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How Does the Process of State Formation in Most Developing Countries Differ from the Process Experienced in Europe and with what Consequences for their Developmental Potential?

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The process of state formation seen in the past century in developing countries has diverged dramatically from the process experienced in Europe unsurprisingly as a result of different historical conditions. While the early European state building model will likely not repeat itself, as for instance there is no longer room for meaningful territorial expansion, it is nonetheless useful to compare state-making processes and experiences of survival to gain insights into contemporary state building and development. The following essay will begin with the empirical criteria of a "state" in the modern system of rule. Next, it will delineate the process of state-building in Europe, and juxtapose it against the wave of state formation in the developing world subsequent to decolonisation. Finally, this essay will examine the consequences of their differences as they relate to the developing countries' growth potential.

In examining state formation, a natural question to ask is, "What is a state?" In his essay "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations," John Ruggie defines a system of rule as comprising of legitimate dominion over a spatial dimension. He identifies the signature of the modern system of rule as today's territorially disjoint, mutually exclusive, functionally similar sovereign states. The modern system has undergone the consolidation of authority into one public realm, as well as spatial demarcations "between public and private realms and between internal and external realms" (Ruggie 1993: 151). The public sphere was constituted by the monopoly by the central authority over the legitimate use of force: internally this was expressed through the government's ability to enforce the law; externally this was manifested in the sovereign right to wage war. Thus sovereignty began in Europe as an independence *de facto* between states, and only later turned into an independence *de jure*, as natural barriers were overcome by technology and international relations.

In stark contrast is the quasi-statehood that characterises a number of developing countries that acquired their statehood through decolonisation. The resulting states, particularly those in Africa, differ profoundly from the modern conceptions and expectations of statehood discussed above. In Africa, states frequently lack an effective public realm: offices possess uncertainty authority, government organisations are ineffective and plagued by corruption, and self-enrichment and personal/factional aggrandisement constitute politics. Some regions have escaped from national control, and are ruled by either regional warlords or internal anarchy. Loose patchworks of plural allegiances resemble medieval Europe, but are supported externally by the framework of sovereignty regardless of their domestic condition. Robert H. Jackson uses the term "juridical statehood" to refer to these states, as these places acquired constitutional independence so as to conform to a new international egalitarianism. African states are states by international "courtesy", and may be characterised more accurately as "quasi-states" (Jackson 1987: 528). These quasi-states are juridical artefacts of a highly accommodating regime of international law and politics that expresses the 20th century norms of anti-colonialism and self-determination.

The source of the vastly different manifestation of "statehood" in the European case and the quasi-states case lies in

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their fundamentally different state formation processes. European sovereign statehood was hammered out by a long historical process of material, strategic and social epistemic adaptation. Sovereignty was the indigenous product that grew out of centuries of warfare and repulsion, tried-and-failed political and social arrangements, and, argued from a constructivist perspective, a revolutionary self-consciousness that shaped everything from the arts to politics. The quasi-states in, for example, Africa, however, were born through unilateral decolonisation. Sovereignty was exogenously “granted”, partitioned by artificial boundaries drawn by former imperialists.

In *The formation of National States in Western Europe*, Tilly's analysis of state-building focuses on the common properties of and variations within the European experience during the 15th to 16th century. The contributing authors identify the processes bringing European states into being as: consolidation of territorial control, differentiation of governments from other organisations, acquisition of autonomy (and mutual recognition of) by some governments, centralisation and coordination (Tilly 1975: 70). The authors discuss several common preconditions for state building. The first was cultural homogeneity, which facilitated the diffusion of organisational models, the expansion of states into new territories, and the movement of administrative personnel from one government to another. The second condition was the prevalence of the peasantry ruled by a small class of landed elites, which meant that the bulk of wealth and resources available were tied to land. The third condition was a decentralised but relatively uniform political structure. This gave rise to competition for power among multiple groups: state-makers had to subdue and/or incorporate numerous political units which already exercised significant claims to sovereignty—free cities, principalities, etc.—to fashion something larger and stronger than had existed before. Taxation became the principal means by which state-builders supported their armies, which in turn allowed them to establish control of their frontiers, push them out, defend them, and monopolise over the use of force within those frontiers. In turn, overcoming resistance to taxation required the maintenance of military force. (Tilly 1975: 22-23)

