State Formation Patterns: China, European Countries, and Decolonized Countries

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Abstract: The exploration of state formation patterns is a multifaceted and intricate field of study, encompassing a range of factors such as geography, history, and culture. It is essential to comprehend different nations' various state formation models to gain a holistic understanding of their political, societal, and economic structures. This study seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of state formation patterns in diverse countries and elucidate their unique characteristics within their respective historical and cultural contexts. By examining historical facts and taking into account the geographical, historical, and cultural dimensions, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of the political, societal, and economic systems in China, European nations, and formerly colonized regions. These elements have given rise to distinct state formation traits in these areas, firmly rooted in their distinctive historical and cultural heritages. Furthermore, this analysis sheds light on the interconnectedness of these factors, offering a comprehensive perspective on state formation across the globe.

Keywords: state formation, China, nation-state, decolonized country

1.   Introduction

In political science, the state has always been a pivotal subject. Dating back to around 200 B.C., during China's Warring States period and Europe's Feudal Society period, the preliminary form of the state had already commenced. After evolving for thousands of years, the formation patterns of the state in China and Europe moved from comparable origins to their exclusive routes. Nonetheless, before the era of European colonialism, many regions worldwide were still without a state.

The First World War significantly impacted the shift from "empire" to "nation-state", driven by Europe. After the Second World War ended, the world moved towards multi-polarity. This resulted from decolonization, which saw more and more countries emerge and create new power structures, resulting in states covering almost the entire globe.

State formation is a complex process that is influenced by a range of factors. This paper examines the disparities between early Chinese and European states, European nation-states, states arising from revolutions, and decolonizing states. The author analyses the factors that influenced the formation of these states and understands the reasons that gave rise to the differences between these states from geographical, historical, and cultural perspectives, respectively.

This paper will employ a comparative research methodology to examine the variations in the patterns of state formation in China, European countries, and former colonies. The construction of their states will be analyzed through a meticulous comparison of historical facts and in-depth studies. By comparing their state-building processes, we aim better to understand the influence of different factors on state formation and investigate the underlying reasons. This is extremely important for comprehending political and social change and offers guidance and insights for subsequent research and policymaking.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Definition and Characteristics of the State

From a manifestation perspective, a state refers to a community within a specific geographical boundary. According to American jurist Hans Kelsen, in his 1952 publication - Principles of International Law, a state involves a territory, a population, and an independent and effective government, thus forming the three essential elements of a state [1]. Additionally, Craven has added the fourth component of sovereignty to the definition of a state [2]. This emphasizes that the state form is identified as an organizational unit with "sovereign characteristics" in various historical periods.)

2.2. The Concept and Meaning of State Formation.

There are currently various prevalent theories regarding the formation of the state.

The theory of the stages of state formation is the first one. According to Western legal theory, state formation has undergone three stages: the city-state, represented by the Greek city-states, the Empire (Macedonian or Roman Empire), and the modern nation-state. However, analyzing Chinese history and culture, the evolution of state forms can be categorized into three stages: Kingdom, Empire, and Republic. The distinction between the Kingdom and the Empire is marked by the reign of Emperor Qin Shihuang, who ruled over the world, earning him the title of Emperor. Similarly, the abdication of the Qing Emperor served as the dividing point between the Empire and the Republic of China.

Additionally, the social contract theory is of relevance. Rousseau presented a rational argument for the establishment of the state: humans have a desire to survive, the power of the individual is limited, and the protection of individual rights, pleasures, and property can be achieved more effectively in a society governed by a formal government rather than in a state of anarchy where everyone is only focused on their interests. The feasible solution is to come together and form a union, that is, the state [3].

Thirdly, Engels, in The Origin of the Private Family and the State, views the state as the outcome and expression of unresolvable class conflicts. In other words, the presence of the state signifies the unsolvability of class conflicts [4]. Marxism posits that the state is a political organization, serving as the power instrument of the ruling class, functioning as the political superstructure erected on a s pecific economic foundation. It is the most prominent segment of the superstructure and the violent machine used to enforce class domination.

3. Exemplary Comparative Analysis of State Formation

3.1. Similarities and Differences in Forming the Early Chinese and European States

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (656-221 BC), China was a monarchical state system similar to early modern Europe. In both instances, the formative phase experienced a prevalence of warfare, the founding of alliances, the emergence of a centralized bureaucracy, the

advancement of citizenship rights, and the expansion of global trade. Charles Tilly's hypothesis states that "wars create states and states wage wars" pertains to forming states in early modern Europe. However, the contemporary state already existed in ancient China, and its formation was also driven by military competition [5].

