

there are different kinds of both, this discussion begins, in the third section, with a typology of identities and interests. I distinguish four kinds of identity (corporate, type, role, and collective), and two of interest (objective and subjective). Each identity has associated needs or objective interests, and actors' understandings of these in turn constitute the subjective interests that motivate their action. The last section applies this framework to the concept of national interest. I define the national interest as the objective interests of state-society complexes, consisting of four needs: physical survival, autonomy, economic well-being, and collective self-esteem. I argue in conclusion that states' interpretations of these needs tend to be biased in a self-interested direction, which predisposes them to competitive, "Realist" politics, but that this does *not* mean that states are inherently self-interested.

This talk of states' nature brings me to my last objective, which I develop throughout the chapter but state explicitly only in the conclusion: I want to show that states are ontologically prior to the states system. The state is pre-social relative to other states in the same way that the human body is pre-social. Both are constituted by self-organizing internal structures, the one social, the other biological. In effect, what emerges in this chapter is a theory that is "essentialist" in certain key respects, which supports the key intuition that motivates individualist approaches to the states system. Since this book takes a constructivist approach to the states system this will require some explaining. Against anti-essentialists to the "left," like postmodernists, I argue that we can theorize about processes of social construction *at the level of the states system* only if such processes have exogenously given, relatively stable platforms. But against thicker essentialists to the "right," like Neorealists and Neoliberals, I defend a minimalist vision of these platforms, arguing that many of the qualities often thought to be inherent to states, like power-seeking and egoism, are actually contingent, constructed by the international system. To do systemic theory in IR one has to give some ground to an essentialist view of the state, but this still leaves a lot of room for constructivist theories of international politics.

## The essential state

In order to show how states are constituted as unitary actors we first need to be clear on what we mean by the state. This would be difficult

enough if we were dealing only with states, since the fact that states are not observable provides ample room for disagreements that are relatively unconstrained by evidence. Thus there are at least three significantly different conceptualizations – Weberian, Pluralist, and Marxist. But the task is made even more difficult by the fact that it seems impossible to define the state apart from "society." States and societies seem to be conceptually interdependent in the same way that masters and slaves are, or teachers and students; the nature of each is a function of its relation to the other. Weberian, Pluralist, and Marxist theories think about this relationship in different ways, differences that affect more than just their conceptualizations of the state. Pluralists and Marxists hesitate to define the state as an "actor" at all. In other words, it is not that state theorists disagree about whether the state is defined by X, Y, and Z or just X and Y, as if they were all talking about the same underlying phenomenon, but that they disagree about what the putative object is to which the term "state" is supposed to refer in the first place. To that extent their definitions of the state seem incommensurable, not just different; one might say that the state is an "essentially contested concept." Undaunted, in this section I first offer brief, stylized representations of the three theories with a view toward identifying a common referent object, and then discuss in more detail five properties which define the essential state.

### The state as referent object

Weberians define the state as an organization possessing sovereignty and a territorial monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence.<sup>17</sup> Two features of this definition stand out for my purposes here. The first is that the state is seen as an *organizational actor*. The Weberian view is the most anthropomorphic of the three – states have interests, make decisions, act in the world – and for that reason it is particularly well suited to systemic IR. The second is that this actor is seen as ontologically independent of society.<sup>18</sup> Weberians emphasize the functions that the state performs for society (internal order and external defense), but for Weber the state's nature is not conceptually dependent on society. For example, a state may happen to exist in a

<sup>17</sup> On Weber's definition of the state see (1978: 54), and for contemporary Weberians, Poggi (1990: 19), Tilly (1990: 1), and Mann (1993: 44–91).

<sup>18</sup> Poggi (1990: 20–21).

capitalist system but to Weberians this makes it nothing more than a "state-in-capitalism," not an inherently "capitalist state."

