

EXPLAINING STATE FORMATIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN GLOBAL HISTORY, C.1000 - PRESENT

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Abstract: Historians and political scientists both consider the diversity of states that exist in the world, past and present, but each tends to prefer distinct approaches. Political scientists often employ metrics that allow comparisons among many states, such as the degree of democratic or authoritarian forms of governance. Historians tend to consider the nature of state rule in particular times and places according to conditions and concerns specific to their cases. This article, mindful of these two quite different research approaches, considers the ways in which historical comparisons of state formation and transformation in different world regions can help scholars understand some of the reasons for similarities and differences among states in more recent times and help prepare us to ponder possible paths of change in the future. Drawing upon comparisons between China and Europe, the article goes on to make some comparisons across the Americas, ending with thoughts on what can be learned by juxtaposing these two sets of comparisons to make a more global history of state formations and transformations.

Keywords: Global History; World Regions; Comparative History

EXPLICANDO FORMAÇÕES E TRANSFORMAÇÕES DO ESTADO NA HISTÓRIA GLOBAL, C.1000 - PRESENTE

Resumo: Historiadores e cientistas políticos estudam a diversidade dos Estados existentes no mundo, tanto no passado como no presente, mas preferem abordagens distintas. Cientistas políticos frequentemente empregam métricas que permitem a comparação entre diversos Estados, tais como o grau de elementos democráticos ou autoritários de determinada governança. Historiadores tendem a considerar a natureza do governo do Estado em tempos e espaços específicos, seguindo as condições e preocupações próprias dos casos que estudam. O presente artigo, ciente dessas distintas abordagens de pesquisa, considera o modo pelo qual as comparações históricas da formação e transformação estatal em diferentes regiões mundiais pode ajudar a explicar as causas de semelhanças e diferenças entre Estados em tempos mais recentes e preparar-nos para prospectar possíveis caminhos de mudança no futuro. Valendo-se de comparações entre a China e a Europa, o artigo procede a algumas comparações nas Américas e conclui com reflexões sobre o que se pode aprender da justaposição desses dois conjuntos de comparação para a escrita de uma história mais global das formações e transformações dos Estados.

Palavras-chave: História Global; Regiões Mundiais; História Comparada.

In the division of intellectual labor, historians are conventionally expected to analyze and interpret some set of experiences of people living in a particular time and place subject to certain events, social-cultural settings, economic processes, and political systems. We frequently approach our various topics influenced by diverse propositions forwarded by one or another kind of social,

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cultural, economic or political theory. These theories in turn often depend on earlier interpretations of historical experiences that yielded propositions deemed general and thus relevant to evaluating what we could expect to find in other times and places. Usually when we find some kind of exception to what we expected based on some theory, we note qualifications on the seemingly simple propositions we find non-historians making. We frequently stress the multiple contingent factors that collectively created conditions that led to distinctive, if not unique, outcomes for our chosen case studies. What we don't often do is consider the possibility that many case studies don't fit the generalizations that inform theories and that therefore these "generalizations" are not as general as they once were before research on world regions beyond Europe expanded.

I want to consider how historians might increase the relevance of our findings to generating more capacious and comprehensive generalizations that can contribute to revising the kinds of theories proposed by scholars in other disciplines and often used by historians, sometime explicitly but also implicitly. If theories can be considered the distillation of general principles from particular practices, then historians can contribute additional historical material to the mix of elements that can produce some new theoretical compound. The capacity of theories to guide us more intelligently may well be enhanced by considering systematically diverse historical experiences using comparative methods.

This article suggests the kinds of comparison that can reframe some approaches to modern state formation and contemporary political transformations. I suggest ways to augment such efforts in order to take in historical material that is not as easily accommodated without recasting our methods of comparison. Scholars of contemporary international relations have become sensitive to the limitations of state building narratives based on the experiences of European states for other parts of the world and at the same time remain attached to a framing of international relations that depends on relations among sovereign states with allowances made for increasingly important non-governmental organizations, including private corporations pursuing economic ends and NGOs dedicated to some specific set of goals. Also recognized is the "incomplete" nature of many contemporary states by the standards laid out in the

political development literature of the 1960s and 1970s. What historians using comparative methods can offer, I suggest, are some possible ways to address two distinct features of how states vary historically and today. The nature of domestic governance and a country's international relations can both be considered in historical terms sensitive to the significance of how constructing political order on different spatial scales in different world regions has always had historically specific features particular to each world region, even when the world region being examined is deeply shaped by its relations to powerful actors from other parts of the world.

