

REVIEW ESSAYS

A Millennium of European State Formation

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TILLY, CHARLES. *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990–1990*. Basil Blackwell, Cambridge (MA) [etc.] 1990. xi, 269 pp. £25.00.

I

Since Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, few attempts have been made to explain the pattern of European state formation over the past thousand years in an equally grand and ambitious manner. Charles Tilly's account of European state formation belongs in the same rank with Moore's classic study. It is a brilliant, thought-provoking analysis, which is firmly grounded in historical research. Its geographical and temporal coverage of European political history is, if anything, even more impressive than Moore's *Social Origins*. Moreover, it displays all the geometrical elegance of well-proportioned architectural design. Tilly has devised a powerful and unequivocal theoretical framework in order to account for the general features and the main varieties of European state formation. Two types of historical interaction form the core of his model. The first type, the *logic of coercion*, involves using administration and violence to control human activities in a territorial setting. The second type is the *logic of capital*, which binds human activities in an economic framework by organizing exchange, markets, transport and credit.

Tilly opens his comparative analysis of state formation with the clear-cut but far-reaching claim that the nature of a given state depends on the specific interplay between these two modes of interaction. Accordingly, he defines two basic, ideal-type trajectories of state formation: the coercion-intensive path, in the European context usually a territorial principedom or monarchy, and the capital-intensive path, usually a city-state.

In the course of European history, a third pattern emerged that combined elements from both ideal types. Tilly calls it *capitalized coercion*. It resulted in more efficient territorial states that incorporated cities and capital and used them productively, rather than simply exercising control over them and milking their economies. Eventually, the third mode prevailed over the other two because it combined three elements, namely effective authority, a rich supply of capital, and a large population. The monarchies that were purely coercion-intensive incorporated authority and population, but lacked the necessary capital; the city-states

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combined efficient governance and capital, but had an insufficient demographic base.

The historical victory of the third type, based on capitalized coercion, must be taken quite literally. Tilly considers warfare the driving force behind the entire process of state formation. In this international process, individual polities engaged in constant competition, which was primarily military, according to Tilly's adage: "The state made war, and war made the state." Tilly attributes the significance of economic competition between states to the rising cost of warfare, which rendered the military power of states increasingly dependent on their economic potential.

Over the course of the thousand-year period, the number of independent political entities in Europe declined drastically, from over 1,000 around AD 900–1000 to about 30 in the twentieth century.¹ This reduction in the number of states follows a Darwinist logic: a great variety of polities (feudal monarchies, city-states, federal empires, ecclesiastical territories) existed at the onset of the thousand-year period, but in the end only the polities based on capitalized coercion survived the race, eventually laying the groundwork for the nineteenth-century national states. This historical process typically involved trial and error, *natural selection* and *survival of the fittest*.

II

Tilly explains variations in the European pattern by incorporating items from the work of Barrington Moore and Stein Rokkan in his analysis. He uses Moore's distinction between labour-repressive and commercialized agriculture. Taxation in large agrarian regions with a poorly developed monetary economy was possible only through the coercion system, as peasants derived little benefit from the state and would surrender a share of their harvest only under duress. Extracting the agrarian surplus was generally the task of local rulers and other intermediaries who transferred a share to the sovereign. Most peasants were not free men, but rather serfs or bondsmen.

Commercialized agriculture defined the relationship between farmers and local landowners in economic terms. Farmers were free men, and rent payments replaced political coercion. Furthermore, the convergence of trade on the market-places facilitated tax collection.² In addition, farmers and other landowners had an interest in minimal enforcement

¹ Tilly, *Coercion*, pp. 39–43; also see Mark Greengrass (ed.), *Conquest and Coalescence. The Shaping of the State in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1991), pp. 1–2.

² Recently, however, it has been argued that the sophistication and the size of the tax-gathering organization are greater in the case of a highly developed market economy, see Thomas Ertman, "The Sinews of Power and European State-Building Theory", in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War. Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London and New York, 1994), pp. 33–51, especially p. 38.

of law and order, simply because trade was vulnerable. Their association with the sovereign's local officers began to resemble something like an antagonistic symbiosis.

Moore's study virtually ignored the urban zones of Europe. Tilly bridges this gap with the geopolitical analysis of Stein Rokkan, a Norwegian political scientist who suggested dividing Europe into three zones: a western zone with mainly commercial agriculture and fairly numerous but geographically dispersed cities, a central area with numerous autonomous cities, regions of high urban density and commercial agriculture, and, finally, an eastern zone with few cities and agriculture that was primarily labour-repressive.³

While urban zones were well suited for regular taxation and debt finance, many cities were powerful enough to resist princely rule, or to impose stringent conditions on its operation. Larger territorial states did not emerge, or emerged very slowly, in the urbanized central area. The Dutch Republic and the Swiss Confederation remained federative polities in which the urban burghers retained considerable autonomy.

