The state, the nation, and war

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War, peace, and political violence

UC3M, Fall 2024

Overview

- Political violence from a historical view
- Two main events deeply connected to violence and war:

1. The rise of the modern state
   - → role of violence in the process of state-building
   - → and how wars changed when modern states emerged
2. The rise of the nation-state (more during seminar)
   - → nationalism changed how and which wars were waged
   - → and role of political violence in shaping nations

The state

- What is a state?
- Weberian idea: a state is a political entity that maintains a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within its own boundaries
- "Compulsory political organization"
  - $\rightarrow$ (in reality not all states maintain this monopoly though)

The state as a criminal organization

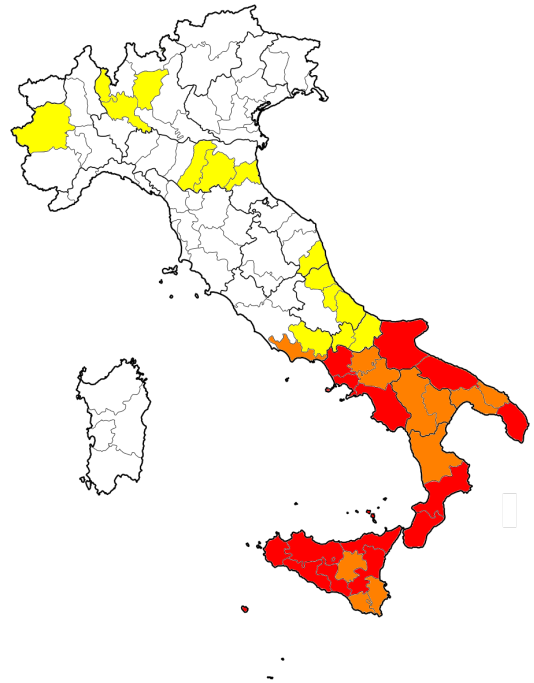


Cosa Nostra's 'The Commission'

- How does a state resembles a criminal organization?

The state as a criminal organization

- *Pizzo* in Italy (Mafia in Sicily, 'Ndrangheta in Calabria, Camorra in Campania, etc)
- Protection money paid by local businesses to a criminal organization
- If you pay you get access to services: protection, speedy bureaucracy, resolution of conflicts...
- If you don't pay? Business destroyed
- Who do you pay? Local organization



Extortion in Italy, 2008

Source: Daygum (Wikipedia), data from Confesercenti Survey

The state as a criminal organization

- Offering protection in exchange for taxes
- Only works if there's territorial monopoly
- Use of violence as an enforcing mechanism

The state as a criminal organization



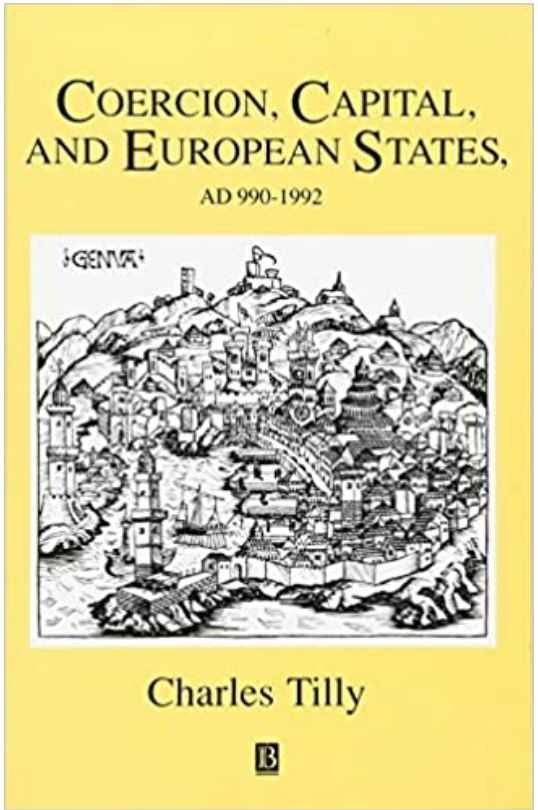
Hobbes' *Leviathan*

The origins of states

- How did the modern state emerge?

Charles Tilly and the origins of European states

- State-formation process in Europe
- The protection racket idea: kings and rulers were not different from the initial competitors (legitimacy happens afterwards)
- Dual process of establishing a monopoly of violence and building state institutions

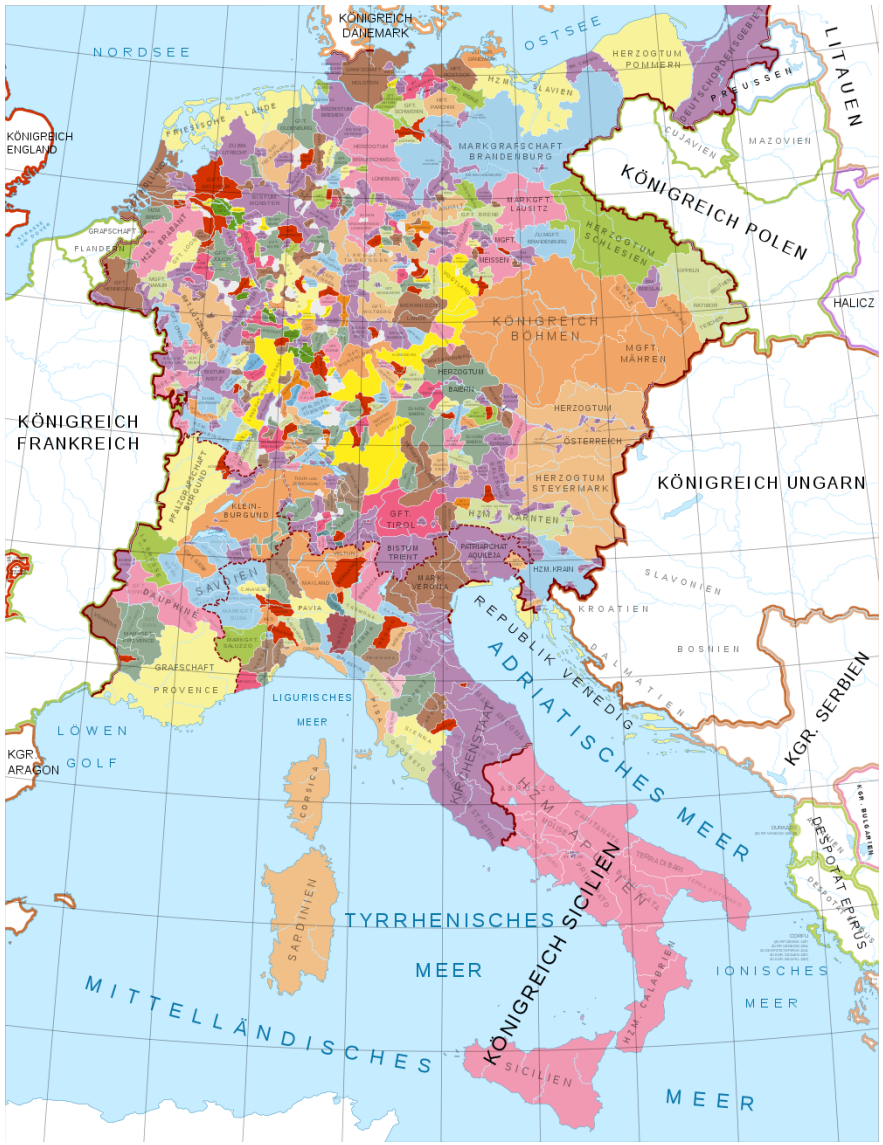


Charles Tilly (1990)

