

Introduction

In doing research some years ago on the relationship between public finance and political transformation of the state,¹ I was struck by two interesting phenomena. One was the intensive collaboration between state and society over infrastructural facilities and even defense in England between 1600 and 1640, Japan between 1820 and 1853, and China between 1820 and 1840, periods when each state was encountering sustained fiscal difficulties. Such state–society collaboration in public goods provision such as famine relief, water control projects, and even national defense contributed significantly to the resilience of these early modern states with limited fiscal capacities.² The other was the popular demands to reduce military expenditure and the tax burden in England after the 1750s and in Japan between 1890 and 1895. The recent establishment of modern fiscal states had greatly enhanced the state capacity of both England and Japan, and yet the question of whether the state should spend more on domestic welfare or instead on foreign wars or military expansion was the subject of serious public debate. Late nineteenth-century China, by contrast, remained a traditional fiscal state; despite a somewhat enhanced state capacity, it faced much less acute conflict over such issues than did England or Japan.

The tension between domestic welfare and foreign wars poses challenges to the dominant paradigm that takes warfare as the driving force of state formation. Is the state capacity exhibited in domestic governance

¹ Wenkai He, *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State: England, Japan and China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

² He, *Paths toward the Modern Fiscal State*, 10.

simply a byproduct of its capacity developed for fighting foreign wars? Or is the state's ability to take care of domestic welfare different from its capacity to launch wars? Likewise, how shall we account for the surprisingly close collaboration of state and society in public goods provision given the hierarchical political order of the early modern state? What is its relationship to the popular contention that has figured so largely in our understanding of state formation and political change? What was the political nature – and the consequences – of the participation of social actors in public goods provision in nondemocratic systems in the early modern era? Attempting to answer these questions pushed me to reexamine state formation from the perspective of how the state legitimates its power by providing public goods necessary for domestic governance.

The state's provision of public goods such as infrastructural facilities plays a vital role in both domestic governance and economic development.³ In authoritarian regimes, the state often appeals to its performance in the safeguarding of socioeconomic welfare to justify a power that is not acquired through free and fair elections.⁴ Even in well-governed democracies, the legitimacy of the state is also undergirded by its specific performance in social welfare.⁵ The failure of a democratic state to meet the basic welfare needs of its citizens can increase the likelihood of its collapse.⁶

³ Timothy Besley and Torsten Persson, "The Origins of State Capacity: Property Rights, Taxation, and Politics," *American Economic Review* 99, no. 4 (September 2009): 1218–44; Mark Dincecco and Gabriel Katz, "State Capacity and Long-Run Economic Performance," *Economic Journal* 126, no. 590 (February 2016): 189–218; Mark Dincecco and Mauricio Prado, "Warfare, Fiscal Capacity, and Performance," *Journal of Economic Growth* 17, no. 3 (2012): 171–203; Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Ben W. Ansell and Johannes Lindvall, *Inward Conquest: The Political Origins of Modern Public Services* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

⁴ For the contribution of good governance to legitimating authoritarian states, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968); Francis Fukuyama, "What Is Governance?" *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 26, no. 3 (July 2013): 347–68; Francis Fukuyama, "Governance: What Do We Know, and How Do We Know It?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19 (2016): 89–105; Dingxin Zhao, "The Mandate of Heaven and Performance Legitimation in Historical and Contemporary China," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 3 (November 2009): 424–28.

⁵ For the relationship of state performance in welfare to the legitimacy of liberal democratic states, see Bo Rothstein, "Creating Political Legitimacy: Electoral Democracy versus Quality of Government," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 3 (November 2009): 311–30.

⁶ Jessica Fortin, "Is There a Necessary Condition for Democracy? The Role of State Capacity in Postcommunist Countries," *Comparative Political Studies* 45, no. 7 (2012): 903–30; Nancy Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

The state's performance in public goods provision is thus closely connected to the justification of state power to society. However, the implications of the state's provision of public goods for state legitimacy and state–society interactions in the process of state formation have long been neglected in the literature, which instead focuses on the contribution of warfare, religion, and the networks of royal households to state formation.⁷

Economic historians have recently noted that the development of a market economy benefits greatly from the provision of public goods by non-market means, particularly the active role played by local communities and regional associations.⁸ Inspired by historical research on early modern England, Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson argue that good governance in Tudor and early Stuart England mainly resulted from the participation in local governance of the “middling sort of people”: yeomen, craftsmen, traders, and so on. These unsalaried amateurs – rather than salaried state bureaucrats – occupied the lower levels of the early modern English state by serving as parish officials and local constables; they also managed local public goods such as repairs of roads, bridges, and river banks, as well as providing poor relief.⁹ The inclusion of transportation facilities, river control, and poor relief makes public goods more broadly defined than in the standard economic theory of state capacity, which mainly treats defense as a public good.¹⁰ This inclusion, however, implies that we need to go beyond the contribution of local communities that Acemoglu and Robinson have highlighted. Large-scale and cross-regional infrastructural facilities are obviously beyond the ability of local communities. Moreover, in the case of cross-regional or cross-sectoral conflicts of interest, a higher authority above local society is a necessary condition of peaceful resolution.

⁷ Charles Tilly, ed., *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Philip Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Philip Gorski and Vivek Swaroop Sharma, “Beyond the Tilly Thesis: ‘Family Values’ and State Formation in Latin Christendom,” in *Does War Make States? Investigations of Charles Tilly’s Historical Sociology*, ed. Lars Bo Kaspersen and Jeppe Strandsbjerg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 98–124; Julia Adams, *The Familial State: Ruling Families and Merchant Capitalism in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

⁸ Masayuki Tanimoto and R. Bin Wong, eds., *Public Goods Provision in the Early Modern Economy: Comparative Perspectives from Japan, China, and Europe* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

⁹ Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, “Paths to Inclusive Political Institutions” (working paper, Department of Economics, MIT, Cambridge, MA, January 2016).

¹⁰ Besley and Persson, “The Origins of State Capacity,” 1218–44.

The central theme of this book is to explore the political nature, process, and significance of the state's involvement in public goods provision in state formation. I argue that such participation is vital to domestic governance, the legitimation of state power, and the development of state capacity. Instead of viewing state formation simply as a process of overcoming resistance from society, I emphasize an interdependence between the state and society in overcoming various problems of domestic welfare. In particular, I argue that the state's role in public goods provision is intimately tied to its efforts to legitimate its power to society by proclaiming a duty to safeguard the public interest of the realm. This public interest-based discourse of state legitimation provides a common normative platform upon which both state and social actors can collaborate to complement their respective weaknesses in the public goods provision vital to domestic governance. The state capacity exhibited in and developed by such provision is of a different nature from that measured by fighting foreign wars.

Before I discuss the logic of case selection and comparability of England between 1533 and 1780, Japan between 1640 and 1895, and China between 1684 and 1911 in this comparative historical analysis of state formation, let us first look more closely at the meaning of public interest. In particular, the organic conception of public interest is the linchpin connecting provision of specific public goods to the general issues of domestic governance and state legitimacy in early modern politics, as is the conception of "passive rights" derived from the state's duty to the public interest. This theoretical framework that connects discourses on public interest with state performance in domestic governance ultimately casts new light on the ramifications for state formation of state–society interactions surrounding public goods.

Public interest or the common good is widely held to be vital to state legitimacy.¹¹ In the early modern world, public interest was typically substantive; it was often associated with concrete public goods: relief from famine or disaster, or provision of infrastructural facilities, for example. But public interest as a concept is, and was, flexible. Its different dimensions might include domestic welfare, national interest, and/or a non-material good, such as a particular religion or a specific conception of a good life.¹² Then as now, it could be stretched and adapted by state and social actors to respond to changing socioeconomic conditions.

¹¹ See Bruce Gilley, *The Right to Rule: How States Win and Lose Legitimacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 4.

¹² In this book I use "public interest," "public good," and "common good" interchangeably to refer to the interest believed to be common to one political community or to the state. When referring to public interest in regard to domestic welfare, I sometimes use

In modern liberal democracies, public interest has become less substantive than its early modern counterpart. Neoliberalism often views public interest as a consequence of rights-conscious individual citizens pursuing their private interests in an idealized free market economy.¹³ Liberals committed to egalitarianism take “public interest” as the necessary background condition of basic political and economic institutions so as to attain the goal of treating all citizens as equals.¹⁴ In contrast, a substantive definition of public interest such as economic growth or social harmony is often found in present-day authoritarian regimes that stress a corporate conception of society as an organic whole rather than an assembly of rights-conscious individual citizens; Singapore or China comes to mind. This organic conception of public interest has been largely discredited among advocates of a liberal democracy that values inalienable individual rights or human rights over any substantive collective goal.

