Query: Please summarise the following books, providing an overview of i) their core arguments and ii) what they say about service delivery and state-building:

- Africa Works (Chabal and Daloz, 1999)
- Strong Societies and Weak States (Migdal, 1988)
- Coercion, Capital and European states (Tilly, 1992)
- Bringing the State Back In (Evans et al., 1985)

Enquirer: Policy Division, DFID

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2. Africa Works (Chabal and Daloz, 1999)
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1. Overview

These books all seek to explain how states came to take their current forms, and to account for their relative strengths and weaknesses using historical, political and social analysis. They differ markedly in their approach: Tilly uses historical analysis to trace the evolution of states in Europe, Migdal uses contemporary case studies to illustrate a theoretical model of state-society relations, Evans et al pull together contemporary work to illustrate a paradigmatic shift, and Chabal and Daloz are concerned primarily with diagnosing the situation across Africa, with little reference to specific cases.

The books share a concern with understanding states within a framework of state-society relations. This means both how the organisational structure of states is determined through state-society interactions, and in turn how the state is able to shape the nature of societies. They all reinforce the important point that since states are shaped by their societies, amongst other things, there can be no singular model for interpreting or understanding processes of state formation. Taken together, they demonstrate the level of variety in the forms states have taken, both among states and over time.

The books are seminal in their contribution to understandings of processes of state formation and transformation, and say a great deal about the nature and functions of the state, and its relationship with society. However, on the whole they say little (explicitly at least) about the role of public services in state-building. They do not explicitly discuss the ways in which the delivery of state services impact on (support the positive development of) state-society relations, or how states develop the capacity, or the will, to provide services. Migdal and Tilly make fleeting references to this, and are the exceptions. However, all the books do broadly discuss issues of state capacity, incentives for states to respond to basic needs, the fundamental role of resources and distribution in state-society relations, and the legitimisation
of authority, all of which arguably contribute to an understanding of services and state-building.

Some of the overlapping themes in the books are outlined below:

**States affect societies and societies affect states**

The nature of the state cannot be separated from the nature of societies (Migdal and Chabal and Daloz). The organisation of major social classes within a state's territory, and their relations with the state, significantly affected state-building in Europe (Tilly). The state must acquire a certain degree of relative autonomy from the dominant class in order to promote economic transformation (Evans).

States have meaningful impacts on societies. They not only conduct decision-making, coercive, and adjudicative activities, but also give rise to various conceptions of the meaning and methods of 'politics' itself, conceptions that influence the behaviour of all groups and classes in national societies (Evans). In order to achieve social control (the primary determinant of state strength), states have to become a real and symbolic aspect of people's daily survival strategies (Migdal).

**Multiple rules of the game**

Societies are a 'melange’ in that they operate according to multiple and often competing systems of rules (Migdal). There is often disjuncture between the state’s rules of the game and the operative dictates of society (Migdal). Individuals operate according to multiple sources of identity (Chabal and Daloz).

**State functions (or basic capabilities needed to pursue goals, or to survive)**

All of the books present a view of the basic functions states should perform. For Evans, a state’s means of raising and deploying financial resources are the most important (Evans). For Migdal, probably the most important factor in the state’s ability to survive is its ability to mobilize society. For Tilly, it’s the use of coercion and capital for the extraction of resources, and in turn for the mobilization of society.

**Incentives for responsive and un-responsive state-building**

Responsive state-building (reciprocal state-society relationships) does not always occur in the pursuit of the universal interest. In Tilly’s account, the development of states that performed various functions, including service delivery, occurred by necessity, not by design; it was an unintentional consequence of the need for states to prepare for and make war, and to some extent it burdened states in ways that were unanticipated. States first engaged in distribution as a way of assuring state revenues from the flow of goods, although they later did so in response to popular demands for correction of inequities and local shortages. For Migdal, the development of state functions was more purposeful; part of a deliberate strategy to gain social control. Chabal and Daloz’s main argument could be interpreted as an account of why responsive state building hasn’t occurred in Africa: because of ‘the instrumentalisation of disorder’ - a system which is inimical to development and to the institutionalisation of the state.

**Exogenous factors influence state formation and state capacity**

Exogenous factors have both positive and negative effects on state capacity. At the basic level, Evans argues states acquire capacities to act through transnational flows and challenges. Migdal argues social control cannot occur without exogenous factors first creating catastrophic conditions that rapidly and deeply undermine existing bases of social control. At the same time, colonialism worked against the creation of conditions for the emergence of strong states in Africa, and was a major determinant of social control (Migdal). For Chabal and Daloz, exogenous factors reinforce the instrumentalisation of disorder; Africa’s reliance on a few primary exports, its vulnerability to price fluctuations and its reliance on foreign aid profit those who hold power (Chabal and Daloz). Tilly argues external military intervention and aid have meant that Third World states are able to bypass bargaining with their subject populations.
Incentives for service delivery, or pursuit of the universal good

For Tilly, the nationalisation and specialisation of the armed forces and subsequent conscription lead to citizens making demands and claims on the state. For Migdal, state resources (including services) have both real and symbolic meaning and are an important part of extending the state’s control, and in achieving ‘compliance’. The universal good has little place in Chabal and Daloz’s analysis: political life is driven by the imperative of exchange. The central redistributive imperative for elites is at the micro-level, in relation to clientelist networks, and this is a diversion from broader concerns with economic growth and development.

Sources of state legitimacy or legitimate rule

Chabal and Daloz argue our difficulty in making sense of African politics is partly a result of our inability to conceptualize the question of legitimacy. Furthermore, the patrimonial and infra-institutional ways in which power is legitimated continue to be most politically significant. Migdal argues legitimacy is the most potent factor accounting for the strength of the state. ‘It is an acceptance, even approbation, of the state’s rules of the game, its social control, as true and right’.

Dilemmas of state-formation, which can undermine state capacity

Both Tilly and Migdal discuss the dilemma of central coherence and strength versus the need for subnational agencies to extend the arm of the state. For both of them, there is a concern that the extension of the state could create autonomous agencies with potentially conflicting interests. Evans similarly argues that states need both centralized policy coordination and decentralized capacities for gathering information and pursuing policy goals in disparate settings.