War-making and state-making in Europe



France around 1477



Holy Roman Empire around 1200

War-making

- Early states in Europe competed for territory and power
- Context of Feudalism:
  - → Decentralized means of violence, fragmented rule
  - → Pressures for war-making: conquer or be conquered
- Kings or powerful lords did not use *direct rule*, but relied on intermediaries
  - → Direct vs indirect rule
- Innovations in the technology of war changed it all: war became more and more expensive

State-making

- In the process of waging war against external enemies, two more things happened

1. Bureaucracy
   - → How do you finance the war? Taxing the population
   - → Tax and administration institutions developed
2. Internal monopoly
   - → The intermediaries in *indirect rule* (feudal lords, etc) were also potential enemies to the king
   - → Gaining power among internal threats, establishing monopoly of violence (not always successfully)

- Later on: censuses, modern bureaucracy, police

War-making and state-making

- "War made the state and the state made war"

- Different from other conceptions of the origins of the state
  - → e.g. social contract
- Rooted in security concerns: remember that protection threats (esp. external) is usually the idea of a minimum state
  - → "Love-hate relationship between state makers and **pirates**"
- The service side of the state was developed as a response to population resistance to coercive governance
  - → Resistance by whom?

Little offtopic: the pirates

- Golden Age of Piracy ($\approx$ 1650-1750) happen at the same time as the emergence of the *modern state*
- Where do the pirates fit into all of this? Ideas?
  - $\rightarrow$ thing about the *letters of marque* of the privateers/corsairs, do they make sense?

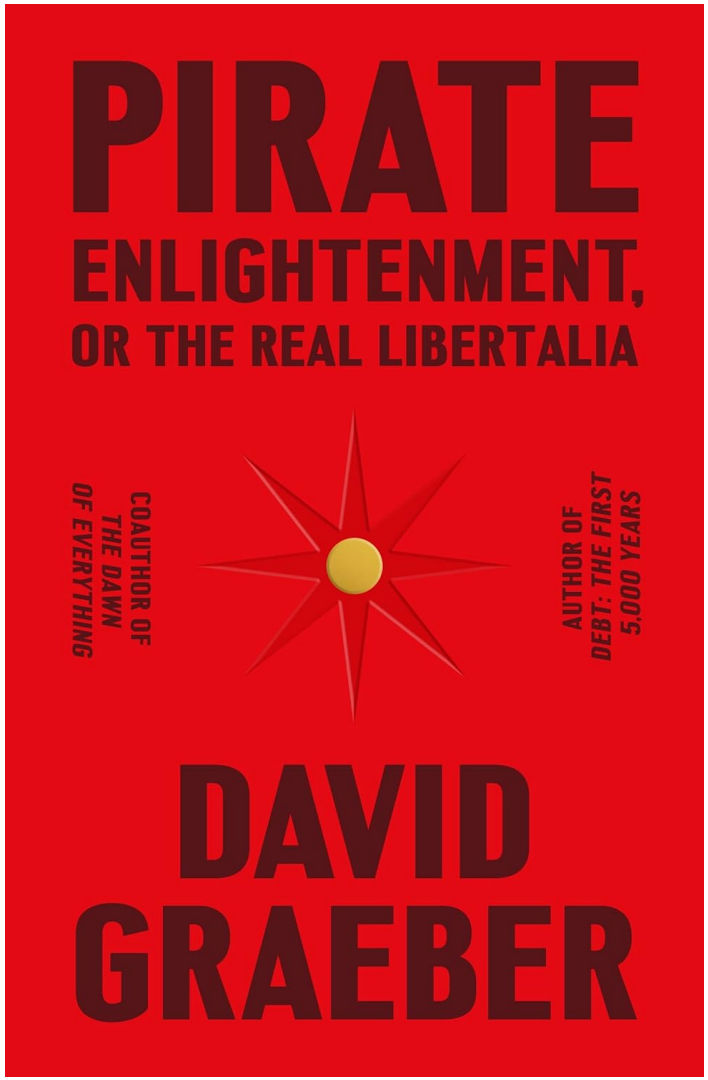


Little offtopic: the pirates

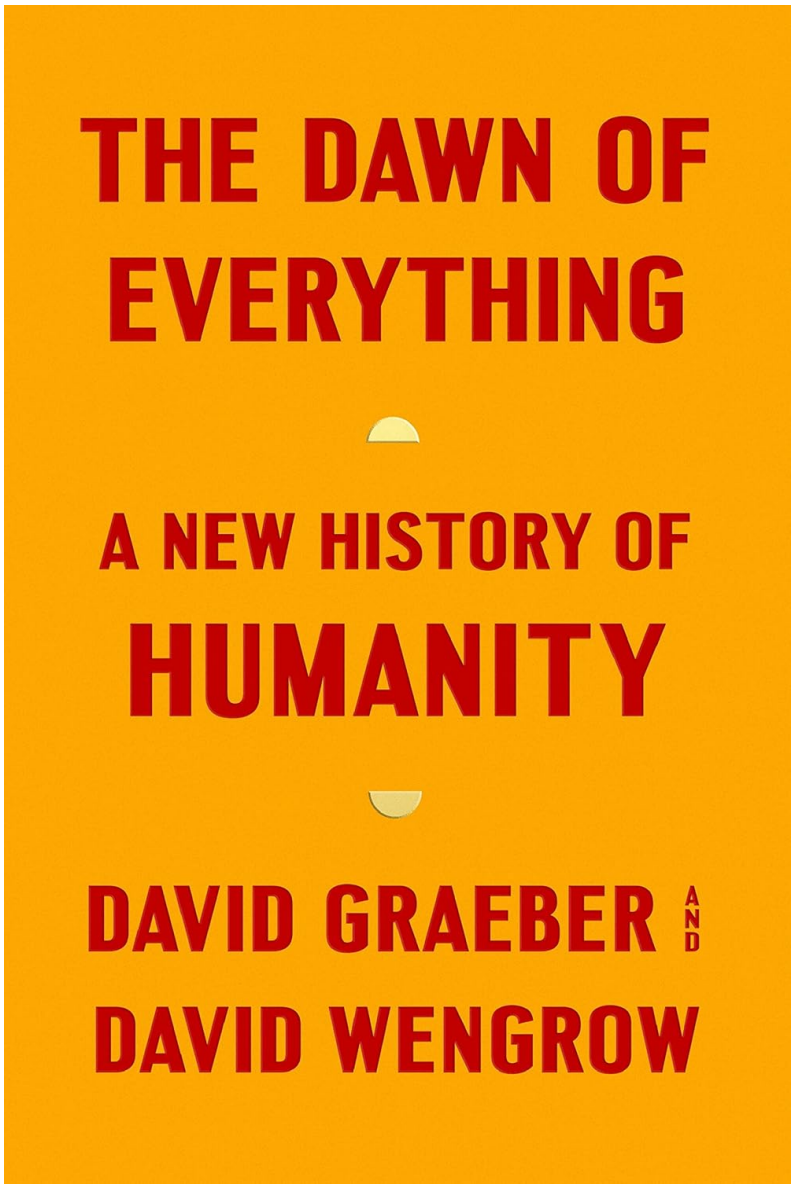
- Related:

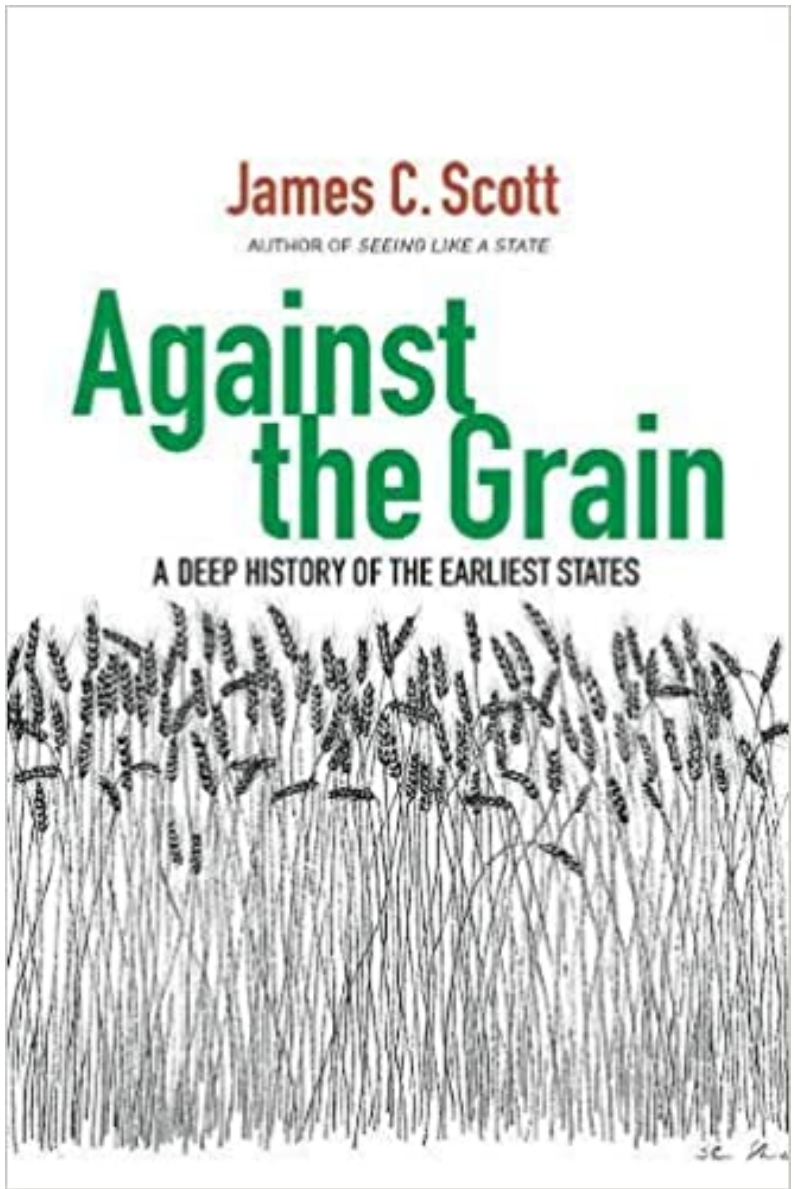
  the ‘Pirate Enlightment’ and ship democracy

  → why would they set up democratic governance onboard?



Other ideas on ‘state’ development





War-making and state-making

> *By the later eighteenth century, through most of Europe, monarchs controlled permanent, military forces that rivaled those of their neighbors and far exceeded any other organized armed force within their own territories. The state's monopoly of large-scale violence was turning from theory to practice. (Tilly 1985, p. 174)*

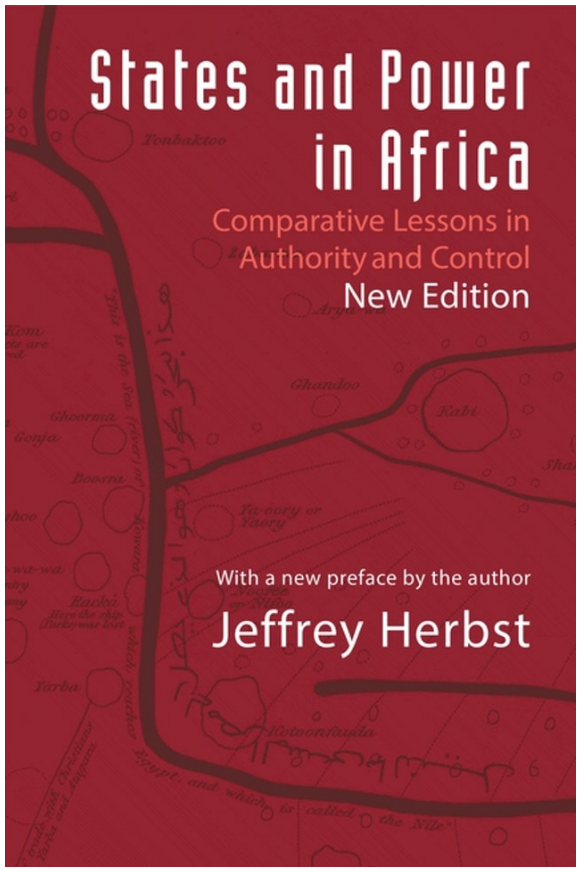
- Westphalian international system "fully developed"
- Shift to (more costly) **direct rule** after French Revolution
- Only possible after kings won previous "civil wars"
  - → The development of the police in the 19th century was the latest step, reaching out the most local challengers

Bringing the international system in

- Early on, no distinction between internal and external threats
- Later on, war as major moving force of the international system, with similar dynamics as in internal state making (violence)
- Peace of Westphalia in 1648: clear borders of sovereignty emerge and after each war, states are re-defined (usually decreasing in number)
  - → if you think about this, how to make sense of 'pre-Westphalian' civil wars?

Can we generalize from European history?

- Absence of international wars in Africa explains weak states
  - → Historically low population density, rough terrain: no state emergence
  - → "Addis rule" froze borders after decolonization
- Problem: there are some disputes and also these states face much more internal than external threats, shouldn't this be an incentive for state-building or work the same way?