However, in early modern states, as in many nondemocratic states today, the public interest was conceived as an organic one that ties members of a hierarchical political system into one united entity. Official declarations by the state of its duty to protect public interest cannot be – and were not – taken at face value. Yet such proclaimed responsibility constituted much more than an empty discourse; it was embodied in providing specific public goods through various welfare policies. These included infrastructural facilities and particular institutions and measures to address welfare concerns of the populace. The state’s provision of concrete public goods was thus inherently connected to the general idea of public interest, and the acceptance by social actors of such norms of state legitimacy rested to a large extent upon the same conception of public interest.

The welfare of various communities and even that of individuals were in principle coherent components of an organically conceived public interest. The acknowledgment of the state of its duty to safeguard the organically conceived public interest therefore allowed social actors to engage with the authorities in domestic governance. This conception of public interest shared by both state and social actors thence constituted a common normative platform upon which state and society could interact

“public welfare” or “general welfare.” The nonmaterial conception of “public good” is often seen in contemporary communitarianism.

¹³ See a typical presentation of this view in Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

¹⁴ A representative example is John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

over how to deliver concrete public goods to safeguard the public interest in specific circumstances. In this way, the obligation of the state to protect the public interest opened up a space for political participation as it entailed certain rights to the subordinates; most importantly, a right to petition the authorities for redressing welfare grievances so as to safeguard public interest. Such rights were, however, *passive*, as they were derived from the obligation of the state to protect the public interest.

In contrast, active rights, at the level either of the local community or of the individual, are conceived as independent of the state.¹⁵ While passive rights are derived from obligation, active rights are often held to be entitlements of individuals. Examples of such inalienable rights include absolute private property rights or human rights, or freedom of conscience in religion. These are crucial to justify political constraints on the sovereign viewed as a delegate of the people.¹⁶ Popular protests instigated by theories of active rights were revolutionary because they were not simply based upon obligations of the existing state authority.¹⁷ Such theories were crucial to justify armed resistance to kings of another faith in the religious wars of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Europe.¹⁸

This conception of active rights independent of the state has greatly influenced the classic work on contentious politics, which considers the rise of democracy and expansion of citizen rights in Western Europe as victories attained by rights-conscious social movements.¹⁹ This scholarship accordingly views nondemocratic state regimes as repressive and

¹⁵ On the difference between a passive right and an active right, see Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 6; Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law, 1150–1625* (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 3.

¹⁶ On the rise of the active conception of rights in Western Europe, see Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories*, chs. 3–7. On the importance of an active conception of private property rights to constrain state power, see C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

¹⁷ Examples include the American and French Revolutions, as well as the radical element in the English Civil War that rejected the legitimacy of divinely ordained sovereignty. See Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989).

¹⁸ Quentin Skinner, “Humanism, Scholasticism and Popular Sovereignty,” in *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2 *Renaissance Virtues* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 245–63.

¹⁹ Charles Tilly, “Where Do Rights Come From?” in *Democracy, Revolution, and History*, ed. Theda Skocpol with the assistance of George Ross, Tony Smith, and Judith E. Vichniac (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 55–72.

their state–society relationships as confrontational.²⁰ However, the intellectual history of theories of active rights is different from the political and social history of popular contention in Western Europe. Let us look briefly at how this unfolded in the classic example of England and consider how a different understanding of this dynamic might lead us to rethink both contention and state formation.

After 1688 and well into the nineteenth century, the protests and collective actions justified by active natural rights were persistently repudiated by the English state. During the French Revolution and the Napoleonic War, they were characterized as dangerous “continental radicalism” or “republican radicalism,” and leaders and organizers faced charges of sedition and even high treason.²¹ Demands made by the national Chartist petition campaigns for universal manhood suffrage, repeal of property qualifications in elections, an annual Parliament, and secret ballots were likewise rejected, as the state authorities could not accept their grounding in an active conception of rights.²² This hostility on the part of the state forced even radical petitioners to phrase their demands as based on passively conceived rights: imagined Saxon constitutional rights, the rights of “free-born English,” or the Bills of Rights of 1688.²³ Dressing radical political demands in the familiar and relatively acceptable vocabulary of passive rights entailed by the state’s duty to protect the public interest made such claims less threatening to the authorities and more likely to receive a hearing.

The calls to reform parliamentary elections in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in order to make Parliament more representative

²⁰ Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 56–60; Charles Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 30; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2 and 62.

²¹ T. M. Parssinen, “Association, Convention and Anti-Parliament in British Radical Politics, 1771–1848,” *English Historical Review* 88, no. 348 (July 1973): 504–33; John Stevenson, “Popular Radicalism and Popular Protest, 1789–1815,” in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789–1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 61–84; Robert Poole, “Petitioners and Rebels: Petitioning for Parliamentary Reform in Regency England,” *Social Science History* 43 (Fall 2019): 553–79.

²² On how the Chartist demands rested upon conceptions of active rights, see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 77–99; Peter J. Gurney, “The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement,” *Journal of Modern History* 86, no. 3 (September 2014): 566–602.

²³ James A. Epstein, “The Constitutional Idiom: Radical Reasoning, Rhetoric and Action in Early Nineteenth-Century England,” *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 553–74; Josh Gibson, “The Chartists and the Constitution: Revisiting British Popular Constitutionalism,” *Journal of British Studies* 56 (January 2017): 70–90.

of an industrializing nation and thus to better serve the public interest were largely presented upon the basis of passive rights; claims framed in this way resonated with reform-minded ruling elites as well.²⁴ In England in the early nineteenth century, popular petitioners often invoked the state or the crown as the “Father of the people” who was bound to protect the livelihood of the ruled, albeit on a much larger scale in an industrializing economy.²⁵ Organizers of petitions consciously presented the welfare grievances of the working class and middle class as common components of the organically conceived public interest.²⁶ In response, the English state accommodated redress of specific welfare grievances such as high food prices, factory conditions, and unemployment.²⁷ The idea that a government should safeguard the organically conceived public interest remained strong and politically efficacious in England even in the late nineteenth century, despite facing increasing challenges from radical advocates of inalienable individual rights.²⁸

Given the distinction between passive and active rights and the state’s different reactions to them, we need to reexamine the role of passive rights in popular contention in England before the mid-nineteenth century. For this time period, the work of Margaret Somers has been particularly influential, especially her careful examination of the legal rights to which textile workers appealed in demanding wage and apprenticeship regulations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Such contention was truly important in the transition toward democracy; however, these rights should not be understood as actively conceived general citizen

²⁴ For the extension of suffrage and the reform of parliamentary elections as the means to achieve better representation of the Commons rather than viewing voting as a fundamental individual right, see Robert Saunders, “Democracy,” in *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. D. Craig and J. Thompson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 142–67; Joanna Innes, “People and Power in British Politics to 1850,” in *Re-imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolution: America, France, Britain, Ireland, 1750–1850*, ed. Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 135–38.

²⁵ Robert Poole, “French Revolution or Peasants’ Revolt? Petitioners and Rebels in England from the Blanketeers to the Chartists,” *Labour History Review* 74, no. 1 (April 2009): 6–26; Poole, “Petitioners and Rebels.”

²⁶ Gareth Stedman Jones, “Rethinking Chartism,” reprinted in Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832–1982* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 90–178.

²⁷ Robert Saunders, “Chartism from Above: British Elites and the Interpretation of Chartism,” *Historical Research* 8, no. 213 (2007): 463–84; Innes, “People and Power in British Politics to 1850,” 129–48.

²⁸ James Thompson, “Good Government,” in *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. D. Craig and J. Thompson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 21–43.

rights, which became dominant largely after the late nineteenth century.²⁹ They were in fact still passive rights granted by the Tudor Statute of Artificers, which incorporated the state's paternalistic responsibility to protect labor's livelihood as a component of the organically imagined public interest of the realm.

The difference between passive and active rights is also important in recognizing continuity and discontinuity in popular contention. Between the 1760s and 1830s, both the volume and number of signatures on petitions presented to Parliament increased dramatically.³⁰ Charles Tilly views the remarkable rise of contentious collective actions on a national scale in eighteenth-century England as representing a discontinuous development of contentious claim-making from local to national and from specific issues to general political concerns.³¹ However, growth in the scale and organization of contentious collective actions does not necessarily imply discontinuity in popular political participation if petitions were about redressing specific welfare grievances and the claims made were still justified by the political duty of the state to safeguard the organically conceived public interest. The dominance of passive rights derived from the state's proclaimed duty to protect the public interest in England before the mid-nineteenth century suggests that we should not underestimate the significance of passive rights to political change.