Tilly examines several pre-conditions which weighed the outcome of the historical processes towards the development of the national state. First, Europe was politically fragmented: the presence of multiple contenders for power promoted consolidation among geographically focused elites, and impeded efforts to impose an authority without contiguous territory or to subordinate a large part of Europe to a single authority. The weakness of corporate structures, particularly those linked by kinship, aided this process of growth through the manipulation of shifting coalitions in geographically concentrated territories. Tilly also points to several features inherent the *process* of state formation that helped give rise to the national state. Effective specialised organisation gives a ruler the advantage over his rivals, such as success at war. Organisational advantage also went to rulers who specialised their instruments of government. The openness of the European periphery allowed for the availability of territories for expansion, conquest, and extraction of new resources. Smaller political units could therefore grow without being swallowed by adjacent empires and establish their own control. Finally, mercantile activity in Europe before the national state helped free resources, making taxation and other forms of governmental extraction feasible, and motivating authorities to develop new forms of control over the population. As a result, the expansion of capitalism and the growth of state power became mutually reinforcing. All of these conditions affected the way national states formed and grew.

Importantly, Tilly discusses certain recurrent themes in the research. Preparation for war had been the great state-building activity because the formation of standing armies provided the largest single incentive for the extraction of resources from the population and the largest single means of state coercion. Tilly identifies a causal chain running from 1) the expansion of land armies, to 2) new efforts to extract resources from the subject population, to 3) the development of new bureaucracies and administrative innovations, to 4) resistance from the population, to 5) renewed coercion, to 6) durable increases in the bulk of state. At an international level, wars and war settlements, such as the Congress of Vienna, the Treaty of Versailles, etc., have shaped the European state system as a whole by reconfiguring identities and relations. (Tilly 1975: 74-75) Furthermore, citing Immanuel Wallerstein, Tilly points out that the mid-15th to 17th century saw the emergence of the large-scale economic division of labor extending outside of Europe. A small set of core states dominated commercial transactions and manufacturing, and pushed the peripheral areas toward large-scale monoculture. Multiple states sprang up, which reduced the capacity of any particular government to dominate investment, lending, production or distribution. State-making efforts at centre of this emerging world economy, fed by the flow of resources from the periphery, had a far greater chance of success than those at the periphery. Second, systems of states acknowledged and to some extent guaranteed each other's

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existence. The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 divided all of Europe into distinct and sovereign states whose boundaries were defined by international agreement. Over the next three hundred years Europeans managed to spread that state system to the entire world. (Tilly 1975: 45)

Tilly concludes by arguing that the European state building model will not repeat itself as historical conditions have changed substantially: there is, for instance, no longer room for substantial expansion and the role of military forces has diminished. Europeans had fashioned a worldwide system of states through war, conquest, and alliance. Newcomers have had far less choice in the positions they would occupy, down to the exact territories they would control. Tilly argues that the pre-existence of a state system has fundamentally changed the role of the military in smaller states, as their relative strength no longer makes a major difference within the state or in its relation with other states. However, this can be true only to the extent that states refrain from what Ruggie would refer to as “positional” warfare, or conquest over neighbouring states. Resources on which contemporary state-makers draw and the forces against which they struggle are radically different from those of early European experience. Builders of European states, as landlords and suzerains, occupied themselves in extracting from the agrarian populations. In contrast, most managers of states today have undertaken different tasks, such as building the economic system, creating facilities and infrastructures, maintaining minimum level of public welfare, and other tasks that flow in from existing models of state-building, partly from the logic of the international system, partly from pressures within individual countries. (Tilly 1975: 81)