Jeffrey Herbst (2015)

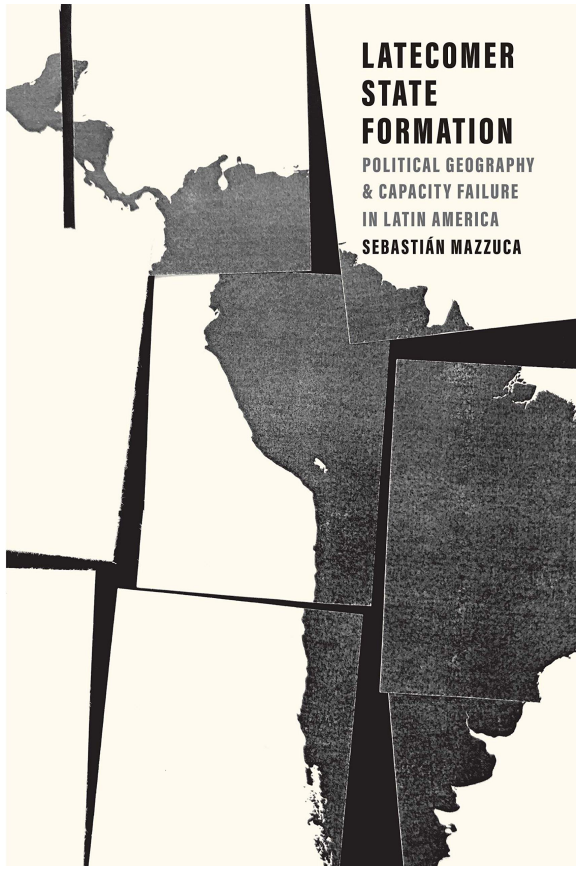
Can we generalize from European history?

- Tribute-taking empires in Asia (Victoria Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe*)
- Existence of capital in Latin America (Miguel A Centeno, *Blood and debt: War and the nation-state in Latin America*)

- One pressing question today is: **How should we see internal conflicts? Do they strengthen of weaker state-formation?**

Can we generalize from European history?

- State formation (monopoly of violence within delimited borders) vs state building (switch from patrimonial to bureaucratic administration)
  - → They can happen at the same time (Europe), or not
- State formation in LatAm took place when capitalism, rather than war, ruled internationally
- Because of pursuing benefits of trade, LA countries created weak states, with patrimonial structures, etc



Mazzuca (2021)

Generalizing from European history

Table 1.1. Geopolitical and International Economic Environments of State Formation

		International economy	
		Feudalism/ mercantilism	*Capitalism/free trade*
Geopolitical context	*Anarchy*	Pioneer state formation	Competing state formation
		War-led (with military innovation)	Trade + war-led
		Western Europe	*United States*
	Hierarchy	Reactive state formation	Latecomer state formation
		War-led (with military imitation)	Trade-led
		Eastern Europe, China, Japan	*Latin America, Africa*

Two critiques to the bellicist theory

1. **European system environment is not exogenous**

- Why were so many independent states in Europe fighting each other? maybe it has to do with the failure of other systems?

2. **Which micro-level mechanisms explain that war-making increases state capacity?**

- States can increase internal capacity, but can also look for allies, bandwagon on stronger powers, etc
- In other words, it does *not* always happens this way, fighting could also lead to chaos and state collapse, and external threats do not necessarily lead to stronger states

See: Hendrik Spruyt in *Does War Make States?* (CUP, 2017)

The role of legitimacy

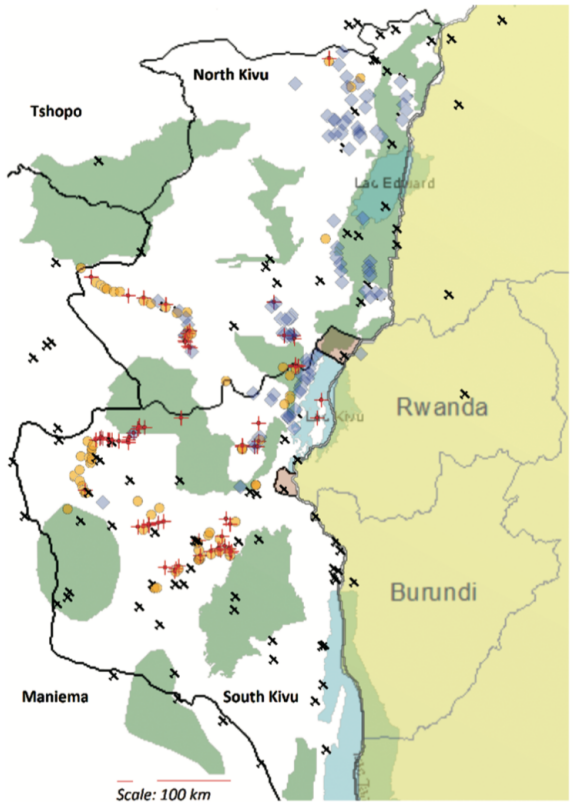
- So are states really like criminal protection rackets?
- But legitimacy could have played a role: maybe people did care about who ended up ruling over all
- Kings were not exactly the same as minor lords: they could claim legitimacy and loyalty, and emerge as the ultimate defenders
- Think of situations of fragmented rule without cultural unity: e.g. warlords in Somalia
  - → (though we cannot talk about nationalism in Early Modern Europe)

What is this all about

- War and violence and the state are deeply related from the start
- Coercion and the monopoly of violence still define many if not all problems of political order today
- Very relevant questions for contexts of civil wars or state collapse
  - → Somalia, DRC, etc
- Do preferences for centralized or decentralized force matter?
  - → War and state formation in multi-ethnic countries?
  - → Why Mafia flourished in southern Italy? And why do we see higher mobilization against it today? (*Addiopizzo* movement)

Extra: Empirical evidence

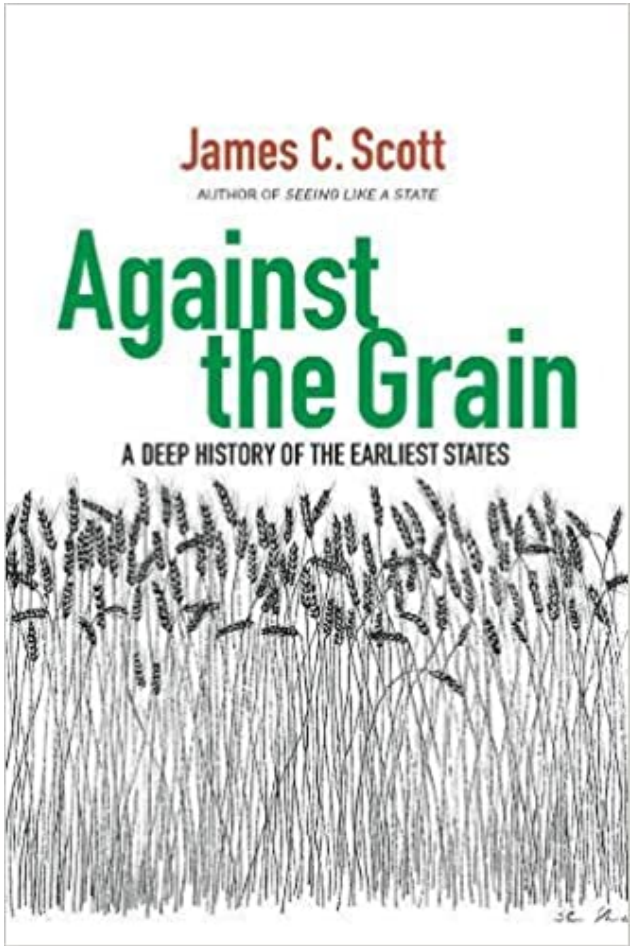
- States created statistics, so it's difficult to study its formation empirically
- Q: When do 'stationary bandits' emerge?
- Studying 'roving bands' in DRC, and analyzing price of coltan and gold
  - → coltan is bulky, but not gold
- When coltan price goes up, rebels establish monopoly of violence in mines
- When gold price goes up, rebels tax villages and provide services
  - → i.e. expropriation → state