The responsibility of the state to the public interest empowers subordinates to expect or even demand that the state fulfill its proclaimed duty through popular petitioning and even protests. Social actors who justify their claims by terms acceptable to the state are not necessarily obedient subjects. Instead, the political duty of the state to protect the public interest allowed and even invited society to make rightful – that is, passive right – claims on the state. Contentious collective actions were thus often a means to remind the state to fulfill its officially proclaimed duty to safeguard the public interest or to contest the effectiveness of specific state welfare policies. Even in nondemocratic states, the significant expansion of popular political participation in the form of collective petitioning or

²⁹ Margaret R. Somers, "Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere: Law, Community, and Political Culture in the Transition to Democracy," *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 5 (October 1993): 587–620.

³⁰ Richard Huzzey and Henry Miller, "Petitions, Parliament and Political Culture: Petitioning the House of Commons, 1780–1918," *Past and Present* 248, no. 1 (August 2020): 123–64.

³¹ Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

protests thence does not necessarily indicate resistance to or rejection of state authority if such protests are justified by the duty of the state to protect the public interest.³²

State formation, then, is a political process in which state and social actors interact upon a common platform of a public interest-based discourse of state legitimation and contend over how to provide specific public goods essential for domestic governance and how to safeguard that public interest by redressing grievances. Moreover, passive rights derived from a state's proclaimed duty to protect the public interest can be found not only in early modern England, but also in non-Western countries such as Tokugawa Japan and Qing China; this is not a peculiarly English or European phenomenon. Such a comparative investigation of state formation through public goods provision can thus help us better reconceptualize the relationship between state formation and popular contention and build a more general and robust model of state formation.

We cannot properly understand state–society collaboration in public goods provision, however, if we view the state–society relationship as fundamentally confrontational before the rise of liberal democracy. Such a vision grows out of understanding the state mainly as a violent machine: “war makes the state.”³³ According to this bellicist view, the state first emerged through a series of wars to wipe out political rivals, and the growth of the state apparatus in Europe is often attributed to the increasing cost of war, particularly after the military revolution in the mid-sixteenth century.³⁴ The incessant wars in Europe have been linked to the political incentives of rulers to prize glory.³⁵ Although Charles Tilly

³² These sorts of petitions in a hierarchical nondemocratic system are politically different from the petition in a democracy, where it complements the operation of formal representation. For the latter, see Daniel Carpenter, *Democracy by Petition: Popular Politics in Transformation, 1790–1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

³³ Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 170.

³⁴ Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Charles Tilly, “Reflections on the History of European State-Making,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe, 3–83*; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1, *A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³⁵ Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso, 1979), 32; Philip T. Hoffman, *Why Did Europe Conquer the World?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

distinguishes two different methods used by the state to extract resources from society, a capital-intensive one in the capitalist mode of economy and a coercion-intensive one in less commercialized economies, both serve the same purpose of fighting wars.³⁶ Some scholars have shifted the focus from fighting foreign wars to suppressing domestic opponents; however, they continue to view the state mainly in terms of violence.³⁷

This important body of scholarship has taught us much about how states came into being, how they acquired many of their effective powers, and how violence plays an inescapable role in politics. This paradigm, which is derived largely from European experiences, has also been applied to non-European parts of the world such as ancient China and Latin America.³⁸ Yet the intense focus on war and coercion has in other ways skewed our understanding of the nature of the early modern state and its relations with society, and has overlooked the political space of participation provided by the very terms of state legitimacy.

From a methodological perspective, the bellicist approach suffers from a subtle yet serious problem of selection bias caused by the preference in traditional political history for “high politics.”³⁹ The revenue and spending recorded by the central government in early modern times were mainly for wars and diplomacy; yet many important state functions, such as local welfare provision, typically occurred outside the center, though not isolated from the guidance and coordination of the central

Press, 2015); Philip T. Hoffman, “What Do States Do? Politics and Economic History,” *Journal of Economic History* 75, no. 2 (June 2015): 315.

³⁶ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States: AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

³⁷ Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Sidney Tarrow, *War, States, and Contention: A Comparative Study* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

³⁸ Edgar Kiser and Yong Cai, “War and Bureaucratization in Qin China: Exploring an Anomalous Case,” *American Sociological Review* 68, no. 4 (August 2003): 511–39; Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Cameron G. Thies, “War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America,” *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 3 (July 2005): 451–65; Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Mark Dincecco and Yuhua Wang, “Violent Conflict and Political Development over the Long Run: China versus Europe,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 21 (2018): 341–58.

³⁹ See the discussion of the selection bias caused by uncritical use of the work of historians in Ian S. Lustick, “History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias,” *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 3 (September 1996): 605–18.

government. This is particularly the case in a decentralized fiscal system in which a great deal of the funds spent on local infrastructure or welfare provision were raised and spent locally without going through the central government.⁴⁰ Theories of state formation built upon this kind of traditional political history thus tend to give too much weight to the contribution of warfare.

The stress on violence as the driving force of state formation makes the state appear as an entity externally imposed upon society. Society for its own self-protection has to resist the state's ever-increasing demands for resources and penetration; such resistance manifests itself in various forms of anti-tax protests and social movements.⁴¹ However, to conceive the state–society relationship only in confrontational terms makes it hard to understand the state's role in providing public goods, as well as social actors' demands that the state intervene in issues related to the public welfare of communities.

One solution to this problem is to look at the social origins of state power. In this view, the provision of public goods by the state resulted from demands by an assertive and strong society. For example, Michael Mann argues that the early modern state prior to the availability of modern communication and bureaucratic techniques could still achieve high "infrastructural power" by seeking society's cooperation and consent; such consent endowed the early modern state with a better capacity to coordinate social resources and implement policies than would be the case with a despotic state that only relied upon violence.⁴² But how could the state collaborate with society if the state is conceived by society primarily as a machine of violence?

Neoclassical political economists have sought answers in the bargaining power of society over the state. If property-owning elites could force the state to grant political concessions by allowing more representation and autonomy in local governance, they would be willing to contribute money to the state, which enhances the infrastructural power of the

⁴⁰ Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 12; Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1640* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 16.

⁴¹ Tarrow, *War, States, and Contention*, 21–24. For a characterization of state formation as a process of societal resistance, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 47–49.

⁴² Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results," *Archives of European Sociology* 25, no. 2 (November 1984): 185–213; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1, 479–81.

state.⁴³ If economic elites consider the political agenda of the state to go against their interests, they could block the efforts of the state to develop capacity, leading to a weak state.⁴⁴ In Western Europe, it has been argued, where the society still possessed late medieval political legacies such as rural assemblies, urban self-governments, and territorially based representative bodies, these institutions could force the ruler to make political concessions in return for the consent to contribute taxes. The negotiations produced a constitutionalist state with strong infrastructural power. In contrast, if the state could depend upon foreign loans or non-tax revenue to suppress resistance, then absolutist regimes would emerge, despite their limited capacity to mobilize resources from society.⁴⁵

In this view, despotic states would prevail in regions lacking a tradition of self-governance and representative bodies; such societies would have little bargaining power vis-à-vis the state. However, the stress on the social origins of state capacity leaves little space to even imagine the state's autonomous role in domestic governance and public goods provision. In constitutionalist regimes, these would be the responsibility of self-governed local communities, whereas despotic states would only be interested in extracting resources from society.

Acemoglu and Robinson have further proposed a model of coevolution of state and society so as to explain the emergence of a strong state

⁴³ For theories that rest on bargaining and negotiation between the state and elites, see Richard Lachman, "Greed and Contingency: State Fiscal Crises and Imperial Failure in Early Modern Europe," *American Journal of Sociology* 115, no. 1 (July 2009): 39–73; Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, "The Political Economy of Absolutism Reconsidered," in Robert H. Bates, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi et al., *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 63–108; Philip T. Hoffman, "Early Modern France, 1450–1700," in *Fiscal Crises, Liberty, and Representative Government, 1450–1789*, ed. Philip T. Hoffman and Kathryn Norberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 226–52; Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

⁴⁴ Francisco Garfias, "Elite Competition and State Capacity Development: Theory and Evidence from Post-Revolutionary Mexico," *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 2 (May 2018): 339–57.

⁴⁵ Brian Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Ertman emphasizes that Otto Hintze had developed this insight in his later work on state formation, yet it was ignored by Charles Tilly. See Thomas Ertman, "Otto Hintze, Stein Rokkan and Charles Tilly's Theory of European State-Building," in *Does War Make States? Investigations of Charles Tilly's Historical Sociology*, ed. Lars Bo Kaspersen and Jeppe Strandsbjerg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 52–70.

without appealing excessively to the negotiating power of society vis-à-vis the state. In this model, the active participation in local governance by social actors could effectively defend the interests of society against the intruding state. Social actors were thus not afraid to see state capacity develop. Instead, once the national economy became integrated, local actors would demand the state provide large-scale public goods.⁴⁶ State capacity thence grew as a result of competition with an assertive civil society that had enough power to tame, rather than merely bargain with, the leviathan in order to advance the interests of society. Such coevolution ultimately gives birth to what they call “inclusive political institutions” in which the state has a strong capacity to deliver public goods, yet political power is widely enough distributed to make the state accountable to society.

