STUDYING THE STATE THROUGH STATE FORMATION

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Introduction

THE state is a central concept in the study of politics but has had an unstable career in American political science. The concept dominated scholarship when the discipline was founded a century ago in the United States.[1] It then slipped in importance during the behavioral revolution of the 1950s and 1960s.[2] In the 1980s a movement to "bring the state back in" (hereafter BSBI) attracted many followers but also drew considerable criticism from various quarters.[3] Now, two decades later, the status of the state is again ambiguous. Detractors claim that the concept is now "out of fashion."[4] Even supporters think it has "become somewhat suspect in mainstream social science."[5]

This review of the fast-growing scholarship on state formation seeks to place these pessimistic assertions in their proper context. Although the BSBI movement ran out of steam within a few years, there is more continuity between the movement and subsequent scholarship than is commonly recognized. In fact, the movement has recently been given credit for spawning many new research agendas not only among scholars who agreed with it but also among those who disagreed.[6]

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[1] Farr 2007.

[2] Gunnell 1995.

[3] Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol 1985. For an early debate on the significance of the movement, see Almond 1988 and his rejoinders.

[4] Levi 2002, 33–34.

[5] Steinmetz 1999, 11.

[6] Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson 2007.

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Four lines of work can be seen as being either inspired or provoked by the movement. First are historical institutionalists, who narrow their concerns down to particular state institutions such as welfare or trade regimes.[7] This move was made by some leaders of the movement themselves. Rational choice institutionalists, who form the second group, rail against the movement for its exclusive focus on abstract macroprocesses and entities. Rather than focusing on the state, Margaret Levi of this group calls for bringing "people" (that is, "rational" individual actors) back in.[8] The third group comprises those who accept that states are important players in politics but criticize the movement for exaggerating state power at the expense of social forces in the developing world.[9] This group sponsors the concept of "state in society" to stress the importance of society versus the state.

The fourth and final group, which is the subject of this article, involves those who study state formation in comparative perspective. This group has many special characteristics that set it apart from the rest. First, it shares with historical and rational choice institutionalisms a strong historical focus but differs from them by *not* focusing on a narrow set of institutions or indeed on any particular institution. As scholars study processes by which states were formed, their attention shifts from mercenary armies to state granaries, from revenue-collecting bodies to representative institutions, often in a single essay or volume. Second, studies of state formation approach the issue from a macrosociological perspective, whereas the two institutionalisms tend to aim only for the mesolevel and the microlevel of causal mechanisms. Third, because states were often born out of, or built on, domestic conflicts, scholarship on state formation must of necessity attend to the roles played not only by elites but also by the masses. While states rather than societies are the focus, one does get a sense of "state in society" from this literature in its discussion of how mass protests and social revolutions gave birth to or shaped the structures of many modern states. Finally, work on state formation straddles many disciplinary boundaries, perhaps to a greater degree than one finds with the other three groups. Not only political scientists but also historical sociologists, anthropologists, and comparative historians engage in the enterprise. Due to its particular characteristics, the state-formation literature in an important sense transcends the other three lines of work while maintaining its distinctive focus and approach.

[7] Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson 2007. See this analysis for a list of works in this group.

[8] Bates, Greif, Levi, Rosenthal, and Weingast 1998; Levi 1988; Kiser and Baer 2005; Kiser and Cai 2003; and Kiser and Schneider 1994.

[9] Migdal 1988; Migdal, Kohli, and Shue 1994; Migdal 2001.

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For all its distinctive aspects, however, the state-formation literature has not received as much attention in political science as have the other three. In the most recent volume on the state of the discipline, for example, the authors of the two chapters related to the state hail primarily from the second and third groups.[10] A recent study of the history of political science in Britain and the United States focuses only on the first group.[11] This is the first reason for writing this article: to take stock of the insights offered by this literature. As I hope to demonstrate, the literature makes clear that state genesis is much more than a historical question of interest only to historians or historical sociologists. State-formation dynamics generated durable institutional complexes within state structures (for example, a centralized or decentralized bureaucracy) and particular patterns of relations with society (for example, democratic or authoritarian orientations). This vibrant body of scholarship suggests that doubts about the salience of the state as a critical concept in political science may be misplaced.

This does not mean that scholarly thinking about the state remains the same as it was two decades ago. The second goal of this article is to discuss new conceptualizations of the state derived from studying state formation. I argue that these new conceptualizations have successfully addressed many long-standing criticisms of the concept. Two particular improvements will be highlighted here. First, by historicizing the state—by studying its formative moments and evolving processes—the literature has been able to integrate material and immaterial components that constitute states. Although state power involves much more than the monopoly of physical force, the immaterial aspects of its power, such as state monopoly of scientific knowledge or of legitimizing means of expression, have long been overlooked. Second, in the new scholarship the state is no longer defined as actors capable of autonomous actions, as it once was by those scholars who pioneered the BSBI movement. The new uses of the concept define states as institutional configurations in which political actors operate. Methodologically, states are rarely operationalized now as crude causal variables but rather are operationalized as sites or processes where politics is played out. This new conception has been accompanied by efforts of comparative-historical researchers to develop epistemological justifications and methodological terminologies for their approach.

This article is not the first to review the literature on state formation. Yet previous efforts have largely failed to compare and analyze the find-

[10] Levi 2002.
[11] Adcock, Bevir, and Stimson 2007.

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ings across historical eras and geographical boundaries.[12] Although the literature was initially pioneered by Europeanists, it has since achieved a global reach. Thus, while European state formation still dominates the scholarship, the rising globalizing trend is unmistakable. If China is still sometimes treated as an "anomalous case,"[13] more sophisticated studies have turned the tables and made European states look like historical laggards.[14] Thus, this article hopes to accomplish a third goal: to incorporate and contrast findings about state-formation processes across time and geographical regions. While I will note the Eurocentric biases in accounts based solely on European cases, it is not argued here that there was a historical pattern specific to each region. The aim is rather to search for differences and similarities in state-formation processes and causal mechanisms across cases.

