

What sorts of things do states do?

Public safety / order (e.g., policing)

External defense (military, spies, etc.)

Dispute resolution (e.g., courts)

Public services

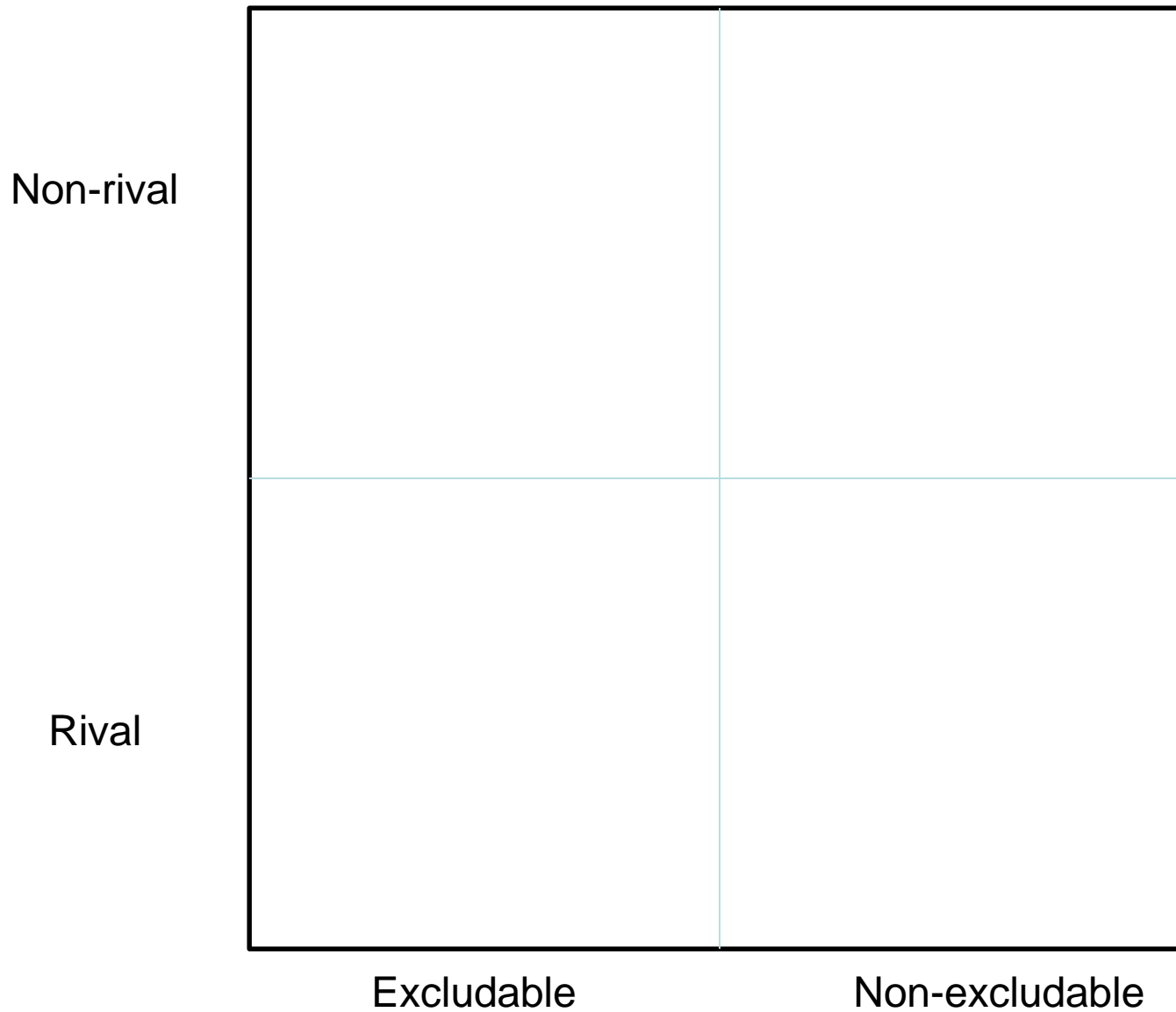
- *Critical infrastructures (water systems, bridges, roads, etc.)*
- Disaster relief
- *Public health (e.g., epidemics)*
- Education

Economic regulation

- *Currency*
- *Standardized weights and measures*
- Establishment and enforcement of property rights
- *Consumer protection and product safety*
- **Redistribution**

Revenue collection (e.g., taxes)

Public goods (classic definition)



Public goods (classic definition)

Non-rival	Water from the village well Local road Public education	Pure public goods (clean air, national defense, currency, legal system, large dams, classified information about cyberthreats) Public beaches
Rival	Candy bar, car, milk from a dairy cow, agricultural land, apartment building, private education	Fruit growing by roadside
	Excludable	Non-excludable

[Goods may also look different when how they are financed is taken into account] 3

States don't just provide public goods

Other types of goods

- State may be able to provide a semi-private good more cheaply given economies of scale (e.g., a road)
- Redistribution
- Education

Should certain goods be provided, and in what amount?

- Redistribution (to the poor, elderly, unemployed, etc.)
- National defense

Can they be provided in a different way? (make versus buy)

- E.g., should trash collection be outsourced to private firms or done by state directly?
- Should the state provide public education or provide vouchers?
- How should social welfare programs be administered (Dutch versus Swedish versus Swiss versus Americans)?
- National defense

Can we imagine a different the state?

Countries that are “born free” *versus* something else

- Assume *isonomia* (equality of political and civil rights)
- Don't assume anything else

Introduction to the (fictitious) island nation of Compostela

- Backup rainwater catchment versus coastal defense?
- Who should pay for public services?

What are the proper boundaries of the state?

The problem of rights, numbers, and intensities (a.k.a., the James Madison problem):

- What to do when majorities trump minorities with intense preferences on “ordinary” issues? (e.g., trade policy)

The problem of cultural rights and prejudices (a.k.a., the Larry Diamond problem)

- Religious freedom versus religious conformity
- Language policy in a linguistically divided society

The scope of the public sphere

- Can the community regulate indecency and offensiveness that do not actually cause harm (a.k.a., the Joel Feinberg problem)
- How should a conventional society deal with sexuality and gender identity?
- Can the state restrict reproductive rights (e.g., banning birth control)?

Which rights are necessary for citizenship? How do we decide how far those rights should extend?

For Groups A and B

1. The problem of popular ignorance (a.k.a., the H.L. Menken problem)
 - “Democracy is a pathetic belief in the collective wisdom of individual ignorance. No one in this world, so far as I know—and I have researched the records for years, and employed agents to help me—has ever lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the great masses of the plain people.”
 - Introduction to minimalism
 - Where “experts” lead public opinion
2. Democracy versus liberalism (a.k.a, the Judith Shklar problem)

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