Sánchez de la Sierra (2020) *Journal of Political Economy*

Extra: James C. Scott on the origin of state

- Against the usual idea that people freely chose to settle and form states
- The origin of the state matched with violent coercion, diseases, and slavery
- States 'domesticated' humans as much as they domesticated animals



James C. Scott (2017)

Nations and Nationalism

- Rise of nationalism in the late 18th/early 19th centuries, and its relationship with political violence

- Nations: 'imagined communities' of people with a sense of commonality based on linguistic, territorial, ethnic, or religious traits
- Nations = fully mobilized ethnic groups, claims of statehood
  - → Some ethnic groups do not claim statehood, some nations are multi-ethnic (Switzerland)
- Nationalism: political ideology, congruence between units of political sovereignty and nations

Emergence of nationalism

- American Revolution
- Independence movements in Spanish South America
- French Revolution
- Full development during 19th century

The French Revolution and warfare



"in 1793 a force appeared that beggared all imagination. Suddenly war again became the business of the people—a people of thirty millions, all of whom considered themselves to be citizens. (...) the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance."

(Clausewitz, *On War*)

What happened in international politics?

- Main idea: Nationalist systems change after French Revo
- Gilpin's typology of international change
  - → Interaction change (the way states relate to each other)
  - → Systemic change ('Waltzian' balance, etc)
  - → Systems change (the very *nature* of the units)
- Previous change: Westphalia and the territorial systems change
- Explaining impact on inter-state warfare at a global level
  - → *historical* patterns of war

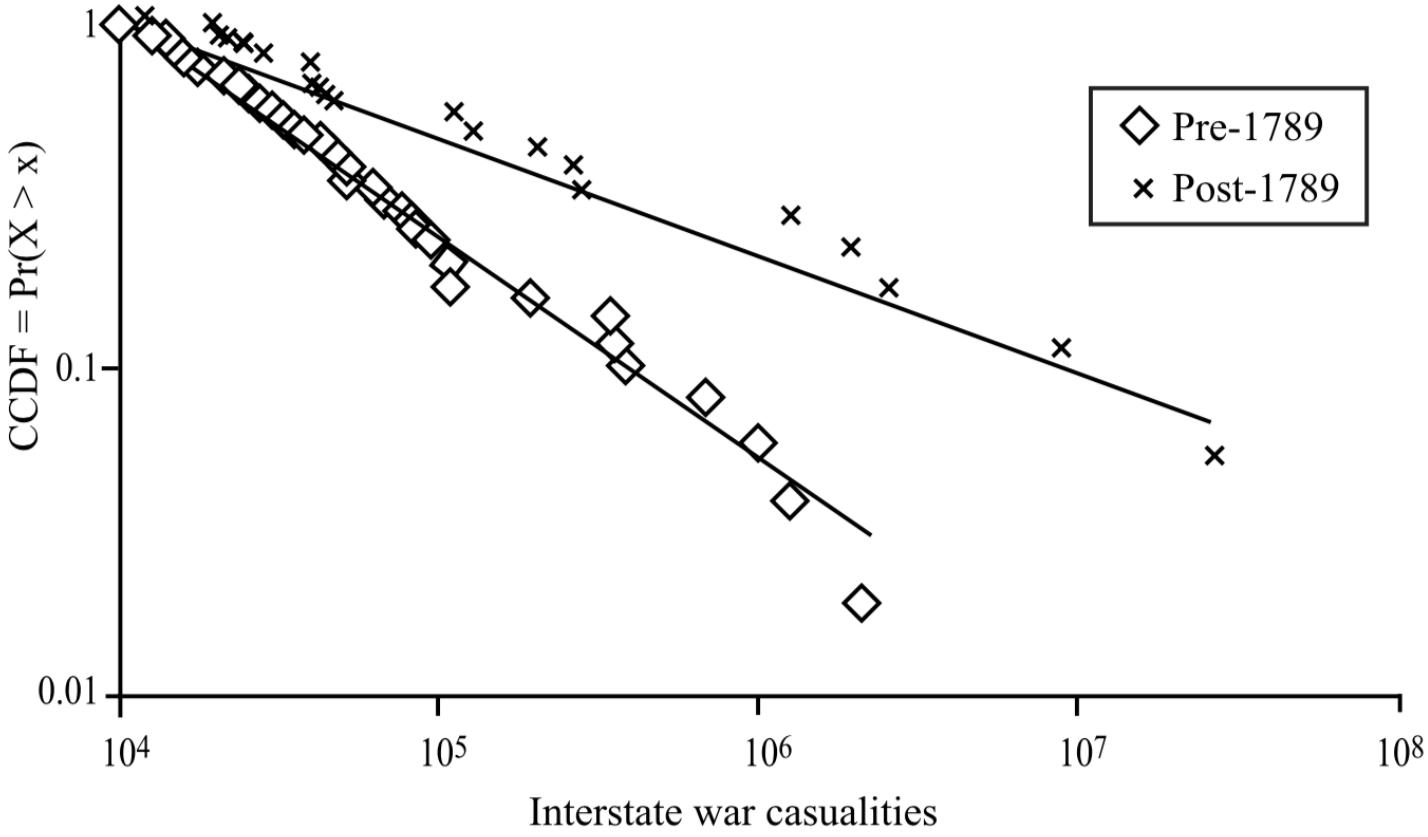
Territorial systems change

- Usual date: Peace of Westphalia in 1648
- Emergence of the modern state
- New scenario: internal monopoly of violence & territorial sovereignty
- Direct, coercive methods of resource extraction
  - → Different from indirect rule, where tax/resource collection and coercion are outsourced
- New warfare: Standing armies, better weapons, larger wars, ...

Nationalist systems change

- Usual date: French Revolution
  - → Birth of the modern *nation*, the imagined communities
- New technology of statecraft: nation-building through mass schooling, mass mobilization, popular sovereignty, etc
  - → Remember previous technologies of statecraft: earliest states and the 'domestication' of humans (Scott), Early Modern Europe and the emergence of direct rule (Tilly), etc
- Loyalty replaces coercion, mass popular armies replace professionals
  - → That's why Clausewitz spoke of a new "force ... that beggared all imagination", and added that "nothing now impeded the vigor with which war could be waged"

Did the French Revolution change warfare?