The three goals outlined above dictate the choice of works on state formation examined herein. First, only studies related to the origins of bureaucratic centralization and particular modes of state-society relations will be discussed, as these are the works that have made contributions most relevant to political science. Second, the choice of works intends to demonstrate how the literature has changed our conceptual understanding of the state since the days of the BSBI movement. Recent critics of the concept such as Levi appear not to have taken note of these improvements and instead keep recycling old complaints. Finally, I pay greater attention to state formation outside Europe to compensate for the Eurocentric biases in the literature. The comparison of state-formation cases on a global scale over two millennia no doubt makes for a more dense read, but I believe it offers a worthwhile payoff. Most of the works reviewed here represent the best and most recent scholarship in English on the relevant regions or countries.

The rest of the article is divided into three parts that correspond to the three areas of substantive and conceptual contributions made by the scholarship on state formation.

Origins of Bureaucratic Centralization

The modern centralized bureaucracy is perhaps the most important institution in the structure of any state. As will be seen in this section,

[12] This remark pertains to two most recent reviews, that is, Spruyt 2002; and Ertman 2005. The former contains few observations about non-European state formation while the latter is exclusively focused on Europe.

[13] Kiser and Cai 2003.

[14] Wong 1997; Hui 2005.

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while early scholarship stressed war as the central causal mechanism of bureaucratic centralization, subsequent studies have shown that war was not the only route. Depending on contexts, war can even hinder bureaucratization. Indeed, various other factors are more important than war, including elite ideologies, administrative models, religious doctrines, and elite politics. For states in developing countries that were once colonies, a long-standing debate continues between those who attribute the presence or absence of centralized bureaucracies to colonialism and those who offer alternative explanations.

One of the earliest and most influential views was that of Charles Tilly, who argues that war or, more precisely, "the deployment of coercive means in war and domestic control" obliged "coercion-wielders" to prepare by building up not only armies but also an infrastructure of administration and taxation that often outlasted the particular wars they fought.[15] In addition, if rulers succeeded, as some did while others lost, they would have to administer and exploit the lands, goods, and people they conquered. Tilly assumes that "coercion-wielders" or rulers were motivated primarily by a desire for survival and would not have embarked on state building if not forced by circumstances. States were by-products of wars. Rather than being designed by any rulers, institutional structures of European states emerged gradually out of a "mosaic of adaptations and improvisations" in response to immediate needs at particular moments.[16]

Tilly's pioneering argument has been debated subsequently. Brian Downing goes beyond Tilly in showing how changes in military technologies such as the use of gunpowder rendered European feudal militaries obsolete.[17] Downing broadens the circumstances of war, emphasizing not only interstate wars but also peasant rebellions, religious clashes, and conflicts over international trade. The meaning of state survival for Downing is more complex than for Tilly: defeats in conflicts over international trade, for example, may or may not affect the survival of a state. Borrowing from Otto Hintze and Max Weber,[18] Thomas Ertman corrects Tilly by suggesting that the impact of war on bureaucratization was not the same across all time periods.[19] In

[15] Tilly 1990, 20–21. Tilly is not the first scholar to identify war as a major mechanism of state formation. Norbert Elias's significant but neglected work on European state formation and civilizing process, first published in German in 1939 and translated into English in 1969, made many similar arguments. See Elias 1982, esp. chap. 2. Elias focuses not on war per se but rather on the broader process, which he calls "competition and monopolization."

[16] Tilly 1990, 26.

[17] Downing 1992, 64–74.

[18] Ertman 2005, 368–71.

[19] Ertman 1997, 19–34.

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particular, he distinguishes between state-building efforts before 1450 and those afterward. Before around 1450, rulers had been forced to rely on the cooperation of vassals. Their model of government was feudal and ecclesiastic, meaning offices could be bought, sold, inherited, and transferred like a property. After 1450 there emerged a new model of administration that was less patrimonial. There was also a growing stock of trained jurists for use in merit-based administrative positions thanks to the rapid growth of European universities. Thus war did not always generate a cohesive modern bureaucracy. It depends on people's view of offices at a particular point in time and on associated institutions, such as universities, that train bureaucrats.

Hendrik Spruyt goes even further, using the French case to challenge Tilly's assumption about war. There, Spruyt argues, centralization under French Capetian kings predated the change in military technologies and the surge in warfare that occurred around 1400.[20] What enabled these kings to centralize and create a unified France was support from the burghers and the acquiescence of the nobility. Both kings and the burghers favored authority structured by territorial boundaries, rather than by means of personal ties and lineage as favored by the feudal nobility and the clergy. Kings taxed the burghers to finance centralization while buying the nobility's acquiescence with tax exemptions or outright payments.[21] The formation of France as a modern state appears to have had little to do with wars and the need of rulers to survive in a narrow sense. Yet this fact, as is the case with Ertman's argument, does not refute Tilly's thesis completely but only suggests the limit of its scope.

The ambiguous role of war as a catalyst for state building is further highlighted by Victoria Tin-bor Hui in a comparison between premodern Europe and China's Warring States period (656–221 BCE) and by Miguel Centeno in his discussion of nineteenth-century Latin America. Joining Ertman, Hui claims that war had different impact at different periods in European history. Yet in contrast to Ertman, Hui argues that it was not until the eighteenth century that European states pursued the right strategy of state building.[22] This strategy included the establishment of a standing army by conscription, the imposition of direct and indirect taxes, the promotion of economic productivity, and the replacement of the aristocracy by a meritocracy. Before that, war contributed not to state formation but to its *deformation* instead,

[20] Spruyt 1994, 31 and chap. 5.
[21] Spruyt 1994, 95.
[22] Hui 2005, 36.

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as rulers became dependent on intermediate sources for war financing and on mercenaries for war fighting.[23]

Based on Latin American cases, Centeno argues further that wars need to be large in number, follow each other closely in time, and occur in concentrated areas to have the effects observed in Europe.[24] As he points out, wars in Latin America were too short and isolated in time and place to have the cumulative impact on bureaucratization argued by Tilly.[25] The Latin American experience suggests several other qualifications to Tilly's thesis. Latin America's vast landmass made bureaucratization far more costly than it was in the much more compact Western Europe. Latin American economies were also much poorer, offering few resources for ambitious rulers to build war machines. Furthermore, wars in Latin America broke out at the wrong ideological moment in world historical time. Liberalism and federalism, which became the dominant ideologies in the last third of the nineteenth century, were not conducive to building state structure. Finally, rulers and dominant elites had little interest in state building because they were in a low-threat environment and because of the availability of foreign loans.[26] What emerges from these rich non-European accounts is that wars may make centralized states but only under certain narrow conditions, which Europe met in the eighteenth century but which did not exist elsewhere.

