitimacy of . . . institutions'.⁵² There are two problems with this account. The first is the view of institutions and norms as merely constraining; the second is the assumption that all actors are self-interested, maximising individuals that underpins this view of institutional constraint. While institutions and norms do constrain actors, they are also constitutive of the interests, identities, expectation and behaviour of actors. They provide a framework within which action occurs and gains meaning. In other words, they allow actors to act in a meaningful way, instead of merely limiting what actions can be taken.

In trying to articulate the relationship between agents and structures in institutional change, North does acknowledge that perceptions are important in informing the choices that actors make. He asserts that a theory of ideology is necessary to explain how different perceptions of reality influence the reactions of individuals to an 'objective' situation and why individuals made the choices they did.⁵³ It is this last element, the recognition of ideology, at the level of theoretical intent at least, which distinguishes North's model from neoclassical analyses. It is not possible, he argues, to explain structural change without some notion of ideology that recognises the importance of agency. Structural change is driven by the activity of agents, as 'alterations in institutions involve purposeful human activity'.⁵⁴ There are three aspects of ideology that are stressed here. First, ideology as world view; second, the moral/ethical stance that is taken, or the normative judgements that are made; and third, how ideologies change as individuals alter them in response to perceived slippage between existing explanations and experience. Thus, there is a very strong sense of how institutions, which change over time, 'do not occur in a vacuum, but are the result of peoples' perceptions stemming from historically derived opportunities and values'.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61. ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18. ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8. ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 58. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Despite the importance of this insight, and of North's attempt to grasp the interaction of agency and structure, his theory of institutional change remains anchored in methodological individualism and assumes that individuals will act to maximise their interests defined in terms of wealth. This undermines the importance he ascribes to agents' self-understanding, as ultimately both the identity and the interests of basic actors are taken for granted. Because he takes 'interests' – that which motivates agents – as given, he presents no theory of interest formation. When there are a number (even a limited number) of organisational options open to actors, *why* do they choose the ones they do? If it is on the basis of 'interests', how are these interests constructed and interpreted, because clearly, actors have often chosen paths which seem 'inefficient' from the perspective of maximising economic self-interest. While North uses the term ideology in a number of senses, ultimately he gives priority to ideology as 'legitimising the rules of the game', which in the end is not so different from Wallerstein. He does not enquire into how 'the game', and 'the rules of the game', are constituted. As a result, this approach provides important answers to a particular set of questions about the sort of institutional choices state-builders made. It cannot, however, answer the questions that this study asks about the social construction of identities and interests, and about the role of such constructions in state-building. It does not provide resources for understanding the construction of corporate identities and the interaction of agents and structures in constituting not only 'the rules of the game', but also the game itself, as well as who is a meaningful participant in the game.

In a more recent institutionalist approach, Hendrick Spruyt challenges conventional international relations theory, arguing that instead of taking the existence of the territorial sovereign state for granted, the success of this institutional form must be explained.⁵⁶ Spruyt sees major institutional change as an unusual occurrence, for unless there are major benefits to outweigh the costs involved it will be blocked. The transformation to the modern state is one such institutional shift, although it was but one of a number of institutional responses that agents devised.⁵⁷ Spruyt compares the modern state with the other institutional forms that developed in late medieval and early modern Europe, namely city-states and city leagues. He also asks why the nation-state outlasted its competitors

⁵⁶ Hendrick Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁵⁷ The institutional outcome is thus not just the result of 'Darwinian struggles', but also of 'what actors themselves also find acceptable', and the impact of belief systems on this. Hendrick Spruyt, 'Institutional Selection in International Relations: State Anarchy as Order', *International Organization* 48:4 (1994), 553.

and became the universalised form of political organisation. This second question is usually overlooked by approaches that assume that because the sovereign territorial state became the dominant form its dominance was inevitable or necessary, as Wallerstein, for example, assumes, because it allowed the continued functioning of a larger economic system.⁵⁸ What then made the sovereign state so successful? The core of Spruyt's argument is that the nation-state outlasted its competitors because it could meet both the internal needs of centralised authority and administration, and the external need to be recognised as a legitimate actor that could make and keep agreements in the long term. At the centre of these capacities is the concept of territorial sovereignty. The territorial demarcation of the fixed boundaries of political authority meant that the reciprocal recognition of states as legitimate political actors was possible. Because states were compatible in this way they could make and keep long-term agreements and the success of this institutional form meant that others copied or defected to them.⁵⁹

