

Interrogations #8. Charles Tilly
March 9, 2017

1. Griffin JM Bur

I have a short question this week. On p. 63, Tilly briefly outlines his account of why European states eventually converged on one particular form of state; his answer is effectively that this was due to long-run changes in the art of war; on p. 84, he reiterates and clarifies that this was essentially due to the increasing capital-intensity and complexity of war. This seems to play a fairly important role in his argument. My question is: how do we understand this argument about the changes in war-making? It seems to me that we could plausibly subsume this under an account of the capitalist mode of production (perhaps the increased complexity and capital-intensity of the war industry is part of the same general dynamic of capital that characterizes other industries), read it as a relatively autonomous outcome of changes in scientific knowledge, treat it as a specific dynamic of war as a specific social practice, or treat it as a contingent outcome of history. No matter the answer, I would be interested in discussing this because a lot of Tilly's arguments about the dynamics of state-formation, from those about the financing of war to the raising of permanent standing armies, rely on this and I think it would be interesting to probe it more--not because I'm skeptical (it seems like a reasonable argument to me) but because he spends relatively little time on war itself (70-76 offers some answers but also some generalities about "war in general" that might not fully explain changes in war in the epoch under discussion).

2. Benny Witkovsky

Therborn, Jessop and (maybe to a lesser extent) Mann, all seemed to push back against the classic Weberian focus on the state as defined by coercion, opting instead for a definition about "rule-making, rule applying rule-adjudicating, rule-enforcing and rule defending" (Therborn, 47) in which coercion might be a threat, extreme example or emergency measure. Tilly, it appears, breaks pretty strongly with this argument, placing coercion at the center of state activity and as a driving force through states are formed and take a particular shape.

In several instances Tilly argues that the other functions of the state specifically grow out of the material and political mechanisms necessary to organize a state's capacity for internal and external violence. On page 53 he places the move toward a broader state apparatus in this process, arguing "Rulers continued to bargain with capitalists and other classes for credit, revenues, manpower, and the necessities of war. Bargaining, in its turn, created numerous new claims on the state: pensions, payments to the poor, public education, city planning, and much more. In the process, states changed from magnified war machines into multiple-purpose organizations."

To what extent is this the difference between questions about state formation and questions about how modern states operate? Should we understand the tension between Tilly and Therborn (if we agree that there is such a tension) as simply saying that coercion was the driving force for state formation in an earlier period, but today state's look and operate much more like Therborn's definition? Or is there a more important theoretical disagreement here, and if so, what are its implications for how we study states today?

3. Youbin Kang

Tilly's employs a highly Weberian view of the state, "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (70). In using this mode of characterizing European states, Timmy maintains that the minimum essential activities are: statemaking, warmaking, protection, and extraction, with other terrains of adjudication, distribution and production. His characterization, however, does not necessarily consider the role of legitimacy and consent. Tilly's discussion of popular collective action similarly centers on the ability of states to "a function of the relative salience of coercion and capital as the basis of state formation" (100). States, ultimately are autonomous, through means of "cannon versus staves" (102). His explanation thus centers on bargaining, backed by force, with no means of explaining the importance of achieving consent, or a means of the populace as being ideologically captured by certain state mechanisms (e.g. educational system in France, or the protestant ethic espoused by the church).

By this omission, I wonder whether Tilly is leaving such mechanisms out of the picture deliberately, perhaps because it is much more of a democratic ideal relevant to states and state structures in modern times, or whether he sees it as inconsequential compared to the more central activities of amassing coercive means and capital. What do we think of in the contemporary political climate? Are ideological forces secondary to geopolitical warfare and footloose capital, or is collective action, legitimacy, and consent something that may drive state-making today?