Around 200 BC, Qin unified the six states and established the first centralized empire in the history of China. Although the checks and balances system worked somewhat, the Qin state ultimately established a unified kingdom through annexation wars, thanks to clever tactical strategies and self-reinforcing reforms in a brutal environment of international competition.

In contrast, state formation in early modern Europe was hampered by internal power fragmentation and private interests. State power was transferred to private entrepreneurs and financiers, weakening the state's administrative, financial, and military structures. This fragmentation of power led to the incapacity of state institutions to exercise effective control and forced monarchs to compromise in their quest for a balance of power with social forces. This situation continued in early Europe due to the state's weak ruling logic, unable to curb the inclination towards decentralization of energy [6].

From the European perspective, it was far from certain that rule would emerge victorious in ancient China. During the unification process, the Qin Dynasty had to overcome obstacles, including geopolitical barriers, the costs of expansion, and the consolidation of their conquest. By contrast, the eventual institutionalization of checks and balances in modern Europe was not an automatic outcome, as ancient China's experiences demonstrate.

The pressures of international competition were so significant that they caused comparable inter-state divisions and wars of annexation for hegemony in ancient China and early Europe. However, due to variances in political structures and cultural perceptions, China and Europe followed divergent paths.

China implemented self-reinforcing reforms during the Warring States era, involving centralization and the establishment of a coercive unitary empire in response to external threats and internal strife. These modifications reinforced China's state power. Moreover, the politics of the Warring States period in China witnessed the rise of multiple rival states. These states implemented military, political, and economic reforms to gain the upper hand in the battle for dominance. They also preserved power dynamics by forming alliances and maintaining balances. In ancient China, this concept of equilibrium served to self-reinforce [6]. Most significantly, in Chinese history, the idea of a unified empire and centralized culture led to the formation of potent centralized states.

In contrast, Europe pursued a counterproductive approach to reform by curbing monarchical power via checks and balances and bolstering mechanisms of restraint and harmony within the state. Although balancing efforts existed amidst states, they depended more on warfare and competition to attain comparative advantage. In addition, Europe's history is characterized by constraints on monarchical power and local autonomy, which have contributed to a decentralized power structure of European states. Consequently, early European states confronted internal conflict, political fragmentation, and economic downturn, which resulted in a weakened sense of self.

3.2. The Formation of European Nation-states and the Factors Shaping Them

The formation of European states is a complex and rich history. In the medieval feudal society, numerous distinct feudal states emerged in their political, economic, and social dimensions. These states developed into the modern nation-states of today. As mentioned, the three fundamental elements of a nation-state include territory, population, and sovereignty. A nation's cultural and political identity is crucial in shaping the nation-state. Unifying people's cultural identity and shared political systems strengthen unitary links, forming a robust national identity [7].

England is a typical example, as it was fragmented into distinct kingdoms in the early Middle Ages. However, the Danish, Norwegian, and Norman invasions of the 9th to 11th centuries and the

unification of the English kingdoms in the 12th century led to the emergence of a united country. By the late 17th century, England and Scotland had formed a union, with King James I of England also becoming King of Scotland. This union was not formalized until the passing of the Act of Union in 1707. The Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century provided an ideological context for forming a nation-state identity. Britain's cultural, linguistic, and political systems took shape during this period, and many Britons began to identify themselves as English. Britain's imperial expansion peaked in the 19th century, resulting in colonies and influence worldwide. Britain's political and economic power effectively assumed control of the entire empire and enhanced national identity dominance throughout the UK. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Britain experienced a sequence of nation-building processes, including governmental reforms, infrastructure development, and the dissemination of education. These measures fortified the national identity and solidified Britain as a state-nation.

France is a nation-state with a rich history dating back to the medieval era when the Kingdom of France conquered and unified territories. In the 9th century, the Carolingian dynasty united French regions and established a centralized state. The successors of this dynasty gradually expanded their territories throughout France, introducing centralized monarchical power. At the same time, a French national identity slowly emerged. French became the official language, and the Kingdom of France established a French national consciousness. This national identity was based on a shared language, culture, and values. The French Revolution also enhanced France's national identity; concepts such as democracy and peace fostered a greater sense of unity among the French populace.