The combined frameworks of Rokkan and Moore initially yield three patterns of state formation. The West contained territorial monarchies featuring a powerful Estates representation, and rather influential cities. The centre was characterized by city-states, federations, and small territorial principalities. Finally, the East consisted of territorial monarchies with influential Estates as well, but with widely dispersed cities possessing little autonomy. Tilly is particularly interested in the conditions for establishing *strong* monarchies. He states: "Big powerful national states formed chiefly at the edges of the urban column, where cities and capital were accessible but not overwhelming" (p. 133). This rationale applied to Britain, France, Prussia and Spain (p. 159). Especially the first three nations expanded their power in the long run. According to Tilly's perspective, Britain, France and Prussia were characterized by the early development of a territorial monarchy which facilitated control over the cities,⁴ subsequent reinforcement of the monarchy through taxation of an agricultural sector with a rising productivity ("capitalistic landlords with market outlets"), and resulting access to the European urban economy in the central zone without actually belonging to it.

The counterparts of the winners in the struggle for survival were, of course, the losers. Of the three kinds of losers, two eventually disappeared altogether. Between 1750 and 1850, almost all city-states were

³ Stein Rokkan, "Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A Possible Paradigm for Research on Variations Within Europe", in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975), especially pp. 575–591.

⁴ For an attempt to explain the geographic distribution of these proto-monarchies in Western Europe, see Michael Hechter and William Brustein, "Regional Modes of Production and Patterns of State Formation in Western Europe", *American Journal of Sociology*, 85 (1979–1980), pp. 1061–1094.

absorbed by larger national states. The federal states (the Dutch Republic and the Swiss Confederation) made the rather difficult transition to national unitary states during the same period. Finally, except for Russia, the multi-ethnic empires dissolved into national states in the course of the “long nineteenth century”.

The victory of unitary national states resulted from international competition rather than from some internal logic of state formation, and Tilly repeatedly emphasizes this conclusion. Two factors were responsible for this outcome. First, the absolute power of the unitary states became greater than that of their competitors. Second, warfare became more costly following the professionalization and expansion of the military forces (p. 190).

Tilly considers the early modern era decisive for the consolidation of the European state system (p. 81). By the end of the eighteenth century, the supremacy of the capitalized-coercion model was essentially a *fait accompli*. In the era of the French Revolution and more generally throughout the transition period from 1750 to 1850, this type of state successfully accomplished the transition from *indirect rule* to *direct rule*. Government through regional and local intermediaries was replaced by direct intervention of the national administrative elites in local communities, households and enterprises. By and large, bureaucracy replaced patronage, and burghers and professionals supplanted aristocrats and prelates (pp. 103ff.). The subsequent administrative modernization, facilitated by new means of communication and *surveillance*, further strengthened this type of state, which prevailed throughout Europe and North America during the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, the global range of the European powers promoted its world-wide expansion through colonial state-building or as a result of confrontation and imitation.

Finally, Tilly also attributes the development of representative institutions to the consequences of warfare. Wars required a major mobilization of resources: money, equipment and manpower. The princes, or more generally the state elites, were forced to bargain with their more powerful subjects to obtain these resources. They could achieve their objective only through threats, co-optation, or exchanges of services and money. The rising cost of warfare increased the pressure on rulers to bargain with their subjects. Therein lie the origins of representative institutions (p. 188).

III

Tilly's approach is deliberately *comparative* and must be judged accordingly. The title of his book conveys both the geographic and the chronological range of this comparison: Europe during the second millennium of the Christian era. Thus, Tilly's theory should explain three things: (1) the major variations in forms of states; (2) the spatial distribution

of these variations; and (3) the chronological pattern of these variations.

At this juncture, we can opt for either a strong or a weak formulation of Tilly's theory. According to the strong formulation, the demands of warfare in conjunction with the capital-coercion ratio provide a necessary and sufficient explanation of the major variations between types of states. The weak formulation holds that the requirements of warfare in conjunction with the capital-coercion ratio are necessary but not sufficient for explaining these variations. I shall argue that the weak formulation can be sustained but that the strong one cannot.

I would like my critique to be understood as a constructive contribution to an ongoing debate. To make this clear, I will start with pointing out what I see as the three chief strengths of Tilly's analysis. First, there is his non-finalist view of the temporal pattern of state formation. He is surely right to shun the country-by-country approach that assumes each country to proceed through the same stages.⁵ This method can easily lead to an anachronistic and teleological historical interpretation projecting political units from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries back into the Middle Ages. Tilly, on the contrary, stresses the need to explain the transition from the heterogeneous and dispersed political structure of medieval Europe to the fairly homogeneous large-scale network of states of the past century and a half.⁶

Tilly's scheme thus allows for contingencies. As modern states are not based on any pre-existing general logic, several options competed for priority within an international system of states. The victory of the territorial unitary state resulted solely from a concrete historical process. The superior military prowess of such states was indeed largely responsible for this outcome, as Tilly's theory leads us to expect.