The inclusive state, which for Acemoglu and Robinson is exemplified by Tudor and early Stuart England, differs from both the despotic state, whose capacity is constrained by its lack of accountability to society, and the weak state, which cannot promote the public interest either due to resistance from powerful social groups, or because the weakness of society precludes the competition that would stimulate state capacity.⁴⁷ Steven Pincus and James Robinson demonstrate that such mutually reinforcing interactions between local political participation and the development of state capacity in England continued with the ascendance of parliamentary sovereignty after the Glorious Revolution in 1688, and the fiscal-military state in Britain also contributed significantly to domestic welfare improvement, which Joanna Innes has called the domestic face of the military-fiscal state.⁴⁸

However, this theory of the coevolution of state and society still attributes public goods provision to local self-governance. It neglects fundamental differences between local governance in small communities

⁴⁶ Acemoglu and Robinson, “Paths to Inclusive Political Institutions”; Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019).

⁴⁷ Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, “The Emergence of Weak, Despotic, and Inclusive States” (working paper, Department of Economics, MIT, Cambridge, MA, May 2018). See more discussion of the inclusive state in Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (New York: Crown, 2012), 79–82.

⁴⁸ Steven Pincus and James Robinson, “Challenging the Fiscal-Military Hegemony: The British Case,” in *The British Fiscal-Military States, 1660–c.1783*, ed. Aaron Graham and Patrick Walsh (New York: Routledge, 2016), 229–61; Joanna Innes, “The Domestic Face of the Military-Fiscal State,” in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London: Routledge, 1994), 96–127.

and domestic governance of a country that consists of various regions. Examination of the actual provision of large-scale cross-regional public goods shows that the inherent free-rider problem is often resolved by the use of compulsory means to raise money, not by depending upon the voluntary collaboration of the communities at stake. The political authority of the state is indispensable to such compulsory collection of funds backed up by the threat of coercive power.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, inter-regional or intercommunal conflicts of interest in public goods provision are quite common, and local authorities are frequently incapable of resolving them. In other words, the wide dispersion of political power in a society does not necessarily imply a consensus held across communities or across the social spectrum on how to resolve clashing interests and secure the general interest of society. The authority of the state is a necessary condition for a fair and impartial resolution of interregional and intersectoral conflicts of interest.

What motivates the state to participate in the creation and management of large-scale infrastructural facilities that local communities are unable to afford and to intervene in conflicts of interest over public goods provision? Acemoglu suggests that fiscal incentives may lead the state to initiate investment in public goods provision even without demands by social actors; this self-interested motivation can be applied to both despotic and inclusive states.⁵⁰ State investments in public goods provision do contribute to meeting fiscal need, particularly by consolidating a future tax base through famine relief or repairing infrastructural facilities. However, fiscal need is not the only purpose of the state in public goods provision. For example, the state's arbitration of conflicts of interest among different communities is not determined by its fiscal needs. Why should communities expect the state to provide impartial arbitration in interregional or intersectoral conflicts of interest if that state is perceived by social actors as simply a violent machine or revenue maximizer?

Therefore, in order to fully understand the state's involvement in public goods provision for domestic governance, we need to go beyond a positivist understanding of the state and investigate how the state legitimates its power to society by claiming to safeguard the public interest of society. If such terms are accepted by society, they would then serve as a common

⁴⁹ See the classic discussion on the use of coercive means to resolve the free-rider problem in Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

⁵⁰ Daron Acemoglu, "Politics and Economics in Weak and Strong States," *Journal of Monetary Economics* 52, no. 7 (2005): 1199–226.

platform on which society and state could interact for the provision of public goods. In this manner, the political discourse on state legitimacy studied by intellectual historians and political theorists can be linked to the empirical research on public goods conducted by socioeconomic historians. Let us thus turn to the complex question of state legitimation.

Legitimation is one crucial component in the Weberian definition of the state as a governing apparatus that monopolizes the *legitimate* use of violence over a delimited territory.⁵¹ The legitimacy in Weber's theory is either source based (such as the charisma of the leader or the established laws) or procedurally derived (such as a bureaucracy or a democracy with fair and competitive elections).⁵² Both these conceptions, however, suggest a one-directional conveyance of authority from the ruler to the ruled; neither says anything about how such transmitted or presented legitimacy is evaluated and accepted by the ruled. The appeal to popular belief to demonstrate state legitimacy runs the danger of circular argumentation: The state is legitimate because the people believe in it, and the people believe in a legitimate state.⁵³ Thus the measurement of legitimacy in survey research in terms of social actors' belief in state authority may not capture the substance of legitimacy in practice.⁵⁴

Furthermore, a perfectly source-based or procedure-based state legitimacy can produce absurd consequences in practice: for example, rules of imperial succession that put an infant on the throne.⁵⁵ This top-down,

⁵¹ Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 78.

⁵² Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 213–66. Reinhard Bendix follows Weber's theory of source-based legitimacy to study the legitimacy of premodern kings; see Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). For a recent example of applying source-based legitimacy to the role of the state in economic growth, see Jared Rubin, *Rulers, Religion, and Riches: Why the West Got Rich and the Middle East Did Not* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 30–35.

⁵³ David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), 90–97. For critiques of the Weberian norm-based or belief-based concept of state legitimacy, see Robert Grafstein, "The Failure of Weber's Conception of Legitimacy: Its Causes and Implications," *Journal of Politics* 43, no. 2 (May 1981): 456–72; Xavier Marquez, "The Irrelevance of Legitimacy," *Political Studies* 64, no. 15 (2016): 19–34.

⁵⁴ For belief-based measurement of state legitimacy, see Margaret Levi, Audrey Sacks, and Tom Tyler, "Conceptualizing Legitimacy, Measuring Legitimizing Beliefs," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 3 (November 2009): 354–75.

⁵⁵ For critiques of the Weberian definition of legitimacy from a substantive perspective, see Claus Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State*, ed. John Keane (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 135.

one-directional conception of legitimacy can also be found in the study of how the state appeals to ideological slogans, symbols, rituals, or the hiring of Western experts to strengthen its legitimacy.⁵⁶ Yet legitimacy that rests upon symbolic power can be superficial and even misleading if it cannot secure the substantive consent of social actors. As James Scott has pointed out, the public transcript of legitimacy in authoritarian states is often mocked and ridiculed by subordinates who appear obedient and respectful to authority on public occasions.⁵⁷

State legitimacy has not been taken seriously in classic Marxist scholarship, which views the state simply as a machine of suppression wielded by the dominant class.⁵⁸ Scholars of state autonomy and state capacity treat legitimacy as a derivative product of a state that is capable of effectively maintaining social order and defeating foreign threats. Theda Skocpol contends that legitimacy only refers to acceptance of state authority by the politically dominant class. In this light, the loss of legitimacy is equivalent to the alienation of the dominant class to the state.⁵⁹ If the autonomy and capacity of the state are simply instrumental to achieving the goal(s) set by state actors, then the embeddedness of an autonomous state as emphasized by Peter Evans mainly serves the function of incorporating expert knowledge from dynamic classes, such as drawing on industrialists in making effective development policies.⁶⁰ However, this

⁵⁶ Mara Loveman, "The Modern State and the Primitive Accumulation of Symbolic Power," *American Journal of Sociology* 110, no. 6 (May 2005): 1651–83; Matthias vom Hau, "State Infrastructural Power and Nationalism: Comparative Lessons from Mexico and Argentina," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43, no. 3 (2008): 334–54; Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 52; Calvert W. Jones, "Adviser to the King: Experts, Rationalization, and Legitimacy," *World Politics* 71, no. 1 (January 2019): 1–43.

⁵⁷ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁵⁸ See a synthesis of the instrumentalist theory of the state in Marxism and Leninism in Clyde W. Barrow, "Ralph Miliband and the Instrumentalist Theory of the State: The (Mis)Construction of an Analytic Concept," in *Class, Power and the State in Capitalist Society: Essays on Ralph Miliband*, ed. Paul Wetherly, Clyde W. Barrow, and Peter Burnham (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 85–87.

⁵⁹ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 32.

⁶⁰ Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). For a discussion of instrumental state autonomy, see Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9–14.

elite-based approach to state legitimacy underestimates its general significance and ignores the possibility that social actors outside the politically dominant class could turn the discourse of state legitimacy to negotiate with the state.