Spain is a multicultural nation-state that traces its origins back to the medieval Iberian Peninsula, where resistance to the rule of the Islamic Empire led to its formation. The Kingdom of Spain was established through the union of the Aragon and Castile kingdoms. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Spain expanded into the New World, engaging extensively in colonial activities and trade and achieving significant economic progress. Spanish served as the unifying language, and the Reformation, coupled with the wars against the Moors, played a role in the unification of the Kingdom of Spain and the formation of a national identity.

In the 10th and 11th centuries, the Holy Roman Empire's formation laid the groundwork for German unity. The German kings, who sought imperial power, established their authority in the diverse territorial states and integrated the German regions into a unified political system. Despite the political fragmentation of the German Empire, Germans gradually identified more strongly with their national identity and shared culture. Meanwhile, Italy completed its unification in the 19th century, overcoming its earlier division into various city-states and regions. Shared cultural, linguistic, and historical traditions underpin this process. The Italian Renaissance's rise contributed to the development of national consciousness, a crucial factor in unifying Italy. Additionally, the unification of Italy was aided by the efforts of several leaders and movements.

Overall, the establishment of the European states occurred through varying historical processes and characteristics. Nonetheless, they all originated from a feudal society due to the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the royal power. With the Reformation and the national churches' effects, identification with the state became associated with religion and nationality. The monarchs espoused the concept of "I am the state", establishing the basis for constructing the modern nation-state. Additionally, the genesis of these nation-states was characterized by shared language, culture, and history, as well as solidarity in rebuffing external aggression or internal secessionist movements. In this process, the focus on shared values and identity and the actions of leaders and movements were crucial in establishing these nations.

3.3. The Formation of New Forms of Government by Revolutions and the Influence of Ideology

Revolutionary movements are a particular category of historical event and a significant form of political transformation, often resulting in major state changes and new states. Establishing new nations frequently emerged as a critical outcome of many revolutionary movements. The French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Chinese Revolution are three representative examples demonstrating revolutionary movements as a means of state formation, often based on ideological principles.

The French Revolution is among the most crucial and influential revolutionary movements of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The revolution led to the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a new political order based on liberty and equality. French society underwent a radical political transformation by overthrowing the old regime. The idea of liberalism was widely preached, inspiring and motivating French people to participate and struggle. In the French Revolution, the development of the new state rested on the political ideals of freedom and equality.

The Russian Revolution was a significant revolutionary movement in the early 20th century, comprising the 1905 Revolution and the February and October Revolutions of 1917. The overthrow of the Tsarist dictatorship during the February Revolution was followed by the establishment of the Soviet regime after the October Revolution, which adopted Marxism and Communism as the state's ideology. The Russian Revolution resulted in the state's transition from a Tsarist dictatorship to a socialist political system, demonstrating the significant impact of socialist ideology on the formation of the new Russian state.

The revolution in China underwent several critical stages, including the Xinhai Revolution, the May Fourth Movement, and the one led by the Communist Party of China. These events resulted in the downfall of the Qing Dynasty, eradicated the feudal system that had persisted in China for millennia, and paved the way for the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought, as the ideologies of the new state, significantly influenced the development of China's political system. Contemporary China endorsed socialism and democracy, prioritizing national independence and social justice. Objective evaluations have been excluded, and simple and concise sentences are employed for improved comprehensibility. Technical term abbreviations are explained when first used, and a clear and logical progression of information is maintained throughout the sentence. There is no need for further revision as the text already adheres to the remaining principles.

A study of the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Chinese Revolution demonstrates that the ideologies created during the revolutions were crucial in shaping the new state. In each of these revolutions, a new political philosophy emerged, providing the participants of the revolutionary movements with guidance and a theoretical foundation for the political system of the new state. These revolutionary movements typically resulted in the reorganization of the state power structure, along with the implementation of a fresh political system. This then sparked profound alterations in social class relationships, ultimately culminating in the emergence of novel states [7]. These states' establishment frequently relied on an ideological motivation, such as liberalism, communism, or socialism.

3.4. Independence of Decolonized Countries after World War II

After World War II's conclusion, an extensive wave of decolonization occurred across the globe. In this phase, multiple emerging countries gradually established independent states by struggling for autonomy and breaking away from colonial regulation.