I take an example outside Europe since Tilly claims that "if we explain the various paths taken by European states, we will better understand today's non-European states." (16) In South Korea the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons and the central role of the U.S. military in politics has been heavy handed in shaping the political sphere. In 2014, the far left political party, the United People's Party was disbanded through constitutional law, inciting its close relationships with North Korea and the security threat it posed to the country. Today, the coercive diplomacy of the U.S. military has enabled the deployment of the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile in 2017, which is beginning to threaten the trade relationship between South Korea and China. In these two cases, Tilly's characterization of the state fits quite nicely. However, on the other hand Tilly leaves out the impact and extent of ideological consent that the South Korean state has obtained through various educational, conscription military, and other means, that has supported the deployment of THAAD and the disbandment of UPP.

4. Kris Arsaelsson

In Tilly's theory "rulers" face a number of problems in defending/expanding their positions, of which the extraction of resources to sustain militaries is central. And while classes or identity groups are not central to his macro theory he acknowledges their role: "To the extent that a state's population was segmented and heterogenous the likelihood of large-scale rebellion declined, but the difficulty of imposing uniform administrative arrangements increased." But do contemporary rulers/states face the same problem?

5. Tamara Wattnam

When I took Political Sociology, Ermakoff suggested that even though Tilly argues that states always grow out of competition for control of territories and people, he doesn't really try to explain why there is conflict and competition. This simply appears to be an "anthropological fact" – in Ermakoff's words. Tilly also doesn't say very much about class structures and conflicts. In fact, he admits that he treats this issue only "cursorily." I'm wondering if we can try to figure out what his underlying assumptions about social change are. Does he have an implicit theory of history?

6. Kaan Jittiang

In *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*, Charles Tilly provides an interesting discussion regarding the variation in the formation of states in Europe. His explanation rests upon the two major logics of capital and coercion. While the organization of major social classes within the state's territory may affect the strategies rulers use to extract resources and the shape of the state in general, the preparation of war seems to be a more significant factor that Tilly emphasizes throughout. According to Tilly, it was the preparation of war that lead states to extracts resource, and by-products of both the extraction of resources and the creation of armed forces are different components of states, such as treasuries, courts, central administration, etc. Thus, the emergence of internal structure of the state are not by designed but unintentional.

Tilly tends to repeatedly stress this particular point throughout his discussion, but I am not sure whether it is convincing. According to Tilly, it seems as if war as well as the preparation for war was the primary issue that every state concerns. In other words, every state has to get ready for war. I am certainly not denying that particular fact; however, I would disagree with his argument that every state would indulge with war preparation and only because of such preparation different internal structures of the state emerged. Even though the peacetime in Europe is known to be short, I would assume that different states during such period would be able to deliberately design their state structure. The emergence of courts, for example, I don't think that it is not necessarily related to the preparation for war. It is likely to be the attempt to create social order, which leads to the establishment of court. Also, let's think about 1815-1914, the longest period without major wars in Europe as well. I would assume that more available time

that different rulers and politicians have might allow them to carefully design state institutions. Accordingly, I don't think different components of states and the construct of states are necessarily and simply the by-product of war preparation as Tilly pointed out.

7. Sarah Farr

My questions for this week mostly center around understanding the details of Tilly's argument. Tilly identifies three broad categories of state formation: capital-intensive, coercion-intensive, and capitalized coercion (some sort of middle ground?). In the capital-intensive model, society is organized around relations of exchange, the ruling class are capitalists, markets are the most important institutions, and cities are the center of power. In the coercion-intensive model, the ruling class is the landholding elite or nobility, society is organized by force, militaries are the most important institutions, and the population is rural and dispersed. I'm not sure I have a good grasp on the capitalized coercion model. Tilly's main argument is that the type of capital-coercion balance present in a given society will determine the nature of state formation. This happens because the types of demands that are placed on the state depend on the nature of class relations, which depend on the capital-coercion balance in a given society. The nature of the state is determined by the types of structures that result from responding to and negotiating over these demands. By "demands," Tilly is referring to demands for services, city planning, and other social controls by different classes. The state has an interest in responding to demands because of its dependency on these classes for war-making. To ensure that the state is able to continue extracting labor/resources for war without rebellion, it must obtain legitimacy through responding to these demands.