His second strong point is the explanation of state formation in terms of the combined action of geopolitical and socio-economic forces, with the triad of armament, credit and taxation as the core of the process of state formation. Such a perspective permits an approximate periodization according to the successive "military revolutions" on the one hand and economic development and social structure on the other hand. This kind of theory is clearly superior to theories accommodating endogenous factors only, such as class and bureaucratization theories. The explanation for the global-geographic pattern of early modern state formation, which combines Tilly's own war theory with elements from schemes by Moore and Rokkan, is largely convincing.⁷

⁵ To see how such a model succumbed when confronted with historical issues and historians, see Raymond Grew (ed.), *Crises of Political Development in Europe and the United States* (Princeton, 1978).

⁶ See Charles Tilly, "Cities and States in Europe, 1000–1800", *Theory and Society*, 18 (1989), p. 563.

⁷ Tilly's approach shows some similarities with Immanuel Wallerstein's analysis of the world system, but lacks its economic determinism; see Aristide Zolberg's critique of Wallerstein: "Origins of the Modern World System. A Missing Link", *World Politics*, 23 (1980–1981), pp. 253–281.

A third strong point is Tilly's theorization of state formation as a process of negotiation. As a consequence, it encompasses the *top down* and *bottom up* logics and does not conform to any preconceived plan of an all-powerful elite. This principle is perfectly compatible with Tilly's previous work in which he asserted that no a priori difference exists between legitimate and illegitimate violence, and that order can emanate from the top as well as from the bottom.⁸ It is striking, however, that the elitist perspective is more dominant in *Coercion, Capital and European States* than in Tilly's own earlier work.

IV

Tilly's view of state formation is, however, less convincing when it comes to explaining the emergence of representative institutions. The difference between states with and states without powerful representative institutions is one of the major variations in the development of European states. All theories of state formation try to explain this distinction, which is actually the crucial focus of Moore's work. True to his central hypothesis, Tilly bases his explanation on the demands of warfare. He asserts:

The more expensive and demanding war became, the more they (the state elites) had to bargain for its wherewithal. The bargaining produced or fortified representative institutions [. . .] and eventually national legislatures. (p. 188)

This explanation implies that an increasing war effort enhanced the development of representative institutions. The history of France and Prussia, however, suggests the contrary. Tilly probably sensed this problem, as the sentence quoted above is followed by a somewhat cryptic formulation:

Bargaining ranged from co-optation with privilege to massive armed repression, but it left behind compacts between sovereigns and subjects. (p. 188)

Such an interpretation of the concept of negotiation, however, empties it of all meaning, and thus eliminates the unambiguous relationship between negotiation and the growth of representative institutions. It also remains unclear why (and if) massive armed repression always leads to compacts between sovereigns and subjects. In the following sentence, Tilly explains that these agreements sometimes arose after a very long time indeed (*italics added*):

Although rulers of states such as France and Prussia managed to circumvent most of the old representative institutions *for several centuries*, those representative institutions or their successors *eventually* acquired more power vis-à-vis the crown

⁸ Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York, 1984), pp. 53–59.

as regular taxation, credit, and payment for the national debt became essential to the continued production of armed force. (p. 188)

Here, Tilly attempts to cover England, France and Prussia (Germany) with one model. In my opinion, however, his theory fails to come to terms with either of the three cases. In France, tremendous military efforts weakened representative institutions in the seventeenth century.⁹ Looking at the subsequent evolution of the French monarchy, we might invoke Tilly's theory as a *partial* explanation of the eventual collapse of absolutism in the second half of the eighteenth century, for the political crisis of 1787–1789 can be attributed *in part* to the financial consequences of French intervention in the American War of Independence. The recent study of the French Revolution by Bailey Stone, which combines a geopolitical approach with a fine-tuned analysis of the political culture of the *Ancien Régime*, demonstrates, however, that the salience of war-related financial stress can only be fully understood within the context of the political culture and the ideological setting of French society.¹⁰ In Prussia, the state's military expansion laid the groundwork for the emergence of absolutism in the second half of the seventeenth century, and military policy impeded the parliamentarization of the country in the nineteenth century as well, especially in the crucial *Konfliktzeit* of 1861–1866.¹¹ In the component parts of the Habsburg monarchy, the military efforts of the Thirty Years War likewise accelerated the drive towards absolutism.¹² In the subsequent history of Prussia/Germany and Habsburg Austria, Tilly's approach is clearly insufficient, for these states were *never* parliamentarized by endogenous forces: the military pressure on the Prussian/German state prevented or frustrated (Weimar) parliamentarization again and again, until it was definitively imposed by external forces in 1945 following defeat in two world wars. The trajectory of the Austrian state was roughly similar.

