PhD Seminar on State Formation

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Description: This is a seminar about why states form, what types of states form, and what they do. Over the course of the semester we will review what both current and classic work has to say about state formation. The first requirement for this course is that students do the reading (prior to class) and participate actively in class discussion. The second requirement is that each student present two papers over the course of the semester. We will discuss the format in class. The third requirement is a research paper with a topic to be determined in advanced with the instructor.

1. Anarchy

2. Primary States (Theories)

3. Primary States (Evidence)

1
4. Controlling Violence


5. State Capacity (Theories)

- Max Weber “Bureaucracy” in his Economy and Society.vol.2, pp.956-1005
- Timothy Besley and Torsten Persson (2011) Pillars of Prosperity. Ch.1-4

6. State Capacity (Evidence)
• Strengthening State Capabilities: The Role of Financial Incentives in the Call to Public Service, Quarterly Journal of Economics 128(3), August 2013

7. Executive Constraints and Limited Rule (Part 1)

• Weingast, Barry R. “The political foundations of democracy and the rule of the law.“ American political science review 91.02 (1997): 245-263.

8. Executive Constraints and Limited Rule (Part 2)


9. Public Debt

• Stasavage, David States of Credit Princeton University Press. (2012)


10. Property Rights & Contract Enforcement


11. Power, Consent, & Compliance


12. The Number and Size of States (Part 1)


13. The Number and Size of States (Part 2)


14. Nations

- Keith Darden. Resisting Occupation: Mass Literacy and the Creation of Durable National Loyalties. Cambridge University Press. (201?). Read chapters 1-5; skim chapter 6

15. Norms, Sovereignty, & Contemporary State Formation In the International System