The ‘Third World’ will not experience modernisation along the lines of the West

Chabal and Daloz argue Africa will not conform to Western models of state-building, or to modernisation theory. They conclude that Africa is modernising, but according to a developmental logic that is unlike Western conceptions of modernisation. Tilly goes further in examining why the circumstance of Third World development (particularly external military intervention) means it will not follow the path of European states.

Both Tilly and Evans caution against understanding state building as a form of engineering - Evans argues that building the nonbureaucratic foundations of bureaucratic functioning is a long-term enterprise. It cannot be done ad-hoc, with short term time spans.

Prospects for state consolidation or modernization in the Third World are slim; both Migdal’s and Chabal and Daloz’s model of state-society relations are described as self-reinforcing.


This book examines how Africa ‘works’ in spite of the widespread absence of political institutionalisation or sustained economic development on the continent. It diagnoses the current (1999) condition of Africa – its crisis of disorder - in relation to the nature of African societies. The central thesis is that Africa is characterised by the ‘political instrumentalisation of disorder’. That is; ‘the process by which political actors in Africa seek to maximise their returns on the state of confusion, uncertainty, and sometimes even chaos, which characterises most African polities’ (xviii). The political instrumentalisation of disorder is explored through an analysis of the informalisation of politics, the importance of tradition and identity in society, and the productivity of economic failure. It concludes that Africa is modernising, but according to a developmental logic that is unlike Western conceptions of modernisation.
The instrumentalisation of disorder (Introduction)

All African countries are all characterised by patrimonialism, apparent disorder, a high level of governmental and administrative inefficiency, a lack of institutionalization, a general disregard of the formal political and economic sectors, and a universal resort to personal(sized) and vertical solutions to societal problems. This should not be construed as a state of dereliction, but rather a condition which offers opportunities for those who know how to play the system. The weakness and inefficiency of the state has been profitable to African elites. They have instrumentalized the resources they command, forming vertical and personalised infra-institutional relations that maximise the returns on disorder.

This system is inimical to development as it is usually understood in the West. It limits the scope for reform in two ways: 1) it reduces the incentives to work for a more institutionalized ordering of society 2) where resources to sustain the system decline or are absent, elites resort to war or crime. The system therefore has an in-built biased towards disorder. Consequently, the prospects for political institutionalisation in Africa are limited. In this context, it is unlikely that elections will lead to constitutional, legal and bureaucratic political order. The state in Africa will durably fail to conform to Western notions of political modernity. Unless African’s begin to question or reject the logic or legitimacy of the instrumentalisation of disorder, and struggle for new forms of accountability, the system will endure.

The informalisation of politics

Above all, the instrumentalisation of disorder is the consequence of the instrumental concept of power and the informalisation of politics. The state in Africa is not just weak in terms of formal Weberian institutions, but vacuous in the sense that it has not been institutionalised, or ‘differentiated’ from society. It is dominated by localized and personalised political contests (1).

The legitimacy of African political elites derives from their ability to nourish the clientele on which their power rests. The patrimonial and infra-institutional ways in which power is legitimated continue to be most politically significant. Representation is instrumentally connected with transactions between patrons and clients.

W(h)ither the state (Ch1)

In most African countries, the state is no more than a façade, masking the realities of deeply personalised political relations. This has limited the scope for good governance and economic growth. But the consolidation of clientelistic networks within the formal political structures (neo-patrimonialism) has been immensely profitable to elites. This constitutes an in-built disincentive against the institutionalisation of the state. Why should African elites dismantle a system which serves them so well? (14-15).

In Africa, the informal has always been more significant than the formal, but economic crisis is contributing to greater informalisation because political elites, bereft of the resources needed to maintain their patrimonial legitimacy, urgently seek the resources which the informalisation of the state might generate (16).

The Illusions of civil society (Ch2)

In Africa, there is no genuine disconnection between a structurally differentiated state and a civil society composed of properly organised and politically. There is no evidence of a functioning civil society.

Recycled elites (Ch3)

There is a surprising permanence at the top of African politics - in other words, limited renewal of the major political actors. This is in part due to respect for experience and the instrumental aspect of age, that is, the accrual of access to resources. It is also because African elites are skilled in their capacity for adaptation.

It is often argued that the misfortunes of Africa are attributable to the incompetence and dishonesty of their leaders, and that a change at the top would improve matters considerably.
But politics in Africa cannot be encompassed within the electoral process because it is experienced and instrumentalised according to the short-term logic of representation and reciprocity. 'Present political transitions have not hitherto changed either the role of the elites or the nature of leadership. It is true that many regimes have suffered dramatic losses of legitimacy but this is more often than not due to a decline in the resources they have available for redistribution' (43).

The re-traditionalization of society

Much of what is happening in Africa seems to reinforce the notion that the continent is moving backwards, or 're-traditionalizing', confounding Western expectations of modernisation. This re-traditionalization is indicated through the resurgence of ethnicity, 'tribal' politics and violence, the continued use of witchcraft, the expansion of criminal activities and the resort to (often ritualised) violence in situations of civil disorder. But in reality, African elites operate in a world that combines both modernisation and retraditionalisation. 'The failure to understand the apparently contradictory nature of politics in Africa is itself very largely the result of an analytical convention which tends to assume a paradigmatic dichotomy between the realms of the modern and the traditional' (46). The role of the 'irrational' and the 'illicit' in politics at micro- and macro-levels needs to be better understood.

Of masks and men: The question of identity (Ch4)

Ethnicity is not an argument about the 'backwardness' of African politics, but emphasises that since in Africa (with some exceptions) all countries are multi-ethnic nations, the only appropriate political order is one which makes space for a political framework grounded in this multi-ethnic reality. Politics must be based on, rather than avoid, the ethnic dimension, in order to be both legitimate to the population and accountable (62).

The following are important in understanding of the politics of African identity:

- **The boundaries of politics:** There is no well-defined separation between the political realm and the economic, social and religious or cultural realm.

- **The notion of the individual:** 'Classical political analysis rests on a notion of the discrete, autonomous and self-referential individual which does not seem relevant to Africa (46). African identities incorporate a more communal notion of the individual, placed firmly in family, kin and communal networks (52).

- **The issue of legitimacy:** Our difficulty in making sense of African politics is partly a result of our inability to conceptualize the question of legitimacy (54). The boundaries of politics, the place of the individual and the role of the citizen impinge on what is or is not considered to be legitimate.