Pluralists are a mirror-image of Weberians. Whereas Weberians highlight the state's agency and differentiation from society, Pluralists attempt to reduce the state to interest groups and individuals in society. Classical Pluralists even denied the existence of "the state" altogether, saying it was nothing more than "government," the concrete individuals who head the state at any particular time (see below).<sup>19</sup> For Pluralists, the referent object of the term "state" differs from that of Weberians, if it is an object at all. In IR this society-centric approach is particularly useful for exploring the extent to which foreign policy behavior is affected by domestic politics; it has also become the basis for an emerging "Structural Liberal" theory of international politics.<sup>20</sup>

Marxist state theory can be seen as a framework for integrating these two perspectives. If the referent object of "state" for Weberians is an organizational actor, and for Pluralists is really just society, then for Marxists the referent is the *structure* that binds the two in a relationship of mutual constitution.<sup>21</sup> The state is "the enduring structure of governance and rule in society."<sup>22</sup> To say that this structure mutually constitutes state actors and society is to say that each is what it is only in virtue of its relation to the other. On this view, for example, a capitalist state is a structure of political authority (not an actor) that constitutes a society with private ownership of the means of production, and simultaneously constitutes a state actor that is authorized and required to protect that institution. In a sense, Marxists agree with both Weberians and Pluralists, since for Marxists state actors are "relatively autonomous" from society and yet not ontologically independent of it. But Marxists go beyond the others in emphasizing that neither state actor nor society can exist apart from the structure of political authority that constitutes them, any more than master and slave can exist apart from the structure of slavery.

<sup>19</sup> The Classical Pluralist position is represented by Bentley (1908) and Truman (1951), and more contemporary Pluralisms by Almond (1988).

<sup>20</sup> Moravcsik (1997).

<sup>21</sup> I am equating Marxism here with the "structural" or "neo-Marxist" tradition of Althusser (1970), Poulantzas (1975), and Jessop (1982); for other Marxist theories of the state see Carnoy (1984).

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin and Duvall (1985: 25).

All three of these state theories – one might call them organizational, reductive, and structural respectively – get at phenomena commonly denoted by the term "state." Each has a different referent object, only one of which (the Weberian state) is an "actor" at all. This is a book on systemic international politics, which assumes states are actors and so seems to privilege a Weberian approach. But when states interact they do so with their societies conceptually "in tow," and this calls for supplementing our conceptualization of the state with insights from a Marxist or Pluralist analysis. From this standpoint, in other words, the referent object of "the state" should be conceptualized as an organizational actor that is internally related to the society it governs by a structure of political authority, which in effect rolls all three views up into one.

### Defining the state

States take many forms – democratic, monarchical, communist, and so on – that reflect the structure of state-society relations. However, here I am interested only in what all states in all times and places have in common, in the "essential state" or "state-as-such." This is not to suggest that variations in the state do not matter to international politics. They clearly affect foreign policy, and in my view the logic of states systems as well. But in this chapter I am guided by the narrower concern of grounding systemic IR theory in a theory of how states are constituted as its moving parts. Since all states are actors this calls for a minimalist view of the state, stripped of its contingent forms. The purpose is not to help us analyze real historical states but rather to provide the necessary platform or "body" to begin doing systemic theory.

Anti-essentialists might argue that even a stripped down view of the state will be inappropriate because as social constructions states cannot have *any* transhistorical, cross-cultural essence.<sup>23</sup> I think states do have a common core, and must if we are to make sense. If states have nothing in common, then what distinguishes them from any other social kind? If the members of the Swedish state reorganize themselves as a bowling team but still call themselves a state, does that mean states can now take the form of bowling teams, or that

<sup>23</sup> For some postmodern interpretations of the state from which this conclusion might be drawn see Mitchell (1991), Campbell (1992), and Bartelson (1995).

Sweden is no longer a state? Can a state, in short, be *anything*? To my mind there seem to be significant constraints on what we can plausibly call a state, which I take to be their essential properties. On the other hand, the fact that states must have certain properties does not necessarily mean that these can be precisely specified, since social and even natural kinds have borderline cases. It might be useful, therefore, to think of the state as a fuzzy set, no element of which is essential but which tend to cohere in homeostatic clusters (chapter 2, pp. 59–60). The state does not seem particularly “fuzzy” as social kinds go, but it too has borderline cases,<sup>24</sup> which indicate that our emphasis should be on the cluster of properties, not individual ones.

The discussion in the preceding section suggests that the essential state has five properties: (1) an institutional-legal order, (2) an organization claiming a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence, (3) an organization with sovereignty, (4) a society, and (5) territory. (1) is the Marxist's state-as-structure, (2) and (3) the Weberian's state-as-actor, and (4) the Pluralist's state-as-society. (5) is common to all three. These properties form a homeostatic cluster, which provides a rationale for the familiar “billiard ball” model of states in systemic IR. Strictly speaking, however, only (2) and (3) refer to the state as an actor, and since in this chapter I am trying to clarify that notion it is important that my terminology be more precise. Thus, I will use the term “state” to denote the Weberian's organizational actor, “state structure” to denote the Marxists' structure of political authority, and Cox's<sup>25</sup> “state-society complex” to refer to all five properties at once. I now take up these properties in more detail.