Our basic ideas about modern states and contemporary governance issues both emerge out of European historical experiences. This basic fact was recognized by the inclusion of the volume edited by Charles Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, in a series of books developed by Social Science Research Council in the United States entitled "Studies in Political Development", a series that more generally conceived political development as part of a modernization process that carried countries through changes that made them "modern" through the acquisition of traits found in Western democratic societies. What this particular volume edited by Charles Tilly achieved was explaining how the formation of national states in Western Europe was a specific historical process; Tilly, then, followed up with a more comprehensive and systematic account of European state making in *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990 - 1992*. Tilly's account worked at both national and world regional levels because the formation of national states in Europe included the twin processes of developing ideas and institutions for domestic governance and principles and practices for inter-state relations within Europe. In the second of these two volumes Tilly stressed variations among European cases concerning the relative importance of capital and coercion as tools for constructing states in different parts of Europe. Looking back roughly three decades since *Coercion, Capital, and European States* was published, the significance of this state making path as a specifically European set of historical experiences seems largely forgotten when taken as a set of expectations for what to find elsewhere. Nor do we consider in the context of Europe being one world region among many the ways in which the

post-WW II path of European integration from economic to political integration creates a kind of governance that straddles an earlier European binary between domestic rule and foreign relations.

Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990 – 1992 was published a year before the formal establishment of the European Union and the creation of a new kind of political order in Europe that went beyond the borders of national states. The question of how effective the E.U. can become to ensure its member states adopt monetary and fiscal policies that respond in coordinated ways to varied but related conditions across their national economies has been more recently joined by issues of labor mobility and migration by people from other world regions into Europe. Thinking about how European Union might develop its governance practices in the future depends on how national sovereignty is interpreted in the coming years. Europe now faces governance challenges related to its large spatial and demographic scale that are in many ways unprecedented. From a historical perspective that brings in China, the establishment of the E.U. marked the first moment since the Han and Roman empires that China and Europe have shared similar spatial and demographic scales of political order. Europe doesn't meet its governance challenges with a millennia-long history of seeking to sustain political order over a territory as large as the E.U. China does.

While Europe experienced fragmentation and the ultimate crystallization of national states as part of an inter-state system in the centuries following the collapse of the Roman Empire, China recreated empire several times in its imperial history of more than two millennia, basing its rule on an expanding set of political practices rooted in principles quite different from those formulated in Western settings. The last dynasty fell in 1911 and subsequent fragmentation of political order was in a significant way resolved in 1949 with the formation of the People's Republic of China, which claimed sovereignty over most all of the territory claimed by their imperial Manchu predecessors who, in the eighteenth century, stretched their dynastic authority over areas well beyond the Great Wall. The processes and content of this twentieth-century state transformation depended on a combination of domestic and foreign factors that deserve evaluation within the country's own world regional context mindful that by the early twentieth century all world

regions were becoming increasingly connected economically and politically. China historians certainly recognize how different twentieth-century China was from many twentieth-century countries in Europe, but this spatial contrast is not often tied to a temporal depth of history to track the dynamics of state transformation in China with the same level of attention that has been paid to state formation and transformation in European countries. As a result, we find it hard to understand how political order which spans both the nature of formal states and governance more generally not only differed historically in China and Europe, but continue to do so even now. The challenges of better understanding and explaining changing patterns of governance in China and Europe today will no doubt benefit from anchoring both subjects of research in a sense of possibilities each faces with the principles and practices they each hold dear as well as those they can observe being followed in other world regions.

I began to consider some of the historical similarities and differences between Chinese and European patterns of state formation and transformation more than two decades ago in *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience*. In that book, I took as given that China and Europe c. 1000 differed greatly in the size of their polities and from those differences suggested different sets of challenges and capacities states in each world region would create, as well as noting that the political logics of making claims and making commitments were alternative approaches to constructing political relationships between rulers and ruled. More recently in *Before and Beyond Divergence: The Politics of Economic Change in China and Europe* published in 2011, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and I considered as the initial conditions for our comparison of economic changes in China and Europe the importance of the size of polities for influencing the kinds of economic activity and the institutions supporting them that would develop. We further offered a specific explanation for why the development of new technologies leading from craft to factory industry was more likely to occur in war-torn early modern Europe than in relatively peaceful early modern China. Our explanation of economic change, in other words, depended on our assessments of Chinese and European politics in this period, as well as our understandings of economically based development possibilities. Building on the

arguments and evidence in those two books, a historically grounded comparison of state formations and transformations could be extended from the cases of China and Europe to other world regions.