Finally, Tilly's explanation does not fit the English case, the most important example of successful parliamentarization. During the first stage of this process, the consolidation of parliamentary authority in the century and a half after Magna Carta, the war effort 'was but one of the factors that led to the strengthening of parliamentary rule; the administration of justice, issues of feudal law and ecclesiastical politics were at least equally important.'¹³ Religious matters played an autono-

⁹ See David Parker, *The Making of French Absolutism* (London, 1983), pp. 59ff.

¹⁰ Bailey Stone, *The Genesis of the French Revolution: A Global-Historical Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1994).

¹¹ Francis L. Carsten, *Geschichte der Preussischen Junker* (Frankfurt/M., 1988), pp. 35–44; Wolfram Siemann, *Gesellschaft im Aufbruch. Deutschland 1849–1871* (Frankfurt/M., 1990), pp. 200–231; James J. Sheehan, *Der Deutsche Liberalismus, 1770–1914* (Munich, 1983), pp. 135ff.

¹² See Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526–1918* (Berkeley, 1980).

¹³ G.O. Sayles, *The Medieval Foundations of England* (London, 1948), pp. 399ff.

mous rule in the making of the 1640 Revolution as well. Between 1640 and 1688, the second crucial stage in the parliamentarization of the British government, external war was only of marginal importance (Scottish and Irish affairs were relevant, but they do not fit neatly into Tilly's model).¹⁴ Rather than a military revolution, the *absence* of a standing army due to the island kingdom's protected status was an important precondition for the victory of the parliamentary party in the seventeenth century.¹⁵ After 1688, further parliamentarization can certainly not be attributed to the increasing military effort in the wars against France. It was the other way around: the parliamentary monarchy fortified and employed the military power of the state for the furtherance of its own strategic goals.¹⁶

England, France, Austria and Prussia, however, were not the only states possessing representative institutions in the pre-seventeenth-century period. In a recent comparative study of the political effects of the military revolution, Brian Downing has argued that, *as a general rule*, strong mobilization of military resources is more conducive to absolutism than to constitutionalism.¹⁷ Historically, throughout Europe the emergence of representative institutions *preceded* the military revolutions of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries submitted by Tilly as an explanation. All over Europe, the legal practices and the political rituals and beliefs subsumed in the concept of representation came under severe pressure during the period 1500–1800. In so far as they survived, it was *in spite of* the military revolutions and not because of them. Contrary to the course suggested by Tilly's theory, representative institutions generally grew weaker during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Netherlands and England were the major exceptions. A new historical wave of parliamentarization began only with the American and French Revolutions.

Tilly's war model does not explain the historical origins of the representative system in Europe. Representative institutions were a medieval phenomenon that was closely related to the gradual emergence of larger political units from the political fragmentation that peaked in the eleventh century.¹⁸ While military issues were a factor, the inner logic of feudal law, economic politics, and religious affairs also came into play. Joseph

¹⁴ Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529–1642* (London, 1977), pp. 116ff.

¹⁵ Stone, *Causes*, p. 116; Keith Thomas, "The United Kingdom", in Grew, *Crises of Political Development*, p. 93.

¹⁶ Brian M. Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change. Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, 1992), pp. 183–186.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 242. John Breuilly reaches a similar conclusion in *Labour and Liberalism in Nineteenth-century Europe. Essays in Comparative History* (Manchester, 1992), pp. 289–293.

¹⁸ Joseph R. Strayer, *Feudalism* (Princeton, 1965), pp. 38–41; recently, and in the same vein: T.N. Bisson, "The 'Feudal Revolution'", *Past and Present*, 142 (1994), pp. 6–42.

Strayer claimed that the Supreme Court and the Treasury formed the two corner-stones of state formation in the twelfth century, when extended warfare far exceeded the capabilities of contemporary states.¹⁹

Medieval Europe operated according to a federal logic: anything not explicitly assigned to a higher authority pertained to the jurisdiction of local authorities. To build their proto-states, sovereigns had to establish a *modus vivendi* with regional and local powers. The logic of shared power was a direct consequence of this type of state formation.²⁰ Furthermore, sovereigns ruling larger regions encountered a variety of legal traditions, which they were expected to uphold in their respective territories: the result was usually a “composite monarchy” which was non-absolute almost by definition.²¹

V

Tilly’s underestimation of the legacy of the medieval Estates monarchy is closely linked to a crucial feature of his theory of state formation. His approach defines the state as a financial and military apparatus and views state formation as the struggle of rulers to achieve a territorial monopoly of taxation and violence. Max Weber’s classical definition, however, refers to the monopoly of *legitimate* violence. The modifier is not incidental: legitimacy refers to *legal procedures* and *political ideologies* as essential factors in state formation.