1. What does Tilly mean exactly by this middle ground coercion-capital balance of "capitalized coercion"?
 2. Why is war so central to the purpose of states? Tilly suggests that states go to war in order to obtain resources demanded by the ruling class. But then Tilly suggests that the state has to respond to demands from the both the ruling class and "other classes" that arise from the process of extraction for war. Is this a somewhat circular story? Or maybe the demands are mostly from the "other classes"?
 3. Tilly argues that empires were inherently unstable because of the nature of indirect rule. As the cost of war ballooned in the 18th century, "a closely administered territory became an asset worth fighting for." (29) States had to both intensify and expand the geographical scope of extraction, and the logistical demands of extraction, distribution and administration of populations gave rise to institutionalized state apparatuses. Since WWII, the trend has been "exercising influence over other states without actually incorporating their territory into that of the more powerful state." (30) I'm trying to wrap my mind around this question of direct vs. indirect rule and when we can expect states to expand direct rule vs. indirect rule in their quest to grow their extractive base. I guess a question could be: How does Tilly account for the continued existence of empire-like expansion of powerful states (i.e. extraction of resources through indirect rule) in his argument?
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8. Courtney Deisch

In Tilly's rather ambitious exploration of the formation of the national state (or more precisely the territorially sovereign state), he identifies the driving force of state formation as war waging (20). Three paths were primarily determinant of the development of territorially sovereign states in Europe: the coercion-intensive path (Madrid, Berlin), the capital-intensive path (Barcelona, Amsterdam), and the path somewhere between the two (London). While the model is quite convincing, Tilly seems to neglect the institutional developments of various governmental designs that may have played a role in the development of territorially sovereign states. Additionally, he spends a limited amount of time addressing the development of empires toward the end of the third chapter; however, he tends to neglect an analysis of the impact of ethnic self-determination in the development of territorially sovereign states. Is the claim that war making is the primary and determinist factor in the production of territorially sovereign states in Europe convincing, or does Tilly's argument limit his scope problematically?

9. Loren Peabody

I have three questions about Tilly's model, one about the dynamic within it and two about what is treated as exogenous to it.

First, is Tilly arguing that war provides a selection mechanism that has the effect of weeding out states that lack the centralization, etc. of national states or is he arguing that rulers have the belief that they will succeed in preparing for war through this form of state-building (see p. 31, 54, 58, and especially 63)?

Second, where does the geopolitical competition dynamic come from? Is such competition—or at least its most bellicose form—inevitable or constant (see p. 70)?

Third, accumulation of capital is not a central focus of this book. Although it's not fair to ask an author to bring all variables into their model (see p. 36), does this omission create problems for Tilly's argument? He mentions that capital is "unevenly spatially distributed" (p. 64), but doesn't explore explanations of its accumulation. He also assumes that there is one path to the concentration of capital, missing the significance of the distinction between merchant and productive capital, where the relations of production are actually structured along capitalist lines (he seems to acknowledge the distinction on p. 17). As the centers of trade networks, the city-empires of the Mediterranean could develop considerable wealth, but they never provided the basis for self-sustained growth that the capitalist class structure in the English countryside did. Tilly also does not put a lot of emphasis on the connection of the accumulation of capital to the accumulation of coercion. Is it problematic to leave this out? One could argue that it's no accident that the small island on the edge of Europe that practically took over

the world was the state that first transitioned to capitalism while the great Spanish and Portuguese empires devolved into third-rate powers no matter how much New World plunder was pumped into the black hole of their feudal economies.

10. Masoud Mavahed

What factors shape the forms that the states take in the European continent? This is the question that Charles Tilly seeks to answer in his *Coercion, Capital, and European States*. Tilly clearly goes beyond the dominant explanations of state formation and state structure (namely statist, world system, geopolitical and mode of production models) and instead puts forward an explanation where he situates war-waging as the incentive for state formation and the determinant of its form—to the effect that he titles Chapter 3 of his book “How War Made States, and Vice Versa.” Tilly writes that “the central, tragic fact is simple: coercion works; those who apply substantial force to their fellows get compliance, and from compliance draw the multiple advantages of money, goods, deference, access to pleasures denied to less powerful people” (p. 70). Yet Tilly does not much discuss the genesis of the state for his quest of explaining why European states came to different forms (such as territorial state, city-state, city-league) while ultimately converging on the model with sovereign territorial autonomy or what he calls the “national state.”

