

In Response to Tilly (1985)

INTRODUCTION

How is the process of state formation related to war? Tilly (1985) claims that war making and state making are highly interdependent and equates them with organized crime. Although this impertinent analogy may not have broad support, scholars who examine the relationship between war and state formation share the common understanding that the act of warfare has heavily influenced the transformation from a world of dynastic empires to a world of nation states (Holsti, 1991; Hintze, 1975; Tilly, 1985). Moreover, they all indicate in one way or another that state formation was not premeditated but rather a byproduct of warfare.

However, the authors differ in their understandings of the main drivers behind state formation as an outcome of war. Tilly argues that in order to afford their pursuit of war, rulers run a protection business. They legitimize their accumulation of capital by maintaining a state of war, thereby ensuring that the population needs protection that only they can provide. Thus institutions like tax collection agencies, police forces, and courts emerged. Hintze has a different approach, focusing on the consequences of warfare on regime types. He argues that the organizational demands of specific wars and socio-economic changes required distinct forms of armies, leading to the creation of various military, financial, and administrative structures. In each instance, these institutions ultimately led to a state.

CRITIQUE

Tilly is no doubt correct in arguing that war makes states. Also, his statement that newly-established states devote most of their earnings to war is certainly correct. However, I see weaknesses concerning the normativity of his statements, the logic of his argumentation, and the comprehensiveness of his arguments.

The normativity of his statements can be seen in his explanation for the emergence of state formation. As mentioned above, Tilly sees state formation as an unintentional process. He sees state formation as the byproduct of the allocation of resources by authorities in order to wage war. While the "byproduct" portion of his thesis has support, the argument that this comes about through a protection racket is overly simplistic. Hintze gives a clear overview of the historical events that demanded different kind of soldiers, leading to the formation of different institutions. However, Tilly's argumentation that a protection racket caused this outcome is highly normative and resembles a conspiracy theory rather than a serious analysis. Development in general does not follow a fixed path, so Tilly's arguments are not instructive in all cases.

Although Tilly illustrates his claims that war and state formation are organized crimes with some

examples, other arguments contradict his analysis, causing his essay to lack logical consistency. In his explanation for concessions guaranteed by the authorities, he writes, "When ordinary people resisted vigorously, authorities made concessions: guarantees of rights, representative institutions, courts of appeal." (p. 183). First, he fails to show how this procedure can be labeled as organized crime. In an environment of organized crime, the rulers would threaten people who offer resistance rather than making such considerable concessions. Second, he fails to address the counterargument that sophisticated institutions (e.g. civil rights) are often generated after a period of war and not in order to wage war.

Finally, the lack of comprehensiveness in Tilly's essay concerning the importance of institutions in the process of war and state formation weakens his overall conclusions. In saying "war making went on with relatively little extraction, protection, and state making," (p. 184) he underestimates the relevance and stickiness of institutions. Institutions have a highly continuous character. If established, they can become highly participatory in the state formation and take on a life of their own. Moreover, their state formation character remains even in the absence of war.

CONCLUSION

Tilly's essay, although criticized above, is an important work that sheds light on the processes of war and state formation. This process has lost none of its importance in the modern day, especially in the context of non-state actors like Daesh, who wage war with the goal of the foundation of a state. Still, the line of argumentation that war makes states in Tilly's terms no longer holds. State formation today takes place in a globalized context, thus in terms of external state formation. And war, or more precisely mass violence, has occurred in contemporary history without state involvement (Mazower, 2002).

This week's readings have shown that different organizational demands of warfare have allowed different institutions to emerge into what finally becomes a state. It would be interesting to examine how different organizational demands of contemporary wars shape pre-existing state institutions.

References:

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