## The More War, The Less State: The Inverse Relationship between War, State Size, and “Stateness”

Abstract

European history has generated the most widespread narrative about state-formation: that war made the state. The hypothesis has not been confirmed outside the European region, however. I show this is not an accident: bellicist accounts are not supported by the European record either. For key European states, war was inversely related to state-formation: the more war, the less “state.” I show this in two ways. First, using new GIS data on borders, I show that the key European states had borders defined by historical accident long before the military pressures that are traditionally focused on in the literature began affecting political structures. By contrast, the more war shaped borders, the less unitary the state. War was more important in shaping composite political units, such as empires and federations. Second, microanalysis of a classic case of the impact of the Military Revolution, France, shows that war did not lead to an increase in state size nor did it consolidate the domestic institutions that make for the unitary political structures that generate a state. If these institutions wither after the incidence of war, the administrative ratchet effect attributed to war must be challenged. I conclude by specifying some effects war may be claimed to have on state-formation: it often accelerates or strengthens pre-existing rights and institutions, but does not contribute to their initial emergence.

War pressures are widely viewed as affecting important political outcomes, especially variation in state and regime type. “War made the state, and the state made war,” according to the maxim Charles Tilly derived from the European experience (1975, 1990). The insight was expanded in the seminal work of Michael Mann (1986). The European precedent has had wide-ranging theoretical implications. The process of warfare is claimed to have increased the financial size of the state, measured through tax extraction (Ames and Rapp 1977; Kiser and Linton 2001). Warfare has also informed the analysis of contemporary state-formation in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia (Herbst 1990; Heydemann 2000; Centeno 2002; Thies 2005, 2004; Hui 2005; Bates 2010; Slater 2010). Economists and economic historians are also increasingly exploring the relationship (Hoffman and Rosenthal 1997; Hoffman 2012, 2015; Besley and Persson 2008, 2011; Dincecco 2011; Dincecco et al. 2011; Gennaioli and Voth 2011).

Curiously, however, Tilly’s finding about war and state-formation has prevailed despite a major weakness: it is not empirically replicated outside the European context, with some Asian exceptions that are limited in scope.[[1]](#footnote-2) More commonly, the lack of war is claimed to explain undeveloped or weak states, described as “negative” cases (Herbst 2000; Centeno 2002); or focus instead has been on more intermediate processes, such as inter-state or inter-elite rivalry (Thies 2004, 2005; Slater 2010). Regarding the European record, although several accounts have highlighted core weaknesses of the Tillyan model (Downing 1992; Spruyt 1994; Ertman 1997; Gorski 2003), the prevailing wisdom is that these arguments do “not refute Tilly’s thesis completely but only suggest…the limit of its scope” (Vu 2010, 153). Tilly himself questioned the applicability of the war-based hypothesis to the modern world, yet such applicability is regularly presumed and tested (López-Alves 2001; Heydemann 2000).

Accordingly, a more fundamental question needs to be also asked: do the European cases that generated the hypothesis truly support it? Did war make the European states? I test the bellicist hypothesis by introducing new empirical data. These highlight a striking fact: the borders of England and France today, two key European states, are broadly similar to the ones established by the year 1000. On the dimensions of state size and border definition, war was *inversely* related to the formation of these key unitary states. In these cases, borders were defined by historically remote markers such as Roman administrative limits or the Carolingian partition. The more war was involved in the delimitation of a political unit and its borders, by contrast, the less unitary and integrated its internal structure was. War was thus constitutive of those political units typically identified as alternatives to the unitary state, empires mostly, but also some federations. The more war, the less unitary “state.” This pattern challenges the key theories tying war to state formation through the impact of military pressures on geographical size, as I argue below.

Reconsidering this foundational topic in social science requires some conceptual and empirical clarifications, however. Crucially, it means acknowledging that the dependent variable in the literature is not *any* political form with state-like features, such as fiscal extraction and military organization. Such a broad net cannot distinguish what happened in Europe from elsewhere. The generic state (a category that includes city-states, federations, empires, theocracies etc.), proliferated across the globe and throughout history. Some non-Western cases made advances in institution-building and in extraction that preceded, matched, and/or exceeded European practices, from ancient China (Hui 2005) and the Mongols (Smith 1970) to the Duchy of Russia (Kollmann 1987) and the Ottoman Empire (Inalcik and Quataert 1994; Karaman and Pamuk 2013). Examining the micro-practices tying war and institution-building in a global, comparative manner leaves only a narrow domain in which Western Europe produced a distinct outcome: the emergence of the national, unitary state as a distinct political form. It was the political innovation that was to shape the international system over the next few centuries.[[2]](#footnote-3) It should not be confused with the nation-state, i.e. an ethnically homogeneous state. As I will argue, the unitary state was distinguished by the central institutions that provided political unity and integration across regions and social groups. It was a unit that “governed multiple contiguous regions and their cities by means of centralized, differentiated, and autonomous structures”—chiefly, as I show, parliaments (Tilly 1990, 2). Although the state-building literature typically bypasses regime type (c.f. Blank et al. 2017), analytical precision forces us to prioritize it in our understanding of state emergence.

This point, I argue in the next section, is why older analysts assumed that two cases best approximate the definition of a national or unitary state in the premodern period, England and, to a less degree, France, the two main constitutional exemplars (Finer 1975, 86; Poggi 1990, 51; Zolberg 1980).[[3]](#footnote-4) Such focus is not the result of Euro- or Anglo-centrism, but the analytical implication of a precise definition. Unless the unit of analysis is rigorously defined, any theory risks being unfalsifiable. War was pervasive in Western Europe, but so were different political forms that have state-like features and are frequently conflated with the national, unitary state. As Tilly and Spruyt emphasized, various political structures developed after the medieval period, but only one dominated the international system in the centuries since (Spruyt 1994).

In what follows, I first define the concept of the state, as well as alternative political forms from the period. I focus on the medieval and premodern periods, which saw a dwindling in the number of political units in Europe, from a hypothetical median of about 200 to less than 30 (Tilly 1990, 45-7).[[4]](#footnote-5) The bellicist insight of war creating the large, territorial state has been operationalized in two ways. One theoretical approach claims that borders were shaped through an internal trade-off between costs and benefits (Alesina and Spolaore 2003), with war as a major motor of change. The other theoretical approach posits a critical juncture in military technology, the Military Revolution, which forced political units to expand and differentiate institutionally (Bean 1973; Boix 2015). Using new GIS-generated data, I show that border definition is inversely related to warfare: the more remote the border definition, the less war was involved in determining state size, and the more unitary the type of state. Finally, I challenge the main mechanism stipulating how military pressures generated unitary states and increased state size. Instead, I show that the more a unit was engaged in war to increase or simply retain its size, the more its unitary form was compromised. To conclude, I identify what aspects of state growth war *can* help us explain and are not disputed in this article.

