

# States and the State System

I. States, Nations, Nation-States

II. State Power

III. The State System

IV. Historical Development of the  
State System

# I. States, Nations and Nation-States

- **STATE:** A political actor with four traits
  - (1) territory
  - (2) population
  - (3) government
  - (4) sovereignty
- **Nation:** A group of people who feel a common bond because of shared history, language, culture, religion, ethnicity or race, etc.
- **Nationalism:** General sentiment or political ideology linking nation to state
- **Nation-State:** Idea that geographic area of state and nation should correspond.

# Nation-States

- Think of as a continuum between 'Pure Nation-States' and 'Multinational States'

"Pure"  
Nation-  
States



Multi-  
National  
States

# Nation-States

## Examples of 'Pure' and Multinational Nation-States



## II. State Power

**POWER:** the ability of an actor to get another actor to do what they want, even against their will

A function of:

- **Capabilities or 'Hard Power'** (population, military, economy, resources, geography, etc)
  - NOTE: Nau's definition of power limited to this.
- **Influence or 'Soft Power'** (values, reputation, credibility, trust)
- **Relational and Situational**

# III. The State System

- System = (1) interrelated units (actors in IR) and (2) patterns of interaction (or how IR works)
- STRUCTURE and PROCESS
- Sovereignty implies ANARCHY
  - lack of a higher authority (no 'world 911')
  - Anarchy increases importance of power
  - Hence interaction in anarchic international system largely determined by BALANCE OF POWER

# III. The State System

- Melian Dialogue (Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*): 'The strong do what they can, the weak suffer what they must'
- 'International State System' = ANARCHIC system of STATES (Structure) that is largely guided by the BALANCE OF POWER (Process)

# IV. Historical Development of the State System

## FEUDAL ERA:

- Catholic Church and Holy Roman Empire
- Two Revolutions and a Reformation
  - Commercial Revolution
  - Gunpowder Revolution
  - Protestant Reformation
- Thirty Years War (1618-48) and Peace of Westphalia (1648)
- The Strength of Weak States

# IV. Historical Development of the State System

## ERA OF MONARCHS (1700s)

- Absolutist Monarchies
- Wars among Kings
  - *Ultima Ratio Regnum* (“The final argument of Kings”)
- Wars of Limited Scope and Goals
- Professional, Mercenary Armies
- Era of European Expansion
- PROBLEMS: Challenge of Democracy & Rise of Nationalism/Popular Sovereignty

# IV. Historical Development of the State System

## ERA OF NATIONALISM (1800s)

- Napoleonic Wars
  - HEGEMONY: The primacy of one state over all others either globally, within a particular region, or within a particular area of activity (i.e., economic hegemony; cultural hegemony)
- Wars of Nation against Nation
  - Napoleonic France's *levee en masse* (draft)
- Congress of Vienna (1814-15) and 'Concert of Europe'
- Problems: Nationalism, Democracy, Industrialization and Unification of Germany

# IV. Historical Development of the State System

- IDEOLOGY AND SUPERPOWERS (1900s)
- World War I and 'Total War'
  - Treaty of Versailles (1919)
- World War II – 'Total War Continued'
- Cold War
  - Bipolar (US and USSR)
- Problems: Internal Weakness of USSR

# IV. Historical Development of the State System

## TRAITS OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

- STILL State-Centered and Anarchic
- 'Unipolar' Distribution of Power trending toward Multipolar with New Actors (China, India, Brazil)
- Vast Increase in the Number of Actors (States, IGOs, NGO's)
- Decreased Salience of Ideology?
  - 'End of History' or 'Clash of Civilizations'?
- Increasing Emphasis on Norms & Values that Transcend Sovereignty (i.e., Serbia and Ethnic Cleansing)