Tilly pays little attention to the legal aspects of state formation. Nevertheless, the legal institutions and the political culture of feudalism, itself a highly heterogenous phenomenon that had undergone sedimentation over the centuries, were essential for establishing the practice of representation and the ideology of rights and privileges that has been so significant in the course of the ulterior development of European states. The parcellized sovereignty of medieval Europe also allowed the cities to enjoy relative autonomy, and the rights of cities became an integral feature in the Estates monarchy’s juridical mosaic from the

¹⁹ Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton, 1970), pp. 26–28.

²⁰ Wim P. Blockmans stresses this point in “A Typology of Representative Institutions in Late Medieval Europe”, *Journal of Medieval History*, 4 (1978), pp. 192–193, 196–197; Tilly, *Coercion*, p. 64, also refers to this article, but only with respect to urban zones. Blockmans, however, discusses a mechanism that operated throughout Europe and investigates internal variations. He also notes somewhat emphatically that issues of war finance were *not* the main impetus behind the expansion of representative institutions (p. 202); see also Blockmans, “Voracious States and Obstructing Cities. An Aspect of State Formation in Preindustrial Europe”, *Theory and Society*, 18 (1989), pp. 733–755, especially p. 740.

²¹ See H.G. Koenisberger, “Composite States, Representative Institutions and the American Revolution”, *Historical Research*, 148 (1989), pp. 136–138; J.H. Elliott, “A Europe of Composite Monarchies”, *Past and Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 48–71.

tenth to the fourteenth centuries.²² Legal practices and theories possessed an independent autonomous logic. Jurists (who were steeped in these traditions) predominated in the chanceries of the princes, the bishoprics and the governing bodies of the cities: *homo politicus, hoc est, jurisconsultus*, as François Baudouin, a sixteenth-century French legal scholar, put it.²³ While jurists substantially reinforced governmental power, their concern for traditional status, precedents and correct procedures simultaneously acted as a brake on the rise of unlimited (“tyrannical”) princely power. The political culture of fealty, honour and heroism among the nobility had a similar effect.²⁴

Political practice and political culture in European feudalism, in which the cities participated in their own manner, thus included several features conducive to the establishment of a limited monarchy, such as corporative immunities and privileges, and the concept of reciprocal contracts between lords and vassals.²⁵ Moreover, most medieval political theorists endorsed doctrines which authorized resistance against rulers who violated established rights; a right most frequently ascribed to lower public authorities, notably the Estates. These ideas were later taken up and reworked by the spokesmen of the Protestant Reformation.²⁶ Furthermore, contemporary political theories were imbued with two philosophical traditions that rejected unrestricted sovereignty: Stoic-Christian natural law and Aristotelian republicanism.²⁷ Influential legal scholars

²² Cf. Perry Anderson’s remarks in *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London, 1974), p. 410; also see Peter Burke’s more reserved conclusions in “City-States”, in John A. Hall (ed.), *States in History* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 149–153; see also the contributions in Charles Tilly and Wim P. Blockmans (eds), *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe* (Boulder, 1994), especially the differences between Tilly’s introduction and Blockmans’ concluding essay.

²³ Quoted in Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship. Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York and London, 1970), p. 127.

²⁴ On the latter subject, see Mousnier’s detailed analysis of the operation of formal institutions of French absolutism: Roland E. Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy, 1598–1789* (Chicago and London, 1979), especially pp. 645ff.

²⁵ See F.L. Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne* (New York, 1970), pp. 50–53, on the origins of vassal contracts; Moore, *Social Origins*, p. 415, correctly notes the importance of these feudal practices, but fails to integrate this observation into his socio-economic model; Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, pp. 414, 435–461, compares European and Japanese feudalism and observes that the contractual aspect was less advanced in Japan. The point was first made by Marc Bloch, *La Société Féodale* (Paris, 1968; 1st pub. 1939), p. 611.

²⁶ This doctrine was not specifically “Calvinist”, as is sometimes alleged, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1979), vol. II, p. 321; Cynthia G. Shoenberger, “Luther and the Justifiability of Resistance to Legitimate Authority”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 40 (1979), pp. 3–20; Heinz Scheible, *Das Widerstandsrecht als Problem der deutschen Protestanten, 1523–1546* (Gütersloh, 1969).

²⁷ See Quentin Skinner, *Foundations*, passim; J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975). Both authors show that the modern concepts of state and sovereignty emerged from political

and councillors of monarchs embraced the concept of *dominium politicum et regale* or *monarchie politique*, as well as the conviction that the “ancient constitution” or the *loix fondamentales* ought to be respected by a lawful and honest ruler.²⁸ By the sixteenth century this non-absolutist political culture had become a political force in its own right which cannot be reduced to a simple “rationalization” of power politics.