### An institutional-legal order

The state understood as a structure of political authority is constituted by the norms, rules, and principles “by which conflict is handled, society is ruled, and social relations are governed.”<sup>26</sup> This structure distributes ownership and control of three material bases of power to state and societal actors: the means of production, the means of destruction, and the means of (biological) reproduction.<sup>27</sup> Different forms of state structure are constituted by how this distribution is organized. Capitalist state structures divide forms of power between

<sup>24</sup> Crawford (1979: 52–71). <sup>25</sup> Cox (1987).

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin and Duvall (1985: 25–26).

<sup>27</sup> If the last seems an unlikely candidate for state control, consider the current Chinese policy of one child per family.

capital, state, and family; totalitarian state structures consolidate them in state elites; and so on. Regardless of the particular distribution of political authority, however, state structures are power structures that both regulate the behavior of preexisting subjects, and constitute who those subjects are and what they are empowered to do.

State structures are usually institutionalized in law and official regulations. This stabilizes expectations among the governed about each other's behavior, and since shared expectations are necessary for all but the most elementary forms of social interaction, state structures help make modern society possible. Institutionalization also stabilizes expectations about the use of force within society by state actors, who are empowered by law to use violence to enforce the rules. Security from the arbitrary use of force by officials is crucial if people are to go about their daily lives, and state structures achieve this end by formalizing how and why state actors can coerce society. Broadly speaking, then, law is essential to state-society complexes. Any structure meriting the designation “state” will have a legal order.<sup>28</sup>

Institutional-legal orders constitute state-society complexes and as such include both state and societal actors within their reference. These complexes will be capable of varying degrees of agency depending on the character of the state structure. “Strong” state structures enable state actors to mobilize significant resources from society, and at the limit enable state and society to act routinely as a single agent. Systemic IR theorists implicitly assume that states are strong when they treat state-society complexes as billiard balls under the complete control of a state actor. In reality most state structures are considerably weaker than this, incapable of sustaining a perfect fusion of state and societal agency for any length of time. Thus, despite its limited potential for agency, the Marxist definition of the state as an institutional-legal order is best not seen as referring to an actor at all. It does not have identities, interests, or intentionality.

If we want to conceptualize state agency we need a Weberian view of the state. The connection to the Marxist view is that structures of political authority constitute state actors as organizations distinct from their societies, empowered with the right and duty to use force to secure those structures. This translates into two key functions: the maintenance of internal order, which involves reproducing the domestic conditions of society's existence; and the provision of external

<sup>28</sup> D'Entreves (1967).

defense, which protects the integrity of those conditions from other states. In order to fulfill these functions state actors are empowered by state structures with a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence and sovereignty, which constitute the second and third features of the essential state.

#### Monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence

States are specialists in the legitimate use of organized violence.<sup>29</sup> In Charles Tilly's<sup>30</sup> evocative terms, states are "protection rackets." In some societies state actors also control the means of production or even reproduction, but control over the means of destruction is the ultimate and distinctive basis of state power, and only this is essential to stateness.

"Organized violence" refers to the coordinated use of deadly force by a group. There are many kinds of violence that do not fit this description. Some refer to non-deadly force; states may engage in this as well, but so do private citizens (abusive spouses, bullies). Others refer to violence that is not really force, like the "structural" violence to which disadvantaged groups may be subject by structures of economic, racial, or other kinds of oppression. Still others refer to violence by individuals which is not generally done by groups (murder, rape), or which is done by groups but not organized (riots, mob violence). All of these forms of violence are important and can be found in varying degrees in world politics. In saying that we need to recognize the special role of organized violence in constituting the state, therefore, I do not mean to suggest that IR scholars should ignore other kinds of violence. But it is an essential and distinctive feature of state agency that states are capable of organized violence. Even states that have disbanded their armies, like Costa Rica, retain a capacity for it in their police. An organization incapable of organized violence would be hard pressed to qualify as a state.

The concept of a "monopoly" of violence is more problematic. Most modern states divide their coercive potential into two organizations, a police force for internal security and an army for external, and then further divide these into various functionally and territorially distinct organizations (local, provincial, and national police; army, navy, air force). What is it about this plethora of organizations that constitutes them jointly as a "monopoly"?