- **The question of opposition:** The zero-sum democratic game in which there are winners and loser cannot apply in Africa. 'If the notion of the individual and the meaning of representation are bound up with identity, defence and furtherance of the interests of the community, then there can be no place in the political system for an opposition with no means of delivering resources to its constituents' (55).

The taming of the irrational: Witchcraft and religion (CH5)

Belief in witchcraft is likely to endure in Africa because of its association with 'healing' and its contribution to social cohesion (particularly in rural areas). It is also an important sanction on rulers. Witchcraft is less a throwback to outdated traditions than a mechanism of social regulation which brings both material benefit and communal cohesion to the locality. 'Witchcraft is one of the few means of ‘indigenous’ social responsibility available, however crude its practice may be’ (76).

Crime and enrichment: The profits of violence (Ch6)

The disorderly states of the formal political and economic structures and the high level of violence in most countries in Africa are used as resources by the ‘businessmen of crime’ (91).
The management of violence can be turned into a resource that serves the patron-client relationship. Violence is seen as legitimate in so far as it serves the interests of clients.

The productivity of economic failure

Perceptions of Africa’s economic crisis based on standard development theory prevent an analysis of the ways in which the continent’s economies do work.

The (ab)use of corruption (Ch7)

Corruption is most frequently bound up with important ties of reciprocity linking those who are related within networks of vertical relations. Everywhere in Africa, political success requires considerable investment: it is necessary to convince the indispensable ‘intermediaries’ of one’s potential by showing greater generosity than one’s competitors. Given the difficulty of getting access to resources, it is easy to understand why predatory practices remain one of the main ways of obtaining the means of meeting such obligations’ (99). Corruption is therefore accepted as an integral part of the socio-political order.

The bounties of dependence (Ch8)

The apparently deleterious situation of the continent’s reliance on a few primary exports, its vulnerability to price fluctuations and its reliance on foreign aid may in reality profit those who hold power. Structural adjustment, for example, was a double blessing: 1) it provided a new external scapegoat, allowing African rulers to blame their economic predicaments on the IMF and World Bank 2) it provided a means of attracting more foreign aid.

The (in)significance of development (Ch9)

Certain key societal characteristics in Africa are inimical to development along conventional (Western) lines. Firstly, development is not the priority for a majority of Africans (125). ‘The characteristics that matter are the inability or unwillingness to institutionalize more formal and impersonal social relations; the reluctance to accept a Western socio-economic and political order, despite repeated commitments to that effect; and, finally, the subtle use of distinct registers of socio-political behaviour that may well not be compatible’ (132). The primacy of communitarian and clientelistic imperatives leads to massive economic inefficiency. It seems unlikely, for instance, that the health system of most African countries will ever be satisfactory (138).

A new paradigm: The political instrumentalization of disorder

Most paradigms of African politics have been concerned with explaining why Africa has failed to develop along the lines of the West - in other words, to ‘modernize’. This has led to unrealistic expectations about the development potential of a modern Africa and the assumption that development and modernization are coterminous. In reality, Africans operate simultaneously according to traditional and modern rationalities (146). Cultural dynamics can be understood according to a modern instrumental perspective.

Politics in Africa cannot be understood as divorced from the rest of society. The question of boundaries (the lack of distinction between the political and the socio-cultural and the different spheres of human experience) and the issue of register (the formal Western notion of the individual citizen does not correspond to the realities of the link between the individual and society) are key to any analysis of African politics. Also critical is:

- **The notion of the individual:** individual rationality is based on communal logic. Individuals act on the basis of the psychological, social and religious foundations of the local community. Relations of power are predicated on the shared belief that the political is communal.

- **The salience of reciprocity:** Political life is driven by the imperative of exchange. ‘In Africa, the logic of any action (whether political or not) lies in what it induces by way of expectations of reciprocity between the parties involved’ (157).
The importance of vertical links: Vertical links define patrimonial systems, and the overall aim of politics is to affect the nature of these relations. The question of corruption cannot simply be understood in this context as the abuse of power, but in terms of the search for a position of esteem defined as status, respect and affection.

The concept of success: Ostentation (or the right distribution of resources to clients) remains, and is likely to remain, one of the chief political virtues in Africa. This limits political ambition and accounts for the lack of commitment to development and economic growth among politicians. Political liberalization and democratization were embraced in the early 1990’s partly as an attempt to make possible the continued delivery of foreign aid.

The imperative of the short-term view and micro-perspective: The outlook of political elites is both short-term and concerned with the micro- rather than the macro- in society. The political system functions in the here and now, not for the sake of a hypothetical tomorrow. It’s legitimacy is based on its immediate achievements. Patrimonialism equally depends on delivering through micro-level patronage networks, and offers no scope for deferring to a larger but less immediate macro-rationality (161). The patrimonial system is likely to endure because of its legitimacy: ‘In the end, there is an inter-locking neo-patrimonial logic between the deep ambitions of the political elites and the well-grounded expectations of their citizens’ (162).

What does it say about services and state building?

One of the book’s central themes is sources of legitimate rule and, closely related to this, elite incentives, means and adaptability in gaining and maintaining power. The role of the delivery of macro-level public services is not discussed in relation to the legitimation of power in Africa. Indeed, the book argues the central redistributive imperative for elites is at the micro-level, in relation to clientelist networks, and that this is a diversion from broader concerns with economic growth and development. The ‘responsiveness’ and representation of leaders is related to transactions between patrons and clients, based on short term imperatives. Reciprocity and exchange are important aspects of the legitimation of power (it is not clear whether this includes access to services) but primarily at the micro-level.


This book presents a model for understanding state capabilities in the Third World based on state-society relations. Its central premises are i) the nature of the state cannot be separated from the nature of societies and ii) the emergence of a strong, capable state can occur only with a tremendous concentration of social control (in the state). The state’s struggle for social control is characterised by conflict between state leaders, who seek to mobilize people and resources and impose a single set of rules, and other social organisations applying different rules in parts of society. The distribution of social control in society that emerges as a result of this conflict (between societies and states) is the main determinant of whether states become strong or weak. The book uses state-building case studies (Sierra Leone, Egypt, Palestine) to illustrate why some states have struggled to fashion state-society relations, neutralise opposition, gain predominance, and achieve social control, whereas others have been strong in this regard.