Instead of war, elite politics is another important cause of bureaucratization or its absence. Proponents of this view question Tilly's assumption of rulers as individuals motivated only by a desire for state or personal survival. The fact is that rulers often did not act alone in their efforts to realize such a clear desire but instead operated within intricate webs of relationships among themselves and with their families and staffs. Julia Adams picks as her analytical entry point not rulers but "the collective ruler, comprising both relationships among rulers and those between rulers and their staffs or agents."[27] Included in this collective ruler were the charter companies such as the Dutch East Indies Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC) that were "wayward sovereign actors in their own right" while being the site of struggle among elite factions.[28] Borrowing from both Weber and feminist theorists, Adams shows that the politics of state formation in

[23] Hui 2005, 49.
[24] Centeno 2002.
[25] Centeno 2002, 266–71.
[26] Centeno 2002, 275–76. See also Lopez-Alves 2001, 158–62.
[27] Adams 2005, 15.
[28] Adams 2005, 21.

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seventeenth-century Europe was far richer than just wars, military conquests, and administrative expansion. State development was shaped as much by elite concerns for their own and their families' political privileges as by their survival needs. Patrimonial and bureaucratically decentralized states need not be militarily weak. The Netherlands was the world's dominant power for much of the century even without a centralized bureaucracy. This was because elite patriarchal families collaborated closely with the merchant capitalist class and local elites to devise innovative strategies (for example, the chartered company represented by the VOC) to project state power effectively. Eventually the fragmentation of the state caused the decline of the Netherlands, but, unlike what Tilly argues, wars increased the dependence of the central government on local estates, exacerbated structural fragmentation, and led to this decline. Elite politics thus better explains the rise and fall of the Dutch state than war does.

Like Adams, Philip Gorski considers elite politics during state formation, in particular the confessional conflicts between Calvinism and other Christian sects, as the principal cause of a centralized bureaucracy.[29] Gorski challenges Tilly's notion that war was a ruler's only strategy for survival and that an effective, centralized bureaucracy could be built only through war. While the Brandenburg-Prussian monarchs confronted heavy military pressure from their neighboring states, their effective administrative and military reforms were possible thanks to two factors. One was the creation of a new Calvinist elite who "owed everything to the Crown and nothing to the [old Lutheran elites in] the estates."[30] This loyal elite allowed the rulers to launch a "disciplinary revolution" from above that, within a generation, successfully transformed Brandenburg-Prussia with a small population and a backward economy into a state with the most centralized bureaucracy and effective military in Europe.[31] The second factor was Calvinist values, such as discipline, obedience, honesty, and hard work. These values underpinned the monarch's disciplinary revolution from above, while the Pietist movement carried out a simultaneous revolution from below.[32]

Echoing Adams, Gorski shows that a centralized bureaucracy was not necessary for modernizing states to have greater extractive capacity. The Dutch state, which was born out of confessional conflicts, at its height had no less, if not more, such capacity than other more central-

[29] Gorski 2003.
[30] Gorski 2003, 92.
[31] Gorski 2003, 98–112.
[32] This movement was an ascetic and reformist tendency within the Lutheran church that shared with Calvinists many values.

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ized states. This capacity was primarily embedded in local governments and was buttressed by Calvinist values similar to the Brandenburg-Prussian case.[33] The lesson is clear: rulers and elites armed with strong ascetic religious values such as Calvinism can build an effective bureaucracy and military with very limited resources. State formation was not just a by-product of rulers striving for survival but also a conscious process inspired by their (religious) values. Like Spruyt for Capetian France, Gorski shows for the Netherlands and Brandenburg-Prussia that political and social coalitions were necessary for state building.

Recent research on Asia's developmental states also credits elite politics during state formation as a central causal dynamic determining the internal structure of emerging states, including a centralized bureaucracy.[34] It has been demonstrated that elite polarization in Korea (1945–50) and in Indonesia (1960–75) was one of two crucial dynamics that generated effective, centralized states in these countries. The other dynamic was the mode by which state elites engaged the masses and local elites. In the circumstances of imperial collapse under which these states were formed, local elites and the masses often rose up to seize local power. If elites succeed in suppressing the masses, the likelihood of the emerging state being centralized is high. States that incorporated local elites and the masses such as the Indonesian state in the late 1940s ended up with decentralized structures. In these cases, war appeared merely as a form of elite polarization and mass suppression; although it was an extreme form with great effects, it was not the central logic.

Besides war and elite politics, economic factors also affect state structure. In Tilly's framework, coercion was actually not the only factor in European modern state development; there was also capital or "tangible mobile resources and enforceable claims on such resources."[35] Yet economic factors appear to have played negative roles as far as a centralized bureaucracy is concerned. On the one hand, urban growth and capital concentration allowed independent city-states to emerge in Europe. Trade and economic growth also offered rulers capital—regardless of how they acquired it—to finance their wars. The Dutch state became the most powerful state in the seventeenth century, thanks to its easy access to capital.[36] On the other hand, capital substituted for coercion and lessened rulers' need for it or, more broadly, for a centralized bureaucracy and military. Tilly points out that the more commer-

[33] Gorski 2003, 45–72.
[34] Vu 2010.
[35] Tilly 1990, 17.
[36] Tilly 1990, 88–90.

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cialized and monetized a national economy is, the more efficient a state becomes in taxation. This state can make do with a less expansive administration. Hui makes the same argument in her comparison of China and Europe.[37] European rulers in the premodern period faced the same pressures from their neighbors as did rulers during the Warring States period in China. Yet because Europe was economically richer and more commercialized, most rulers in Europe until the eighteenth century relied on borrowing to build their states; in turn, that made them more dependent on local estates. In China rulers were forced to develop their own administrative capacity to compete, which led to the early unification of China under the Qin several centuries before the Common Era. While war accelerates centralization, wealth retards it.