A proper understanding of state legitimacy is thus crucial to fully appreciate the importance of state autonomy. In the case of contemporary advanced capitalist societies, Gramsci argues that there is a sophisticated combination of coercion and consent. The cultural hegemony of the ruling class is embodied in its ability to speak as the representative of the general interest of society. However, this hegemonic class does so by relying upon the state to engineer the consent of the rest of society to the dominance of the ruling class as the representative of public interest to the rest of society.⁶¹ Both Ralph Miliband and Bob Jessop point out that the state in an advanced capitalist society proclaims itself as the “guardian of the good of all” or the “national interest,” rather than as a servant of the narrow interest of the capitalist class.⁶² However, consent is not the only possible result of the autonomy of the state defined by its duty to safeguard the public interest; such a definition can serve as a platform from which subordinates are able to criticize the dominant class for sacrificing the public interest to its own narrow interest.

The importance of the general interest or public good of the society as the normative basis of state legitimacy is not unique to modern capitalist society. We can trace its historical roots in the process of state formation. From the late medieval era, political discourse on the meaning of kingship in Western Europe stressed the guarding of the common good or public interest of the kingdom or city-state.⁶³ The monarch was presented as

⁶¹ See the discussion of the consent manufactured by the dominant class to justify coercion in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Books* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 228. See more discussion of the Gramscian conception of the hegemonic representation of the general interest of society by the dominant class in Dylan Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania, 1870–1945* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 12–14.

⁶² Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 75; Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in Its Place* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 174.

⁶³ Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970); Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe, 1250–1450* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25–28; J. H. Burns, *Lordship, Kingship, and Empire: The Idea of Monarchy, 1400–1525* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 67; Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200–1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 232–36.

a public figure who would safeguard the public interest, which was different from the monarch as a private person.⁶⁴ The rise of absolutism in Western Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also carried a normative implication that the monarch as the public figure of sovereign power had ultimate political authority within the territory under his or her jurisdiction.⁶⁵ Even pro-absolutist political thinkers such as Hobbes insisted that the divinely ordained absolute sovereign was subject to the duty to “procure the common interest” embodied in the welfare of the subjects: the “commonweal” or “commonwealth.”⁶⁶

Recognition of the vital connection between the state’s responsibility for the public interest and its legitimation is important to both normative and empirical studies of the state. When the state provides public goods and services that go beyond the capacity of local communities, its coercive power, exemplified in the collection of taxes, can be justified to and accepted by the ruled. Meanwhile, to the extent that it is perceived as protecting the general welfare of society, the state becomes morally autonomous of the special interests of particular social groups or classes. This is the normative basis for state autonomy.

Empirically, the grounding of state legitimacy in public interest is connected to specific state performance in addressing actual welfare problems caused by famine, calamities, economic disruptions, and so on. In such an organically conceived public interest, the concrete common interests of communities are viewed as integral components of the general interest. However, the complex and multifaceted linkages between public interest and welfare concerns in specific circumstances imply that the discourse over public interest is both interactional between state and society and dynamic, as socioeconomic changes often disrupt the extant balance between general interest and particular interests. Meanwhile, the scale and scope of “public” in the term “public interest” vary greatly. Different scales of public goods exist, ranging from those common to a small community or a city-state; to those of concern to multiple regions

⁶⁴ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁶⁵ On the development of an impersonal early modern state in Western Europe, see Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1978); Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*.

⁶⁶ Quentin Skinner, “From the State of Princes to the Person of the State,” in *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2, *Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 381; Quentin Skinner, “A Genealogy of the Modern State,” *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 162 (2009): 343.

consisting of many different communities; and finally to those associated with the entire realm under the jurisdiction of the state. The complicated relationships between these different levels compound the negotiation and contestation between state and social actors over how to safeguard the “public interest” in specific circumstances.

Given this interdependence between state and society, state capacity should not be measured only by the amount of resources directly mobilized by the state for fighting foreign wars or held solely at the discretion of the central government.⁶⁷ The capacity exhibited in providing public goods for domestic welfare shows that the state could appeal to its normative justification of power to mobilize resources across regions for the purpose of safeguarding the public interest; and in so doing it could rely on broad cooperation from social actors. Such cooperation, predicated upon sufficient acceptance of state claims to legitimacy, complements the state’s ability to directly deliver public goods, which in early modern states is rarely adequate. The public interest-based discourse of state legitimation is thus performance based or outcome based.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the measurement of such performance is not monopolized by the state, because the state’s efficacy in public goods provision and redress of specific welfare grievances can be measured and evaluated by social actors independent of the state. This is crucial to understand the interactions between state and society upon a common platform of state legitimacy. An empty belly cannot be filled with symbolic power or empty words; nor can the state entirely control or monopolize the interpretation of a legitimacy evaluated by its delivery of public goods. Social actors with specific stakes can judge the state’s performance independent of the official discourse or ideology; more importantly, they have some room to contest rightfully whether or not the state is fulfilling its proclaimed duty in concrete welfare issues. Performance-based state legitimacy therefore does not necessarily imply rejection of political participation.

⁶⁷ The measurement of state capacity by the resources directly controlled by the state is quite common in quantitative studies of state capacity. See typical examples in Mark Dincecco, “The Rise of Effective States in Europe,” *Journal of Economic History* 75, no. 3 (September 2015): 901–18; Mark Dincecco, *Political Transformation and Public Finances: Europe, 1650–1913* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁶⁸ See the discussion of performance-based legitimacy in authoritarian states in Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 50; Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 6–7.

The public interest-based discourse of state legitimation that is embodied in concrete public goods provision thence serves as a common normative platform to allow state and society to interact in two opposite directions. On the one hand, the state can initiate or intervene in large-scale public goods provision in the name of serving the public interest. On the other hand, social actors are legally and morally justified in calling on the state to discharge its acknowledged responsibility to resolve specific welfare grievances. For example, when a market economy threatens the social order, social actors can demand that the state protect society from being ruined by unregulated market forces.⁶⁹ Social actors can also contest the fairness of the state's adjudication of interregional or intersectoral conflicts of interest in similar terms, as both parties in disputes are members of a political community tied together by an organically conceived public interest. Because in practice the connections between specific welfare issues and the "public interest" are complex, such state–society interactions are processes of negotiation and even contestation, in which neither state nor social actors have total control over the interpretation of public interest.

These two-directional state–society interactions thus represent an important space of political participation for both elites and nonelites. On the one hand, such engagement with the state in the form of popular petitions or even protests is not in essence a challenge to state authority: It rests upon the same set of norms regarding the duties of the state. Contention does not automatically imply rejection of state authority. This contrasts sharply with the appeal to a "hidden transcript" to evade the state or the use of passive resistance to undermine the state's authority, as James Scott has brilliantly described.⁷⁰ On the other hand, its roots in concrete policies and particular interests make such contestation different in nature from the debates over general political ideas or abstract principles held in the print media or coffee houses of eighteenth-century Western Europe described by Habermas.⁷¹ Nonetheless, its intimate

⁶⁹ Polanyi's classic work pays attention to the state's role in regulating the market economy but not the state's political duty to protect the public good. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1957).

⁷⁰ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*; James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁷¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). For the distortion and manipulation of "public opinion," rather than the rationality assumed by Habermas for eighteenth-century Western Europe, see Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

connection to state legitimacy lends it a general political significance. Petitioning and contentious claims over specific welfare grievances justified by the public interest-based discourse of state legitimation are therefore inherent components of the political process of state formation.

Having proposed this theory of state formation in which a public interest-based discourse of state legitimation serves as a common basis for state–society collaboration in public goods provision, how might one test it? For this purpose, I conduct a comparative historical analysis of England between 1533 and 1780, Japan between 1640 and 1895, and China between 1684 and 1911. Each case has been prominent in the scholarship on state formation. Just as importantly, these are all cases with an extensive historical literature, as well as rich primary sources, in languages of which I have a reasonably good command. Relatively equal familiarity with the cases studied and competence in their respective scholarships are, I would argue, vital to a truly contextualized comparative analysis.⁷² The empirical strategy adopted throughout is to delve deeply into the respective historical contexts of state formation and bring each case into dialogue with the others. This methodology of contextualized comparative historical analysis allows me to identify similar patterns across seemingly different cases, as well as continuity and discontinuity in the development of state–society interactions. The theory of state formation developed herein is thus more general in nature, but still well grounded in historical context. Moreover, by integrating domestic governance with state legitimacy, it casts new light on the transition from early modern to modern politics; in particular, it helps us rethink the nature and role of popular contention in that process.

The analysis is divided into two parts. Part I examines an earlier period for each state and focuses on how public goods provision secured state legitimacy in domestic governance. Part II looks at a later period in which the understanding of the public interest expanded to include nonmaterial dimensions, and how that expansion transformed state–society interactions. Let us begin with the earlier episodes: Tudor and early Stuart England between 1533 and 1640, Tokugawa Japan between 1640 and 1853, and Qing China between 1684 and 1840.