The African independence movement stood out as one of the most significant and victorious post-WWII decolonization movements. As the decades passed after the end of World War II, independence movements in African nations burgeoned rapidly. Many African countries obtained independence from colonial rule through political and diplomatic means. The achievement of African independence movements demonstrates the efforts of emerging countries to fight for national sovereignty and dignity. The African independence movement led to the independence of several emerging countries, including Kenya and Niger, which achieved autonomous development and state formation.

Additionally, the partition of India and Pakistan was crucial in state formation post-World War II in Asia. The British rulers in the Indian subcontinent failed to address the growing religious and political tensions adequately. To quell these tensions, they decided to partition the country and create two separate nations, India and Pakistan. The partition's implementation resulted in the formation of independent states. This state formation process effectively showcased how emerging countries viewed autonomy and religious freedom during decolonization. India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan's partition enlightened other countries and motivated them to take responsibility for their fate.

After World War II, the trend of decolonization in emerging countries resulted in the formation of numerous new states. The Indo-Pakistani partition and the African independence movements are examples of this significant shift. These newly formed states strived for national autonomy and dignity by securing independence and breaking free from colonial rule. These patterns of state formation suggest that after the Second World War, a model of state formation founded on the principles of autonomy and national independence started supplanting the prior colonial rule model.

4. Analysis of Differences in State Formation

4.1. A Comparison of Formation Patterns

State formation in China underwent a relatively long and complex process, spanning several dynasties and political experiments. Competition and cooperation are common human traits, often manifesting as violence [8]. Nevertheless, China's history exhibits a greater degree of unity. Although China also experienced periods of political division and underwent a transition from a kingdom to a republic, successive rulers prioritized unifying the country as a central goal. They were eventually replaced by unified dynasties or states.

Unlike early European states, China's formation was not typically associated with a feudal and lordship system, was less fragmented, and did not see the emergence of multiple independent states and political entities. For this reason, European states and early China transitioned from similar development patterns to disparate political systems. In the 15th century, European countries highlighted their nation's shared history and culture, dissolving ethnic boundaries and disparities and forging a sense of belonging and identity through historical representation and cultural construction. As a consequence, European nations slowly evolved and fused into nation-states.

Anti-colonial conflicts often accompanied decolonized states' creation, and nationhood was attained via the struggle for independence and detachment from colonial authority. Nonetheless, unlike their European counterparts, decolonized states' formation was characterized by increased exclusionary responses, with civil wars and separatist movements being less prevalent. Among the negative consequences of colonialism on the political arena of decolonized nations, the prominence of secession and civil strife are noteworthy. In Africa, for instance, numerous regimes following independence could not manage their military forces, which led to frequent coups. The ongoing issues of Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and Taiwan also pose significant challenges for China's new administration.

4.2. Influences of Various Factors

4.2.1. Geographical Factor

Geographical factors have a significant impact on State formation patterns. China's geography proves a vital determinant of the nation's unity and centralized political structure. Natural barriers, like the Tien Shan Mountain range, the Yangtze River, and the Yellow River, have historically defined China's boundaries, limiting geographic exchanges and contact while making unification relatively more straightforward. Simultaneously, China's centralized system was shaped to ensure a unified regime controlled the entire country.

In contrast, European geography is significantly more diverse. Europe has numerous mountain ranges, rivers, and oceans, posing natural barriers and distance challenges—this geographical diversity results in more difficulty in unifying and centralizing European countries. In Europe, natural boundaries between individual countries and regions have contributed to forming relatively independent political entities. Various countries and regions possess political and economic power, maintaining relatively independent governmental institutions and decision-making abilities.

4.2.2. Historical Factors

Historical factors have profoundly influenced state formation patterns. China boasts a long tradition and culture that significantly impacted its unification and centralization. Throughout Chinese history, unifying dynasties like the Qin, Han, and Ming established centralized political systems that emphasized the absolute nature of monarchical power. This tradition has normalized unification and centralization in Chinese history.

In contrast, early European state history was influenced by conflicts amongst numerous tribes, kingdoms, and empires. The formation of the European state was characterized by a lengthy period of war, disagreements, and unification endeavors. These historical occurrences resulted in the establishment of a decentralized political system in Europe. The progression of the conventional concept of decentralization played a crucial part in developing a decentralized power structure within European states. The unification and centralisation of European states were accomplished via political alliances and diplomatic consultations rather than through a commanding central authority.