In the accounts reviewed thus far, the creation of a modern state structure was the work of indigenous actors. This may not always be the case, however. In particular, many scholars of state formation in the former colonial territories have argued that colonial powers had a profound impact on the shaping of state structures in their former colonies. The effective bureaucracy in South Korea, for example, has been attributed to the work of Japanese colonialists. The Japanese are credited with removing the corrupt and ineffective traditional monarchy.[38] In place of a decayed agrarian bureaucracy, the Japanese built a modern centralized state with vast capacity and deep penetration into society.[39] Much of the Japanese-trained bureaucracy and police force was retained in postcolonial South Korea. So was the Japanese model that inspired Korean elites and provided them with a well-tested template of state building. While compelling, this argument has been challenged by those who credit politics among indigenous elites and masses as the primary cause of the Korean cohesive state structure.[40] In particular, Vu shows that state-formation processes in South Korea in the aftermath of World War II were critical events that not only transformed the Japanese legacy but also built a new foundation for a centralized bureaucratic state that would emerge a decade later.[41] Elsewhere in Asia, stronger cases for colonial legacy can be made for India and the Philippines. The lineage of the colonial state is less disputed in these cases than in South Korea, perhaps because colonial rulers allowed indigenous elites to form governments under their tutelage decades

[37] Hui 2005, 51, 139–42.
[38] Yang 2004, 1–24.
[39] Kohli 2004, 32–44.
[40] Haggard, Kang, and Moon 1997.
[41] Vu 2010.

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before independence. It is thus easier to argue that the postcolonial centralized bureaucracy in India and the decentralized one in the Philippines resulted directly from the policies of their colonial masters.[42]

In Africa the case for colonial legacy is similarly controversial. Atul Kohli shows for Nigeria that the British set the long-term pattern of a neopatrimonial state whose power was entangled in and weakened by particularistic and personalistic networks.[43] Like Kohli, Crawford Young acknowledges that state building in Africa began long before European colonization but argues that the colonial state's scope of action and capacity for control "vastly exceeded that of its early imperial ancestor."[44] Yet colonial institutions were oriented toward exploitation, not development. Colonial rule corrupted African politics and prevented the construction of a rational centralized bureaucracy. Changes since independence have not been sufficient to erase the impact of colonial states; the effects can still be felt in many African states today.

The studies by Young and Kohli represent long-standing conventional accounts that blame colonialism for much of "what went wrong" in Africa. In contrast, Jeffrey Herbst discounts these views by showing that the real hindrance to African state development has been its difficult geography, which confronts *all* rulers of Africa in the same way.[45] Bureaucratic centralization is far more costly in Africa while offering fewer benefits than elsewhere, and it is not irrational for rulers to shun the project. Rational bureaucracy is in fact irrational in Africa.

In summary, war (or threat of war) is found to be an important route to bureaucratic centralization, but it is not the only route. Neither does war have a similar impact across all time periods; in many cases war can even hinder state building. The factors that matter are the type and frequency of war and the manner in which it is waged; the political and social coalitions in a polity; and finally, elite ideology, administrative models, religious doctrines, and family politics. Similar to war, colonial impact varies greatly with the context. The normative implication of the work of Adams, Gorski, and Herbst is that patrimonialism need not be associated with ineffectiveness. Centralization is not necessary for states to be strong, and what is rational depends on contexts. In the next section, we will see how some of the same variables also shape particular patterns of state-society relations during state formation.

[42] Jalal 1995, 16–22; Hutchcroft 2000; and Sidel 1999.
[43] Kohli 2004, chaps. 8, 9.
[44] Young 1994, 74.
[45] Herbst 2000.

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Origins of Democratic and Authoritarian Institutions

The literature on state formation shares with political science an interest in the origins of democratic and authoritarian institutions situated within broader patterns of state-society relations. The representative bodies that have existed since early modern times in some West European countries are examples of such institutions. Durable military dictatorships prevalent in Latin America and Asia are other cases. Early scholarship argues that rulers' need for resources drove bargains between them and social groups, resulting in representative institutions. Later studies, especially those of non-European military dictatorships, point to an implicit but crucial assumption in this argument. This assumption concerns a competitive social environment where powerful social groups could balance off rulers' power; this environment existed in Europe but not elsewhere. Scholarship on ancient China and medieval Japan further indicates a variety of institutional arrangements that mediate between rulers and subjects. In these cases, states dominated societies but were not predatory.

As with bureaucratic centralization, it is useful to start this section with Tilly, who views European representative institutions as primarily political bargains between rulers and social actors such as the nobility and local estates.[46] These bargains followed attempts by rulers to mobilize resources for their wars, which often ignited popular resistance and rebellions. Striving to survive and seeking to mobilize resources, rulers were forced to offer guarantees of political rights to various social groups in return for their collaboration. Over time, as "extraction and protection expanded, they created demands for adjudication of disputes within the subject population, including the legal regularization of both extraction and protection themselves."[47] Gradually states shifted from indirect to direct rule, creating means of surveillance and control, establishing a national educational system, providing relief to the poor, and expanding communication over their territories.

Yet Tilly's argument overlooks the ability of many rulers to simply crush popular resistance and rebellions. Downing observes that constitutional local governments and representative institutions had existed in medieval times long before the emergence of European national states.

[46] Tilly 1990, chap. 4. By contrast, Norbert Elias views the rise of democratic culture and institutions as a primarily social developmental process ("the civilizing process") after states had been formed and rulers had monopolized the use of violence. State monopoly of force made possible nonviolent forms of political, economic and social competition. See Elias 1982, esp. 113–16.

[47] Tilly 1990, 97, 115.