The conventional answer is that their command and control is centralized in the head of state. Ultimately in the state there is a single locus of authority to make decisions concerning the relationship between its various coercive arms. However, the fact that this authority may reside in a single individual is in some sense beside the point: his or her authority is in any case a function of the institutional-legal order, and if the same result could be achieved in a more decentralized fashion then for all practical purposes we would still have a monopoly of force. What matters in constituting monopoly is the effect of centralization, not centralization itself. This effect must be twofold. First, the coercive agencies of the state must be *non-rivals* in the sense that they do not settle their disputes (for example, over budgets or jurisdiction) by force. In IR this is known as a "security community"<sup>31</sup> which Deutsch argues can be either "pluralistic" (decentralized) or "amalgamated" (centralized) as in the modern state. Second, coercive agencies must be *unified* in the sense that each perceives a threat to others as a threat to itself, so that all defend against it together. In IR this is known as "collective security," in which actors define their individual security in terms of the collective, on the principle of "all for one, one for all." This requirement goes beyond non-rivalry, since non-rivals might be indifferent to each other's fate; unified actors are not.

Centralized states achieve non-rivalry and unity by subsuming coercive agencies under a single point with the authority to command obedience, but the same effect could be achieved by institutional mechanisms that relied on a decentralized consensus, as in a cartel. For example, when it comes to military security, a well-functioning collective security system like NATO does not seem essentially different than the security system of a territorial state like Brazil. In both cases functional and territorial responsibilities regarding the use of force are delegated to non-rival agencies with considerable autonomy in their domain, and a physical threat to one will be seen as a threat to all. From the standpoint of outside aggressors both systems will be *de facto* "monopolies" of force. This suggests the possibility of decentralized or "international" state structures that do not have a single head but are still capable of institutionalized collective action.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Deutsch, *et al.* (1957).

<sup>32</sup> On the concept of an international state see, Cox (1987), Picciotto (1991), Wendt (1994), Caporaso (1996), and Shaw (1997).

<sup>29</sup> Foggi (1990: 21).

<sup>30</sup> Tilly (1985).

The most conceptually troublesome requirement here is that a monopoly of organized violence be "legitimate." The state must have not just the ability to maintain the monopoly, but a *right* to do so which members of society accept even in the absence of coercion or self-interest.<sup>33</sup> This is a problem because a state's right is almost always being contested by someone somehow somewhere, and as such legitimacy is in the eyes of the beholder. What about drug cartels that exercise monopolies of force in the territories they control over people who willingly support them? Or totalitarian states where people cannot express their true feelings? Is tacit consent sufficient for legitimacy? What about non-violent resistance to the state, like tax evasion or refusal to say a pledge of allegiance? Is legitimacy a matter of majority opinion? And so on.

These are hard questions that I cannot answer here. They can be side-stepped for IR purposes, however, by privileging the state's *claim* to a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence, and treating that claim as a right until it is clear that popular opposition has made it impossible to sustain. The problem with this move, of course, is that the state's capacity for violence enables it to defend its "legitimacy" by force if necessary, which means that in some cases there may be a big gap between claim and reality. Moreover, it is precisely this kind of analytical privileging that helps states reproduce their claim, which illustrates how the epistemic aspects of the states systemic project support its political aspect. Given an interest in how states *systems* work, however, what matters is the efficacy of the state's monopoly, not its legitimacy.

### Sovereignty

State structures also constitute state actors with sovereignty, which is in turn traditionally divided into "internal" and "external" sovereignty.<sup>34</sup>

Internal sovereignty means that the state is the supreme locus of political authority in society. After all is said and done, it is states, rather than the Church, corporations, or private citizens who have the right to make final, binding political decisions – indeed, to decide what is (officially) "political" in the first place.<sup>35</sup> The fact that this is a "right" is crucial. Sovereignty is not about *de facto* freedom of action

relative to society, or "state autonomy,"<sup>36</sup> but about being recognized by society as having certain powers, as having *authority*. These powers may be limited, as in the night-watchman state, or extensive, as in the totalitarian, but as rights they are legal rather than political facts, *de jure* rather than *de facto*.<sup>37</sup> Democratic states are no less sovereign than fascist states, despite the greater domestic constraints they face.