## Defining the Unitary State and its Alternatives

Defining the state accurately explains why the impact of war has to be assessed first by a study of England and France, not all European political units. The war hypothesis enjoys wide acceptance because it captures a powerful intuition, believed to apply across European states. Any war to defend or claim territory, especially one that increases expenditure, forces rulers to engage in intense population control not possible during peacetime. But collinearity is a serious problem, since war was as pervasive as varied institution-building in the region. War certainly occurred during the formation of many kinds of political units. However, not every instance of border definition or institution building that occurred within Europe (or elsewhere) produced the distinctive outcome of interest here, the national, unitary state (Tilly 1990, 2; Spruyt 1994).[[5]](#footnote-6)

Confusion exists, moreover, because Tilly and other authors use the term “state” to also describe the alternative political forms. “Most states have been non-national: empires, city-states, or something else” (Tilly 1990, 2; Stasavage 2011; Dincecco et al. 2011). However, other scholars define the state as “a type of organization distinct from both the empire and the city;” these are the alternatives against which the state needs to be defined (Zolberg 1980, 689; Spruyt 1994; Van Creveld 1999, 1-2). Since, as suggested, European outcomes are differentiated from non-Western forms only in the emergence of the national, unitary state, the analysis here will focus on this unit of analysis, which is also sovereign and territorial. The unitary type is the real dependent variable in the existing state-building literature, I argue (though of course, alternatives are also of major importance (Nexon 2009).

Moreover, the unitary type is empirically the same as Tilly’s “intermediate” type of capitalized coercion, in which neither capital nor coercion were dominant. This categorization is typically thought of as the result of the exogenous distribution of the two factors, money and troops. However, Tilly did not empirically test this claim to demonstrate that capital and coercion were indeed balanced; he deduced the classification from the presence of bargaining practices.[[6]](#footnote-7) The cases adduced were England and France (Tilly 1990, 2-3, 64).[[7]](#footnote-8)

The reasons for this focus, as I explain, is that these are the two cases that had the most developed *central* institutions to administer bargaining. By contrast, “war, statemaking, and extraction” in general were common to states *and* city-states *and* empires (Tilly 1990, 22)—confirming that political types cannot be distinguished by whether they engaged in or grew by war; they all did. What was unique to the *national* state, and a function of the *intermediate* levels of capital and coercion was that, since neither of these resources was in excess supply, the state was “compelled by bargaining over the subject’s population’s cession of coercive means to invest heavily in protection, adjudication, and sometimes even production and distribution” (Tilly 1990, 22). Too much capital available to rulers, as with city-states, or too many coercive capabilities, as with empires, allowed rulers to avoid bargaining and providing the types of institutions that build unitary states.

At stake in this literature, therefore, is not just the creation of institutions in general or any growth in state size; it is *how political units effectively integrated a diverse population over an extensive territory by forming central, unified institutions that eventually reflected that population’s preferences in some form*. Although the state-building literature typically keeps domestic factors analytically separate, preferences are reflected only where representative institutions exist—without assuming they are democratic of course. “Kings of England did not *want* a Parliament to form and assume ever-greater power; they conceded to barons, and then to clergy, gentry, and bourgeois, in the course of persuading them to raise the money for warfare” (Tilly 1990, 64, for repeated references to assemblies, see also, 99-103, 26, 30, 32). Representative institutions are integral in securing the political form that is being explained in his and other state-building studies (see also, Poggi 1990, 25, 51; Finer 1999a, 1024-51).

Only a unit that includes nation-wide bargaining institutions qualifies as an intermediate type (and thus a national state) in this literature and can be distinguished from city-states, empires, and absolutist states. City-states may have had representative institutions, but they did not extend over the countryside—a major reason causing them to succumb to despotic governance (Jones 1997). Empires, on the other hand, stretched over extended territory, but did not involve centralized collective bargaining with the population, despite often abundant localized exchange (which typically exempted the most powerful, the nobility, from taxation). Absolutist states may have contained representative elements, but these did not apply uniformly in the polity. Castile for instance only convened the towns, not other social groups, and France, in its absolutist phase, had local representative institutions, but no central one. As such, they differed in degree, not kind, from political units further east.

Tilly’s distinction between unit types is predicated on this institutional dimension, although state theory is widely associated with his two variables of capital and coercion. His definition instead suggests that the constitutional (and eventually democratic) state is in fact the limiting case of the Weberian prototype of the state and his variant. Weber’s famous definition begins, “*Today*…we have to say that the state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (italics added, Weber [1919] 1946, 78). The “state” is a “human community”—not its ruler or the ruling apparatus. But ultimately a “human community” can only *legitimately* hold the monopoly of violence when it is sovereign—a condition that only holds *de facto* once the regime becomes representative, even if not democratic. Political entities can enjoy legitimacy without the community being sovereign, of course, but this is not what Weber is stipulating in his definition. *De jure* sovereignty and legitimacy were invoked across a wide variety of societies historically, such as the Ottoman one.[[8]](#footnote-9) Nonetheless, and ultimately, the Weberian and Tillyan definitions only fully apply to a political entity with representative or polity-wide bargaining institutions.

Given this specific definition of the state, it is not an accident that the foundational literature on state-building focuses on England and France primarily (Tilly 1990; Levi 1988; Mann 1988; Hintze 1975a; Downing 1992; Zolberg 1980; Kiser and Linton 2001, 412; Kiser and Kane 2001; Bates and Lien 1985)—these countries were the first and most important to integrate on these dimensions (though in different ways and degrees).[[9]](#footnote-10) Nor is it an accident that coercion and capital were bargained with in Parliaments, Estates, and other assemblies that are critical in Tilly’s argument, even though he does not dwell on them. Spain, the Habsburg Empire, the Italian city-states that turned into principalities, and the fragmented Low Countries, did not achieve similar levels of integration.

Without this distinction, not much separates Europe from other regions: China, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, all developed highly sophisticated bureaucratic structures, often more advanced and meritocratic than those observed in Western Europe at the time (Hui 2005; Armstrong 1972). If we include empires or “coercion-rich” political entities in the explanandum, like Prussia or Spain, simply because they have many elements of the state, few distinctions can be made with other regions. Karaman and Pamuk (2013, 606) have strikingly shown that up until the 1700s, non-Western cases grew as sharply as Western ones in terms of fiscal extraction. And although the Ottomans extracted relatively less, they still displayed remarkable military organization, often exceeding Western forces (Murphey 2010; 1999, 35-49). A wide variety of political units increase troop size and fiscal extraction due to continuous warfare (Dincecco and Wang 2018). What was distinctive to Western Europe—and there, to only a few cases—was the internal, centralized, and representative organization of political bargaining between capital and coercion, which produced the unitary state.

To maintain theoretical precision, the analysis is thus best confined to the two traditional cases. The other political units can be placed on a continuum, with empires and coercion-rich cases at the low end of the legitimacy dimension and city-states at the low end of territorial extent (Table 1). When historians posited an “age of the territorial state,” therefore, they were not offering a statistical generalization; they were focusing on a few statistical outliers, on territorial units that would eventually provide the template for the political organization of communities on a global scale. Assessing the role of war in premodern European *national* *state-*formation is, by definition, a small-n enterprise.