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Whether these institutions survived until modern times depended on the availability of alternative resources to rulers.[48] When they had no other way but drastically mobilizing resources from domestic groups (as in France and Brandenburg-Prussia), those groups would be forced to submit, leading to their earlier constitutional institutions being disbanded.[49] In contrast, where rulers had less need to mobilize resources (as in Sweden and the Netherlands), medieval constitutional institutions would be allowed to survive. Downing thus clarifies an ambiguity in Tilly's general argument: representative institutions did not always spring from the bargains between rulers and subjects.[50] To the extent that war and rulers' need for resources were involved, these factors (at their high level) actually contributed to the disappearance of those institutions in France and Brandenburg-Prussia.

Downing's argument is modified by Ertman, who notes that the kind of medieval local institutions affected their chances of surviving absolutist rulers' efforts at state building.[51] In particular, in areas that escaped Roman imperial domination (such as the British Isles, Scandinavia, Poland, and Hungary), representative assemblies were organized in bicameral form that promoted cross-class alliances, enabling them to resist absolutist monarchs more effectively. In contrast, in the local institutions in areas of the former Roman Empire, representatives of powerful social groups (the clergy, the nobility, and the burgher class) did not intermingle and were vulnerable to the divide-and-conquer strategy of rulers.

Although Tilly's thesis is challenged by Europeanists, Hui offers some evidence that it applies to Chinese state formation during the Warring States period. During this time rulers struck three bargains to motivate their people to fight wars.[52] These bargains included welfare provision, legal protection, and freedom of expression. Peasants were granted land and upgrades in social status; intellectuals were allowed significant freedom of debate; and people in general were offered certain forms of legal protection. At the same time, ancient China lacked the powerful clergy and burgher classes found in early modern Europe, while there was a nobility but it would be eliminated by the tenth century. There were no domestic groups that might have wanted to orga-

[48] Downing 1992, 239–42.

[49] The French case agrees more with Tilly eventually: the absolutist state did not survive a revolution.

[50] To be fair, Tilly's argument covers a wide range of institutions, not simply representative ones.

[51] Ertman 1997.

[52] Hui 2005, 171–77. Downing discusses ancient China briefly in his analysis of medieval constitutionalism but overlooks these bargains. Downing 1992, 48–52.

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nize formal bodies to countervail Chinese monarchs.[53] Because of this, earlier bargains would be abolished once China was unified under Qin rule at the end of the Warring States period. The Chinese case suggests that it was not just wars and the need for resources that produced representative institutions. A critical condition implicitly assumed by Tilly ought to be noted, namely, a politically competitive environment in which established church and status groups rivaled rulers. Bargains can occur or be sustained only in this environment.

Interestingly, Japan also underwent a Warring States period, from the mid-fifteenth century to the mid-sixteenth century, before being unified under the Tokugawa Shogunate. In medieval times prior to unification, the corporate villages were self-governing and had their own militias.[54] A new form of local organization that expanded beyond village, kinship, and class boundaries emerged in rural Japan. This organization had the potential to become something akin to the local assemblies found in Europe. After unification, through many shrewd strategies, the Tokugawa Shogunate was able to limit villages' autonomy and destroyed their capacity for self-defense. Yet Tokugawa Japan was not a unitary state: Tokugawa still granted significant autonomy to local daimyo domains, villages, and other local organizations. The central authority kept control of local affairs through the chiefs of those organizations who were not government bureaucrats. The result was an integrated yet decentralized system. Eiko Ikegami argues that this system allowed significant collaboration between state and society. No bargains were struck here, in part also because Japan lacked powerful clergy and merchant classes,[55] but the system was flexible enough to avoid state domination as occurred in China with unification under Qin.

Yet even China and certainly Japan confirm Downing's insight that rulers' motivation for mobilizing resources should be treated as a variable, not a constant.[56] In these cases, there were no representative institutions, but state domination did not become predatory because rulers were not always motivated to mobilize resources drastically. Perhaps this is due in great part to the weak competitive pressure in premodern China and Japan. But credit should also be given to innovative institutional solutions to the problems of securing resources and control. In China these solutions included the early development of an articulated

[53] Hui 2005, 203–5; and Wong 1997, 92.
[54] Ikegami 1995, 127–34, 166–71.
[55] Ikegami 1995, 186–94.
[56] Actually Downing does not apply this insight to China and Japan. His brief, Eurocentric analyses of China and Japan portray these polities as having predatory "powerful central states, unencumbered by estates, legal necessities, or local centers of power." Downing 1992, 53.

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political logic and a granary system for peasant welfare provision.[57] Thus, state responses to fiscal scarcities did not lead to bureaucratic expansion and representative institutions as Tilly argues happened in Europe.[58] In Japan the solutions involved the creation of a samurai class and the integrated yet decentralized system of administration described by Ikegami.

Institutions that mediate between rulers and subjects represent only a part of multifaceted state-society relations. Often the mode of relations is primarily domination-subjugation but not bargaining. Tilly in fact suggests three paths of European state formation: coercion-intensive, capital-intensive, and capitalized-coercive. Obviously the last two paths must have been more conducive to bargaining than the first. Tilly is not clear on this point but appears to assume that all paths would eventually lead to bargaining. As he writes: "Bargaining was obviously asymmetrical: at the showdown, cannon versus staves. . . . Yet even forceful repression of rebellions against taxation and conscription ordinarily involved both sets of agreements with those who cooperated in the pacification and public affirmation of the peaceful means by which ordinary citizens could rightfully seek redress of the state's errors and injustices."[59] This assumption has been challenged by those who study state formation in former colonies. In these contexts wars were not directed against external enemies as in Europe but against populations defined as "internal."[60] In these wars colonial rulers, except perhaps for a few individual collaborators, had little need or desire for social cooperation or accommodation with indigenous people. As Mary Callahan describes the situation: "In the process [of being subjugated], most of the population met the modern state in the form of an unintelligible, gun-wielding soldier, not in an encounter with a tax collector who might negotiate in a comprehensible dialect." Young began his book on the African colonial state with the image of Bula Matari (meaning "he who crushes rock"), which he believes captures well "the crushing, relentless force" of that state.[61] Clearly colonial territories represent an extremely asymmetric environment not imagined by Tilly in the European context. While Tilly's metaphor of states as protection rackets may sound too cynical to some,[62] colonial states were

[57] Wong 1997, 77, 98–99. According to Wong, the logic was developed during the Han dynasty (206–20 BCE).
[58] Wong 1997, 93.
[59] Tilly 1990, 102.
[60] Callahan 2003, 9.
[61] Young 1994, 1.
[62] Tilly 1985.