The emergence of the doctrine of popular sovereignty in the eighteenth century complicates this simple conclusion. Popular sovereignty removes ultimate authority to the people, such that if they perceive a state as illegitimate they have the right to revolt, which would seem to undermine the whole idea of "state" sovereignty.<sup>38</sup> Even so, however, a democratic state will still have *de facto* sovereignty insofar as it remains a distinct organization delegated to make decisions and enforce the law on society's behalf. The people may have ultimate authority over this organization, but short of a collapse of state legitimacy the state will be sovereign in all but name.

This relates to the vexed question of whether sovereignty can be divided. Bodin and Hobbes argued that sovereignty must be concentrated in a single person, but contemporary opinion generally holds that it can be disaggregated<sup>39</sup> – by functions (executive, legislative, judicial), levels (local, provincial, national, perhaps international), or issue areas (economic, military, welfare). The view that sovereignty can be "unbundled" enables us to grasp the fact that heads of state today do not have unlimited authority, but as Bodin and Hobbes foresaw, it does create the problem of how to conceptualize the state's unity. Where is the state's sovereignty if it is not concentrated in a single person?<sup>40</sup>

One answer is to recognize that, even as a property of state actors, sovereignty is really a property of a structure. The Weberian conceptualization of the state as an actor itself refers to a structure – not the structure denoted by the Marxist definition of the state-as-structure, which includes society, but the *organizational* structure that constitutes the state as a corporate agent (see below). This "physiological" structure relates the various individuals and bureaucracies which make up a state actor to each other, assigning functional, territorial, or issue-area sovereignties within a framework of rules and procedures

<sup>33</sup> Nordlinger (1981).

<sup>34</sup> D'Entreves (1973: 316).

<sup>35</sup> For a good discussion of the difficulties of specifying the locus of sovereignty see Bartelson (1995: 12–52).

<sup>37</sup> Dickinson (1927).

<sup>38</sup> See Antholis (1993).

<sup>33</sup> Hurd (1999).

<sup>35</sup> Thomson (1995).



for settling jurisdictional conflicts and ensuring their harmonious operation. The argument here is similar to that made above about the state's monopoly of force: what gives a state sovereignty in the face of its internal division is an organizational structure of *non-ritual, unified authority* that enables its parts to work together as a unit or "team." In this light we can see why it is difficult to find sovereignty in the modern state, since structures do not have a single location. The sovereignty of a state actor only becomes apparent when we look at the structure through which its parts become a corporate whole.

In contrast to these difficulties, the concept of external sovereignty is relatively straight-forward, denoting merely the absence of any external authority higher than the state, like other states, international law, or a supranational Church – in short, "constitutional independence."<sup>41</sup> As with internal sovereignty it is important to emphasize that the issue here is not one of autonomy. Rising international interdependence means that states increasingly are subject to powerful external constraints on their action. This creates a gap between their *right* to do what they want and their ability to *exercise* that right, but it does not mean that outsiders have "authority" over states. Authority requires legitimacy, not mere influence or power.

Nevertheless, there is an important difference between external sovereignty that is recognized by other states and external sovereignty that is not. When the Aztec and Spanish states encountered each other in 1519 they both were constitutionally independent, but at least Spain did not recognize (in the sense of "accept") this, and as such considered the Aztecs fair game for conquest. One of the important contributions of constructivist IR scholarship has been to emphasize the role of mutual recognition of external sovereignty in mitigating the effects of international anarchy,<sup>42</sup> and this forms a key part of the argument in chapter 6. However, what I want to emphasize here is that a state can have external sovereignty even if it is *not* recognized by other states. In Hobbesian international systems states may *claim* external sovereignty, but others do not recognize it as a *right*; external sovereignty is *de facto* or "empirical" only.<sup>43</sup> In Lockean international systems, however, states do recognize each other's sovereignty as a right. External sovereignty is here "juridical," not merely empirical.

<sup>41</sup> James (1986).

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Ruggie (1983a, 1993), Strang (1991), Wendt (1992), and Biersteker and Weber, eds. (1996).

<sup>43</sup> Jackson and Rosberg (1982).

This has significant implications for foreign policy: states that recognize each other's sovereignty tend not to conquer each other, not because they cannot, but because recognition implies a willingness to live and let live.

In contrast to some constructivists,<sup>44</sup> then, in my view sovereignty does not presuppose a society of states. Sovereignty is intrinsic to the state, not contingent. Empirical statehood can exist without juridical statehood. Recognition confers upon states certain powers in a society of states, but freedom from external authority *per se* does not presuppose it. This is an important source of the essentialist character of my argument, and I come back to it below.