Strong states require certain attributes

Strong states have capabilities to extract, penetrate, regulate and appropriate (15). This is accepted in international norms. But the state's ability to neutralize opposition has varied markedly. States need certain ‘attributes of stateness’, which include: monopoly over the means of coercion; state autonomy from domestic and outside forces (which allows officials to act upon their own preference); differentiation of the various components (agencies) of the state; and coordination and coherence across the various parts of the state. In other words, the state can be defined as ‘an organization, composed of numerous agencies led and coordinated by the state’s leadership (executive authority) that has the ability or authority to make and implement the binding rules for all the people as well as the parameters of rule
making for other social organizations in a given territory, using force if necessary to have its way’ (quoting Weber, 19).

**Probably the most important factor in the state’s ability to survive is its ability to mobilize society**

Government’s acquire the tools of political influence through the mobilization of human and material resources for state action (22). States in Europe acquired a triad of ‘essential tentacles’ for this purpose: a standing army, a vastly improved tax-collecting mechanism, and an expanded set of judicial courts. Courts were essential services for achieving social control: ‘The implantation of state law in place of fragmented customary or feudal law through the extension of the court system was essential in inducing people to behave as state leaders wanted them to behave and not according to dictates of local lords of others; in other words, the courts, along with the police and others who fed into the workings of the courts, were essential for shifting social control to the state’ (22). Improved tax collection allowed for the expansion of the agencies of the state, and the army provided the necessary force to back up the demands and decisions of the authorities. The impetus for mobilizing society was derived more from the need for political leaders to ensure their survival in the international arena (the mobilization of the population to serve in a standing army) than from lofty visions of universal justice (22-23).

**The state’s capacity to mobilize society rests on social control**

Social control is ‘the actual ability to make the operative rules of the game for people in society’. Whereas at first glance, the state appears to have penetrated third world societies (through formal state agencies, taxation and services), in many cases, the operative rules that govern people’s behaviour in these societies are not derived from state legislation or bureaucratic decrees. There is disjuncture between the state’s rules of the game and the operative dictates of society, which in turn creates disjuncture between the intention of state policy and the actual distribution of resources. The major struggles in many societies are over who has the right and ability to make the rules that guide people’s social behaviour (the state or other organisations). ‘Increased social control is needed minimally for the mobilization of people and material resources against potentially avaricious neighbours’ (40).

**To prosper and survive, individuals enter a careful ‘weighing of incentives’ (between social organisations and the state) to formulate survival strategies**

Informal and formal organizations all have a variety of sanctions and rewards (systems of rules), and people have been sensitive to what they prescribe because they are powerful, and often dominated by people with a means to deny others a livelihood. People will weigh these incentives and sanctions in order to formulate strategies for personal mobility and survival (an example is European peasants in the 14th and 15th century, who were reluctant to adopt state law).

**Social control requires the state to become a real and symbolic aspect of people’s daily survival strategies**

Importantly, incentives, sanctions and rewards are not only material but symbolic (they can be an ideology or belief). Strategies for social control need to include both material incentives and coercion, and the manipulation of symbols of how social life should be ordered. With controlled and selective disbursement of state resources, officials have the possibility of offering the main components, especially the major myths and symbols, for people’s strategies of survival. Only then does the state have the prerequisites for effective regulation and the possibility of extensively mobilizing the population’ (261). Commonly shared values and memories provide the basis for the symbolic configurations underpinning social control.

**Struggles for social control should be understood in relation to the idea of society as a ‘melange’**

Lack of state social control means understanding resistance to social control. The state has been only one organisation within a melange of organisations. There are multiple sets of rules of the game in societies, and societies are often characterised by conflict among organisations offering those different rules. Furthermore: 1) groups exercising control may be
heterogeneous both in their form (e.g. small family or sprawling tribe) and in the rules they apply (e.g. could be based on personal loyalty or profit maximisation) 2) Social control may be distributed among numerous fairly autonomous groups, rather than concentrated in the state. ‘The overall sum of authority may be high in the society, but the exercising of that authority may be fragmented’ (28). Strong societies can be either highly centralised (in state power) or diffused (across several social organisations), but the overall level of social control is high. Such conditions can enfeeble the state.

Societies are also web like

Half of all third world countries experience very high or high ethnic and linguistic fractionalisation; hence, third world states may not fit into the moulds shaped by European or North American experiences. They may be more attuned to web like rather than centralised modes of power (39). Where societies have been web like and where social control has been fragmented among numerous organisations states have faced formidable barriers in seeing their policies through. Weblike societies are being governed, but the allocation of values is not centralised (e.g. numerous systems of justice operate simultaneously). It has been hard for states to grapple with these fragmented systems of social control. Why have the goals of achieving a universal set of rules and a single political system been elusive? Why have some states succeeded?

Levels of (state) social control are reflected in three indicators: compliance, participation and legitimation. These are used by state and non-state organisations alike to seek social control:

- **Compliance**: The strength of the state rests on gaining conformance to its demands by the population. Compliance often comes first with the use of force, but ‘the ability to control the dispersal of a broad scope of other resources and services also determines the degree to which the state can demand compliance’ (32).

- **Participation**: Leaders need to gain strength by organizing the population for specialized tasks. Participation denotes use of state-run or state-authorized institutions.

- **Legitimation**: This is the most potent factor accounting for the strength of the state. ‘It is an acceptance, even approbation, of the state’s rules of the game, its social control, as true and right’ (33). States want citizens to comply through the reasoned conviction that compliance is right. ‘…legitimacy includes the acceptance of the state’s symbolic configuration within which the rewards and sanctions are packaged. It indicates people’s approval of the state’s desired social order through their acceptance of the state’s myths’ (33).

Strong states emerged only in the wake of severe social disruption

‘Social control cannot occur without *exogenous factors* first creating catastrophic conditions that rapidly and deeply undermine existing strategies of survival, the bases of social control’ (262). Dislocating societies is a necessary condition for creating strong states. Societies must be weakened before a new distribution of social control is possible. The two key exogenous factors are 1) spread of the world economy and 2) colonial rule (see Part Two: ‘Crisis and Reconsolidation: The Impact of capitalism and Colonialism’):

1) **Spread of the World Economy**: in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, societies in Africa, Asia and Latin America experienced rapid, deep, and universal debilitation of the existing bases of social control. This included the extension of the World market, legal changes in land tenure and revenue collection, and new modes of transportation, all of which paved the way for a much more fundamental penetration of the world economy to all parts of society (see Ch 1). But the destruction of old norms doesn’t always hold within it the blueprint for new ones.