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even worse: state officials provided little protection and departed when there was nothing left to plunder. Rather than representative institutions, only repressive institutions were built, including harsh laws and brutal police and armies. These institutions, as Callahan and Young argue, cast a long shadow over postcolonial societies.

But again, colonial legacy was not destiny. India, Pakistan, and Burma were all ruled by the British, but postcolonial India has had a democracy whereas authoritarian governments have dominated most of the postcolonial history of Pakistan and Burma. What explains this contrasting state-society relationship? Studies of postcolonial state formation in these former British colonies point to civil-military relations as the key link in the causal chain. Tilly's thesis about war and rulers' need for resources still applies in some sense. In both Pakistan and Burma young civilian governments faced heavy defense burdens due to fresh wars or threats of war.[63] In contrast to India, which inherited the centralized colonial bureaucracy and British Indies' economic assets and which was led by the well-organized and experienced Indian National Congress, politicians in Pakistan and Burma confronted greater pressures with a fragile organizational base and only feeble financial capacity. It is thus no wonder that they became dependent on bureaucrats and military men who would subsequently seize power and who still dominate politics in both countries today.

Moving backward a century and across the Pacific, one can find parallels to these Asian stories in Latin America. Studying nineteenth-century state formation there, Fernando Lopez-Alves identifies a similar cause of (military) authoritarianism in Argentina, Paraguay, and Venezuela.[64] In these cases militaries recruiting from rural labor expanded in the face of civil conflict threats and quickly overshadowed weak political parties as the central institution in these emerging polities. I have noted an implicit assumption Tilly makes about bargaining in Western Europe: the presence of powerful status groups or other social groups that, although weaker than rulers, were not too feeble. The failure of politicians in former colonies to hold power for long must have had something to do with the absence of groups that could have provided some counterbalance to power-hungry army generals. This

[63] In Pakistan war with India over Kashmir broke out within months of independence in 1947; see Jalal 1995, 22–25. Burma saw civil war erupt at independence. In 1951 defeated Chinese nationalist troops armed and trained by the U.S. began to launch operations against communist China from bases inside Burma. This caused the Burmese government to be concerned about a Chinese communist invasion of Burma. See Callahan 2003, 17.

[64] Lopez-Alves 2000, chaps. 4, 5.

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appears to be the environment most conducive to military dictatorships in former colonies.

To sum up, war and rulers' need for resources that led to bargains between rulers and subjects contributed to the later development of representative institutions in Europe but do not explain their origins. These institutions had their first roots in the medieval period. Their survival depended on particular contexts, in particular, on how bad the rulers' need for resources was and how those institutions were organized. Although premodern representative institutions are not found outside of Europe, this need not mean that state-society relations elsewhere were predatory or adversarial. Many innovative institutions were crafted to mediate those relations. Ancient Chinese states had assumed a role as providers of social welfare, legal protection, and guarantees of freedom of expression long before modern European states did. Tokugawa Japan also did a good job of allowing significant local autonomy within an integrated state structure. A competitive *domestic* political environment in which coherent social classes and status groups exist is found to be critical for striking bargains. If society is fragmented, bargaining is not possible and states can be predatory. This is the case with colonial states. The study of state formation in former colonies from Latin America to Asia further suggests that military authoritarianism there had its origins in the absence of such a competitive environment.

Conceptual and Methodological Improvements

While it focuses primarily on the politics of state formation, the literature on state formation contributes significantly to our understanding of the state as a concept. This section discusses two major conceptual changes and the accompanying methodological improvement. First, the state is no longer defined as a purely materialist concept; rather, a greater emphasis is now placed on immaterial (especially "cultural") aspects of the state. Second, the primary meaning of the concept has changed from an organization capable of autonomous action to an institutional configuration in which human actors act. These changes in conceptualization are assisted by scholars' confidence in this approach and corresponding efforts to develop special terminologies for process-tracing methods.

The state has been predominantly defined as a political organization associated with violence. Weber defines it as "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force*

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within a given territory."[65] Later students of the state have modified this definition somewhat but the essential elements remain the same. Tilly defines states as "coercion-wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories."[66] For this definition he means to include city-states, empires, and theocracies and to exclude tribes, lineages, firms, and churches. "National states" are a subset of states that are relatively powerful, centralized, and differentiated sovereign organizations. Levi offers a more restrictive definition than Tilly: "A state is a complex apparatus of centralized and institutionalized power that concentrates violence, establishes property rights, and regulates society within a given territory while being formally recognized as a state by international forums."[67] These later definitions avoid such terms as "monopoly" and "legitimate," perhaps because these are seen as variables, not attributes. Not all states are legitimate and many do not have a monopoly on violence in their territories.[68]

While these modifications may be justified, the removal of legitimacy from Weber's definition unfortunately makes the concept even more materialist. The state is reduced to its material existence through its military and its bureaucracy, which enforce a material order. Material resources are equated with coercion. Yet state power is never derived solely from physical and material forces. This fact is clearly demonstrated in studies of the processes of state formation, in which ideas of administration, concepts of family rights, rituals of rule, and religious beliefs played important roles in the construction of states.[69] Studying the role of Calvinism in state formation, Gorski argues that the valorization of human resources is just as important as the mobilization of material ones.[70] In the very military realm that is at the heart of the materialist concept of the state, discipline acquired by training of the body and coordination of action can produce physical coercion by itself. Adams coins the concept "the familial state" to indicate the importance of gendered familial criteria as a major component of macropolitical authority.[71] Rulers in early modern Europe are found to base

[65] Gerth and Wright Mills 1970, 79, italics in original.
[66] Tilly 1990, 1–2.
[67] Levi 2002, 40.
[68] Levi 2002. I quote only Tilly and Levi here, but scholars from Michael Mann to Theda Skocpol also accept Weber's definition.
[69] Wong 1997; Adams 2005; Gorski 2003; Day 2002; and Corrigan and Sayer 1985.
[70] Gorski 2003, 167.
[71] Adams 2005, 34–35.