### Society

State actors are constituted by state structures with political authority over societies, and as such conceptually presuppose their societies. State actors are differentiated from their societies, but internally related to them: no society, no state. Thus, even though in this book I am concerned with relationships between state actors, and for that reason use the term "state" in the Weberian sense to denote an organization, we cannot understand the behavior of these actors without considering their internal relation to society. The content of this relation will depend on the form taken by state structures. Fascist, communist, and democratic structures create very different relationships between state and societal actors, even if in this section we are interested only in what is inherent to all state-society relationships.

What, then, is "society"? This question obviously cannot be answered here, but let me offer some intuitions that could in principle be developed into an argument. It seems useful to proceed by separating these intuitions into constitutive and causal issues.

The constitutive issue concerns the conceptual requirements for being a society. There seem to be at least two. One is that people have shared knowledge that induces them to follow most of the rules of their society most of the time. Although stateless societies exist, complex societies all have states, and as such many of these rules will normally be codified in law. The other requirement of society is that it have boundaries. These might be fuzzy, as in the case of frontier regions that are only loosely subject to state authority. But as long as there is more than one state there will be more than one society, since

<sup>44</sup> For example, Giddens (1985: 255–293).

each state has its own rules which the members of its society are expected to follow. To say that states and societies are internally related in a state-society complex means that not only is the state constituted by its relationship to society, but so is society constituted by the state.

The causal question concerns where societies come from. Common sense suggests two types of causes, bottom-up and top-down. On the one hand, there are important aspects of social life that seem prior to the state. Human beings are group animals, so much so that a case can be made that the most elementary unit in the "state of nature" was the group rather than the individual.<sup>45</sup> Group identities (from tribe to clan to nation, among others) are based first and foremost on things like language, culture, religion, and ethnicity. These things sometimes are effects of state policy, but some groups existed long before there were states, and some have endured despite states. To that extent these groups can be thought of as self-organizing social facts welling up from the "bottom" of the human experience.<sup>46</sup> Self-organizing group identities are still "constructions" (what else could they be?), but relative to states and states systems, these constructions are often external or exogenous.

Let me emphasize that in suggesting that societies may have self-organizing qualities I do not mean to suggest that this is always or even largely the case. The emergence of states, in which coercive resources become monopolized by political-military elites, creates enormous potential for constructing societies from the top-down. Indeed, since a law-abiding society is a more efficient basis for a state than an unruly, resentful subject population, this will often be a key goal of state policy. Education policy tries to teach children to become loyal citizens; language policy tries to build solidarity by erasing communal differences; foreign policy tries to convince people they face a common danger from external Others.<sup>47</sup> These policies all are backed up, if necessary, by organized violence. Given the power at states' disposal, however, one cannot help but be impressed with the extent to which their efforts to construct societies (let alone nations) can founder on the rocks of preexisting group identities. A potential key factor in constructing societies, therefore, is the extent to which

<sup>45</sup> Alford (1994).

<sup>46</sup> See Smith (1989).

<sup>47</sup> Campbell (1992); also see Walker (1993: 125–140).

the boundaries and policies of the state coincide with the boundaries and needs of the preexisting groups subject to its rule.

### Territory

In addition to societies, states are also internally related to territory. No territory, no state. States are not literally the same thing as territories, but in an important sense Michael Mann is right that "the state is . . . a place."<sup>48</sup> The term "territory" itself suggests the connection, joining the Latin *terra* ("earth" or "land") to *torium* ("belonging to" or "surrounding," presumably the state).<sup>49</sup> In this respect the authority of states is unlike the authority of churches or firms, neither of which is intrinsically territorial in character. State authority is.

An important implication of this is that an inquiry concerned with relations *among* states must take territory as in some sense given, in the same way that sociology must take as given the fact that people have spatial extension. This is not to say that we should never problematize territory "all the way down," but in doing so we should recognize that such a move changes the subject. Rather than a sociology of the states system we would be engaged in a "biology" of the state. On the other hand, the fact that territoriality is in some sense exogenous to states systemic theory does not mean it is in every sense exogenous. An important contribution of critical IR scholarship in the last decade has been to show that there are important aspects of territoriality which should not be treated as given by students of international politics.<sup>50</sup> This has both constitutive and causal aspects.