2) **Colonialism**: worked against the creation of conditions for the emergence of strong states in Africa, and was a major determinant of social control. In many societies, policies favoured the emergence of new or renewed strongmen, leading to the fragmentation of social control (e.g. Sierra Leone).
War and revolution, closely related to mass migration, are 20th century examples of dislocations that have weakened old forms of social control and allowed new ones to emerge. Related to this, sufficient conditions for the emergence of strong states are:

- **World historical timing**: Colonial policies and the alliance of Western capital with indigenous forces fragmented social control. Socialism favoured social control because it gave political support and shelter to state leaders concentrating social control through Socialist policies.

- **Military threat**: The existence of a serious military threat from outside can induce states to risk confrontations with strongmen to consolidate social control because they fear political demise from outside.

- **The basis for an independent bureaucracy**: This relies on the existence of a social grouping with people sufficiently independent of existing bases of social control who can pursue the interests of both state rulers and officials. ‘Strong states can only emerge when the shared notion that there should be an autonomous set of state interests exists and when bureaucrats believe those interests coincide with their own’ (275).

- **Skilful leadership**: Leaders must be skilled in selecting bureaucrats, and in calculating risks.

The need to achieve social mobilization and at the same time a strong central state constitutes ‘the rulers dilemma’

The ‘rulers dilemma’ is that state leaders can only achieve political mobilization when they have proffered viable strategies of survival to the populace. This requires an elaborate set of institutions to dole out sanctions and material incentives, as well as to package state services and sanctions in a coherent, meaningful set of symbols (298). But creating strong state agencies risks creating powerful sub organisations which within the state itself can become and oligopoly of mobilizational capacity. State leaders therefore need ‘to weigh their need to create effective agencies for political mobilization and security against the risks to political stability and their own survival, which come in creating potential power centres they cannot control’ (264). In societies with fragmented social control, agencies are needed to allow states to substitute strongmen strategies for survival with state strategies for survival, but these agencies need to be created so that they don’t become power centres which threaten the political survival of state leaders (particularly in relation to security agencies). (211). Powers of appointment are important in mitigating these risks.

Fragmented social control, the rulers dilemma, and the difficulties of political mobilization have led to a pathological style at the apex of the state; the ‘politics of survival’.

State leaders in weak states have pulverised the very arms of the state that could achieve their goal of mobilization. ‘Their purpose has been to prevent leading officials in important agencies from using their own mobilizational capacities against the central state leadership’ (264). They have used industrial capital and organized labour to coopt, intimidate, or absorb into state agencies these power centres with the aim of thwarting the emergence of social organisations with more mobilizational capacity than the state.

In situations of fragmented social control, the state has become an arena of accommodations.

Power centres have been accommodated but with trade-offs. The local social control of strongmen has led to a ‘triangle of accommodation’; between implementors, politicians and strongmen. Populist leaders maintain an environment of conflict by pitting their legislation, and formal policies against the continuing social control of strongmen, but strongmen depend on state resources for social control, and have learned to accommodate populist leaders or even capture the lower parts of the state.
The legacy of fragmented social control continues to constrain states and the prospects for the consolidation of the state in parts of society which are fragmented is slim.

These structural conditions are likely to perpetuate fragmented social control. A society fragmented in social control affects the character of the state, which, in turn, reinforces the fragmentation of society (257). ‘Once established, a fragmented distribution of social control has been difficult to transform’ (263). The model is self-reinforcing. The politics of survival at the top and the triangle of accommodation at the bottom reinforce social fragmentation.

What does it say about services and state-building?

- Migdal conceptualises the disbursement of state resources as a means of offering the main components, including the myths and symbols, of peoples strategies for survival. State resources (including services) have both real and symbolic meaning and are an important part of extending the state's control, and in achieving compliance. In other words, they are part of the process of winning the battle over setting the rules of the game in society. The extension of Justice, for example, is cited as an important tool for replacing existing norms with state ones. State resources and services are, in sum, vital for achieving social control.


This book seeks to account for the variation over time and space in the kinds of states that have prevailed in Europe since AD 990, and to explain how European states eventually came to converge on different variants of the ‘national state’. It argues the organisation of coercion and capital, as well as relations among states, especially through war and preparation for war, strongly affected processes of state formation. The central thesis is that war drives state formation and transformation. The relationship between state and citizens, and the organisational forms states came to take, were formed through the need for extraction to fund war. These organisational forms evolved over time as warfare became more complex and large scale. Eventually, the pursuit of war led to a civilianisation of government and domestic politics.

Tilly’s starting point is that most available explanations of state formation are unsatisfactory in that they don’t account for the many different types of states that were viable at different times during European history; they focus on the individual characteristics of states rather than relations among them, and they assume a deliberate effort to construct the sorts of substantial centralized states which came to dominate (5-11). On the contrary, there can be no unilinear model of state formation in Europe, and there was no grand plan to engineer state-making.

Continuously-varying combinations of concentrated capital, concentrated coercion, preparation for war, and position within the international system, have driven the organisational forms states have taken.

Forms of the state strongly reflected and were created by capital (tangible mobile resources, and claims on those resources, or state exploitation) and coercion (the domination of the state through armed force, incarceration, expropriation, humiliation and threats). European experience of state-building can be summarised as follows:

- Men who controlled concentrated means of coercion (armies, navies, police forces) ordinarily tried to extend the population and resources they controlled. Where they met with no comparable control of coercion, they conquered; where they met rivals, they made war.
• Some conquerors became rulers; exercising stable control over populations and gaining access to goods and services produced in a territory.

• Every form of rule faced limits to its effectiveness. Efforts to exceed that range produced defeats or the fragmentation of control. Most rulers settled for a combination of conquest, protection against powerful rivals, and coexistence with cooperative neighbours.

• The most powerful rulers in any given region set the terms of war for all, and smaller rulers had to decide whether to accommodate or challenge them.