If we take a second two-case comparison of state formation and transformation sequences and consider them alongside the China-Europe comparison we can begin to create new comparisons. Each two-way comparison identifies sets of similarities and differences initially relevant to these two cases specifically as members of a two-case comparison. We can then make comparisons among the four cases that make up the two comparisons. I will sketch how research of different world regions, comparisons between two world regions, and comparisons among two-case comparisons suggests an approach toward understanding state formations and transformations that historians can contribute to a literature on states in more recent times largely written by scholars in other social science and humanities disciplines.

China-Europe state formations and transformations offers one concrete comparison among world regions. Different kinds of comparison between world regions can be made in the Americas. Here the shared experience of early modern European colonization as the departure point of similarity can be used. Comparing the Americas has already been an important focus for scholars in development economics and economic history; scholars, such as Stanley Engermann and Kenneth Sokoloff in their 1997 article “Factor Endowments, Institutions, and Differential Paths of Growth in New World Economies,” have sought to assess the significance of a variety of factors, including institutions and factor endowments. However, a similar exercise does not seem to exist in comparative politics where political scientists make comparisons among contemporary Latin American countries but not between Latin American countries and the U.S. and Canada. Political comparisons within the Americas can be conceived in at least two different ways, each of which illuminates important features of state formations and transformations. First, as I have already suggested one can distinguish across the Americas between places where northern Europeans and Iberians settled. Such comparisons allow us to consider differences among their colonies. Second, we can distinguish between North and South America as geographical regions in

which the spatial scales of polities differed considerably, not as dramatically as was the case for Chinese and European state formation processes, but certainly visible nonetheless. The different sizes of what became independent American polities were influenced both by their colonial era political institutions and the kinds of cooperation, competition, and conflict that emerged among them as they freed themselves of colonial rule in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Lacking the background in the historical literatures for the Americas that I have for China and Europe, I cannot responsibly do more than sketch some possibilities to explore that follow from the kind of comparative method I am suggesting. In order to facilitate a state formation and transformations comparison with the China-Europe pairing, I will consider how we can explain the evolution of differently sized polities in North and South America and make additional comparisons between Latin American states and other American states. Before beginning this comparison, however, a brief comment about the common heritage of European colonialism that the Americas shared. In some ways, the formation of American colonies generally was the product of Europeans exporting the political and economic competition they pursued within Europe to other world regions. In addition to the competition among European states for territory in the Americas, there was a second axis of political competition and negotiation between colonial elites and their European rulers. The processes of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century state formation in the Americas emerged out of these two broad sets of relations. One set, the competition between colonial home countries was closely connected to state-making dynamics within Europe, while the other was particular to these two world regions. The options open to would-be American state makers were of course additionally created and constrained in important ways general among state makers everywhere, such as the amounts of resources they could mobilize either to compete with each other or prevent fragmentation from within by groups who desired to separate themselves from the state. In American cases, Native Americans and mixed populations competed with European colonists and their state-making aspirations, as Pekka Hämäläinen in his *The Commanche Empire* and Paul Frymer in his *Building an American Empire*, have respectively demonstrated. The amounts of resources would-be state makers

could mobilize in turn depended on the economic wealth generated by their subjects and their capacities to extract taxes or directly control the sources of wealth themselves. With these general and more specific considerations in mind, I turn with an outsider historian's view of the histories of state formation and transformation in the Americas. To simplify my discussion I do not address either the Caribbean or Central America, mentioning each only in passing.