Spruyt accepts the important role of warfare in state-making but asks why the state was better than its competitors at waging war. Size and military capacity alone cannot explain this, as at times city-states and city leagues outstripped states on these criteria. What was crucial to military success, Spruyt argues, was institutional efficiency, and the key to effective institutional organisation was the presence of 'clear sovereign authority'. It is the presence or absence of such authority that accounts for 'variation between units'.⁶⁰ If we look at the competitors to the sovereign state we see a great many differences. City leagues had no internal borders, no hierarchy, no agreements on weights or currency, and diverse legal codes. Sovereign actors benefited from the leagues' lack of unity. Importantly, lack of a clearly defined sovereign authority made it hard for the leagues to *credibly* commit to international agreements.⁶¹ Like city leagues, city-states had no internal hierarchy, lacked internal unity, and made no moves towards the rationalisation of economic practices or the unification of legal codes. However, they did survive for quite some time. Spruyt argues that this was possible because the city-states were represented by dominant cities and were thus able to behave like sovereign states – that is, as unitary actors, despite their internal differences – in their external actions, and were thus considered legitimate actors in the international system.⁶²

⁵⁸ Spruyt, *The Sovereign State*, p. 5. ⁵⁹ Spruyt, 'Institutional Selection', 554–5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 551. Early on city-states equalled and in some cases outstripped the revenue of emerging sovereign states.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 543. ⁶² *Ibid.*, 548–9.

Though Spruyt pinpoints ‘clear sovereign authority’ as what accounts for variation between these different political entities, he does not investigate the construction of corporate state identity as part of the consolidation and centralisation that successful state-builders embarked upon. While Spruyt has a more dynamic sense of the interaction of economic and other dimensions of social life, including belief systems, ultimately his account has little to say about the social construction of collective identities within states. He identifies clear sovereign authority as the important factor in the success of nation-states as an institutional form, but focuses on the role of reciprocal recognition between states. To conclude, institutionalist accounts thus contain a problem similar to that found in Wallerstein’s, though in the case of institutionalist approaches this arises from their methodological individualism, namely, that interests are unquestioningly understood as economic interests.

Power-based explanations

There are a number of power-based explanations of state-building, which in different ways emphasise the role of violence in the development of sovereign states. Norbert Elias stresses the internal pacification that occurred through domestication of the nobility, a process he describes as the ‘civilizing process’. Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann stress the military capacity of the modern state, particularly since the eighteenth century in the case of Mann. Charles Tilly stresses the role of war in state-making, beginning in early modern Europe, seeing early states as the contingent outcome of competition between monarchs for military ascendancy.

Elias traces the process by which monarchs gained control over the means of violence and taxation, both of which were necessary to further war-making. An important part of this process was the ‘taming’ of the nobility, which occurred over a long period. The means by which absolutist rulers gained ascendancy, through manipulating the balance of power between the nobility and the bourgeois, is exemplified, Elias argues, by Louis XIV’s France. Through this ‘royal mechanism’, Louis successfully maintained his own position by controlling and manipulating the tensions between these competing groups.⁶³

Elias has little to say directly about the pathological homogenisation of peoples in state-building. However, his work does have implications for understanding such practices. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, the civilising

⁶³ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, vol. 2, *State Formation and Civilization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p. 200.

process that Elias illuminates should not be viewed as a progressive process towards less violence, but rather as a 'reconfiguration of violence', in which it is not so much 'eliminated' from the everyday, but 'evicted'. The civilising process is thus the 'concentration of violence under the control of the state, where it is used to guard the perimeters of national community and the conditions of social order'.⁶⁴ Bauman emphasises how this carries the potential for the state to turn on its own subjects or citizens, and how this can play a role in the constitution of corporate identity within the state, as political elites define those who belong within its boundaries and those who are 'strangers' to be expelled or annihilated.

However, like Elias, Bauman says nothing about the cultural dimension of corporate identity construction. Although Elias traces the complex social changes that were part of state formation, his account of the civilising process treats culture merely as the instrument of power. But cultural processes cannot be so easily subsumed within the workings of 'power'. Instead, the linkages between culture and power need to be investigated, as does the role of culture in constituting social norms. Simple conceptions of power which ignore how culture provides frameworks which give action meaning, cannot explain the constitution of identities and the practical choices that state-makers make in such processes. Thus such a conception misses an important aspect of the processes of pathological homogenisation.

According to Giddens, two factors drove the development of the state: changes in military technology, and the pressure of the states system as a primary 'source' and 'condition' of state formation.⁶⁵ He thus prioritises the international system as the structure that shapes states as agents. This is despite his avowed interest in providing a theory of structuration that takes into account the dual nature of structures as both the medium and outcome of social action.⁶⁶ As a result, his emphasis on military interaction, driven by new technologies, has much in common with realist explanations of international politics.

Although Giddens recognises the growing coincidence of population and territory, he does not directly discuss forced conversions or displacements. For example, in his discussion of Louis XIV as the epitome of the absolutist ruler, he says nothing about Louis' attempt to forcibly convert the Huguenot population to Catholicism, though he does give account of other aspects of internal pacification, in particular the pacification of

⁶⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 27, 107.

⁶⁵ Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, pp. 104–10. ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 26.