• War and preparation for war involved extraction of the means of war from others who held the essential resources - man, arms, supplies- and who were reluctant to surrender them without strong pressure or compensation.

• Within limits set by the demands and rewards of other states, extraction and struggle over the means of war created the central organisational structure of states.

• The organisation of social classes within a state’s territory, and their relations to the state, significantly affected the strategies rulers employed to extract resources, the resistance they met, the struggle that resulted, and therefore the efficiency of the resource extraction.

• The organisation of social classes varied between coercion-intensive regions (areas of few cities and agricultural predominance, where direct coercion played a major part in production) and capital-intensive regions (areas of many cities and commercial predominance where markets, exchange and market-oriented production prevailed). The demands major classes made on the state, and their influence over the state, varied correspondingly.

• The relative success of different extractive strategies, and the strategies rulers actually applied, varied significantly from coercion-intensive to capital-intensive regions. The forms of the state varied in these different regions.

• “The increasing scale of war and the knitting together of the European state system through commercial, military and diplomatic interaction eventually gave the war-making advantage to those states that could field standing armies; states having access to a combination of large rural populations, capitalists, and relatively commercialized economies won out. They set the terms of war, and their form of state became the predominant one in Europe. Eventually, European states converged on that form: the National State” (14-15).

We can distinguish between coercion-intensive, capital-intensive, and capitalized coercion routes to state formation:

• Coercion-intensive: Rulers squeezed the means of war from their own populations, building massive structures of extraction (e.g. Brandenburg and Russia). But under this model, armed warlords wielded so much power that no one could establish durable control over the rest.

• Capital-intensive: Wielders of coercion drew for their own purposes on manipulators of capital. They relied on compacts with capitalists - whose interests they served with care - to rent or purchase military force, and did not require building massive and permanent structures of extraction (e.g. city states and forms of fragmented sovereignty).

• Capitalized coercion: rulers did some of each, incorporating capitalists and sources of capital directly into the structures of their states. This model proved more effective. (30).
European states had to find ways of reconciling certain dilemmas of war making and extraction.

Preparation for war involves extraction - it means building up an infrastructure of taxation, supply and administration that requires maintenance. To the extent that the wielders of coercion were successful in subduing rivals, they found themselves obliged to administer the lands, goods and people they acquired. But administration diverts from war and can create interests that ‘sometimes tell against war’ (20). In essence, ‘those that run this infrastructure acquire power and interests of their own; their interests and power limit significantly the character and intensity of warfare any particular state can carry on’ (20-21).

The formation of states should not be treated as a type of engineering

The European experience does not demonstrate confident planning:
1) Rarely did Europe’s princes have in mind a precise model of the sort of state they were producing, and even more rarely did they act efficiently to produce such a model state (25).
2) No one designed the principle components of national states - treasuries, courts, central administrations, and so on. They usually formed as more or less inadvertent by-products of efforts to carry out more immediate tasks, especially the creation and support of armed force.
3) Other states, and eventually the entire system of states - strongly affected the path of change followed by any particular state.
4) Struggle and bargaining with different classes in the subject population significantly shaped the states that emerged in Europe.

Three different types of states have proliferated in Europe: tribute-taking empires; systems of fragmented sovereignty and national states

Tribute-taking empires built a large military and extractive apparatus, but left local administration to regional power holders who retained great autonomy. In situations of fragmented sovereignty (e.g. city-states and urban federations), temporary coalitions played significant parts in war and extraction, but little durable state apparatus emerged on a national scale. National states unite substantial military, extractive administrative and sometimes productive and distributive organisations in a relatively co-ordinated central structure. All these arrangements left considerable power and discretion in the hands of local potentates, just so long as they contained the monarch’s enemies and kept the revenues flowing to the national capital.

Relations between capital and coercion have changed from one period to the next.

As war became more expensive because of increased competition, technological change, and the sheer scale of states, fewer and fewer rulers could create military means from routine resources, and began to turn to borrowing and taxation. This produced changes in governmental organisation which can be distinguished through four periods of warfare;

- **Patrimonialism** (up to the 15th century): Tribes, feudal levies, urban militias and customary forces were central in warfare and monarchs extracted capital from them as rent or tribute from populations that lay under their immediate control.
- **Brokerage** (1400-1700): Mercenary forces predominated in military activity, and rulers relied on independent capitalists for loans and for installing and collecting taxes
- **Nationalization** (1700-1850): states create mass armies or navies drawn increasingly from their own national populations, and armed forces are absorbed into the state’s administrative structure, and took over direct operation of the fiscal structure, drastically curtailing independent contractors.
- **Specialization** (from mid nineteenth century): organizational separation of fiscal from military activity increased, division of labor between armies and police increased, representative institutions have significant influence over military expenditures and states take on an expanded range of distributive, regulatory, compensatory and adjudicative activities.
From the 19th century, European states began building social infrastructure, providing services, and assuring citizen’s welfare. “All these activities began as by-products of rulers’ efforts to acquire revenues and compliance from their subject populations, but took on lives and rationales of their own” (31).

**States and their citizens: From Wasps to Locomotives (Ch 4)**

A state’s essential minimum activities are state-making, war making and protection, but no state lasts long without extraction. Whilst coercive activities dominated the European history of state formation, all states found themselves venturing into three other risky terrains: adjudication, distribution and production. All these activities are connected. As extraction and protection expanded, they created demands for the adjudication of disputes from within the population. ‘As rulers drew more and more resources for war and other coercive enterprises from their local economies, the major classes within those economies successfully demanded more and more state intervention outside the realm of coercion and war’ (97). Over time, the weight and impact of production, adjudication and distribution grew faster than war making, state making, extraction and protection. Whereas states first engaged in distribution as a way of assuring state revenues from the flow of goods, they later did so a response to popular demands for correction of inequities and local shortages.