In newly formed states that arose from inner revolutions, specific events and decisions that transpired in history due to ideology had a lasting influence on the state's progress. This, in turn, determined the trajectory of the evolution of state institutions and social structures and path dependency in state formation [9].

Decolonized states, however, are significantly impacted by the enforced divisions of the colonial era. Colonialism has left a weighty historical burden on the colonized nations. The artificial state, carved with the interests of the colonial powers at its core, has led to communal divisions and border disputes that seem to have no resolution [10].

4.2.3. Cultural Factor

Cultural factors play a significant role in state formation, with Confucianism strongly influencing China. Confucianism emphasizes the importance of family and social stability, as well as the absolute power of the monarchy. This provided an ideological foundation for the centralized government system in China, leading to the development of a unified culture and shared values. According to Huntington, China is a civilization disguised as a state [11]. Several dynasties have risen and fallen over time since the Qin Dynasty's unification of China. However, after the collapse of each declining dynasty, the new ruling power took responsibility for the unification of the entire country. It recognized itself as China, with Chinese culture serving as the core cohesive force of the nation.

On the other hand, European countries' religious diversity, such as the various branches of Catholicism and Christianity, and the emphasis on individual freedom's value contributed to creating a decentralized political system. The Reformation and Enlightenment in Europe also played a role in establishing a decentralized government model that prioritized individual rights and independent decision-making. During the formation process, European nations preserved their unique cultures and languages. National identity and pride were reinforced through the use of respective languages and institutions and through actions like colonialism. Anderson has noted that nations evoke a primitive, self-sacrificing love resulting from the nationalist fraternity's "deep horizontal comradeship" [12].

Colonial history and national liberation movements frequently influence decolonized countries' formation. These countries were previously colonies and achieved independence through national liberation movements. Their political systems and historical backgrounds were shaped by their former colonial powers. Typically, they have adopted democratic and federal systems to guarantee a balance of rights and interests among different ethnic and religious groups. This political system manifests colonialism's legacy, marked by significant ethnic, religious, and social conflicts. To achieve political stability amidst multicultural societies and overcome inter-ethnic and inter-religious challenges, such countries have embraced democratic and federal systems.

5. Conclusion

In summary, geographical, historical, and cultural factors have played an essential role in the state formation patterns of China, European countries, and decolonized countries, and together have shaped these countries' political, social, and economic structures. These factors have led these countries to exhibit specific differences in their state formation patterns, reflecting each country's uniqueness and particular historical and cultural background.

China's geographical features and long historical traditions profoundly impacted its unification and centralization. In contrast, geographical diversity and historical traditions of decentralization have led to the formation of decentralized power structures in European countries. On the other hand, the shape of decolonized states was influenced by the history of colonialism and national liberation movements, which adopted democratic and federal systems to address multicultural societies' political and social problems.

These factors have shaped these countries' political, social, and economic structures. Geographical features determine the unity of the state and the possibility of centralization. Historical traditions shape the political systems and modes of governance in different countries, while cultural factors influence the values and political culture of the state.

It is important to note that the impact of different factors on the pattern of state formation is interrelated, and no single factor can fully explain the differences in state formation across countries. Geographical factors and historical contexts shaped the unity and decentralization of the Chinese and European states, while cultural factors produced different political and social structures.

In addition, the different patterns of state formation were influenced by various other factors, such as international factors. The wave of colonialism had a profound effect on the decolonizing states. At the same time, the collapse of the great powers indirectly led to the formation of many emerging states.

The complexity and diversity of state formation patterns is a critical issue that needs further research for a deeper understanding and analysis. Although this paper has already mentioned the influence of geography, history, and culture on state formation patterns, this is only a preliminary exploration, and there are many other factors and interrelationships between factors that deserve further study.

One example is the impact of globalization and modernization on patterns of state formation. As globalization and modernization accelerate, patterns of state formation face new challenges and changes. For example, globalization may weaken state power and power shifts, as well as the impact of nationalism and multiculturalism on national identity. Studying the effects of globalization and modernization on state formation patterns is an essential area of research. In addition, the geographical variability and historical evolution of state formation patterns should be considered. State formation patterns may be different in different regions and different historical periods. For example, other historical and cultural factors may influence state formation patterns in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Therefore, comparing patterns of state formation in different regions and historical periods can provide a more thorough understanding of the diversity and complexity of state formation. These further studies can provide a deeper understanding and insight into patterns of state formation.

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