## Mechanisms

To see what war does explain we must specify the key mechanisms that are typically invoked linking war and state emergence. Listing episodes matching war to a change in borders and an increase in size (or to the emergence of institutions or the raising of taxes) does not confirm the thesis; it typically just demonstrates a tautology. Of course warring entities will often raise more revenue and may change borders. But that does not necessarily result in a *unitary state.* All alternative forms of political organization engage in the same activities of war-making, border-changing, institution-building, and revenue-raising, but the outcome is not always a unitary state. Instead, we need to test specific, clearly defined mechanisms that produce unitary, i.e. *sovereign, territorial,* and *centrally bargaining states.* These mechanisms can be distinguished in terms of timing, process type, and type of impact.

[Table 2](#bookmark) about here

War timing impacts social organization in three different ways: before it occurs (as preparations), during its occurrence, and in its aftermath. Clearly isolating these temporal points, especially the first two, is usually not possible, even within individual cases. The third case is beyond the scope of the article, as it typically assumes a formed state. However, as I suggest at the end, the aftermath of war offers most evidence for the positive political effects of war. But wars may also accelerate existing conditions (Kasza 1996), for instance by ensconcing pre-existing institutions, or they may introduce a critical juncture, the outcome of which is “related stochastically” to initial conditions (Mahoney 2000, 237), for instance by leading to loss of territory that alters the distribution of power. Finally, war shapes unit size and unit type: it can affect the size of a political unit, both in geographical and fiscal terms; but it is also held to affect whether the unit becomes a state, an empire, a federation, or a city-state.

In this article, I consider the two mechanisms that relate to the *geographical* size of the state: the first claims that borders were shaped through an internal trade-off between costs and benefits (Alesina and Spolaore 2003) and the second posits a drastic change in military technology, the Military Revolution, which forced political units to expand territorially and differentiate institutionally (Bean 1973; Boix 2015). They thus cover both types of process type identified in the literature, that of endogenous change and of critical junctures. Regarding timing, the mechanisms occur both before and during war. In the following sections, I will show why these mechanisms do not explain the empirical record, concluding that the impact of war is overstressed.

## Border Timing, War, and Unitary States

Borders are one of three elements that conventionally define statehood—the others being monopoly over the use of force and legitimate authority (\*Tilly 1990, 131). Of these, borders can be objectively measured, thereby serving as indicators of the beginning of state-formation. Borders can be set in two ways: either exogenously, by an administrative division in the remote past via conquest or a natural barrier, like a mountain, or through conflict and accommodation, i.e. endogenously. In the literature on optimal state size, borders are endogenized as a cost-benefit trade-off between the costs of heterogeneity and the benefits of economies of scale, under military pressure from outside (Alesina and Spolaore 2003, 95-136; Lake and O'Mahony 2004; Bean 1973; Boix et al. 2011).[[10]](#footnote-11) In other words, borders are a process-dependent outcome that matches optimum levels of heterogeneity with size sufficient for survival in a competitive (i.e. war-ridden) international environment.

In this section, I show that the critical factor was the timing of border definition: if an exogenous definition had occurred before the military pressures invoked in the state-building literature, then a unitary state could emerge; if border definition was endogenous to these pressures, then composite units were more likely to emerge, remaining so even with the passage of time.

To evaluate these alternatives, I first specify a starting point for the analysis, a historical point prior to the impact of the war pressures invoked by the literature on state building. An origin is necessary to begin the analysis, so that a temporal sequence and causal precedence can be determined (Waldner 2003; Capoccia and Ziblatt 2010). Since the earliest starting point of most institutional histories (Baldwin 1986), as of key accounts about the impact of war on state structures (Downing 1992; Ertman 1997) is in the eleventh or twelfth centuries, the original point is set in the year 1000.

#### The Big Bang Theory of Border Formation

Using new GIS data, I compare this original point with the location of borders in the year 2000, to assess the degree to which current borders are rooted in the historical past. I select this upper limit, rather than 1800 or 1900 for instance, because the latter dates had not seen the de-composition of empires that assigned sovereignty to units we describe as national states, so they would omit crucial cases. Moreover, as stated, the goal in this analysis is to refine our claims about the prototypes for subsequent state-building, not to offer an assessment of the aggregate picture, which is a task for additional analysis and testing.

The analysis reveals the striking fact that some units—especially those generating the national state “form,” England and France—have similar borders to the year 1000. The core “states” thus had a historically remote and arbitrary definition of borders. The pattern is not deterministic; other states with remote borders did not have a continuous trajectory, but we need to first assess the ones that did and that generated the unitary state form. By contrast, the more process- and war-dependent the definition of borders, the more likely the state to be a confederation or an empire. In short, the importance of war varied inversely with the degree to which the unit conformed to the definition of a national, unitary state.

Typically, arbitrary borders are identified with the colonial world and the “artificial” political entities imposed by colonial powers. The colonial borders in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin American are classic cases, a fact commonly invoked to explain the weakness of states in these regions (Herbst 2000; Centeno 2002). The borders of several core European states (especially England and France), however, also resulted from remote conquest and arbitrary partition and originally combined peoples with few linguistic or cultural commonalities; I call these exogenously defined borders. This point is typically ignored, though it carries important implications for state-building in regions where development remains problematic: it suggests that arbitrariness in border definition is not as debilitating as usually assumed.

The logic here is that, if a state’s borders can be dated back to the year 1000, long before the military pressures traditionally adduced in the literature as being causal for state-building, then it was not the process of setting borders through war that determined the *size* of the state (other relevant dimensions are examined below). Moreover, those states developed a more a unitary form.

Figure 1: Timing of Borders, War, and State Type

Border defined by year 1000 🡪 The less effect of war (Military Revolution) 🡪 The more unitary state

Border defined after year 1000 🡪 The more effect of war (Military Revolution) 🡪 The less unitary state (more empire/federation)

None of this implies that unitary states did not engage in war at all; to the contrary. England was a formidable military power that fought constantly on the Continent but also in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales (Blank et al. 2017). But bellicist theories don’t just vaguely invoke war; they are specific. Here I challenge their main claims: *the one that ascribes state size to endogenous and time-dependent processes, specifically to military developments after the fourteenth century, which are assumed to have imposed different dynamics on size than earlier kinds of wars*. Τhe article, therefore, does not offer an independent measure of war; it utilizes existing measures that sea a drastic increase after 1400. I argue that these processes were not causally relevant for the rough shape and size of key states like England and France. Indeed, border stability preceded their expansive military postures. So, the literature treating borders and state size as endogenous is flawed *for the cases closest to the definition of a unitary state*. The two foremost states from the European arena had borders already set by the year 1000. By contrast, war was critical for Prussian, Spanish, and Habsburg expansion, as well as for other composite entities.