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their authority claims on hereditary qualification and patriarchal power rather than on rational-legal procedures. Similarly, political offices and privileges were also distributed on the basis of publicly performed gender identities and perceived family ties.

Ideas, beliefs, and rituals do more than structure elite relations and produce physical coercion. They also serve to legitimize state power—a function that wars of conquest do not perform. Legitimation is found to be at the heart of state making—and as important as waging war. As Gorski insists: "[s]tates are not only administrative, policing and military organizations. They are also pedagogical, corrective and ideological organizations."[72] Gorski shows how ideological institutions were developed in early modern European states from the Netherlands to Brandenburg-Prussia and helped make these states powerful. In a study of Indonesian state formation, the contest for resources was intertwined with the contest for legitimacy as emerging state elites fought for international recognition and forged a new relationship with social groups.[73]

The emphasis on culture and ideology enriches our understanding of the modern state. Yet a tricky issue remains: even among those who attach great significance to nonmaterial elements of the state, there is no clear consensus on the ontological question as to whether these elements are more important than material ones. Some describe the two kinds of elements as operating alongside and reinforcing each other. Others present the state as an idea or a project of legitimation and ignore its material elements.[74] These analysts of state formation have opened up fresh directions of research into the roles of science, religion, and gender concepts in state building.[75] Yet, as Timothy Mitchell notes: "[t]he state is an object of analysis that appears to exist simultaneously as material forces and as ideological construct. It seems both real and illusory. This paradox presents a particular problem in any attempt to build a theory of the state."[76]

But how to build such a theory that integrates the material and the immaterial? Mitchell argues that

[72] Gorski 2003, 165.

[73] Vu 2003, 237–67.

[74] An early advocate of this approach is Philip Abrams, recognized as a founder of British historical sociology. See Abrams 1988, 58–89.

[75] Adams 2005; Gorski 2003; Ikegami 1995; and Day 2002; see also Mitchell 1988; and Carroll 2006. All these studies (except Mitchell) give a nod to the role of physical force but focus mostly on immaterial components of state power.

[76] Mitchell 1999. A version of this chapter appeared earlier as Mitchell 1991.

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> [one should not try to] separate the material forms of the state from the ideological, or the real from the illusory. The state-idea and the state-system are better seen as two aspects of the same process…. The phenomenon we name "the state" arises from techniques that enable mundane practices to take on the appearance of an abstract, nonmaterial form. Any attempt to distinguish the abstract or ideal appearance of the state from its material reality, in taking for granted this distinction, will fail to understand it. The task of a theory of the state is not to clarify such distinctions but to historicize them.[77]

In this view, history is useful not as a reservoir of "cases" but as a reservoir of processes that help researchers overcome analytic dichotomies that were once useful but are now obstructing. Historical processes provide the ideal sites for studying mutually constitutive entities such as ideologies and physical forces. State-forming processes are thus central to obtaining a fuller understanding of states.

Along the same line, Pierre Bourdieu posits that the state is the culmination of a process by which different "species of capital" are concentrated: "capital of physical force" (for example army, police), "economic capital" (for example, fiscal system), "informational capital" (for example, a unitary language, a national identity, or a school system), and "symbolic capital" (for example, honorific title system).[78] The concentration of different species of capital goes hand in hand and eventually allows the (modern) state to emerge as "the holder of a sort of meta-capital granting power over other species of capital or their holders." Similar to Mitchell, the historical logic of concentration is at the heart of Bourdieu's proposed research program for studying the (modern) state.[79]

Patrick Carroll, who studies the use of modern scientific knowledge by British agents in their colonization of Ireland, has recommended a similar step to move beyond the materialist conception of the state. As an alternative to Tilly's oft-cited dictum that "war makes states, states make wars," it is suggested that "states are made of knowledge, just as knowledge is constituted by states."[80] Carroll develops a concept of culture (of modern science) that includes three interrelated components

[77] Mitchell 1999, 77.

[78] Bourdieu 1999, 56–67.

[79] Philosophically, Bourdieu argues that cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but dispositions of the body. Thus the obedience of subjects to rulers should not be understood either as a mechanical submission to an external force or as conscious consent to an order, because orders can function as such only for "those who are predisposed to heeding them as they awaken deeply buried corporeal dispositions, outside the channels of consciousness and calculation." Bourdieu 1999, 69. This philosophical view assumes that the material and the nonmaterial (and their effects) are inseparable *at the individual level*.

[80] Carroll 2006, 2.

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of *discourse* (symbolic meaning, representation, and cognitive structure), *practice* (organized social activities, especially in the application of knowledge), and *materiality* (constructed environments, spaces, and technologies). As he justifies his subsuming materiality under culture, "[t]he material world [for example, tools, engines, and landscapes] … is indisputably cultural, not simply in the meanings such a world has for social actors, but also because humanly transformed materiality embodies cultural designs, aspirations, and objectives, materializing and structuring discourse and practices."[81] Again, the historicization of the state in its formation allows Carroll to integrate its material and ideological elements with the heuristic concept of culture.

Incorporating cultural with material components of the state is one significant improvement of the concept, an improvement that allows it to capture more fully the meaning of state power. The second major improvement to the concept in the literature on state formation involves the move away from viewing the state as an organization (however complex) capable of autonomous actions. This use of the concept was once predominant among the proponents of "bringing the state back in." As Theda Skocpol claims, these scholars want to study "states as weighty actors" and probe "how states affect political and social processes through their policies and their patterned relationships with social groups."[82] Yet this conception has generated considerable criticism. Gabriel Almond criticizes it for being too general and diffuse and calls for disaggregating it.[83] More recently, Levi argues,

> the state is a composite of factors, not a single variable. Sometimes only one or a subset of those factors, such as the ruler or the ruling class, is doing the crucial explanatory work.… Second, the state is an abstraction, but key decisions are made by state personnel or rulers not by the state per se.… Third, the state is sometimes what is affecting a situation, sometimes the focus of action, and often what is transforming and being transformed at the same time. This requires a dynamic model with complicated feedback loops. Such models are often the stuff of caricature rather than hardheaded inquiry.[84]

Although Almond's and Levi's criticisms may apply to earlier scholarship, they do not hold up for the studies under review here. The

[81] Carroll 2006, 16.
[82] Skocpol 1985, 3.
[83] Almond 1988, 869.
[84] Levi 2002, 33–34. Another reason, according to Levi, is that "the state is historically and geographically bounded; it is a notion that does not have meaning in all places and at all times." Yet this criticism makes little sense: "democracy," "nation," and "revolution" are all historically and geographically bounded concepts but no one has called for abandoning them.