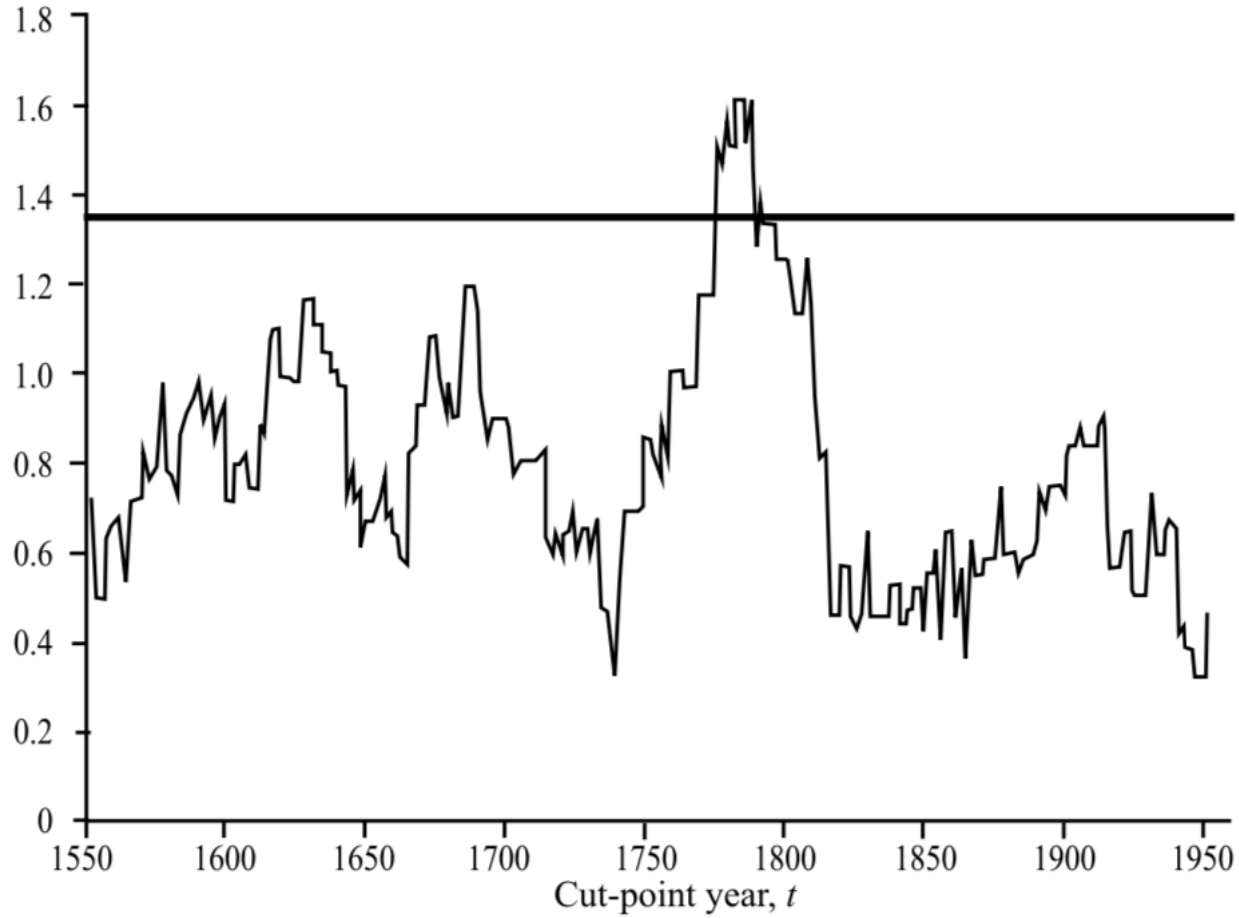


Note: Figure shows complementary cumulative distribution functions for the severity (that is, battle deaths) of all major power interstate wars, with minimum threshold $x_0 = 10{,}000$. Diamonds represent wars beginning in the period 1495–1789 and crosses represent wars beginning in the period 1790–1997. Solid lines show maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) for the shape parameters ($\alpha_1 = 0.65$ and $\alpha_2 = 0.35$, respectively) of the two subsamples.

FIGURE 1. *Interstate war casualties*

Source: Cederman, Gleditsch, Warren, & Sornette (2011)

Did the French Revolution change warfare?



Note: Plot shows Kolmogorov-Smirnov distance metric for two subsamples of major power wars, defined by the temporal bounds of $(t - 75; t)$ and $(t; t + 75)$. Horizontal line represents the 95 percent confidence threshold for rejecting the null hypothesis that the two samples are drawn from the same distribution.

FIGURE 2. *Kolmogorov-Smirnov distance*

Source: Cederman, Camber Warren, & Sornette (2011)

Major institutional changes and war

- Usual studies of war occurrence focus on specific wars, and the conditions leading to each war onset
- Global explanations for historical patterns of warfare over the long run?
- Looking at how polities are organized and how they changed globally
- Claim: likelihood of wars (both interstate and civil wars) is higher in periods of institutional change, in particular, the main two processes taking place in the last 200 years: incorporation into empires and formation of nation-states

Empires & nation-states

- Two competing models of state-building since the French Rev
- Empires
  - → Centralized bureaucratic government, core region ruling over the periphery, claims to universal legitimacy (ideologies, religion), ...
- Nation-states
  - → Also centralized bureaucracy, but uniform rule over a territory and claims to popular sovereignty
- Displacing previous institutional set-ups: absolutist kingdoms, city states, feudalism...