Critically, protracted warfare (the type claimed to increase size and build institutions) was least responsible for exogenous borders. Maybe the original, remote border-delimiting event involved some war (the Romans did invade Britain); but borders were already defined *at the time scholarship places state-formation*, namely around 1500 or before. The argument, therefore, is that war was *inversely* related to the process of state-*formation*, because of the temporal distance separating the two. The degree to which France deviates from this pattern is examined in the following section.

By contrast, composite entities had fluid borders, some disappearing over time, as with city-leagues (Hansa) and empires (Holy Roman Empire), some gradually growing, as with confederations (Swiss federation).[[11]](#footnote-12) Other composite entities, like Germany and Italy, engaged in extended warfare over a long period of time to demarcate their present borders. It is in these cases that war was central to state formation; these are described here as cases where border definition is endogenous to war.

Finally, though borders may have remained relatively unchanged, war may have been required for their defense and reconsolidation. In this way, war may have been important in shaping *internal* institutions. This seems to be the case with France (and other cases, e.g. Poland). We can’t claim war was unimportant there; it was necessary. These, however, are theoretically separate claims, about the effect of war on institutions, not size per se. I challenge them in section [D](#Ref490258140), by showing that the more this was the case, the less unitary (and effective) the state.

This approach implies no teleology or determinism. Continuity cannot be assumed over the intervening centuries in all cases in government, ethnic groups, or historical tradition. In fact, very few show continuity, as will be seen below. But important patterns can be observed for the two prototypes of the state form.

#### The Data

To address the question, I first identified how many current political entities had nominal counterparts between the year 1000 and 1400, depending on the year of their first appearance on the maps. Out of a total of forty-five European countries today, sixteen states and five major administrative units had medieval precursors.[[12]](#footnote-13) The units were ranked according to the degree of change from medieval borders, using a measure that was relative to state size.

This required first expressing state areas in a linear measure: they were converted into a circle through GIS. Then, the center for each state circle was calculated at the baseline year, *t1*, and in the year 2000. The distance between these two points is the GIS centroid distance.[[13]](#footnote-14) Further, in order to express this distance in terms of the overall size of the state, the ratio of the centroid distance between the two temporal points over the diameter of the state circle was calculated. For instance, the border of France moved eastward between the years 1000 and 2000, increasing the area by 26\*\*%. This means that the centroid for the year 2000 is rightward to the one for the year 1000 by 80 kilometers, over a diameter of 746 kilometers. The ratio of the distance between those two points over the putative diameter of France measures the movement of borders. This method is a simplified way of capturing the extent of border change, whilst smoothing out the volatility in border changes in different directions.

I then posited that borders could be considered historically given (or exogenous) if their location changed little between the starting year and 2000, indicated by minimal movement in the centroid. To operationalize this intuition, borders were classified as exogenous if the distance between the centroid at time *t1* and in 2000 was less than 15% of the state diameter at time *t1* (i.e. border movement was limited). The threshold of 15% is not arbitrary, but is confirmed by a k-means cluster analysis that shows the cases are grouped.[[14]](#footnote-15) If the distance between the centers at the two points in time exceeded 15% of the unit diameter, on the other hand, borders were considered endogenous, i.e. defined over time through state interaction.

The measure, by necessity, simplifies an inordinate amount of volatility that occurred within and between the units. The millennium separating the two points encompassed endless conflict that involved different forms of political reorganization, all of which were consequential in some way. One might, for instance, construct a measure that includes all century benchmarks. Yet that would not be representative either, as the turn of a century is an arbitrary moment: for instance, the most drastic changes in France occurred after the year 1800. Calculating volatility for all years in between instead, on the other hand, is a monumental project that exceeds current capabilities.

Since no approach is without limitations, the one adopted here is to take the two outer limits of European state-building phase (the same ones adopted by Tilly) and to identify the cases where continuity exists. The method measures border location and movement imperfectly mostly in cases where states grew concentrically in all directions, as with Hungary and Poland—the center moves minimally, but large changes in territory are observed. As seen in Table 5, these cases are not considered fully exogenous, though they retained a critical core that remained stable over time. Even if the core was not a political entity throughout, it is noteworthy that both cases figure prominently in standard accounts of state formation (Ertman 1997; Downing 1992; Finer 1999b). Otherwise, the measure does a good job of separating the European cases on the dimension of continuity.

Map data were obtained from the Euratlas Georeferenced Historical Vector Data project that “covers the Earth's surface from the degree 15 west to 50 east, and from degree 20 north to 60 north.” I have used the shapefile “sovereign states” (Nüssli and Nüssli 2008) for the years 1000, 1200, 1400, 1600, 1800 and 2000, to define the spatial areas associated with political units in each bicentennial year.

#### The Patterns

The overall patterns are striking. The more temporally remote the definition of borders, the more unitary the political entity. Conversely, units that changed significantly over time, often through war, tended to retain a composite format. We can contrast state units with sub-national administrative components with long historical roots to increase observations, adding further support to the argument advanced here.

For instance, England’s border with Scotland remains close to the *limes* established by the Romans.[[15]](#footnote-16) England saw continuous invasions after the Romans, leading to the creation of the seven kingdoms that were only unified in the tenth century. The Norman invasion in 1066 proved to be the last until the seventeenth century, as England remained unitary in the interim. Throughout this period, borders remained fairly stable, except for minor shifts in Scotland and the conquest of Wales. Wars may have occurred, but they did not really affect the location of the English border. The composite entity of the United Kingdom, by contrast, which formally incorporated Scotland only after 1707 and Ireland after 1801, had a very different and fluctuating trajectory, so I classify it as endogenous. The contrast with sub-state administrative units also underscores the fact that many modern states are often unfinished products (Spain is another example).[[16]](#footnote-17)

The continuity in borders observed in England is approximated by Denmark ([Figure 2](#Ref288225701))\*, which is thus placed in the exogenous category, as a unitary state. However, Denmark had a dual history too, as both a unitary core and the center of a composite structure; it ruled over England, Norway and parts of Sweden between 1016 and 1035 and it was unified with Sweden and Norway through the Union of Kalmar (1397-1523), though Norway remained united until 1814. Nonetheless, its own southern border and core retains remarkable consistency. Portugal also shows minimal change both in border location and area between 1200 and today, although in 1600 in was incorporated into the Spanish kingdom.

Another case of exogenous border definition is Croatia, which shows only eight percent change on both border movement and area increase between the year 1000 and 2000. No political continuity exists in the intervening period in this case, however—the relation is not deterministic, as mentioned. At most, historical borders were focal points (Goemans 2007) in the long process of state-formation and the reinvention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Borders as focal points were also strikingly the case in some endogenous cases, such as the Czech Republic: about sixty percent of its southern border today appears to follow that of 1400, even though Bohemia fluctuated greatly in size over time.