Beginning in North America, both the U.S. and Canada initially formed through the decisions of groups of colonies to organize themselves into larger confederations. The processes creating separation from the British government differed in the U.S. and Canada, as did post-separation developments of each. The U.S. engaged in territorial expansion through a combination of land purchases, military conflicts, and negotiation of their competing claims over land with European colonial powers. The Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803 included territory that would comprise fifteen states subsequently; the land itself had only been reclaimed by Napoleon in 1800 from the Spanish who had control ceded to them by the French in 1762. The southeastern-most state of Florida was purchased from Spain in 1819 and the northwestern-most state of Alaska in 1867 from Russia. Other parts of Spanish North America remained under Spanish colonial control into the mid-nineteenth century when a war between the U.S. and Mexico followed U.S. annexation of the Republic of Texas (previously part of Mexico) in 1845. The U.S. victory led to the Mexican Cession that consisted of territory comprising the U.S. states of California, Nevada, Utah, as well as much of Arizona, roughly fifty percent of New Mexico, and smaller percentages of Colorado, and Wyoming. This was followed by an 1853 U.S. purchase of Mexican land that makes up southern Arizona and a part of southwestern New Mexico. What became the northwestern states of the U.S. (other than Alaska separated from other U.S. states by Canada) came through the resolution of competing claims to territory to form the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and parts of Montana and Wyoming. While Spain and Russia had surrendered claims to the area by the early nineteenth century, Britain and the U.S. disputed control over the region, agreeing to joint occupation until 1827. The resolution of competing claims to the area came in 1846 through treaties that recognized U.S. ownership of land that had been called

the Oregon Territory. The U.S. expansion as a continental state stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean came through a combination of methods that involved competition with European powers and Mexico, another former European colony. A key condition enabling the spread of U.S. state making over such a large territory, at least by the standards of European countries, was the sparse population of much of the lands beyond the original thirteen colonies.

The paucity of population across what became the continental United States was even greater in what became Canada. The state making process there involved an initial act of confederation in 1867 similar in some respects to that forming the original thirteen United States some nine decades earlier, but in very different circumstances regarding relations it had with its former colonial ruler Great Britain, as well as the presence of significant numbers of French-speaking Canadians, the product of French colonial aspirations of an earlier era. For present purposes, I will highlight elements of the Canadian state's relationship to Great Britain that indicate how the state formation process creating Canada did not create a legally sovereign country until well into the twentieth century, noticeably different than the model of modern national state formation drawn out of European history. The 1867 confederation forming Canada made the country legally a dominion of the British Empire. Similar to Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, the political status of these nineteenth-century countries was clarified in the twentieth century through increasing legal recognition of autonomy but not legal sovereignty. Self-government was limited to matters domestic to Canada, while the dominion's foreign policy was formulated in Great Britain. In principle, the British legislature retained the authority to intervene in Canadian self-government, while Canada and other dominions were not allowed to have their own diplomatic presence in foreign countries. Full constitutional sovereignty in Canada was only legally achieved in 1982.

Both Canada and the United States initially formed politically through agreements to combine territories previously under distinct colonial administrations. Their processes of state formation expanding over large spaces were both enabled by the paucity of settlers and indigenous populations, one consequence of which was the absence of would-be political competitors to

territorial growth that would have existed were their more large settlements of people. State formation in Mexico was significantly different. No political leaders of separate colonies made an initial agreement to combine into a single state. Colonial Mexico was part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain which had a bureaucracy of sorts. From the Crown's perspective, officials were appointed to take on duties of rule, key among which was raising taxes, in a manner that at least in form resembled some practices in Spain itself. In reality, the distance separating the Crown and New Spain and the absence of well-developed bureaucratic rules and educational preparation for being an official, both present for centuries already in China, meant that Spanish colonial officials each had a flexible if not entirely free hand in creating their rule at the same time as Catholic priests mounted related efforts to reach the souls of peasant populations. Distinct from all these actors were the local elites with whom colonial officials had to deal; they were typically drawn to Mexico by economic opportunity and succeeded in establishing interests in land, commerce or mining. Colonial Mexican society was further complicated by the process of inter-marriage between Spanish and Amerindians that created a new category of mestizo that subsequently referred to mixed race people more generally. Socially and politically, colonial Mexico was organized in ways very different from those of colonies to their north. Not surprisingly, the overthrow of Spanish rule in Mexico did not follow a path similar to either the U.S. or Canadian cases.