At least two points have emerged on the constitutive side. First, even though territory must have boundaries of some kind if it is to be anything more than simply land (which would make a state's internal relation to territory trivial, since people do not live in the water), the breadth and depth of this boundary may vary. In the modern world we are used to thinking of territorial boundaries as vanishing thin lines on a map, so that the state's spatial extension is precisely delimited. A state is complete up to its boundary, and then disappears equally completely as we cross it. Yet historically there have been many organizations with a monopoly of organized violence over some land, but the precise boundaries of which were contested,

<sup>48</sup> Mann (1984: 187).

<sup>49</sup> Gottmann (1973: 16). For discussion of some interesting ambiguities in this etymology see Baldwin (1992: 209–10).

<sup>50</sup> Ruggie (1993), Walker (1993), Agnew (1994).

overlapping, or simply faded away into nothing. This was the case in the frontier zones of ancient empires, in the heterogeneous authority structures of medieval Europe, and is arguably reemerging today with the rise of a "neo-medieval" international system.<sup>51</sup> The question of whether medieval structures of political authority were "states" is difficult for reasons beyond their ambiguous territoriality,<sup>52</sup> but ancient empires seem very much like modern states except for the occasional imprecision of their boundaries. Some might say they were not "states" for exactly this reason, but this ignores the fact that all empires had geographical cores over which their monopoly of force was complete; does this mean they were states in some areas and not others? In my view the assumption that precise borders are inherent to states mistakes a contingent feature of the state for an essential one. A more fruitful approach would be to recognize that in principle states can have "fuzzy" boundaries, even if in practice they do not. This preserves our intuition that states must have some kind of boundary without prejudging the form it must take.

A second constitutive point is that even if the location of territorial boundaries is clear and constant, their social meaning can vary.<sup>53</sup> Realists tend to assume that territorial boundaries must also be boundaries of identity and interest, such that where a state's authority stops so must its conception of Self and interest. Yet this is not even true of people, who are more constrained by their bodies than states. Despite having basic needs that our physical constitution predisposes us to meet as individuals, most of us identify cognitively in varying degrees with some Others, and sometimes even sacrifice our lives for them. Below I agree with Realists that states too have basic needs that predispose them to conflate cognitive boundaries with territorial ones, and so to be self-interested. If this exhausted the possibilities for state identity then territorial boundaries would always have a "Hobbesian" meaning: walls of exclusion to be policed and defended at all costs. But as I suggest below and argue at length in subsequent chapters, states' territorial nature does not preclude expanding their sense of Self to include other states, and thus defining their interests in more collective terms. In that case territorial boundaries would take on a

<sup>51</sup> See, respectively, Kratochwil (1986), Ruggie (1983a), Bull (1977: 264–276).

<sup>52</sup> On the feudal state see Poggi (1990: 16–35).

<sup>53</sup> See especially Walker (1993) and Agnew (1994). The variable meaning of space is an important theme of the literature in radical geography; see Gregory and Urry *et al.* (1985).

"Lockean" or even "Kantian" meaning: still differentiating states, but embedding them within a larger "cognitive region"<sup>54</sup> that works together toward common ends.

If the constitutive questions about territorial boundaries concern where they are located and how they are meaningful, then the causal questions concern how and why they acquire the locations and meanings that they do. As with the causes of society here too we can distinguish between bottom-up and top-down causes. Thus, on the one hand, territories stem in part from self-organizing groups seeking to settle in relatively stable places,<sup>55</sup> which induces them to push out on the world around them. If there are no other groups in the area then boundaries will be determined by the interaction of a group's size and technology with the natural environment. Groups lacking navigational technology, for example, will find their borders constrained by oceans, whereas sea-faring groups will not. Even in the more usual situation where other groups are present, boundaries of a particular group will be determined in part by factors welling up from self-organizing processes that are exogenous to the states system. On the other hand, war and diplomacy between groups are clearly also important causes of territorial boundaries, and to that extent the process will have a systemic or top-down dimension. As Tilly puts it, not only do states make war but "war makes states,"<sup>56</sup> and a key aspect of that process is defining their boundaries. To that extent states are effects of boundary construction as much as they are its causes.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, systemic interaction is important not only in the initial determination of boundaries but in sustaining them over time. If boundaries are stable, this will either be because states have enough power to prevent others from changing them unilaterally, or because they recognize each other's borders as legitimate. Both involve ongoing causal interactions, and to that extent the construction of state boundaries is never a finished affair, even if it becomes unproblematic in some cases.