While Tilly emphasises power- and interest-based historical explanations of state-building, John Ruggie provides a constructivist account. He attributes the rise and solidification of the modern state system to a transformation in social epistemology that coincided at that time, and reached beyond political and economic life. “The state,” Ruggie quotes Michael Walzer, “is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolised before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived” (Ruggie 1993: 157). The new form of epistemology, Ruggie argues, was the perspective from a particular point of view: the point of view of a *single* subjectivity, from which all other subjectivities were differentiated and, to apply an analogy from the visual arts, against which all other subjectivities were plotted in diminishing size and depth toward a vanishing point (Ruggie 1993: 159). The political space came to be defined as it appeared from a single fixed point; the concept of sovereignty was a doctrinal application of this perspective. At the level of territorial state formation, where in society power would aggregate was to be fixed. Central rulers became more powerful because of their state-building mission. Internally, legitimate power was equated with the provision of public order, rather than primitive extraction. Externally, legitimate power was equated with statecraft, rather than primitive expansion. The process of empowerment helps to account for the geographical pattern of successful centralizing efforts, and large-scale state formation efforts emerged (Ruggie 1993: 161). Like Tilly, Ruggie emphasises the importance of war in solidifying the new organising principle of reciprocal sovereignty. “Constitutive” wars came first, which produced the ontology of the political units. Next came “configurative” wars, which determined territorial contiguity, rather than transterritorial dynastic claims, as the basis of the balance of power in Europe. It was during this phase when reciprocal sovereignty was acknowledged. The third, or “positional” warfare, involved repulsing against periodic quests for universal empire. National sovereignty was thus in-place, and armed forces became an expression of the nation.

In the European case, the core legal idea of a modern “state” is a stable political community in a territory with an established legal order and an effective government with centralized administrative and legislative organs. If this is true, then the criterion is problematic: using the notion of demonstrable government effectiveness, the statehood of those particularly in Africa—Chad, Sudan, Uganda, Congo, etc.—would be in serious doubt. These “quasi-states” are not substantial realities in the conduct of public officials and citizens, but are the product of the widespread delegitimation of colonialism in the 20th century and a renewed focus on the value of sovereignty. Sovereignty, as a constituent principle of the international civil regime, is not only a normative but also a legal relationship. A sovereign statehood is “constitutionally independent” of other states. As a legal order, it may be understood in terms of a game, consisting of: 1) constitutive rules, which define the game and include the legal equality of states, mutual recognition, non-intervention, making and honouring treaties, etc.; and 2) instrumental rules, or maxims which contribute to winning play, e.g. foreign policy (Jackson 1987: 522). Affecting sovereignty are the power and wealth of states, and prevailing international moralities and ideologies, as was evident in the spread of sovereignty in Africa.

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African decolonisation is largely a political artefact by and large divorced from substantive conditions—“an instance of a straight line in international history,” (Jackson 1987: 524) coming about from a “change of wind” in international political discourse. The political boundaries of Africa are diplomatic and European in origin. Despite the arbitrariness of straight partitions, post-colonial Africa governments accepted the political map; hence political Africa is an “intrinsically imperial cum international construct” (Jackson 1987: 526). Because colonial governments were essentially small municipal governments backed by a transoceanic imperial power, local administrations were never indigenised at the decision-making levels. When time came for decolonisation, European administrators simply departed. The new rulers were inadequate replacements, as they had no comparable experience in running a modern government. The new states thus acquired the characteristics of “quasi-states.” Congo, for instance, collapsed with the departure of the Belgians in 1960s and had to be propped up by a large-scale UN effort. Independence, Jackson argues, was not the product of the development of colonies to the point of meeting empirical criteria for statehood, but derived from a sudden and widespread change of mood about the legitimacy of colonialism that resulted in its abolition. Independence spread quickly across Africa because it only required agreement or acquiescence to a new international legal principle. It was a *legal transaction* that lacked socioeconomic substance; as such it ignored the intrinsic value of sovereignty and its substantial consequences (Jackson 1987: 526).