The differences in nineteenth-century state formation narratives between the U.S. and Mexico are hardly surprising and not as typically compared as are Mexico with other Latin American countries. I would like to suggest that we can also usefully consider Mexico in a North American world region—not as an alternative or substitute to Mexico as part of a Latin American world region, but instead as another way to see how regions are constructed by different sets of connections and shared traits.

A world regional focus more generally I think is worth considering any time we can distinguish the kinds of comparisons and connections that exist within a world region from those connections and comparisons that relate the region or parts of it to places beyond the region. A world region, as I use the term, is not a

formal politically defined space marked by constituent political units with clear borders. Instead, a world region is formed by the kinds of political, economic, social, and cultural connections among parts of the world region that differ from the mix of relations that those parts of the world region have with places beyond the world region. Whether relations within a world region or those between outside powers and places within the world region prove most significant varied over time. Within a world region the number and importance of connections a particular place had with other places varied; at some points in history, the connections of a place could be so limited that they do not matter for some assessments of state transformation. Both nineteenth-century Canada and Cuba had ties to European countries at the same time as they both dealt with the United States—being part of an American world region did not mean that the relative importance of political relations within the region compared to that of political relations with states elsewhere remained constant over time. What a world regional focus enables is more careful attention to variations among state making dynamics that exist among world regions.

One of the key aspects of European state making is the similarities among processes of national state formation in Europe and the connections between them that make a connected narrative of shared state making aspirations and challenges rooted in the political and economic competition between them. At times competition could be managed peacefully and at others it was pursued through the use of violence, be it small-scale piracy or large-scale war. State formation in North America shared some traits with the processes in Europe and was certainly connected to them. Nevertheless, North American state formation processes also bore features specific to this world region. Given their growth into large countries, state formation in North America took place as domestic processes that could, nevertheless, have important connections, as the cases of Mexico and the U.S. make clear. The U.S. would not have become a continental power without gaining formerly Mexican territory. By the mid-nineteenth century, Mexico lost roughly half of its territory to the U.S., largely through defeats in warfare. U.S. relations with Canada, in contrast, proceeded diplomatically and without the scale of competition for control over land that the U.S. had with its southern neighbor.

North American state formation involved a variety of ways in which colonies separated from their European rulers and then were combined by North American state makers.

For Canada and the U.S., sparse native populations with whom European settlers did not inter-marry created a sharp line of division between natives and white settlers that was less precise in Mexico. In addition there were African slaves and their descendants, the presence of whom was especially strong in the southern U.S, while Mexico had an earlier history of African migrations and Canada far smaller connections to Africa. Strong differences in the characteristics of colonial administration created different sets of options for how political independence was pursued and the structures of government that were forged, despite shared European political ideals of nineteenth-century liberal republics. The contrasts will become even stronger when we consider Latin American countries further in a moment. The differences I am stressing concern political transformations. I note in passing that these political contrasts were accompanied by economic differences that did not simply parallel political differences—the U.S. and Canadian economies, for instance, were more integrated into international trade than Mexico was, but the same contrast could also be made between Mexico and two of South America's largest countries, Argentina and Brazil. A fuller treatment of economic changes to complement the political transformations that form the main focus of this article would no doubt yield a more complex picture of how political and economic developments became entwined in a variety of ways across the Americas during the nineteenth century.

To conclude this portion of the essay on North American states, I will introduce a comparison with European state formation that reminds us of how European models of state formation don't quite capture the dynamics taking place in North America. First, the contrast of European state-making being all about forging strong central governments seems quite different than any of the three nineteenth-century North American states, none of which has a very strong and significant central government for many decades after the states were first established. In the Canadian and the U.S. cases constitutional scholars can attribute the limits to central government power to their federal systems of

government. Federal governments took on responsibilities transcending the jurisdictions of their states or provinces. In the Mexican case, historians can simply state the chaotic political situation before 1850 and the persistence of ongoing uncertainties regarding the type of state that could and would be constructed. Second, what the three cases share is a trait that distinguishes all of them from European states, namely their large territorial sizes and relatively sparse populations compared to populations and territories of European countries, not to mention China. These territorial and demographic features made the challenges of governance largely domestic and these were largely met at lower levels of government and within civil society in the cases of Canada and the U.S. The viability of the United States as a unified country was certainly brought into question by its Civil War (1861-1865), while Mexico, once stripped of former territories that became part of the United States, may have had a weak national state but it remained a single state with some competition from within and with certain aspirations of becoming a liberal republic, pursued more fervently after its loss of territory to the U.S. at mid-century. Even after this loss however, Mexico remained a large country with a central government lacking the kinds of capacities to exert power and authority so highly stressed in the European state formation literature. Thus, as part of the comparison of state sizes in North and South American world regions, North American cases all ended up being large territorial states with population densities far lower than in either the Chinese or European world regions and with central governments formed that did not follow European norms for strength in a sustained and ongoing competition with other states making up their world region.