These three cases are comparable in important ways in examining state formation from the perspective of public goods provision in domestic governance. All were early modern states that legitimated their power

⁷² I will return to the importance of contextualization in comparative historical analysis in the Conclusion.

by safeguarding an organically conceived public interest that entailed passive rights to subordinates. None was involved in consecutive and expensive foreign wars, so state power was mainly used for domestic governance and public interest was defined primarily in terms of domestic welfare. Moreover, the interactions between each state and society in public goods provision crucial to domestic governance were largely independent from each other. In contrast to the focus on the extraction of resources in the conventional scholarship of state formation and state capacity, I pay special attention to the spending on public goods provision vital to domestic governance and maintenance of social order.

These three cases varied greatly in territorial size, population, political institutions, and culture. In particular, early modern England and Tokugawa Japan were much smaller than Qing China. Still, their territorial scale was large enough to generate many cross-regional welfare problems that self-governed local communities simply could not resolve by themselves. Furthermore, all had serious defects in their respective fiscal institutions. Decentralized fiscal systems seriously weakened the fiscal capacity of the royal government in early modern England and the shogunate in Tokugawa Japan. The Qing state possessed a centrally managed fiscal system, yet its fiscal capacity was restricted. This was due to the fixed quota in both tax collection and government spending, as well as a rigid fiscal management that did not give even provincial governments independent budgets.

Given the inadequacy of state capacity to fulfill state obligations, a public interest-based discourse of state legitimation was crucial to domestic governance and is common to these three cases. Upon this normative platform shared by state and social actors, similar patterns appear of state–society collaboration to deliver public goods vital to domestic governance. The direction of the collaboration, however, might differ. In Tudor and early Stuart England and Tokugawa Japan, the limitations of self-governed communities in building and maintaining large-scale public infrastructure were complemented by intervention from the royal government and the shogunate. In Qing China, the weakness imposed by a rigid central fiscal system was to some extent compensated by the active local participation in public goods provision encouraged by the Qing state. This common pattern of state–society collaboration was the major cause of the relatively good governance achieved in all three cases, despite the quite limited fiscal capacity of each state relative to its territory and obligations. The empirical identification of such similar patterns across mutually independent cases strengthens the generality of the

theory of state formation that integrates domestic governance with state legitimacy. The comparative methodology used here is to uncover congruence among apparently different cases.⁷³

In examining the resilience of the early modern state with a weak fiscal capacity, the beginning and end year of each earlier episode are determined by the nature of the state and its circumstances. None was engaged in consecutive and expensive warfare. Each case had an early modern state characterized by the institutionalization of a governing apparatus that asserted sovereign power over a delimited territory. As Quentin Skinner has pointed out, the emergence of the early modern state is a watershed in the development of the state, one that is embodied in the usage of the term “state” in its modern sense.⁷⁴ The early modern state is *modern* in the political sense as the state is conceived as an impersonal governing apparatus, which distinguishes itself from the ruler as a private person. It is *early* modern as it has not yet developed centralized institutions of public finance to regulate economy and society. The characterization of the early modern state as such does not imply a teleological trajectory to a modern state. A transformation into a modern state, as well as the resilience of an early modern state, can occur in different historical circumstances at different times.

The treatment of England (1533–1640) starts from the break with Rome that made the crown the head of both the secular government and the Church of England. England’s involvement in continental power struggles during this time was limited in both scale and duration, which contrasted sharply with the almost continual and increasingly expensive foreign wars that it fought with France and its allies after the Glorious Revolution in 1688.⁷⁵ In Tudor England, by the mid-sixteenth century, increasingly complex formal procedures in administration and legislation led to exponential growth in the amount of written documentation – proclamations, writs, and statutes – involved in the process of transmitting information and orders between the center and local offices. The personal rule of the monarch became impractical. The “Tudor revolution in government” described by G. R. Elton captures the core feature

⁷³ Dan Slater and Daniel Ziblatt, “The Enduring Indispensability of the Controlled Comparison,” *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 10 (October 2013): 1303.

⁷⁴ Quentin Skinner, “The State,” in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 117–18; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2, *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 349–58.

⁷⁵ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*.

of this institutionalization of the royal government, even though the speed of institutional development and the degree of continuity before and after Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) are debated.⁷⁶

By the late sixteenth century, the English state had transformed into an impersonalized governing institution clearly distinct from the monarch as a person.⁷⁷ As Michael Braddick has pointed out, the English state in the early seventeenth century referred to the entire political apparatus; the center acted as the ultimate political authority and coordinated a network of offices within a delimited territory; and serving the public interest of the realm was held to be the duty of officeholders.⁷⁸ The royal government inculcated such a public duty into officeholders across the country even though they were unsalaried. Over time, the discourse of public interest engendered a sense of public duty among officeholders and a significant degree of public trust in the offices of the state, even though corruption remained widespread in practice.⁷⁹

Tokugawa Japan (1603–1868) was not a tributary state of Qing China or any other power. After suppressing the Shimabara Rebellion in 1638, Tokugawa Japan entered into the Great Domestic Peace (*tenka taihei*; 1640–1853), the period examined as our first episode for Japan. This is a rare case of state formation in peaceful times without external wars at all. The year 1640 represented the beginning of the transition of the Tokugawa regime from a system of military mobilization to one of civil administration, and of the samurai from mostly illiterate warriors to well-educated administrators.⁸⁰

The formation of the early modern state in Tokugawa Japan was characterized by parallel processes of state formation both in domains governed by lords known as *daimyo* and in territory directly governed by the *bakufu* (the shogunate). In the domestic peace that ensued after 1640, the political authority of both the shogun and the daimyo was justified by safeguarding the welfare of the subjects in the territory under

⁷⁶ G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1953). For the continuity of the Tudor administrative revolution before and after Henry VIII, see Christopher Coleman and David Starkey, eds., *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

⁷⁷ John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 352.

⁷⁸ Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England*, 9, 69–72.

⁷⁹ Mark Knights, *Trust and Distrust: Corruption in Office in Britain and Its Empire, 1600–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

⁸⁰ Eiko Ikegami, *The Taming of the Samurai: Honorific Individualism and the Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

their respective rulership.⁸¹ With the increasing complexity of the economic and social landscape over the course of the eighteenth century, both the shogunal and domain governments became more institutionalized. From the early eighteenth century onward, collective deliberation dominated the making of major policies in both the shogunate and domain governments; governance was based upon a massive corpus of codified laws and administrative regulations and precedents.⁸² In consequence, the shogunate and ruling daimyo households (*ie*) emerged as impersonal governing apparatuses distinct from the shogun or daimyo as a private person.

From the mid-eighteenth century onward, both shogun and daimyo often used the term *kokka* (*guojia* in Chinese), or “state,” to characterize the impersonal institutional nature of the governing apparatuses upon which they relied to rule their respective territories. Major daimyo, particularly the “outside” (*tozama*) daimyo, were autonomous in legislation and could even mete out the death penalty to their subjects without the sanction of the shogunate.⁸³ Nonetheless, the use of *kokka* by daimyo and their retainer-officials should not be taken to mean “sovereign

⁸¹ The consciousness of the public rather than personal characteristics of the daimyo’s power originated late in the Warring States period (1467–1615) when the daimyo realized the importance of good governance of subjects to increasing its military power. See Ike Susumu, “Chiiki kokka no bunritsu kara tōitsu kokka no kakuritsu e” [From the decentralization of regional states to state unification], in *Shintaikei Nihonshi*, vol. 1, *Kokkashi*, ed. Miyachi Masato, Gomi Fumihiko, Satō Makoto et al. (Tokyo: Yamagawa shuppansha, 2006), 234–37; Katsumata Shizuo, “Jūgo-jūroku seiki no Nihon” [Japan in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries], in *Iwanami kōza Nihon tsūshi*, vol. 10, *Chūsei* (4), ed. Katsumata Shizuo, Asao Naohiro, Amino Yoshihiko et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1994), 32–33.

⁸² For the institutionalization of the shogunate, see James W. White, “State Growth and Popular Protest in Tokugawa Japan,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 1–25; Daniel V. Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 15–19; for a similar process of institutionalization in major domain governments, see Takano Nobuharu, “Daimyō to han” [Domain lords and domains], in *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi*, vol. 11, *Kinsei* (2), ed. Ōtsu Tōru, Sakurai Eiji, and Fujii Joji (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014), 37–70; Fujii Jōji, *Bakuban ryōshu no kenryoku kōzō* [The power structure of the lords of shogunate and domain] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2002), ch. 13.