In a number of cases, the drive towards absolutism was thwarted or slowed by religious conflicts as well. In Britain and the Netherlands, in France before the age of Louis XIV and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the Austrian lands prior to the late seventeenth century, representative institutions derived a part of their strength from the inability of sovereigns to enforce religious homogeneity in nations where the reformation had led to a *de facto* religious pluralism. Tilly’s book scarcely discusses the Protestant Reformation, the fragmentation of Latin Christianity and the ensuing nationalization of religious politics because these developments do not fit in his war model. This is a striking omission in a comparative analysis of state formation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²⁹

Furthermore, the impact of religious dissent on state formation involves a methodological issue. Let us view the French example from this angle. According to Tilly’s model, the enormous military efforts of the French monarchy under Louis XIV were supposed to reinforce representative institutions. As we know, the result was the contrary. This outcome was due to several factors, including the political culture and the collective mentality of the government elite. The king and his most important ministers *sincerely* believed in the necessity of imposing religious homogeneity for establishing a strong state, and consistently acted on this assumption.³⁰ In retrospect, their conviction proved incorrect: the repression of the Huguenots, which culminated in the revocation

discourses in which restricted sovereignty, active citizenship, and the right to resist tyrannical rulers were firmly embedded.

²⁸ See J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge, 1987; 1st pub. 1957); Nannerl Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France: the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1980), ch. 1; Martyn P. Thompson, “The History of Fundamental Law in Political Thought from the French Wars of Religion to the American Revolution”, *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), pp. 1103–1128; Michael Hughes, “Fiat Justitia, pereat Germania? The Imperial Supreme Jurisdiction and Imperial Reform in the Later Holy Roman Empire”, in John Breuilly (ed.), *The State of Germany* (London and New York, 1992), pp. 29–46.

²⁹ This observation also applies in the cases of the impact on the process of state formation of other major transformations in political culture and the social patterns of communication, such as the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century social democracy. For an ambitious attempt in that direction, see Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse. Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European Socialism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989).

³⁰ Janine Garrisson, *L’Edit de Nantes et sa Révocation* (Paris, 1985), pp. 184ff.; Elizabeth Labrousse, *La Révocation de l’Edit de Nantes* (Paris, 1990; 1st pub. 1985), pp. 92–95.

of the Edict of Nantes, actually weakened (rather than strengthened) the French state. A policy of tolerance, combined with the co-optation of the wealthy and able Calvinist bourgeoisie in the process of state formation, would probably have been more successful. The French case only illustrates a general aspect of state formation in the post-Reformation period. The attempt to impose religious uniformity was part and parcel of the political project of absolutism, and absolutist politics therewith created an emotionally charged ideological division that fused otherwise disparate oppositional groups. The failure of absolutism in sixteenth-century Holland and seventeenth-century Britain can hardly be explained without taking such processes of fusion of religious and political cleavages into account. In eighteenth-century France, the growing gap between the pretence of a “catholic monarchy” and the reality of Enlightenment culture and religious controversy was one of the elements that went into the making of the final crisis of the absolutist state.³¹ In my opinion, Tilly’s rational-actor model, in which capitalistic interests and military strategy are the sole motives, is unable to explain this aspect of state formation.

VI

Remarkably, Tilly has not related his work to the recent historiography on political culture and political theory. In the main, the newer historiography emphasizes the autonomous historical effectiveness of rituals, procedures, memories, discourses and manners of speech.³² While many interesting differences of opinion exist concerning the relationship of language and culture to power, class and money, very few historians will maintain that language and culture are only instrumentally deployed in struggles that are “essentially” about military violence and economic power.

Tilly’s view of human motivation comes close to a modernized version of the famous *homo economicus*: the *homo economico-militaris Tilliensis*.

³¹ Jeffrey W. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1990).

³² See for example Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990); William H. Sewell Jr, *Work and Revolution in France. The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge, 1980); E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991); Roger Chartier, *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1990); J.G.A. Pocock, “The Concept of a Language and the *métier d'historien*: Some Considerations on Practice”, in Anthony Pagden (ed.), *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 19–38; Quentin Skinner, “Language and Political Change”, in Terence Ball, James Farr and Russell L. Hanson (eds), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 6–23; John E. Toews, “Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience”, *American Historical Review*, 92 (1987), pp. 679–907; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History, 1832–1982* (Cambridge, 1983).