After 1795, during the period of nationalisation, the state moved from indirect rule (mediated through mercenaries) to direct rule and intervention in people’s lives. The more dramatic expansion of non-military activity began during the period of military specialisation (after 1850). The process of moving to direct rule brought with it mass national politics. States moved from reactive to proactive repression, monitoring potential subversaries or possible rebellions, industrial conflict, working conditions etc. States began to extend into providing systems of education, organising aid to the poor and disabled, and national legislatures became targets for complaints from well organised groups (115) States began to invest not only in war but in public services and economic infrastructure, giving their economies unique characteristics. National symbols crystallised, languages were standardised and labor markets organised. ‘War became a homogenizing experience’. Forms of mass representation became reality, and citizens began to demand state action on employment, foreign trade, and education and more. Expenditure on central administration, justice, economic intervention and social services increased as an outcome of political bargaining over the state’s protection of its clients and citizens (121).

**Moving from indirect to direct rule, from tribute to tax, from subordination to assimilation involved imposing common languages, religions, currencies and legal systems.**

Extraction impinged on people’s interests and means of survival; processes of so-called ‘state formation’ included setting ruthless tax farmers against poor peasants and artisans, the hanging of protestors, conscription, the imposition of religious conformity. State intervention in everyday life incited collective action in the form of resistance or claims on the state. This standardisation stirred up massive resistance where it threatened the very identities on which subordinate populations based their everyday social lives (100). Resistance compounded into popular rebellion where the state’s demands offended citizens’ standards of justice or attacked their primary collective identities, where these people were connected to durable social ties, had allies outside the state, or where the state had revealed itself as vulnerable to attack.

**States bargained with civilian groups that controlled the resources required for effective war making**

In the face of resistance, the state entered into a process of bargaining between the population and power holders concerning the conditions under which the state could extract or control and the kind of claims that power holders could then make on the state (99). This bargaining changed with the move from patrimonialism to brokerage to nationalization to specialization. The actual forms of the collective action, bargaining and the establishment of rights varied according to whether the state was based on coercion or capital (100).
This process of bargaining produced individual or collective claims on the state

In effect, it created citizenship (rights and obligations) (102). Through this struggle and negotiation for resources, states also came to reflect the class structures of their populations.

Given the diversity of trajectories of state-making in Europe, we cannot expect a single trajectory of change in the Third World

However, we can reasonable extrapolate the following from the European experience:

- Significant influence of the relative distributions of coercion and capital in the paths of state formation;
- Distinctively different directions of change in the presence and absence of significant clusters of cities;
- Strong effects of war and preparation for war on the creation and alteration of state structure;
- Mediation of those effects through a) fiscal structure and b) the sources of arms and military personnel;
- Civilisation of state power through the creation of central bureaucracies, increasing reliance on credit and taxation for the purchase of military means, and bargaining with the subject population over those means;
- Continuation of the trend from “internal” to “external” determination of the organizational forms of states” (197).

Moreover, external military intervention and aid have meant that Third World states are able to bypass bargaining with their subject populations (207). 'Lacking strong ties between particular state institutions and major social classes within the population, those states have become more vulnerable to forcible seizures of power and abrupt changes in the form of government' (208).

What does it say about services and state-building?

- Tilly is arguing that the relationship between state and society (and the expansion of state services) was formed through the need for extraction to fund war. State incentives for the delivery of these services derived primarily from the need for extraction, and later became embedded through a process of bargaining. As warfare became more complex and large scale, national armies and conscription became necessary. The functions of the state grew inadvertently (in an unplanned fashion) as a result of demands and expectations placed on the state by citizens (starting with the conscripted). This process of bargaining between state and society, through which subjects became citizens who successfully made claims on the state, was marked by resistance and conflict. Bargaining was only possible once the state moved from indirect rule (mediated through mercenaries) to direct rule. This so called 'state-building' impacted negatively on people’s lives.

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This book argues for ‘bringing the state back in’ to its proper, central place in explanations of social change and politics. This not only means analyzing states as organizations that may pursue distinctive goals, but the ways in which states are influenced by society and are able to shape political and social processes and meanings for all groups and classes in society. The book makes the case for a more adequate understanding of the state based on an analysis of i) the states role in economic development, ii) how states as individual actors and institutions are embedded in transnational relations, and iii) how states pattern (create and reflect) social conflicts, political cleavages and collective action.

A central theme is examining the determinants of the autonomy and capacity of states, which are defined as:
State autonomy is: "states conceived as organisations claiming control over territories and people may formulate and pursue goals that are not simply reflective of the demands or interests of social groups, classes, or society".

State capacity is: "the capacity to implement official goals, especially over the actual or potential opposition of powerful social groups or in the face of recalcitrant socio-economic circumstances".

State autonomy is related to its extranational orientations, the challenges it faces in maintaining domestic order, and its organizational resources.

It is not a fixed structural feature; it can be spurred by crises which force rulers to pursue autonomous actions, but it can also depend on transformations in coercion and administration. Autonomous state actions have historically been considered more capable of addressing the 'national interest' than governmental decisions strongly influenced by the push and pull of demands from interest groups. But some are sceptical of these self-legitimating arguments and official claims to know and represent 'national interests'. State activity can never really be 'disinterested' in any meaningful sense: all state actions necessarily benefit some social interest group and disadvantage others, and they all aim to reinforce the longevity, authority and social control of state organisations.

Certain very basic fiscal and administrative capacities are vital for states, and may be utilized for various tasks.

State capacities help explain state autonomy (and autonomous goal formation) because states are likely to try to do things that seem feasible within the means available. The basic capacities a state needs are: 'Sheer sovereign integrity and the stable administrative-military control of a given territory are preconditions for any state’s ability to implement policy' (16). Loyal and skilled officials, plentiful financial resources are also fundamental to state effectiveness in achieving any goal. Other basic facts will determine a state’s capacities, including: sources and amount of revenues and the degree of flexibility in their collection and deployment; authority to collect taxes, to borrow, and to invest in public enterprises; and room in the constitutional-political system to change patterns of revenue collection unfavourable to the state. ‘A state’s means of raising and deploying financial resources tell us more than could any other single factor about its existing (and immediately potential) capacities to create or strengthen state organisations, to employ personnel, to coopt political support, to subsidize economic enterprises, and to fund social programs’ (17).

One of the more important facts about the capacity (and power) of the state is its unevenness across policy areas

State capabilities also need to be understood in relation to socio-economic settings - i.e. actors with interests and resources. Relational capacities - the balance of the states resources and situational advantages compared to other actors, including non-state actors or other states - are also important to understand.