⁸³ Botsman, *Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan*. For important works on the autonomy of major domain governments in Tokugawa Japan, see Philip C. Brown, *Central Authority and Local Autonomy in the Formation of Early Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); Mark Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Luke S. Roberts, *Mercantilism in a Japanese Domain: The Merchant Origins of Economic Nationalism in 18th-Century Tosa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Luke S. Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2012).

state”; they were well aware that they were subject to the shogunate as the higher political authority in many important aspects such as mintage of currency, foreign relations, map-making, and national defense.⁸⁴

To characterize the Tokugawa political system as a “composite state” or even a conglomeration of independent states ruled respectively by the shogunate and various daimyo recognizes the autonomy of daimyo in their own territories, particularly before the mid-eighteenth century.⁸⁵ By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, the growth in the shogunate’s authority over daimyo, not only in national defense but also in safeguarding the wider domestic welfare across the boundaries of domains, changed the political nature of their relationship. Indeed, the delegation theory of shogunal power developed by the late eighteenth century highlighted that the normative basis of the shogunal authority over daimyo rested upon the duty of the shogunate to protect the public interest of Japan on behalf of the emperor.⁸⁶ This later Tokugawa state was very similar to a quasi-federal state in which the shogunate served as the higher political authority over daimyo.⁸⁷

In China, the state as an impersonal apparatus of governance appeared earlier than it did in Tudor England or Tokugawa Japan. The meaning of the term *guojia* in China underwent similar changes to the word “state” in English: From originally referring to the status and condition of the emperor, it came to refer to a set of impersonal governing institutions. Before the middle of the Tang dynasty (618–907), *guojia* was often used

⁸⁴ Mizubayashi Takeshi, *Hōkensei no saihen to Nihon-teki shakai no kakuritsu* [The reorganization of the feudal system and the establishment of Japanese society] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1987), 280–81; Ronald P. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991); Sugimoto Fumiko, *Kinsei seiji kukanron: Sabaki, ōyake, “Nihon”* [Early modern political history in terms of spatial theory: Judgements, public sphere, and “Japan”] (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuappankai, 2018), ch. 3.

⁸⁵ This was underestimated in lordship scholarship on the political history of Tokugawa Japan. See Ravina, *Land and Lordship in Early Modern Japan*, 27; Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace*, 9–14.

⁸⁶ Fukaya Katsumi, “18 seiki kōhan no Nihon” [Japan in the second half of the eighteenth century], in *Iwanami kōza Nihon tsūshi*, vol. 14, *Kinsei* (4), ed. Asao Naohiro, Amino Yoshihiko, Ishii Susumu et al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 47–51; Fujita Satoru, *Kinsei seijishi to Tennō* [Early modern political history and the emperor] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1999), ch. 3.

⁸⁷ Ronald P. Toby, “Rescuing the Nation from History: The State of the State in Early Modern Japan,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 56, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 230; Mitani Hiroshi, *Ishinshi saikō: Kōgi ōsei kara shūken datsu mibunka e* [Rethinking the history of the Restoration: From public authority and imperial rule to centralization and the removal of status] (Tokyo: NKH shuppan, 2017), 69.

to refer to the emperor himself or the emperor's household.⁸⁸ By the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), it alluded to the governing institution as an impersonal entity that separated the emperorship as a public figure from the emperor as a private person.⁸⁹

The institutionalization and centralization of the state formed one important political outcome of the process known as the 'Tang–Song transition' (eighth through tenth centuries).⁹⁰ As the historian Miyazaki Ichisada has emphasized, the absolute authority of the emperor did not imply a personal autocracy. Rather, it signified the highest political authority of the central government in the use of political power in localities and civilian control of the armed forces, which depended upon fiscal resources allocated by the central government.⁹¹ Scholar-officials in the Northern Song thus could publicly proclaim that they and the emperor "jointly governed the realm" (*gongzhi tianxia*) as officials with a public duty rather than as personal servants of the emperor.⁹²

⁸⁸ Xing Yitian, *Tianxia yijia: Huangdi, guanliao yu shehui* [One family under Heaven: Emperor, bureaucracy and society] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 15; Ogata Isamu, *Chūgoku kodai no "ie" to kokka: Kōtei shibaika no chitsujō kōzō* [Family and state in ancient China: A historical study of the structure of imperial rule] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1979), 265–66.

⁸⁹ Gan Huaizhen, *Huangquan, liyi yu jingdian quanshi: Zhongguo gudai zhengzhishi yanjiu* [Imperial power, rituals and classical interpretation: A political history of ancient China] (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2008), ch. 6. Peter Bol also points out the impersonal nature of the Song government as being in nature different from the personal rule of the emperor. See Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 120–21.

⁹⁰ For the rise of an early modern economy after the Tang–Song transition, see Paul J. Smith and Richard von Glahn, eds., *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003); William Guanglin Liu, *The Chinese Market Economy, 1000–1500* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015).

⁹¹ Miyazaki Ichisada, *Tōyōteki kinsei* [East Asian early modernity] (Tokyo: Kyuiku Taimususha, 1950). See the development of the thesis of institutionalized emperorship in the Song dynasty in Hirata Shigeki, *Sōdai seiji kōzō kenkyū* [A study of Song-dynasty political structure] (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 2012). On the development of civilian control of the military, see Teraji Jun, *Nansō shoki seijishi kenkyū* [A study of the political history of the early Southern Song dynasty] (Hiroshima: Keisuishā, 1988), ch. 1. For a synthesis of the literature on emperorship as distinct from the emperor as a private individual, see Peter K. Bol, "Emperors Can Claim Antiquity Too: Emperorship and Autocracy under the New Policies," in *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China: The Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics*, ed. Patricia B. Ebrey and Maggie Bickford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 175–79.

⁹² Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 126; Deng Xiaonan, *Zuzong zhi fa: Bei Song qianqi zhengzhi shulüe* [Methods of the ancestors: A political overview of the early Northern Song] (Beijing: Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2006).

In particular, policy-making was based upon huge amounts of information in the form of written memorials submitted from regional governments and of official archives held by the central government. The sheer size of this documentation constituted a formidable information constraint on the arbitrary use of personal power by the emperor, no matter how intelligent and hard-working he was.⁹³

The emergence of the early modern state after the Tang–Song transition thence marked a watershed in state formation in China. The degree of institutionalization in governance and the importance of domestic welfare to state legitimacy made the state thereafter qualitatively different from that found in previous dynasties.⁹⁴ However, these normative and institutional constraints on the personal power of the emperor are neglected by many social scientists who view the emperor as having a high degree of despotic power: He “owned the whole of China and could do as he wished with any individual or group within his domain.”⁹⁵ Such an early modern state as an impersonal governing apparatus that justified its power by protecting domestic welfare was in general sustained into the Qing dynasty (1644–1911).⁹⁶

In Qing China, large-scale military campaigns came to an end after the suppression of the Three Feudatories Rebellion and the conquest of Taiwan in the early 1680s. Between 1684 and 1840, the period considered here, there were no major civil wars within China proper.⁹⁷ The Qing government did launch military campaigns on its frontiers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but these wars did not present

⁹³ For the institutionalization of government archives and its implications for policy-making, see Hilde De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015). Philip Kuhn vividly described the deep frustration the Qing-dynasty Qianlong emperor experienced in dealing with the ministers and provincial governors who had a great advantage in controlling the information available to him. Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

⁹⁴ Social scientists who underestimate the significance of the rise of an early modern state in China often treat the state as unchanging across the imperial period (i.e., from the Qin dynasty founded in 221 BCE to the Qing dynasty that fell in 1911): “two thousand years of autocracy.” See such examples in Bendix, *Kings or People*, 49–60; Dingxin Zhao, *The Confucian-Legalist State: A New Theory of Chinese History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁹⁵ Mann, “The Autonomous Power of the State,” 185.

⁹⁶ Why was the institutionalized early modern state so resilient in China despite the invasions of the Mongols (Yuan dynasty, 1271–1368) and the Manchus (Qing dynasty), and the highly personal and sometimes arbitrary use of imperial power by the first emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644)? This question deserves further investigation.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 1 for a definition of China proper.

significant fiscal difficulty.⁹⁸ Likewise, it had adequate fiscal capacity and military power to suppress domestic rebellions, including the White Lotus Rebellion between 1795 and 1805.⁹⁹ Its performance in providing public goods for domestic governance was thence the key to the legitimacy of the Qing state.

To safeguard public interest in domestic welfare was by no means a simple task for these states, as all experienced significant socioeconomic changes during the respective periods examined here: integration of the domestic market, commercialization of agriculture, urban expansion, and population mobility, not to mention an increasing literacy rate that fostered a rising political consciousness among the populace. Although the degree of development of the market economy varied, each state had to face serious social problems caused by fluctuations in the markets and the growth of interregional trade, such as the vulnerability of urban populations to high food prices. Increasing interregional and intergroup conflicts of interest threatened social order. R. Bin Wong contends that the state's commitments to domestic governance and social welfare were unique to state formation in China, whereas European states were committed to extracting resources for fighting wars and left the maintenance of social order and welfare provision to social elites and the church.¹⁰⁰ But the imperative to maintain "good governance" in a commercially dynamic society was common to all three states.