In sum, the essential state is an organizational actor embedded in an institutional-legal order that constitutes it with sovereignty and a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence over a society as a territory. The class of states may be somewhat "fuzzy" in practice, but it excludes lots of things from ever being states: dogs, trees,

<sup>55</sup> Sack (1986: 19); cf. Abbott (1995: 873).

<sup>56</sup> Tilly (1985).

<sup>57</sup> Adler (1997a).

<sup>58</sup> Abbott (1995).



football teams, universities, and so on. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize how stripped down this model is, which can be seen if we briefly consider what it does *not* attribute to the essential state. Being a state does not imply any particular political system, any particular mode of production, recognition by other states, nationalism, or undivided sovereignty. I argue below that it even does not imply self-interest. All of these involve contingent forms of state, not the essential state. Critics might reply that this definition is *so* stripped down that it is of little use for analyzing states in the real world, which necessarily take on various and complex forms. To be sure, but that was not my intention: it was to identify what is common to all discussions of how states are constructed by the states system.

A minimalist definition also has another virtue: it helps us see that the state is not an inherently modern phenomenon, and thus, once we have identified its motivational dispositions, as I purport to do below, it should be possible to develop transhistorical generalizations about its behavior.<sup>58</sup> The attempt to identify such generalizations has long been a staple of Realism, and animates several recent studies of international politics.<sup>59</sup> Critics may argue that these efforts are anachronistic because the term "state" has only been used since the thirteenth century,<sup>60</sup> which might be thought to imply that there were no states before then. To my mind this illustrates the problem with nominalist thinking. In the realist view, if there were organizations with sovereignty and a territorial monopoly on organized violence before the thirteenth century then there were states. And there clearly were: Greek city-states, Alexander the Great's empire, the Roman Empire, and so on. Social kinds are constituted by how they are organized, not by what they are called. This is not to say that there are no important dangers in making transhistorical claims, such as projecting contingent features of the modern state backward, and ignoring important differences in the systemic contexts in which states operate. This latter danger is especially likely if, as in Realism, structure is not conceptualized in cultural terms. These problems suggest that any valid transhistorical generalizations about the essential state will be very thin, but such generalizations are not ruled out altogether.

<sup>58</sup> Much the same point could be made about transcultural generalizations.

<sup>59</sup> See Watson (1992), Buzan and Little (1994), and Kaufman (1997); cf. Reus-Smit (1999).

<sup>60</sup> Harding (1994).

## "States are people too"

In the previous section I defined the state as an actor, but did not show that such talk refers to a real corporate being to which we can properly attribute human qualities like identities, interests, and intentionality. I have not yet shown, in other words, that the state has a "Self," as suggested, for example, by the Realist assumption that states are "self"-interested. The question of whether we can anthropomorphize corporate actors goes back at least to medieval debates about the Church. It concerned Hobbes, figured prominently in nineteenth and early twentieth century debates about the nature of the state and the corporation, and continues to interest scholars in a variety of disciplines today.<sup>61</sup> All sides seem to agree that corporate agency is actually a kind of *structure*: a structure of shared knowledge or discourse that enables individuals to engage in institutionalized collective action. (Not to be confused with the broader structures in which corporate agents might in turn be embedded, like structures of state-society relations.) But there is deep disagreement between nominalists and realists about the ontological status of this structure. Nominalists, who seem lately to hold the upper hand in IR scholarship, believe that corporate agency is just a useful fiction or metaphor to describe what is "really" the actions of individuals. Scientific realists believe it refers to a real, emergent phenomenon which cannot be reduced to individuals. In what follows I defend the realist view, explore the internal structure of corporate agency that makes it possible, and conclude with some thoughts on the limits to anthropomorphic talk about corporate agents. In my discussion I focus on states, but the argument is applicable to other forms of corporate agency as well.

### *On the ontological status of the state*<sup>62</sup>

One reason that centuries of debate have not solved the problem of corporate agency is that nominalists and realists each face difficulties.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Dewey (1926), Copp (1980), Coleman (1982), French (1984), Douglas (1986), Gilbert (1987), Tuomela (1989), Vincent (1989), Searle (1990), Sandelands and St. Clair (1993), and Clark (1994). Runciman (1997) looks to be a superb study of corporate personality that came out too late to address in this discussion.

<sup>62</sup> The heading is taken Ringmar (1996).