The consequence was the African states frequently do not have the benefit of strong state institutions that have developed and allowed to adapt to the historical context thoroughly; and socially-constructed understandings of the state as an authority. The political community is often segmented ethnically into several “publics” rather than one, given the arbitrary ex-colonial boundaries. Reality was primordial, as self-determination in practice just means racial majority sovereignty within inherited borders. However, independence was a positive legal right: extensive civil strife or government ineffectiveness is not considered to detract from it. Quite telling is the 1960 UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which affirmed that “all peoples have the right to self-determination” and that “inadequacy of political, economic, social, or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence” (Jackson 1987: 531). Given the supremacy of the norm of self-determination, quasi-statehoods such as that of Congo were never contested despite their near or total collapse.

In light of the continuing plight of failed states, the notion of international “trusteeship” has come under debate. Some argue that an autonomous state is “one in which citizens experience the well-being of the state as fundamental to their own well-being.” This implies that the uncivil domestic conditions of certain countries constitute valid grounds for setting aside norms of equal sovereignty and non-intervention. However, Jackson argues in his book *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States*, this line of reasoning is parallel to the colonial practice of *de facto* recognition, based on the Western “standard of civilization” in effect before 1960. It reflects a conception of international society as an association of civilized governments and not merely one of juridically independent states (Jackson 2000: 301). Trusteeship, Jackson claims, challenges the most fundamental norm of *societas* of states: that independent governments and their citizens are the ones who bear responsibility for their domestic affairs. Sovereignty is no guarantee—certainly not by the international community—of domestic well-being; it is merely the framework of independence within which the good life can be pursued and *hopefully* realised (Jackson 2000: 308).

The moral grounds for non-interventionism can be summed up with Kant’s denunciation of public paternalism. Kant believes a paternal government is the “greatest conceivable despotism” because it treats adult and sane human beings “as immature children” who cannot be entrusted with responsibility for their own lives. It “suspends” their freedom and obliges them “to behave purely passively” (Jackson 2000: 311). The equality of states in international law is only an equality in form: if it were of substance it would interfere with the sovereignty of countries. Human rights do not pre-empt the basic norm of non-intervention; otherwise, world politics would no longer presuppose states as independent communities and there would be no right of self-defence. Imposition of armed force, even in the name of democracy and human rights, repudiates a more fundamental value that was hard-won only after a long struggle around the world: international freedom manifested as self-determination, equal sovereignty, and non-intervention. (Jackson 2000: 312-314)

This is not to say there are no alternatives to deal with quasi-states. Jackson suggests the following strategies: cut off trade and foreign investment; isolate their governments and expel them from international organizations; use financial aid or technical assistance to reward or punish foreign governments; get involved in the pacification or development

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of any country with the consent of its government (e.g. through peacekeeping and international aid); and use various military and diplomatic stratagems. The weakness in Jackson's argument is that all of these strategies do intervene with states' sovereignty to some degree. A case in point would be the International Monetary Fund's conditions for lending to developing countries that are arguably set up to further the West's hegemonic liberal agenda. The notion that one needs to "reward" and "punish" a foreign government is already indicative of a paternalistic frame of mind. But perhaps the compromise is to search for loopholes and indirect ways to apply pressure on governments without outright rejecting their sovereignty. Whether it is for strategic or economic reasons, or out of a sense of responsibility borne from an imperialist past, "non-intervention" by the West in practice cannot and has not historically meant entirely ignoring gross civil abuses.

This essay has shown that the vast differences in the process of state formation experienced in Europe and in the late developing countries, with a focus on quasi-states, have contributed to the latter's current conditions. The *de facto* sovereignty in Europe was the culmination of thorough adaptation to a changing historical context. Institutions and social arrangements were continually created and destroyed, until the territorially exclusive modern state emerged. The *de jure* sovereignty granted to quasi-states, however, happened in a proverbial switch of a light—a "change of wind" in the international realm—and lacked any socio-economic, substantive reality. Quasi-states are borne out of the tangible remnants of the colonial past and call into question again the notion of sovereignty, the means versus the ends: has the long struggle for statehood a means to safeguard domestic peace and ensure some tolerable standard of life for citizens; or is recognition by the international community as a sovereign equal the ultimate goal of statehood? One can only feel which way the wind blows next.

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