As a bridge to considering state formations and transformations in South America as a world region, I'll make a few comments about Mexico as a Latin American state. I do so recognizing that historians can consider different comparisons and connections among state formation and transformation processes according to how they define world regions. Taking Mexico as a Latin American state allows us to see a common temporal rhythm of more serious and successful efforts at national state formation coming throughout Latin America after the mid-nineteenth century. In the Mexican case an earlier generation of

scholarship highlighted the role of regional political and military leaders, *caudillo*, who wielded what actual power existed in post-independence Mexico for several decades. More recent generations of Mexican historical scholarship have looked well beneath the politics of state formation to look at local actors, many of whom resisted successfully state making initiatives and for some of whom identifying with Catholic ideas and institutions rather than secular liberal republicanism proved more appealing. In his 2017 review of trends in Mexican historiography, “All Politics are Local,” Mark Wasserman considers six books that together suggest a return to a focus on topics related to nineteenth-century state formation and transformations that had not been studied much for many years. In his view, the return to these earlier topics doesn’t simply recapitulate older positions, but at the same time doesn’t adequately explain the linkages between the regional and national political issues being addressed and more local conditions that include relations of the Mexican state with local elites and the population more generally. This observation strikes me as reflecting a feature of Mexican efforts at state formation that contrasts with the other two North American cases and resembles a trait found in some South American state formation processes as well.

Both the U.S. and Canadian processes of state formation involve efforts at federation, which represent a kind of bottom-up formation of a state. There emerged in each a balance and fit between central and local authority that was subject to strain and redesign but was a key feature of their political evolutions. In contrast, Mexico exhibited much more conflict between top-down efforts at creating a state and bottom-up resistance to the ideology and institutions that proponents of a liberal republic put forth. As we move to look at South American processes of state formation a similar lack of coordination and fit between top-down and bottom-up components of state making is also in evidence.

A diverse set of societies and political forms existed in South America during the pre-Columbian period—from tribes in the Amazon rain forest to the Inca Empire centered in the Andes mountains in the western part of the continent, the political and social organization of this world region varied considerably. After conquest, societies became diverse for additional reasons as the proportions of indigenous peoples, Iberian settlers, mestizos, and Africans varied, to some degree

influenced by distinct environmental geographies that supported different kinds of economic activity. As in Mexico, there were specific kinds of economies associated with different natural environments—mining, plantation agriculture, and combinations of pasture with farming. Considering Mexico and South America a bit further, where large-scale haciendas in Mexico used poor indigenous labor to produce for domestic markets, Brazilian coffee and sugar plantations went to export markets that used African slave labor until the late nineteenth century. What was true throughout South America was a sharp social hierarchy and concentration of political power among the European settler elites. Such a contrast could also be found in slaveholding southern states of the U.S., but the political power of these elites had to compete with the political elites of northern states, for which there were no close counterparts in Latin America.

Across the diverse conditions and previous histories that shaped the ways in which several independent states were formed in nineteenth-century South America in the territories previously subject to Iberian colonization, I wish to pose as a hypothesis to explain the character of state formation. My hypothesis stresses two relationships: 1. the particular relationship between political ideologies and administrative institutions in Latin America; 2. the relationships between state formation and social elites. I am leaving Guyana and Suriname in the northeast of South America aside because they were colonized by Dutch and English Europeans and French Guiana since it remains until today a French territory. The presence of such polities is a reminder that the colonization of the Americas was a process shared by several European states and those that were far more important to the historical evolution of states in North America left a mark as well in South America. As a non-specialist historian of Mexico and Latin America more generally, the comparisons about state formation and transformation I make cannot be based on even modest familiarity with either sources or scholarship on many key subjects. The two relationships I pose as perhaps key to explaining state formation and transformation in South America have the virtue of enabling comparisons with both state formations and transformations in North America, in Europe, and even China. I am deliberately seeking to identify components of a broader comparative frame of reference within which to look at state formations and transformations in

different world regions that allows for a recognition of patterns specific to different world regions and the reasons for them, as well as the possibility of moving toward a more conceptually refined and empirically grounded theory of state formations and transformations.