His argument has no use for the entire political culture of early modern Europe. It is therefore hardly surprising that his analysis of the transition from the politics of the *Ancien Régime* to the political culture of the nineteenth century does not acknowledge the dramatic rupture in the entire conception of politics brought about by the French Revolution and its aftermath. In the same vein, Tilly views the transition during the Napoleonic era from indirect to direct rule as a fundamental rift in the process of state formation, but fails to note that this innovation from above coincided with an equally important development from below, namely the replacement of traditional corporations by *citoyens*, of class assemblies by national parliaments, and of the old political discourse by the new language of human and civil rights. This oversight is especially surprising in the light of Tilly's previous, pathbreaking work on the emergence of new modes of collective action (*repertoires* in his terminology) in the very period to which I have just referred.³³

Paradoxically, the discussion of the nineteenth century state in Tilly's book is extremely condensed. He observes, of course, that the nineteenth century is the heyday of the *national* state. Tilly views nationalism as the product of the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars combined with direct rule and the increase in administrative homogenization of the population that became possible as a result. Wars alone, however, do not account for nationalism; wars had been waged for centuries. Nor does homogenization through *direct rule* provide an adequate explanation, as nationalism historically preceded the effective homogenization policies of the later nineteenth century. While cultural homogenization exerted decisive influence on the successful consolidation of nation-states, this success story assumes that the national ideal was already effective as a political force.³⁴

While Tilly's observation that *direct rule* and nationalism *subsequently* reinforced one another is unexceptionable, nationalism as such remains a contingent circumstance within the historical framework he puts forward. A satisfactory explanation for the force of nineteenth-century

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³³ See William Sewell Jr's criticism of Tilly in "Collective Violence and Collective Loyalties in France: Why the French Revolution Made a Difference", *Politics and Society*, 18 (1990), pp. 527–552; Sidney Tarrow's response in "Modular Collective Action and the Rise of the Social Movement: Why the French Revolution Was Not Enough", *Politics and Society*, 21 (1993), pp. 69–90; also see François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 22, 79.

³⁴ Tilly's analysis presents the same problem as Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), which relates national identity to the "need" for homogenization of industrial society, i.e. to a sociological issue that became fully manifest only *after* the rise of nationalism. I prefer the historical explanation in William H. McNeill, *Poly-ethnicity and National Unity in World History* (Toronto, 1986), pp. 36ff.; see also the perceptive comments by John A. Hall, "Nationalisms, Classified and Explained", in idem (ed.), *Coercion and Consent. Studies on the Modern State* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 124–148, especially 127–131.

nationalism must consider the new model of political action introduced during the French Revolution that inaugurated and made possible the launching of a new method of warfare (the *levée en masse*, the ideology of *la patrie en danger*).³⁵ The destruction of the symbolism of the society of Estates in a gigantic European *auto da fé* ushered in the new political imagery of the nation. Nineteenth-century nationalism differed from earlier forms of national sentiment and patriotism in its linkage with the new doctrine of popular sovereignty. Previously, the people harboured nationalistic sentiments; now, the people *were* the nation.³⁶ The old ideal of religious homogeneity definitively faded into the background, as the nation itself was sacralized. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of this type of political culture for a comparative analysis of state formation. For example, consider the differences between France, Germany and England during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The considerations above provide the framework necessary for comprehending the successful rise of representative democracy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A direct link with the necessities of warfare appears highly unlikely in this case: after 1860–1880, the share of war expenditure in government finance began to decline for the first time in history, and, coincidentally, spending for civilian purposes started its gradual ascent that continues to this day.³⁷ Once again, the example of Prussia (Germany) provides a useful counterpoint. More than elsewhere in Europe, nineteenth-century state formation in Prussia was ruled by a war logic (1864, 1866, 1871), but it was precisely this circumstance that impeded effective parliamentarization.

In my opinion, the key to a comparative analysis of state formation in the nineteenth century lies elsewhere. Tilly correctly emphasizes that the transition to direct rule reinforced the government's power in administrative and disciplinary respects.³⁸ He pays insufficient attention, however, to the parallel strengthening of civil society. Tilly notes that government bureaucracies developed their own *esprit de corps* and organizational power in the period of direct rule and thus became formidable agents in the political order (p. 117). But he does not discuss the analogous development in civil society: in the period 1750–1850 the society of Estates, with its emphasis on orders and ranks, and on local

³⁵ See Downing, *Military Revolution*, p. 253.

³⁶ Modern nationalism is inextricably linked with the idea of civil equality: nations are homogeneous and do not tolerate privileged classes. See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 18ff.; this principle holds true for the “political nation” that dominated in Western Europe; the Central and East European *Kulturnation* was less egalitarian, see Peter Alter, *Nationalism* (London, 1989), pp. 14ff.

³⁷ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. Vol. II: The Rise of Classes and Nations, 1760–1914* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 373, 393.