Empires & nation-states

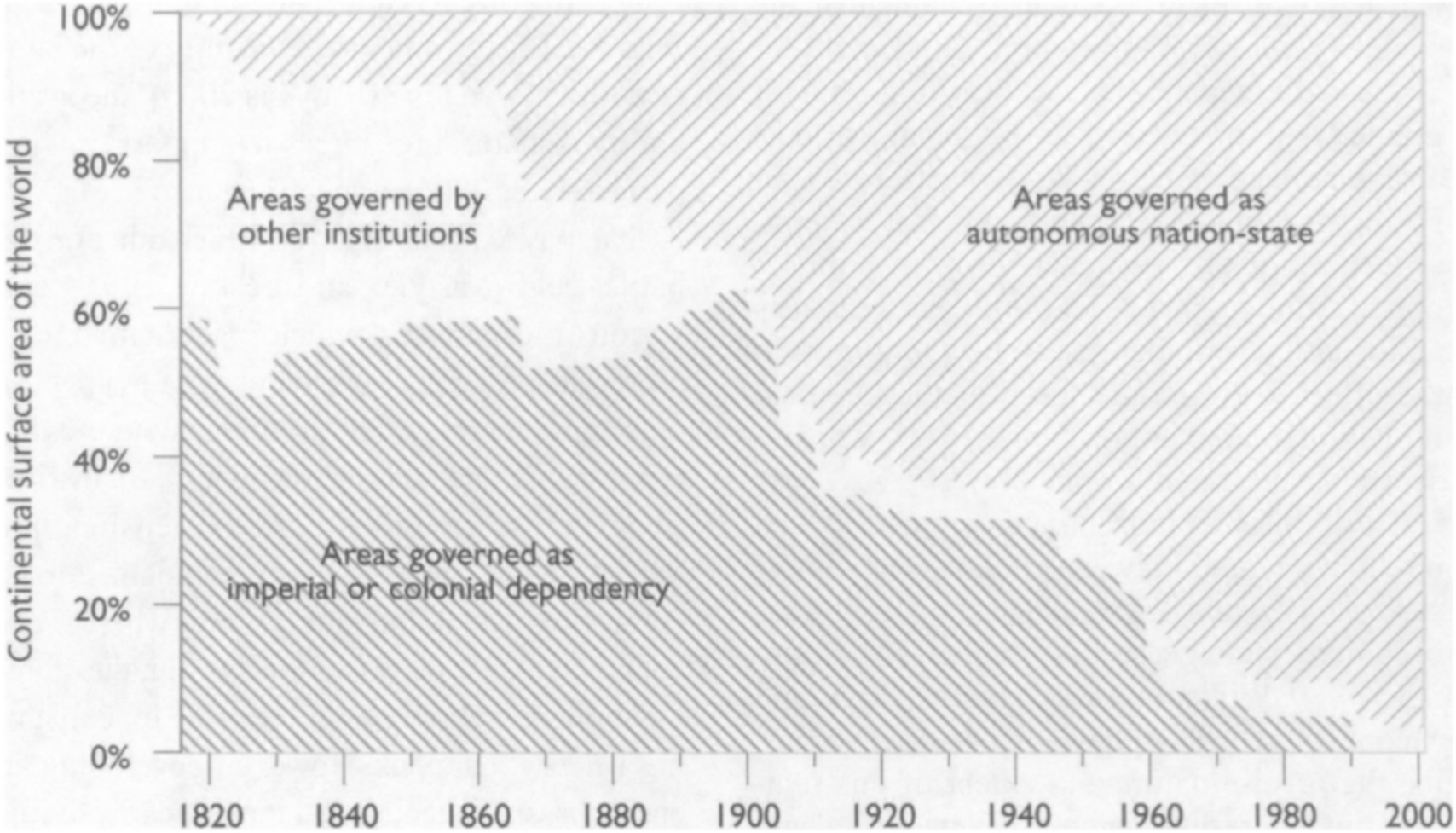


Figure 1. Percentage of Land Surface Governed by Empires, Nation-States, or other Institutions, 1816–2001

Note: States smaller than 25,000 km^2 are excluded.

Source: Wimmen & Min (2006)

Why war?

- *Competing* models of state building
- Wars not because of changes to the international balance (as in Waltz), but because of internal processes and competing claims to the same territory or population
- Creating an empire will cause resistance to incorporation, particularly in the peripheries
- Formation of nation-states leads to the violently reordering of states (inter-state wars) or, once they are formed, wars over internal power distribution

Institutional changes and wars

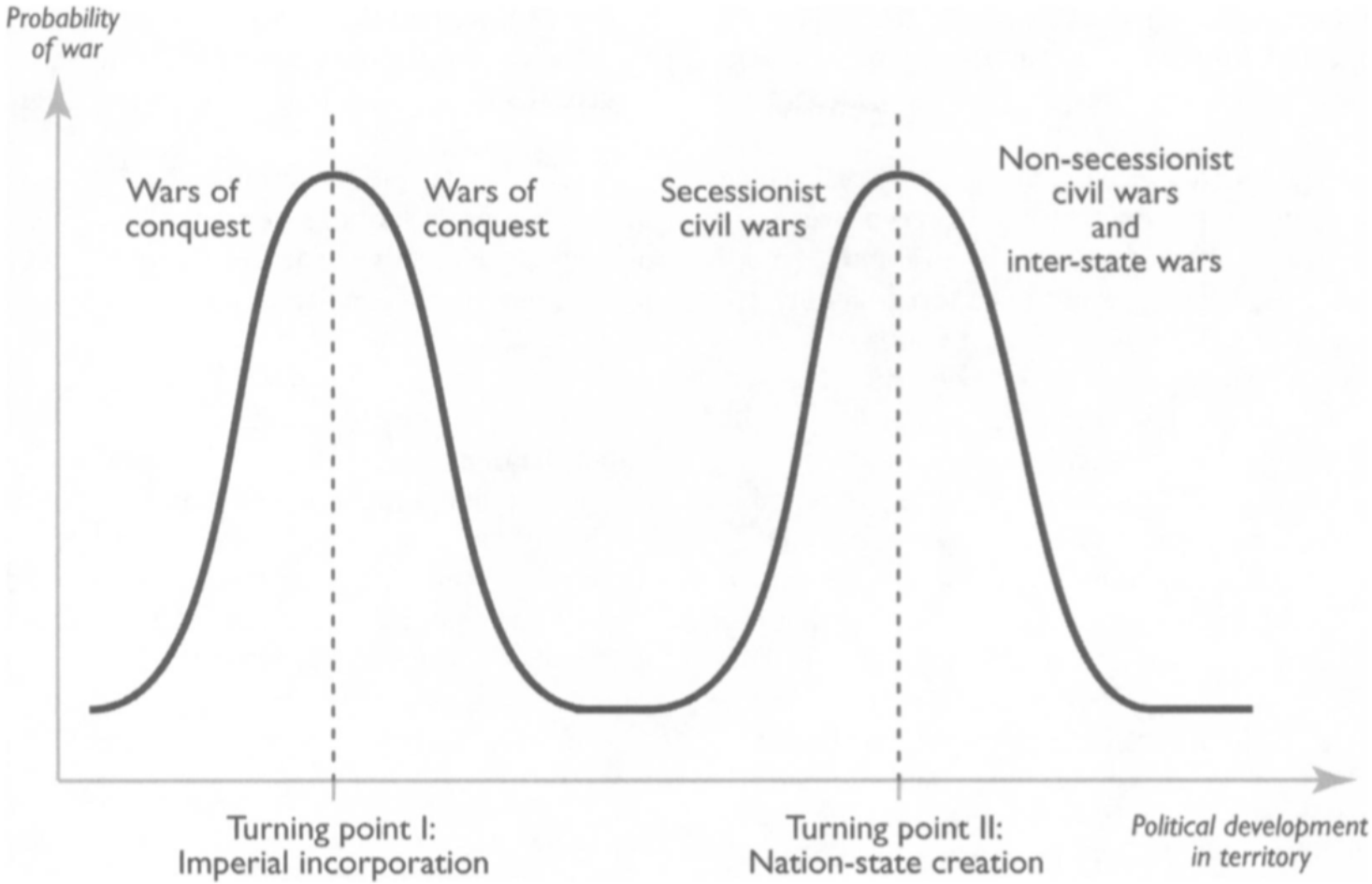


Figure 3. A Stylized Historical Model of Institutional Change and War

Source: Wimmen & Min (2006)

Nation-states and wars

- The rise of nationalism and nation-states in the world linked to different types of war
- Creating a nation-state often involves splitting off from a former polity: secessionist wars
  - → Many conflicts throughout the world (e.g. ETA in Spain)
- Congruence between nations and states (nationalism) leads to irredentism wars
  - → Irredentism: from Italian *irredento* (unredeemed), about territories inhabited by Italian-speaking populations ruled by the Austro-Hungarian empire during the 19th century
  - → E.g.: Ireland and Ulster, Nagorno-Karabakh?
- Once nation-states are formed, conflicts over the distribution of power, ethno-political discrimination (civil wars)