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charge that analysts of macro–state formation conflate rulers with the state does not hold for works by Adams, Gorski, or Ikegami, who separate rulers from the states in which they reined. These studies show how rulers interacted with their staff within a particular cultural context and institutional structure. They treat the state mostly as an institutional configuration formed by interactions among political actors within certain communities. At the same time, as I argued, they show how processes of state formation have had profound consequences for later outcomes. The conception of states as institutional configurations is not new;[85] what is new is the centrality of this conception in the scholarly literature.

This shift in the meaning of the state has been accompanied by important methodological improvements. Back in 1980 Skocpol and Margaret Somers sought to mimic quantitative research by advocating the use of J. S. Mill's methods for studying states and social revolutions:

> [T]he logic involved in the use of comparative history for Macro-causal analysis resembles that of statistical analysis, which manipulates groups of cases to control sources of variation in order to make causal inferences when quantitative data are available about a large number of cases. This [use] of comparative history is a kind of multivariate analysis to which scholars turn in order to validate causal statements about macro-phenomena for which, inherently, there are too many variables and not enough cases.[86]

The conception of states as causal variables was congruent with Mill's variable-oriented comparative method. As the comparative-historical genre of scholarship evolved, however, these methods were replaced by "process tracing"—a method developed to uncover the specific causal mechanisms that link macroprocesses to events as they unfold over time.[87] This methodological innovation reflects a more methodologically confident generation of comparative-historical researchers who no longer have to borrow quantitative terminologies to describe their approach. They have developed many criteria with which to evaluate the comparative-historical method on its own terms, which is absolutely essential if its rigor is to be appreciated.[88] Consider the issue of

[85] For a summary of various conceptions of the state in the early scholarship, see Krasner 1984, 222.

[86] Skocpol and Somers 1980, 182.

[87] Goldstone 2003, 49.

[88] Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Brady and Collier 2004; and George and Bennett 2005. For broader analyses of epistemological and ontological issues involved, see Adams, Clemens, and Orloff 2005; Steinmetz 2005; and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006. For an earlier and insightful discussion of the ontological justifications for the study of processes, see Elias 1998, especially the introduction by Mennell and Goudsblom 1998, 36–39.

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testing, for example. Many rational choice institutionalists hold the view that only (their) deductive and "analytic narrative" approaches allow researchers to falsify and test hypotheses.[89] This view is wrong because macrohistorical inquiries do require testing, although in different forms and at a different stage in the research process. In the course of weaving various versions of an event collected from archival documents and interviews into a logical argument and a credible story, comparative historical researchers have to go through many hypotheses before settling on the most convincing one. Later analysts of the same event can unearth other sources or use other cases to test the arguments but testing in this approach is primarily embedded in the process of constructing a narrative.[90]

In summary, the study of state formation has brought two improvements to the concept of the state: immaterial components of state power receive greater emphases and the state is no longer conceptualized crudely as a unified actor and a causal variable. These improvements open up many fresh research agendas such as on the religious or gendered bases of modern states. Conceptual refinements have been bolstered by trends in social science disciplines to develop methodological justifications and terminologies for the comparative-historical approach.

Conclusion

The movement to "bring the state back in" in the 1980s was transformed over time into four significant lines of research in political science, including historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, the state-in-society approach, and the state-formation literature. Works on comparative state formation have grown rapidly and become globalized in recent years, but American political science has barely noticed.

I have focused in this article on two theoretical puzzles addressed by this literature that are particularly relevant to political scientists. On the causes of bureaucratic centralization, the importance of war as an explanatory factor has been questioned in the literature, while new variables such as elite politics, religion, ideologies, and colonial legacies have been brought in. Interestingly, case studies from seventeenth-century Europe to twentieth-century Africa show that bureaucratic centralization is only one of many viable strategies for state building. Patrimonial states need

[89] Levi 2002, 52–54.
[90] See Yanow 2006.

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not be militarily weak, and in some contexts building centralized bureaucracies may not be a rational undertaking for rulers.

On the origins of durable democratic and authoritarian institutions, the literature on state formation has advanced similarly nuanced explanations. A competitive domestic social environment is found to be necessary if political bargains are to be made among elites. These political bargains created or sustained representative institutions in some parts of Europe, but these institutions are not the only possible outcome. In ancient China similar bargains created a different set of institutional arrangements that were no less effective in mediating state-society relations. Moreover, the absence of representative institutions in ancient China and medieval Japan did not translate into adversarial state-society relations, as one might expect. In the case of the many former colonies in Latin America and Asia where a competitive domestic setting is missing, predatory states and military authoritarian regimes tend to have a durable presence.

Studies of comparative state formation offer not only theoretical insight but also conceptual benefits to political scientists. In this literature the state as a concept encompasses not only material but also cultural components. This contrasts with the emphasis on materialistic dimensions of state power in most political science works. Methodologically, works on state formation employ predominantly process tracing and interpretive methods. States are not viewed as unified actors or operationalized as causal variables. Rather, they are treated primarily as institutional configurations whose formative processes are the focus of analysis. Perhaps because states no longer occupy the central role in multivariate causal analyses that Skocpol and her collaborators once claimed for them,[91] it appears that the concept is "out of fashion" or "suspect." Nevertheless, shifts in the concept's meanings and uses should be more important for us than changes in its popularity. The concept is now indisputably richer with its material and immaterial contents. By reconceptualizing the state, scholars are simply less dependent on it as an explanatory variable. For macrolevel studies dealing with configurations of institutions such as the works reviewed in this article, the concept remains indispensable.

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[91] Skocpol 1985; Skocpol and Somers 1980.

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