States need to be understood as more than organisational entities

Essentially, politics is not only grounded in society, the economy and culture, but in the organizational arrangements and activities of states. States matter ‘not just because of the goal-oriented activities of officials, but because their organisational configurations, along with their overall patterns of activity, affect political culture, encourage some kinds of group formation and collective political actions (but not others), and make possible the raising of certain political issues (but not others)’ (21). (This understanding of the state is called the ‘Tocquevillian approach’).

The structures and activities of states affect political cultures, group formation, and collective political action:

- States not only conduct decision-making, coercive, and adjudicative activities, but also give rise to various conceptions of the meaning and methods of ‘politics’ itself, conceptions that influence the behaviour of all groups and classes in national societies. For example, there are institutional and cultural differences between ideas
of ‘stateness’ in the UK and USA. Whereas Europeans think of sovereignty as residing in centralised administrative institutions, US citizens refuse to designate any concrete body as sovereign, but instead attribute sovereignty to the law and the constitution (22).

- State structures, as well as the actions of state officials, affect the timing, goals and forms of collective protest (see Tilly, Ch5). In early modern Europe, collective protest began as an attempt by local elites to defend their rights to collect taxes.

**States as Promoters of Economic Development and Social Redistribution**

**The state and economic transformation (Ch5)**

This chapter focuses on the nature of state structures required to undertake effective market intervention, and the social structural conditions likely to facilitate such intervention.

The state can be understood in formal terms of authority and enforcement, but it also tends to be an expression of pacts of domination, to act coherently as a corporate unit, to become an arena for social conflict, and to present itself as the guardian of universal interests (48). These tendencies are contradictory, and the efficacy of the state will depend on the pattern in which these contradictory tendencies are combined.

**Two conditions underlie state effectiveness**

i) *The structure of the state apparatus:* constructing a cohesive bureaucracy is not a simple instrumental project requiring only the creation of formal organizational ties. Instead, it depends on a long-term process of institution-building.

ii) *The relations between the state and dominant class:* The state must acquire a certain degree of relative autonomy from the dominant class in order to promote economic transformation (especially in terms of formulating and implementing collective goals). But certain social structural conditions are likely to promote autonomy (48-49).

These characteristics are not necessarily mutually reinforcing – a bureaucratic machinery does not necessarily enhance autonomy.

**Several contradictions undermine state capacity:**

- Income distribution policies must work against the grain of the market and social norms. Income redistribution by definition means the state has to become involved in relations between dominant and subordinate groups, and can often intrude into social and economic processes.

- States need both centralized policy coordination and decentralized capacities for gathering information and pursuing policy goals in disparate settings. Subunits are critical for information use and situational decision making, and because of their political role. But autonomy to subunits leads to problems of incoherence and state capture.

- Although strong, effective state interventions in economic policy may initially be undertaken by coherent bureaucracies relatively autonomous from social interests, those interventions are likely to lead in time to diminished state capacity and autonomy, because affected groups mobilize to pressure state authorities.

**Building the nonbureaucratic foundations of bureaucratic functioning is a long-term enterprise. It cannot be done ad-hoc, with short term time spans.**

State bureaucracies are the basis for states to develop capacities to act on a “general and inclusive vision” of state economic problems, but this “state building” is more than short-term organizational engineering. The construction and reconstruction of state bureaucracies takes place within the overall institutional structure of the state and in the context of established relations between state officials and groups in society (42). Cohesion has to be built over the long-term, not through the short term creation of formal ties.
States and transnational relations (Part II)

States acquire capacities to act through transnational flows and challenges. They are linked into transnational geopolitical and economic structures.

- The development and exercise of the state’s basic monopoly of violence are necessarily intertwined with the construction of fiscal capacities that vary in response to the resource possibilities of different domestic and world environments (Tilly, Ch5).
- American geopolitical policies have a crucial influence on the aims and capacities of Third World state managers (Evans Ch6).

States and the Patterning of Social Conflicts (Part III)

States influence the meanings and methods of politics for all groups and classes in society. “The existing patterns of state intervention in economic and social life, and policies already in place, all influence the social interests pursued in politics. Some potential group identities are activated; others are not. Some lines of conflict are politicized; others are not…In turn, these political realities partially affected by the state feed back to affect future struggles over state structures and policies’ (254).

Toward a more adequate understanding of the state

There is not necessarily a positive relationship among different kinds of state capacities, and states are unlikely to be capable of intervening equally in different areas of socioeconomic life. “The unevenness of state capacities may be the most important structural feature to recognise in understanding how [the state] confronts challenges” (352). Neo-Weberians have labelled states as “stronger” or “weaker” according to how closely they approximated the ideal type of centralised and fully rationalised Weberian bureaucracy. But the possibilities for state interventions at the sectoral level cannot be derived from some overall level of generalized capacity or state strength.

- There may be insulation or contradiction among different types of state capacities. For example, Switzerland has been more effective intervening in agriculture than the economy. In the US, the autonomous intervention in agriculture through the New Deal inadvertently strengthened the American Farm Bureau Federation and the congressional conservatives, which constrained state capacity for economic planning.

- Received historical frameworks have posited that state autonomy and state capacities for effective socioeconomic interventions go hand in hand. But state autonomy and the power of social groups can increase or decrease together, through challenge and response patterns. Evans, for example, argues the presence of social actors, specifically transnational corporations, has stimulated the growth of autonomous states.

- Whether originally autonomous or not, state interventions in socioeconomic life can, over time, lead to a diminution of state autonomy and to a reduction of any capacities the state may have for coherent action (354). States that intervene in the economy risk mobilizing social groups pursuing their own interests who might either aim to penetrate the state’s apparatus or try to gain a veto over its policies (as Rueschmeyer and Evans argue).

- Interactions among parts of the state’s apparatus itself may provide the key to changing state capacities and degrees of autonomy (e.g. the power of the treasury in Britain over other parts of the civil service made the state more autonomous from the labour party and the working-class as a whole, Weir and Skocpol).

What does it say about services and state building?

- One of the books central themes is to understand how the autonomy of states to act in the ‘national interest’ emerges and impacts on its capacity and effectiveness. The introduction to the book argues state interventions are never fully autonomous; they all benefit some social interest group over another, or risk mobilizing some groups over others. This concept is relevant to understanding the politics of service delivery, even though service delivery is not explicitly discussed in relation to it.
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