France is a more complicated case: it had broadly exogenously defined borders and, although its state-formation process was more conflictual than that of England, it also retained a core. French borders were set through the exogenous shock of the division of the Carolingian Empire in the ninth century (Stasavage 2010; Blaydes and Chaney 2013).France’s geographical center (not to be confused with the capital) moved about 11% between the years 1000 and 2000, as mentioned—with a major but reversed fluctuation under Napoleon. But its present perimeter remains on the broad lines set by historical accident and by geographical markers, such as mountains. The Carolingian division defined French borders *de jure.* Successive rulers reclaimed provinces *de facto,* over the course of many centuries. The institutional implications of this are examined in the next section.

[Figure 2](#Ref2882257011) about here

[Table 4](#Ref2732807181) about here

The remaining countries in the dataset consist of cases of endogenous border definition with some prefiguration of borders in the year 1000. Modern Italy and Germany, for instance, were end products of a long unification process of subunits with different trajectories. Germany can be defined both in relation to the borders of the Holy Roman Empire, which provided focal points for imperial extension into the nineteenth century, and of which it is today about half, and to those of Prussia, the leading state in its expansion, which grew almost twenty times in size. Both were the product of extended war. The Ottoman and Habsburg empires are not represented in the GIS data, but they confirm the association of composite units with war.

In all, endogenous cases are typically composite[[17]](#footnote-18) and fall in different categories: they can be federal, such as Germany and Belgium since the nineteenth century and the Swiss Confederation from the medieval period; unions like the United Kingdom; imperial entities, such as the Habsburg and Ottoman empires; or aggregates of communities with constitutionally-recognized autonomy, like Spain. Italy is in the latter category, as an aggregate of distinct administrative units, although their autonomy is more curtailed than Spain’s. As Riker noted long ago (1964, 12), federal units that are likelier to have seen border change resulting from protracted war or annexation over time.[[18]](#footnote-19) War was not the only factor, as dynastic mechanisms and alliances were also important (Nexon 2009). Nonetheless, borders were fluidly defined and overlapped little with medieval precedent. It is no accident that the names of federal or composite units (Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom of Great Britain) are meaningless for the medieval period, but not those of more unitary polities.

In short, the first mechanism, linking war to border definition, applies increasingly only as we move away from political entities we would define as unitary “states.” Although federal states are of course considered fully states, their trajectory, conditions of emergence, and mechanisms of consolidation are not identical to those of unitary states (Ziblatt 2006; Riker 1964) nor are they considered as stable and effective (Gerring et al. 2007), especially if the Swiss and the former British colonies are excluded from the set. Switzerland, moreover, was the product of an alliance, not war. For the rest of cases, evidence suggests that the more war, the less “state,” or at least unitary state.

It is interesting to note that the data do not support an East-West division. As I have suggested, the differences between eastern, coercion-rich empires like Russia and the Ottoman Empire and western absolutist polities, which suppressed central bargaining institutions, like Prussia and late France, are ones of degree, not kind. Nor did geography and open plains compromise Eastern Europe, by allowing invasions, as Northern Europe faced similar conditions. Further, geographical barriers did not necessarily foster unification: Spain was well protected from the north and the threat from the south was minimal after the Reconquista ended in the 1490s, but it never overcame its composite nature. The main division occurred in the northwest of Europe chiefly, where a few polities managed to unify institutionally, with England at the forefront.

## War and Internal Shape: Troops, Size of States, and Institutions

In this section, I examine the second mechanism, that a drastic change in military technology, the Military Revolution, forced political units to expand territorially and differentiate institutionally. So far, the article has shown that where borders were set remotely, the state was more unitary. Yet obviously war occurred in the interim; it was constant in the period. England was a prodigious military power, even invading the European continent. Yet its borders were not the product of this war-fighting, but of an exogenous event in the past. France also had its borders remotely defined, through the Carolingian partition, yet it engaged in protracted warfare to reclaim and defend those territories. France better exemplifies the mechanisms tying war to geographical size, articulated in the theory of the Military Revolution (Roberts 1956; Parker 1996; Rogers 1995). Warfare was transformed after 1400, according to the revised version of the theory, replacing cavalry with large-scale infantry and standing armies. This created different pressures on societies.

In one view, technological change increased demand for larger populations supplying troops and thus for greater territorial appropriation (Bean 1973). Another view focuses on the logistical and institutional pressures for centralization imposed by war (Tilly 1990, 28; Blockmans and Genêt 1993, 143). “After 1400 the European pursuit of larger, more permanent, and more costly varieties of military organization did, in fact, drive spectacular increases in princely budgets, taxes, and staffs. After 1500 or so, princes who managed to create the costly varieties of military organization were, indeed, able to conquer new chunks of territory” (Tilly 1985, 78 ). A more specific mechanism involved the “institution of a standing army and its incorporation into the activities of the state [which] was what first created the early modern state with its concentration of power at the center” (Oestreich 1982, 50). Accordingly, the dependent variable here is the growth of the state*,* proxied through the increase in *size of troops* and in the centralization of *institutions*, which are believed to lead to an increase in the *geographical area* of the unit itself, thus creating a “state.”

The questions here are twofold. Did increased troop size truly impact the size or institutional structure of the state after 1500, creating a unitary state? If it did not, as I suggest here, might it have done so through war *before* the Military Revolution? If these effects cannot be established for a “critical case” such as France, their validity is thrust into doubt. Coupled with the fact that war-based theories have been disconfirmed in so many different regions (as outlined in the introduction), little, or highly qualified, confidence in them should remain.

Armies did grow after the late medieval period: from 40,000 in 1470 to 150,000 in 1630 and to a remarkable 400,000 by 1700 (Parker 1976, 26), an increase of over 1,000 percent in 200 hundred years. These trends ushered in multiple reforms; standing armies, the *compagnies d'ordonnance,* consolidated and administrative reforms such as the *généralités* were implemented (Contamine 1972). These changes are supposed to capture the logic tying war and state formation together, in a compelling and widely invoked logic.

Troop sizes thus did increase and institutions were differentiated and centralized, but did the period of the Military Revolution produce changes in the size of France, after 1500, to select Tilly’s cut-off point? Actually, by 1500, France already controlled 80% of today’s territory ([Table 5](#Ref153108483)).[[19]](#footnote-20) The unprecedentedly large armies fielded by French rulers for the large-scale wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries yielded no gains in the 1500s and only 13% of final territory in the 1600s. As Spruyt (1994, 85) perceptively pointed out, the Military Revolution *followed* French state-building success. The role of war in *enlarging* French territories was minimal precisely in the critical period: when military technology or simply the pressure of war is assumed to have the greatest effect on state-formation and especially on state size.

[Figure 3](#Ref243476540) about here

[Table 5](#Ref1531084831) about here

That war did not create substantial increases in state size after 1500 does not mean that war was not important at all in accumulating the 80% already controlled by the French crown, however. War mattered, but *before* the period of the Military Revolution, i.e. independent of the mechanisms assumed by most of the literature regarding troop size and organization. In fact, war reclaimed almost 40% of the total of French territory before 1500 and about two thirds of the provinces. [Table 6](#Ref230253675) shows the incorporation of French provinces by mode, whether war or some other dynastic mechanism (marriage, inheritance etc.), dividing the cases in two periods, before and after 1500. So, although the post-1500 mechanism of the Military Revolution is challenged, war seems to have had some state-building effect earlier on, leaving a variant of the theory intact. But what were these effects precisely?