Each earlier episode ends with events that heralded a period of great challenge that threatened the state's ability to meet its basic obligations to the public interest and thus its legitimacy. The terminal year for England (1640) is set prior to the outbreak of the English Civil War (1642–1651), which marked the beginning of great changes both in public finance and in the political system. The terminal years for Japan (1853) and China (1840) are set at the times of their respective forced "openings" by Western powers. This framing thus highlights the indigenous sources of the public interest-based discourse of state legitimation in the two non-Western cases.

⁹⁸ On the contribution of the commercialized economy to the frontier wars launched by the Qing government, see Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁹⁹ Wensheng Wang, *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

¹⁰⁰ R. Bin Wong, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), chs. 4 and 5; R. Bin Wong, "Taxation and Good Governance in China, 1500–1914," in *The Rise of Fiscal States: A Global History, 1500–1914*, ed. Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla and Patrick K. O'Brien with Francisco Comín Comín (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 353–77.

Following these challenges, each state undertook reform of its institutions so as to enhance its fiscal capacity under new socioeconomic conditions; we see this to different degrees in England between 1640 and 1780, Japan between 1853 and 1895, and China between 1840 and 1911. Despite great historical events, such as the English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, the Meiji Restoration, and the Taiping Rebellion, the state's proclaimed duty to safeguard the public interest continued to serve as a common normative platform across these three cases. State–society interactions centered on provision of public goods in the earlier episodes therefore provide crucial background to identify both continuity and discontinuity in such interactions in the later episodes under the new circumstances of enhancing state capacity, industrialization, and urban development. The terminal years for the later episodes are set by a juncture of “great divergence” in state development. In England and Japan, large-scale collective petitions that appealed to the state's proclaimed duty to protect the public interest began to demand fundamental political reforms; in so doing, they ushered in the transition to a modern state. In China, such petitions of public grievance did not appear until 1907, and were quickly followed by the final collapse of the imperial state in 1911. The comparative methodology used here is to explain divergent outcomes in state–society interactions in the new circumstances that emerged from a common basis: the public interest-based discourse of state legitimation.

In these later episodes, despite important changes, the continuity in the pattern of state–society interaction around domestic welfare was remarkable, and occurred regardless of whether there were changes to sovereignty. The challenge for the state to safeguard domestic welfare was particularly serious in England due to rapid economic integration and industrial development after 1640, and especially after 1700. In Meiji Japan, the traditional ideology of benevolent rule remained influential in spite of great efforts to learn from the West and the implementation of programs of modernization. The Qing state also met new challenges in providing public goods for domestic governance under changed socioeconomic circumstances with its decentralized fiscal operation. In all these three cases, the degree of organization of social actors and the resources deployed by them to participate in public goods provision increased dramatically; moreover, both were permitted and even encouraged by the state. State–society interactions over public goods provision related to domestic welfare continued as before, even though the capacity of social actors in public goods provision increased significantly.

Where discontinuity in such participation occurred, it was mainly caused by tension among different dimensions of the public interest; that is, when dimensions other than domestic welfare became prominent. A passive conception of rights derived from the public interest-based discourse of state legitimation could greatly expand political participation when state–society interactions were compounded by diverse dimensions of the public interest. In England and Japan, new types of claims and demands emerged in the form of collective petitions of public grievances that were not about specific material concerns; they were made, however, upon the same basis of state responsibility for the public interest. In England between 1640 and 1642 and again in 1679–1680, the issue of “true Christianity” was held by many – including both elites and common people – as a “public good” that the sovereign had the duty to protect. In Japan, the unequal treaties with Western powers signed by the shogunate and inherited by the Meiji government were widely considered by contemporary Japanese as a “national dishonor” or “national shame” that was contrary to the public interest of Japan.

More importantly, issues of nonmaterial public good in both England and Japan generated great conflict between two dimensions of the public interest: general domestic welfare and international power struggles. Should the state use its greatly enhanced fiscal capacity more for improving domestic welfare or for military spending for imperial wars? This conflict constitutes a vital backdrop if we are to understand how the public interest-based discourse of state legitimation instigated massive but lawful cross-regional and cross-sectoral petitions of public grievances that demanded fundamental political reforms: the parliamentary reform in England between the 1760s and 1780s, and the demand to establish the Diet as the institution of representation in Japan between the 1870s and 1880s. In both cases, the cross-regional and cross-sectoral collective petitions of public grievances greatly stimulated the development of associational activities and the public deliberation of general issues of public interest in mass media such as newspapers and printed pamphlets. People involved in these heated debates over general political issues, however, agreed on the state’s duty to protect that public interest. The development of a public sphere is therefore intimately connected to severe conflicts among different dimensions of the public interest. Great expansion of the public sphere took place within the framework of state legitimacy, and did not necessarily reject state authority. The terminal years for England and Japan are thus set at 1780 and 1895, respectively.

Qing China presents a sharp contrast. The Qing state after suppressing the Taiping, Nian, and Muslim rebellions also enhanced its fiscal capacity. This allowed it to resume its role in collaborating with social actors to deliver public goods to maintain domestic governance in the new circumstances of the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, state legitimacy, unlike that in England or Japan, continued to be tied primarily to the public interest understood in terms of domestic welfare. Before the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), neither issues of nonmaterial public good nor a conflict between the international and domestic dimensions of the public interest emerged to generate collective petitions of public grievance. Qing China in the late nineteenth century thence demonstrates the strong resilience of an early modern state that legitimated its power by taking care of general domestic welfare; this resilience was crushed only by international pressure after 1895. The terminal year for China is the fall of the Qing state in 1911.

In order to further strengthen the causal argument that tensions between the domestic and international dimensions of the public interest are the necessary condition for instigating cross-regional and cross-sectoral collective petitions for fundamental political changes still justified by the terms of state legitimacy, I adopt a natural experiment approach. I take the astronomical indemnities imposed on China due to a series of events between the Qing defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War and the Boxer Incident (1899–1900) as a proxy for the international dimension of the public interest. The conflict between domestic welfare and payment of indemnities did in fact give rise to cross-regional collective petitions of public grievance that demanded the establishment of an elected parliament between 1907 and 1910. These collective petitions of public grievance across the country were organized by reformers and gentry-merchants who remained loyal to the Qing dynasty. Needless to say, this natural experiment is only for the purpose of testing causal inferences in counterfactual situations.¹⁰¹ In actuality, the payment of indemnities had already made the Qing state unable to fulfill its basic functions in providing public goods for domestic governance; nor could it protect the national interest in international politics. Thus its refusal to immediately establish an elected parliament in 1910 contributed significantly to its collapse in the Republican Revolution (*Xinhai geming*) of 1911.

¹⁰¹ See the discussion of using historical events as natural experiments in social science in Jared Diamond and James Robinson, eds., *Natural Experiments of History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

The rest of the book is divided into two parts. Part I, which constitutes the bulk of the study, focuses on the earlier episodes. It describes the public interest-based discourse of state legitimation for each case and explores how it operated as a basis for collaboration and contention in different aspects of early modern governance. In Chapter 1, I detail the nature of the early modern state in Tudor and early Stuart England, Tokugawa Japan, and Qing China, and emphasize the discrepancy between the state's limited fiscal capacity and its proclaimed duty to safeguard the public interest in domestic welfare. In Chapters 2 and 3, I examine the collaboration between state and society upon a shared normative platform of state legitimation to combat the subsistence crisis and finance infrastructural facilities. In Chapter 4, I demonstrate similar patterns in the state's response to popular petitions justified by passive rights that demanded the state fulfill its duty to redress welfare grievances.

Part II takes up the later episodes. I briefly outline the causes of state crises in England in the 1640s, in Japan between 1853 and 1868, and in China in the 1840s and 1850s. This provides a backdrop against which to explore the process of how each state endeavored to reestablish its legitimacy. Chapter 5 then explores both continuity and discontinuity in state–society interactions upon the shared normative platform of state legitimation in periods when each state had greatly enhanced its fiscal capacity while society confronted new socioeconomic and international circumstances. I demonstrate how the conflicts among diverse dimensions of the public interest instigated cross-regional collective petitions of public grievances that demanded fundamental political reforms, but were still justified by the state's proclaimed duty to protect the public interest. Such petitions of public grievance occurred in England and Japan, but not in China. In the Conclusion, I review how the findings of this research change our view of state formation and popular contention, and elaborate upon the importance of contextualization to comparative historical analysis and social science research in general.