³⁸ Foucault's *surveillance*, Tocqueville's *pouvoir tutélaire*.

and regional particularism, was transformed into a society that featured national organizations of countless interest groups. Throughout Europe, associations flourished with the arrival of the modern periodic press during the second half of the eighteenth century. Societies of artisans also expanded their activities dramatically in this period. Recent historiography generally places the formation of public opinion as an autonomous political force in the second half of the eighteenth century as well.³⁹

Two social groups forced their way into politics after 1750: (1) the broad stratum of the burghers (all those who were not part of the wealthy patrician upper crust) and (2) the artisans. The American historian Robert Palmer has called this period *the age of the democratic revolution*, a characterization that still stands today.⁴⁰ Palmer's democratic age begins with the Wilkite agitation in Britain, the American Revolution, the movement of the *Patriots* in the Dutch Republic and the French Revolution, and concludes with the European wave of revolutions in 1848.⁴¹ During these decades, the operation of the general political structure changed drastically. The aristocratic-patrician political order, in which the populace figured only as a source of temporary disorder, was supplanted by a "populist" politics which conceived of the state in terms of the dialectic of the people and the nation. By his earlier work, Tilly himself has enormously enhanced our understanding of this transition. His book about the development of collective action in France characterizes political action as "parochial and patronized" in the period 1650–1850 and as "national and autonomous" after 1850.⁴² Surprisingly, both this element and the democratic aspects of nationalism are scarcely taken into account in Tilly's analysis of European state formation. In the book under review, the impact of nineteenth-century mass politics as an agent in state formation "from below" is hardly discussed. These processes are crucial, however, to any comparative analysis of state formation in Europe after the French Revolution. Tilly's book deals only briefly with the nineteenth century and he does not relate his analysis of early modern state formation to the comparative research on the democratization of states in the period 1848–1940.⁴³

³⁹ See the survey of the recent literature in Margaret C. Jacob, "The Mental Landscape of the Public Sphere: A European Perspective", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28 (1994), pp. 95–113.

⁴⁰ R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 2 vols (Princeton, 1959).

⁴¹ In between, a smaller wave of revolutions occurred in 1830, see Clive H. Church, *Europe in 1830* (London, 1983).

⁴² Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French. Four Centuries of Popular Struggle* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), pp. 392–393.

⁴³ For example, see Gregory M. Luebbert, *Liberalism, Fascism or Social Democracy. Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe* (Oxford, 1991); Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (eds), *Working-Class Formation. Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, 1986); John Breuilly,

Tilly's comparative analysis of state formation effectively ends at the close of the eighteenth century. The book concludes with a chapter on military coups and regimes all over the world around 1990. While this section is extremely stimulating and important in its own right, its connection to the original research question, which focused on *variations within Europe*, is tenuous indeed.

VII

Tilly's *Coercion, Capital and European States* is a brilliant accomplishment, notwithstanding its shortcomings. To construct a comparative model of state formation in Europe over such an extended period is a daunting task indeed. Tilly's explicit intention was to explain the long-term development of the European state system, from 1000 to 2000 (or from 990 to 1990, as indicated by the book's title). The book's *comparative* analysis, however, primarily deals with the early modern period. It is here that the war-model of state formation works best. In the case of the "feudal" era of 1000–1400, the internal dynamic of the emergent proto-states sits somewhat uneasily with a framework that focuses on external war, as Tilly himself acknowledges (p. 181). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the non-military activities of European states have overtaken the military effort both in terms of expenditure and manpower. A war-related theory of state formation is clearly unsuited to undertake a comparative study of the expansion of the civilian state. I have, however, attempted to show that, while Tilly's analysis goes a long way to account for the pattern of European state formation in the early modern period, even in this case it fails to cover several essential differences between the major European states. Furthermore, the gaps in the comparative analysis are directly related to the theoretical model Tilly proposes, notably to its neglect of the legal aspects of state formation, to the political salience of religion, and, more generally, political culture and discourse. In the final analysis, the reductionist aspects of Tilly's theoretical explanation must be attributed to the rational-actor model. Although money and power are important, indeed extremely important, it would be a mistake to think that history is solely about the interplay of these two forces.⁴⁴

Thus, the challenge of a comparative analysis for the *entire* process of European state formation, from the dissolution of the Carolingian

Labour and Liberalism in Nineteenth Century Europe (Manchester, 1992); Jürgen Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im Europäischen Vergleich*, 3 vols (Munich, 1988). I have discussed this issue in more detail in Siep Stuurman, "Liberalism, Labour and State-Formation in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *International Review of Social History*, 39 (1993), pp. 77–84.

⁴⁴ See the critiques of the self-interest paradigm in Jane J. Mansbridge (ed.), *Beyond Self-Interest* (Chicago and London, 1990).

empire to the present day, still lies before us. One conclusion can, however, be stated with some confidence: Tilly's *Coercion, Capital and European States* is definitely indispensable reading for anyone seeking to answer that challenge.