In his award-winning book on Latin America, *The Other West: Latin America from Invasion to Globalization*, Marcello Carmagnani offers suggestions for what distinguished Latin America from other parts of the Americas as well as what shaped the Americas as common influences from their shared European heritage. He intends to explain both political contrasts within the Americas, and their shared participation in a larger nineteenth-century global order that was politically constructed according to principles and practices formulated by European powers. Considering the principles of free trade and freedom, he says:

Although the paths taken by the two continents to implement these principles were not necessarily the same, both sides were looking for new economic, social, and political forms within the same philosophical framework of liberalism, which is the foundation of nineteenth-century civilization.²

He goes on to highlight a shared belief in constitutionalism among Latin American elites whether they sought autonomy under the Spanish monarchy or independence from their European colonizer:

Both the autonomists and independentists favored constitutionalism, and neither as yet had a clear idea of the more appropriate form of government for each country, a republic or a monarchy. The result was that the real conflict in Spanish America between 1820 and 1850 was between monarchy and republic and whether the form of government should be unitary, a confederation, or federal.³

To explain why Latin American countries, despite desires for a democratic form of government, failed to create that kind of state, he argues:

Thus, in its separation from the monarchic order, Latin America resembled other parts of the Western world seeking a constitutional order that would allow political actors to choose a liberal,

² CARMAGNANI, M. **The Other West: Latin America from Invasion to Globalization**. Oakland, CA: University of California, 2011. p. 86.

³ Ibidem. p.107.

representative form of government with balanced constitutional powers. The difference in Latin America was that the lack of an absolutist, centralized government during the colonial era unleashed strong secessionist forces that produced broad regional autonomies.⁴

His explanation for the different state formation processes for Canada and the U.S. compared to those among Latin American states considers the nature of colonial era government and the absence of an absolutist, centralized government. Yet, one might also observe that it was a constitutional monarchy, England, which had a far greater impact on the state formations of the U.S. and Canada than any absolutist European state did. If we turn to colonial administrations themselves, Spanish and Portuguese colonial administrations were varieties of top-down administrations because European rulers in both instances expected their colonial officials to remain far more closely connected to the political priorities originating in their European capitals, even as those colonial officials had to make decisions on how to rule largely on their own, mindful of the constellations of American elites and broader populations seeking to influence how political order would affect them. In contrast, the English colonies that became the United States formed according to three different methods. In charter colonies and proprietary colonies, governance was in the hands of local leaders within the colony, while only royal colonies were under direct rule by the English Crown through an official appointed by the King. The frequent involvement of elites in governance created institutional possibilities for elites to construct political order when some decided to seek independence. They could conceive doing so because members of the privileged classes had already participated in formulating and implementing colonial rule.

Iberian colonies were under officials appointed by either the Spanish or Portuguese crowns. Elites sought to negotiate with authority appointed to rule over them without the kinds of institutionalized participation present in English colonies. The differences among colonial administrations mirrored in important ways differences in the nature of early modern European states themselves. These differences in the nature of colonial governance in Americas also occurred before the formulation of the nineteenth-century ideologies that gave elites and to varying

⁴ Ibidem. p. 135.

degrees lower strata of different societies across the Americas a commonly shared vision of desirable principles for political order. The formation of independent states out of former colonies certainly did share some common tenets of political ideology, but they were forged out of quite different colonial relations between political authority and social elites. These differences influenced the likelihood that the institutions needed to implement nineteenth-century constitutional liberalism would be very feasible to construct—both in former American colonies and in Europe itself.