Tilly emphasizes on two main factors that explain state formation and evolution: 1) the intensification of a particular combination of forces namely, capital and coercion within European states; 2) attempts at waging wars at continental and international levels. Tilly builds his argument on the evolution and formation of state based on the following elements. Arrangements for both defensive and offensive war incentivized rulers to build infrastructure necessary for taxation, supply, and administration (i.e. judiciaries, treasuries, regional bureaucracies, and public assemblies etc.). According to Tilly, where capital accumulation was robust but the coercive force of the state was diffuse (such as the Italian states of Venice), rulers were obliged to depend on compacts with capitalists for the acquisition of military equipment, or to acquire means of defense through contracts with mercenaries (Tilly calls this *capital-intensive state*). Conversely, where capital was diffuse, rulers had to “squeeze” the means of war from their own population by ways of coercion and outright domination such as the state in Brandenburg and Russian as the exemplars of *coercion-intensive states*. There were also areas in Europe where a more *balanced* level of both capital and coercion amalgamation emerged (such as in France and England). The rulers in these countries were capable of “playing one against the other” by deploying purchased military force to contain the holders of private armies and deploying national armies to coerce the holders of private capital. Tilly calls this form of state as *capital-coercive* (p. 92). And this balance supported the maintenance of large armies. For Tilly, in the long-term, the military superiority of war-waging of capital-coercive states produced convergence towards the “national state model.” In short, variation in the accumulation of capital and coercion explains the divergent state forms, whereas the interstate wars at continental level explains the convergence of national state model in Europe.

There are a few points that I would like us to have brief discussions on in class. First, by arguing that war is foundational and primary, Tilly comes close suggesting that war is an end in and of itself. But if war is a means to another end, then, an account of economic variables, the emergence of exchange market in European cities, colonization of countries in the Global South are necessary to explain the motive behind waging wars. While Tilly does briefly acknowledge that the purpose of war is to secure

“access to money, and goods (p.70),” he omits examining the above-mentioned economic variables throughout his analysis. Tilly also seems to occasionally contract himself. For example, he on page 162 he claims that “the dominant political fact of the last thousand years is the formation and extension of a European state system consisting largely of national states rather than empires, city-states, or other variants of coercive power.” If the dominant political fact about state formation in the last thousand years in Europe has been congruent with “national state” model—and not city-states, city-leagues, empires, etc.—then the explanatory power of wars—as a causal effect— which led to the convergence of state formation in Europe is significantly undermined. If “national state model” is historically institutionalized in the European continent, then, one might say that convergence is largely due to this historical institutionalization of “national state model” and not wars.

11. Samina Hossain

It was interesting to revisit Tilly's *Coercion, Capital and European States*, after reading Weber's *Protestant Ethic* just a few weeks ago in Theory. The two works take different approaches to explain the organization and ascendancy of European states. The following quote summarizes Tilly's bellicist argument on state formation:

“Nevertheless, the increasing scale of warfare and the knitting together of the European state system through commercial, military, and diplomatic interaction eventually gave the war-making advantage to those states that could field standing armies; states having access to a combination of large rural populations, capitalists, and relatively commercialized economy won out. They set the terms for war, and their form of state became the predominant one in Europe. Eventually European states converged on this form: the national state.”

Weber offers a different perspective on the rise of the European modern states, attributing the “rational, systemic and specialized” form of these states to a peculiar ethic of the West. Below is Weber's description of this ethic, the gist being that it encourages capital accumulation:

“the *summum bonum* of this ethic, the strict earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, ... is thought of ... purely as an end in itself, ... Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs... At the same time it expresses a type of feeling which is closely connected with certain religious ideas.”

Weber eventually traces this ethic back to the doctrines of Protestantism. I'm curious to know how you guys imagine the conversation to be between Tilly and Weber about the root causes of state formation in Europe. Does Tilly's framework allow room for cultural explanations?