[Table 6](#Ref2302536751) about here.

First, one should note that war pre-1500 aimed to reconsolidate control over territories already *nominally* under the jurisdiction of the French crown. Further, the pre-1500 period for France illustrates perfectly war’s “deformation” effects (Hui 2005). Given precisely the intense warfare, the period confirms the hypothesis that “the more war, the less state” in two ways. First, the period was one of great internal weakness and hence least “state-ness” and monopoly of legitimate control. Second, the most intense warfare did not build “legitimate authority,” i.e. build “state-ness;” instead, national institutions were abolished once war ended, making France indistinguishable from coercion-intensive cases.

In the period before 1500, extensive parts of French territory were out of the control of French kings. The English controlled Aquitaine, expanding their reach in the 1350s and 60s. The Duchy of Burgundy took over the Western part of France in the 1400s (Vaughan 1975, 2002), and the Duchy of Normandy was ruled by the English between 1415 and 1450 (Allmand 1968, 1983). Paris was captured by the Burgundians and then the English between 1419 and 1435 (Favier 1974). However, all the warfare that France was involved during the Hundred Years' War only re-appropriated about 9% of territory, by seizing Aquitaine from the English ([Figure 3](#Ref2434765401)), whilst in 1488 Brittany was incorporated, adding another 7% ([Table 7](#Ref287826650)). Most territorial gains, e.g. in the early 1200s, were made through brief wars, often in single years. Characteristically, they *followed* the intense institution-building efforts of Philip Augustus since 1180 (Baldwin 1986), offering additional evidence for the importance of pre-existing institutions in allowing rulers to wage war that has been deduced from other regions and periods (Centeno 2002; Heydemann 2000). The French state was thus not at war to increase its size strictly speaking, but because it was too weak to prevent attacks on or contestations of its sovereignty in the first place.[[20]](#footnote-21)

 ([Table 7](#Ref2878266501)) about here

What about the effects of war on institution-building, especially through revenue-raising? Taxation is the conventional way in which war is expected to impact the state. Indeed, revenue increased from 8 million *l.t.* in 1440, to 16 million in 1560 and 27 million in 1789 (Hoffman 1994, 226). The aforementioned reforms, the first standing armies in Europe, the *compagnies d'ordonnance,* and administrative reforms, such as the *généralités,* took place in this period. However, neither a revenue increase nor a bureaucratic articulation necessarily builds up a *unitary state*. Taxes were successfully extracted across political types—even the nomadic Mongols had exceptional techniques for revenue generation (Smith 1970). And, as mentioned, China, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia developed bureaucratic forms that were in some respects far in advance of European patterns (Hui 2005; Armstrong 1973). In the Ottoman Empire, for instance, robust negotiations took place between the ruler and his subjects, with a strong administrative role for the judges (*kadis*) (Murphey 2010, 147-152).

The question, rather, is: did military pressures, of the Hundred Years' War or of the Military Revolution that followed, affect the dimensions that matter according to the Weber/Tilly definition? The period fails on the most critical one: legitimacy of sovereign rule. Although monopoly of force was strengthened, this came at the expense of legitimacy: the end of the Hundred Years' War also saw the end of the Estates General as a regular institution, with one meeting held in 1463, one in 1468, one in 1484, another one in 1560 after a hiatus of 76 years, and then again one in 1614 and none until the French Revolution—cementing the description of France as “absolutist.” By contrast, England, during this same war-torn period, had 5.5 meetings per decade in the 1400s, 4.4 meetings per decade in the 1500s and 7 meetings per decade even in the trouble-infested 1600s (Fryde 1996; *Actes Du Parlement De Paris* 1863; Furgeot 1920; Soule 1968).

Although the literature on state-formation has not explicitly engaged this dimension—the importance of representative institutions—no other factor captures the full scope of the definition of the unitary, national state. Of interest, one must repeat, is not simply the extension of infrastructural powers of political units—this is achieved by entities such as coercion-intensive types as well. The Ottoman Empire, in fact, “surpassed their central European contemporaries in their ability to mobilise and support large armies in the field” up to the first decade of the eighteenth century(Murphey 2010, 136). Rather, the outcome of interest is the creation of an integrated unit, the authority of which is legitimate and exclusive in the eyes of the “human community” involved and, specifically, which bargains with the ruler through central institutions. Empires and absolutist states don’t fulfill any of these conditions.

But it is also not enough to simply observe representative assemblies held during wartime and deduce that unitary state infrastructure has been established by war. If those institutions do not survive after war ends (let alone if they are not resurrected once war begins anew on an even grander scale), then it can’t be claimed that war helped build “the state.” Instead, war generated a need for an institution, which lasted only as long as the need was active. There was thus no lasting effect of war on the institutional structure of the state, no ratchet effect and no path-dependency. So, although war was in full force between the 1480s and 1560s in France, and of course beyond, no central, state-wide institution was called to administer the bargaining that had to take place in order to finance these wars.

This does not mean that representative activity ceased entirely in France; only that it devolved to the local level, where pre-existing institutions had long taken root. This is why scholars have questioned the term “absolutism;” in practice, political activity that looked little different from what occurred in England was also transpiring in these regional assemblies (Major 1960; Bonney 1995; Collins 1988; Henshall 1992).[[21]](#footnote-22) This is also why it is classified with England in most studies. Nonetheless, local activity undermines the centralization implied in the model of the unitary, national state—which explains the similarities drawn with absolutist regimes. High fragmentation was the main challenge facing French kings and which elicited the absolutist ideology in the first place. War had not sufficed to secure the *political* centralization of the French state; administrative reforms had been profound over the centuries, but the more unitary structures that we associate with the national state were not ushered until the French Revolution (Tocqueville 1856). The more war and violence were necessary for such unification, the weaker the infrastructural control exercised by political authority and hence the less unitary the state.

Once a central representative institution is abolished, however, the distinction between an “absolutist” entity like France and a “coercion-rich” one like Prussia or a “sultanic/absolutist” one like the Ottoman or the Habsburg Empire becomes increasingly blurred, as recent historiography strongly argues (Balla and Johnson 2009; Tezcan 2010; Salzmann 2004). Absent the central representative institutions that allow bargaining between capital and coercion holders, little warrant exists in still classifying France in the “intermediate” category, which is supposed to generate the unitary, national state.