Nation-states and wars

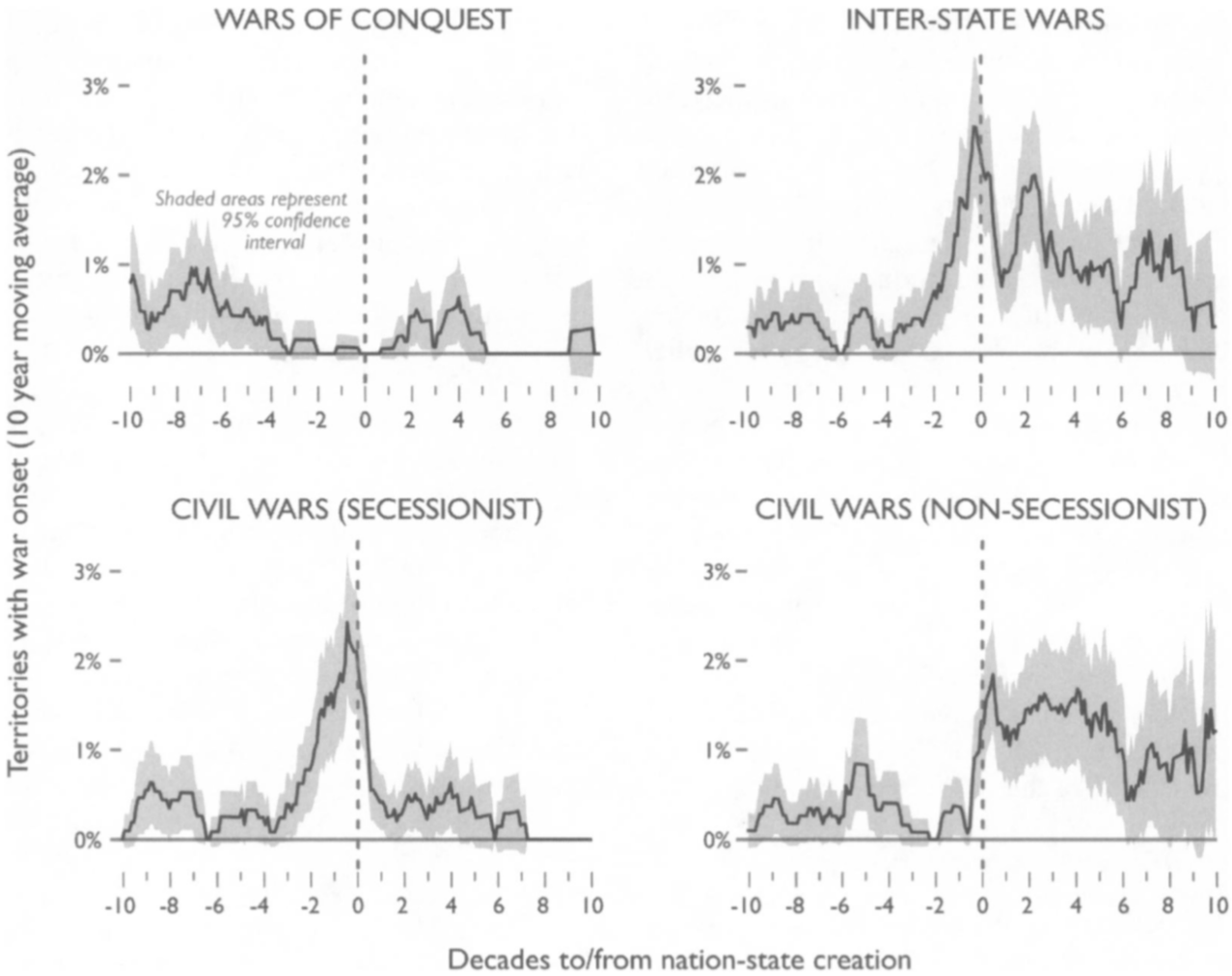


Figure 5. Nation-State Creation and Types of War (10-Year Moving Averages with 95% Confidence Intervals)

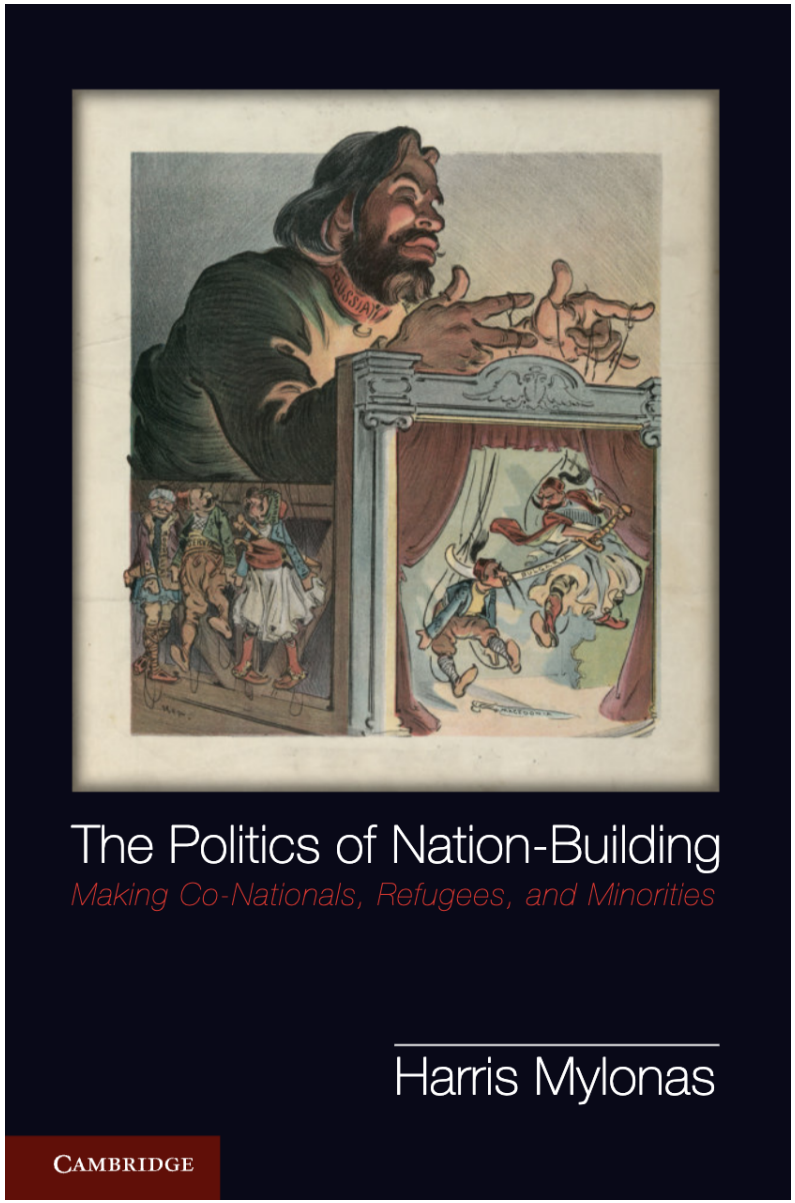
Source: Wimmen & Min (2006)

Making up the nation through violence

- An ultimate version of the nation-to-state congruence: using violence to **make up the nation**
- Homogenizing policies: many available tools or strategies
- A last resort: ethnic cleansing or genocide
- Essentially a modern phenomenon, not about ancient barbarism
- Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and Holocaust*

Nation-building and geopolitics

- Assimilation, accommodation, or exclusion of minorities?
  - → i.e. convert them, tolerate them, or get rid of them (cleansing)?
- Links between minority groups and external powers
- No accommodation if minority is linked to a rival state, assimilation is also less likely
- Accommodation likely when groups linked to allies



Tomorrow's seminar

- 'The birth of a new Ukraine': how Russia's war united a nation

- Relationship between nationalism and war, macro-level
- Role of national ID in fighting a war
- Legitimacy: state and nation
- What effect do wars have...
  1. in terms of state-building?
  2. internal national identification?
  3. nationalism in third-parties?

Extra: Palestine-Israel conflict, nationalism, and democracy