The key here is that war did not create state-defining institutions in France that survived its cessation, so war had no independent contribution to political organization, *as far as the centralized, over-arching political structure of the unit was concerned*. Instead, it contributed institutions also found in imperial forms, like governors, often with greater bureaucratic rigor {Armstrong, 1972 #7300}. It is not enough to list institutions that assisted centralization or the bureaucratization of a political unit, traditionally considered key features of state formation (Poggi 1990): such features were not exclusive to the West. The feature that was exclusive to the West was the unit-wide bargaining institutions that structured interaction between capital and coercion—and this occurred in very few cases.

## What War Does Explain

So if war had such limited effect on the key European cases, why is the war and state-formation paradigm so pervasive? One reason lies in theoretical confusion with the term “formation,” which includes three linked components: *origins,* *consolidation* and *expansion*, the latter two denoting replication over time. No clear demarcation line between these stages can be drawn, but any causal argument requires some specification of origins. Causal dynamics in the three processes are very different. When a causal account is derived from the expanding or consolidating phase of state-formation and is then projected backwards into an account of state origins, serious inferential errors occur.

For instance, war has many demonstrable effects on well-established polities, as noted since antiquity. Pseudo-Xenophon claimed that in ancient Athens “the ordinary people…should have more power than the noble and the rich, because it is the ordinary people who man the fleet and bring the city her power” ("Xenophon" 1968). But in this paradigmatic claim, war causes the *extension* *of pre-existing rights* to broader sections of the population—not the initial granting of rights or the emergence of the institutions enforcing them.

This distinction, I argue, is critical: warfare has contributed to the *spread* of democracy and parliamentary institutions and the *extension* of the electoral franchise, civil rights, the welfare state, and progressive taxation among other important social changes (Schumpeter [1918] 1991; Peacock and Wiseman 1961; Skocpol 1992; Hoffman and Rosenthal 1997; Keyssar 2000; Mares 2006; Besley and Persson 2008; Scheve and Stasavage 2010; Kier and Krebs 2010).[[22]](#footnote-23) War, thus, matters for explanations of how pre-existing rights were extended to broader population segments. However, war is not a critical causal factor in how rights were *first* introduced or of how the state that granted them came into existence in the first place.

## Conclusion

[not anglocentric][France more in the middle]

War entered the study of politics as an antidote to liberal and Marxist approaches that only admitted social forces, whether contracting or conflictual, as generating political organization. From Hintze to Tilly, war was meant to counteract the evolutionary logic common to both approaches and to highlight the role of physical violence in the creation of political order. It also served, though not as an explicit goal, to counteract assumptions about European distinctiveness, by showing how political order was not the simple result of rational processes and the deliberate application of more efficient principles of organization, but the inadvertent effect of the pursuit of power and survival.

The revision in this article should not be taken to imply that violence and coercion were not central to the European political trajectory; this is irrefutable (Moore 1967). It only suggests that *war* itself was inversely related to how the main attributes of the state were shaped. The more protracted the warfare, the more cumbersome the state-formation process. In fact, when borders were the result of an endogenous and protracted process based on war, the political unit was likely to be a composite, namely a confederation or an empire, not a unitary state.

In short, the importance of war varied inversely with the unitary structure of states. Of course, we only have two cases that comply with the widely-accepted definition of the state in the premodern period, England and France, with the latter closer on the continuum to a composite unit. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that de-links war from the state proper conforms better to this limited evidence than the alternatives that have shaped the field.

## Tables and Figures

Table : Classification of Political Forms

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Legitimacy |
| Territorial Extent |  | Low | Medium | High |
| Low |  |  | City-States |
| Medium |  | Absolutist States | National, Unitary States |
| High | Empires | City-Leagues | Federations |

Table : Social Inclusion and Territorial Coverage of European Assemblies

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Classes Attending / Territorial Coverage |
| 1200 1300 1400 |
| England |  | Nobles | Nobles, Towns, & Country | Nobles, Towns, & Country |
| Scotland |  |  |  |  |
| Denmark |  |  |  |  |
| Croatia |  |  |  |  |
| France |  | Some Nobles/Regional | Some Nobles/Some Towns/Regional | Some Towns/Regional |
| Portugal |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Poland |  |  |  |  |
| Hungary |  | Nobles/Whole | Nobles & Third Estate/Whole | Nobles & Third Estate/Whole |
| Navarre |  |  |  |  |
| Bohemia |  |  |  |  |
| HRE |  |  |  |  |
| Castile |  | Towns/Regional | Towns/Regional | Towns/Regional |
| United Kingdom |  |  |  |  |
| Wallachia |  |  |  |  |
| Bulgaria |  |  |  |  |
| Lithuania |  |  |  |  |
| Italy |  |  |  |  |
| Prussia |  |  |  |  |

 1200 1300 1400

Table : Classification of State Formation Theories

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Mechanism Type**Timing* | *Accelerating Existing Processes/Conditions* | *Critical Juncture**(New Direction)* | *Outcome* |
| Before War (Preparations)During War | Increasing Geographical Size/Expanding Borders(Spolaore & Alesina) | Military Technology/Revolution(Bean 1973; Boix 2015) | **Geographical** | **Unit Size** |
| Increasing Fiscal Size of Unit(Mann) | Ratchet Effect(Peacock and Wiseman 1961; Kiser and Linton 2001) | **Fiscal** |
| Capital : Coercion Ratio(Tilly) | Geopolitical Pressures(Downing 1992; Ertman 1997) | Unit Type |
| After War | Disintegrative and Reformative Effects (≠ State Origins) |

Table : Classification of States in terms of Mode of Origin.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Endogenous* *Mode of Origin:**Protracted War (Internal or External)* | *Mixed* *Mode of Origin:**War And Dynastic Modes of Expansion* | *Exogenous* *Mode of Origin:* *Foreign Conquest (Remote or Brief War)* |
| Federal, Imperial, or Composite Entities(fluid borders) | Spain, German states, Italian peninsula, Russia, Ottoman Empire, Habsburg Empire | Belgium, Switzerland, United Kingdom |  |
| Unitary States with fluid borders, but same core |  | Poland, Hungary |  |
| Unitary States(durable borders) |  | France | England, Scotland, Denmark, Portugal |

*Note :* “War” captures cases where an existing unit extends its territory beyond original borders. “Foreign conquest” denotes the invasion of an outside group (e.g. Normans, Danes) taking over new territory. “Mixed Modes” denotes marriage, inheritance, and other dynastic means of expansion, as well as war.

Table : GIS Ranking of Border Changes from Baseline Year to Year 2000

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Baseline Year** | **Difference in Center Location** | **Change in Baseline Size by Year 2000** | **Type of Border Definition** |
| England → England | 1000 | 0.5% | 1.5% | **Exogenous** |
| Scotland → Scotland | 1000 | 0.5% | -1.5% |
| Denmark → Denmark | 1000 | 6.4% | -1.5% |
| Croatia → Croatia | 1000 | 8.2% | -7.7% |
| France → France | 1000 | 10.8% | 26.1% |
| Portugal → Portugal | 1200 | 13.6% | 19.1% |
|  |  |  |  |
| Poland → Poland | 1000 | 8.9% | 43.1% | **Mixed** |
| Hungary → Hungary | 1000 | 2.8% | -46.6% |
| Navarre → Navarre | 1000 | 7.3% | -50.8% |
|  |  |  |  |
| Bohemia → Czech Republic | 1400 | 25.3% | -52.4% |  |
| HRE → Germany | 1000 | 28.1% | -53.3% | **Endogenous** |
| Castile → Spain | 1200 | 34.3% | 298.9% |
| England → United Kingdom | 1000 | 41.2% | 63.7% |
| Wallachia → Romania | 1400 | 42.0% | 154.8% |
| Bulgaria → Bulgaria | 1000 | 43.1% | -58.6% |
| Lithuania → Lithuania | 1200 | 69.3% | -43.4% |
| Italy → Italy | 1200 | 108.0% | 189.8% |
| Prussia → Germany | 1200 | 146.5% | 1709.9% |
|  |  |  |  |

Table : Gradual Incorporation of French Provinces[[23]](#footnote-24)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Area in Km2* | *Percentage of Total Area* |
| Total before 1400 | 260,471 | 51% |
| Total before 1450 | 307,629 | 60% |
| Total before 1500 | 412,634 | 81% |
| Added 1600-1700 | 65,829 | 13% |
| Added 1700s | 32,227 | 6% |

Table : Incorporation of French Provinces by Means

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Percentage of Whole* |
| Total by War before 1500 | 40% |
| Total by War after 1500 | 16% |
| *Total by War*  | *56%* |
|  |  |
| *Total by Dynastic Means* | *44%* |

Table : Dates of Province Incorporation by War

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year(s) of War | Provinces Reclaimed | Percentage of total territory |
| 1203-14 | Maine, Normandy, Touraine, Auvergne, Anjou | 15% |
| 1271 | Languedoc | 8% |
| 1312 | Lyonnais | 1% |
| 1453 | Aquitaine | 9% |
| 1488 | Brittany | 7% |
| 1639-1766 | Alsace, Artois, Roussillon, Flanders and Hainault, Nivernais, Franche-Comté, Corsica, Lorraine | 16% |
|  | Total | 56% |

## Figures

Figure : Historical Maps of Europe, Years 1000, 1300, 1600 and 2000

Year 1000 Year 1300

 

Year 1600 Year 2000

 

*Source:* © 2010 Christos Nüssli, www euratlas.com.

Figure : Percentage of French Territory reclaimed, by Date



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1. In these cases, the effect identified is not causal, but rather accelerating; Kiser and Cai (2003, 535) Hui (2005, 54-63) shows a direct relation between war and state building in the brief Warring States period (475-221 BC). Stubbs (1999) shows the effect of war on economic development. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. By contrast, only 27 federations exist; they were even more of a minority before WWII. Today, they comprise 40% of world population, because India is included. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The Netherlands were a major contender, of course, but it was a federal state and the lack of unity was at the root of its 18th c. decline Zanden and Riel (2004, 42-50). Although we lack the data to settle this decisively, it is likely that the Scandinavian countries also qualified in some periods, as did Catalonia for a short period. In Tilly, however, the former are classified as coercion-rich, probably due to their seventeenth century history, and the latter as capital-intensive. Poland also had some core elements, but the union with Lithuania in the fourteenth century makes the case hard to assess. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. In a companion piece, I explore the impact of war on the institutional structure of European states, especially the fiscal one, and arrive at similar conclusions. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The term “fragmented sovereignty” appears repeatedly in Tilly with respect to city-states and federations; 1990, 21, 25). The term unitary is not meant to denote social uniformity and homogeneity; only relative political cohesion. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. In another piece, I show that the empirical correlation does not hold. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Tilly occasionally includes Germany in the national cases, but I qualify this below. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. In the Ottoman Empire, for instance, state “land…was *de jure* the property of the Treasury,” which was “the joint property of the Muslims, but at the disposal of the sovereign to administer on behalf of the community,” and so “*de facto* [only] under the control of the Sultan;” Imber (1997, 120-1). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Prussia, by contrast, also considered a prototypical “state” after the seventeenth century, is a classic instance of a war-built political unit; Tilly (1975), Hintze (1975b). Tilly at points lists Prussia as a third example of a national state. However, this is inconsistent with his theory, as Brandenburg-Prussia does not have “intermediate levels” of capital and coercion, but is instead “coercion-rich, capital poor;” Tilly (1990, 22-3, 57), Finer (1975, 110). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. These are not only predictive statements about equilibrium outcomes endogenous to systemic parameters; they also claim to explain the European historical record; Alesina and Spolaore (2003, 175-202). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Spruyt (1994), Tilly (1990). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. The twenty state units (and their medieval precursors) are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic (Bohemia), Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (HRE/Prussia), Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania (Wallachia), Spain (Castile), Sweden, United Kingdom (England/Scotland/N. Ireland). The five *major* sub-national administrative units that remain active to this day are Aragon, Castile, England, Navarre, and Scotland (countless smaller ones also exist). Catalonia, Galicia, and Valencia, for instance, also remain active with little apparent change in borders, but GIS data were not available. GIS data were not available for Belgium (Flanders & Wallonia) and the Netherlands, which are federal entities, and data for the Scandinavian countries and Finland were truncated. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. The centroid bears no relation to the unit capital. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. The k-means cluster analysis is available on online Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. If Roman borders had been selected as the baseline, Italy would also show no movement from 117AD. See the [Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilizations, Harvard University.](http://darmc.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k40248&pageid=icb.page188868) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Incidentally, they exemplify the weakness of theories that attribute the greater degree of centralization in England to its insular status: centralization stopped at the Scottish border. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Three states that are placed in the exogenous category are Romania, Bulgaria, and Lithuania today and have a unitary form of government. The latter two are almost half the size of the original entity, so the retrenchment may explain the more unitary character. Romania is far larger than its historical predecessor, Wallachia, but has also had an ethnically varied population. No unit had a continuous history, however. In any case, the argument here is not deterministic. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. See also Gilpin and Gilpin (2001, 349). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. For an account of unification, see Longnon and Delaborde (1969) and Fawtier (1960, 60-168). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. England did not see any invasions between 1066 and 1688, the latter by invitation. It had been regularly invaded before 1066. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. A total of 49 assemblies existed, in Brittany, Burgundy, and Languedoc, and elsewhere, of which 25 survived until the French Revolution. These Estates, especially the larger ones, generated important tax revenue for the Crown, as their institutional set-up ensured that higher participation at the local level meant higher infrastructural control over local resources Kwass (2000), Potter and Rosenthal (1997), Potter and Rosenthal (2002), Collins (1994), Beik (1985). But this institutional differentiation and jurisdictional fragmentation was also a cause of the pervasive weakness of the French state, one that the French Revolution attempted to overcome through sweeping reforms of unification, but one which has continued to plague France in its modern history. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. War also accounts for an increase over previous levels of revenue extraction; Dincecco, et al. (2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Detailed information will be provided on online Appendix B. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)