The colonial era relationships between the institutions of governance and elites subsequently affected the size of independent states that emerged. In addition, the small size of settler populations relative to the land and resources available meant that competition among these states to develop at the expense of each other did not exist as strongly as it did in Europe. While Mexico would of course have been much closer to the size of the United States had it not lost roughly half its territory to the U.S. in the mid-nineteenth century, it remains larger than all South American states other than Brazil. More research will be needed to make clearer all the reasons for these contrasts in spatial size of states. Here, I will simply ask if Mexico not fragmenting after the mid-nineteenth century, often attributed to the liberal state building efforts, may not also be an outcome made likely because the state was not able to make any great centralizing effort at the expense of elites in the different provinces. In other words, the Mexican formation of a liberal federal government seems more of a top-down operation that fails to penetrate deeply, while in different ways U.S. and Canadian state formations enlisted the agreement of provincial or state-level political elites.

Turning to South America, initial Iberian colonization led to a division of the world region into Spanish and Portuguese territories. The Portuguese gained control over a smaller portion of South America than the Spanish, but were able to organize colonial rule under a single administration that even became the seat of the Portuguese royal rule between 1808 and 1821 when the crown fled Napoleon's advance; during that period Brazil became a kingdom that was united with the Kingdom of Portugal. After Napoleon's defeat and the crown's return to Europe, the nature of imperial control over the colonial administration of Brazil became

contested, leading to the Brazilian colonial regent, himself a son of the Portuguese king, declaring Brazil independent, thereby becoming South America's largest country, larger in fact than the United States until the Mexican Cession at the end of the Mexican War.

Spanish South America became nine different countries, based in part on former Spanish colonial administrative boundaries. Initially much of northern South America and a portion of Central America were liberated from Spanish rule by Simon Bolivar and for a bit more than a decade (1819-1831) formed Gran Colombia, and from which the contemporary countries of Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela, as well as parts of northern Peru, western Guyana, and northwest Brazil all subsequently emerged. From my decidedly limited understanding as a non-specialist of the region, it strikes me that various elites across the northern portions of Spanish South America lacked any institutional bases upon which to manage their competing interests that could foster political cooperation and coordination among different elite interests. The absence of institutional bases upon which to form states akin to those present in North America highlights the importance of the different previous colonial institutions. Moving to the rest of formerly Spanish South America, the states of Argentina and Chile formed along colonial administrative boundaries, while Uruguay and Paraguay emerged as far smaller states that became independent along those portions of the frontier separating two of the continent's largest countries, Argentina and Brazil. Argentina and Brazil fought wars as part of their state making process on the continent with Uruguay and Paraguay forming as buffer states.

Through comparing patterns of state formation across the Americas, it becomes clear that state making across these world regions owed much both to European political ideologies and European political institutions. It is important to distinguish ideologies and institutions from each other because it appears that differences in colonial political institutions were a key factor influencing the subsequent kinds of independent states that emerged in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century was a period when the political ideology envisioning a liberal constitutional republic animated aspirations for political order throughout

the Americas at the same time as the institutions to construct this form of political order varied considerably. The different sizes of states in North and South America in part reflects the ways in which European political ideologies and institutions initially formulated in one kind of world region could be translated into states of very different sizes when transplanted into world regions that were far more sparsely settled making. A kind of bottom-up agreement regarding the formation of larger unions composed of previously separate colonies applied political principles that worked quite differently when engaging the top-down authority of a European royal ruler.

To conclude I offer some very brief observations and speculations about comparing American processes of state formation and transformation with those in China and Europe. To start in South America where I ended my sketch of American patterns of state formation, one can observe that the competition among larger South American states such as Argentina and Brazil includes the formation of smaller states that acted as buffers between them, much as some smaller states in western Europe performed a similar role between larger and more powerful states. The liberation of much of northern South America from colonial rule led to formation of states, each able to control far smaller countries than existed as the territory of the Spanish colonial state. This may parallel in some ways the fragmentation of former European territorial empires such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The formation of smaller modern-era states in both cases contrasts with Brazil's persistence as a single large state even as its capacities to govern have not proven stable and secure since the late nineteenth-century constitution declared a federal structure of government. The fragility of large federal systems such as Brazil and Mexico contrasts with the very different political traditions relating center and province in Chinese history. In China, the formation of top-down imperial authority enabled through a well-developed bureaucracy was enhanced by the pursuit of local social and political order by officials and local elites in complementary ways. Bottom-up elite participation in the construction of their local societies created the pre-Republican era structure of Chinese political ideology and institutions that were transformed in the twentieth century. That long and complex process deserves its own separate treatment.

I end this essay with the hope that recognizing the diversity of state formation and transformation processes historically through acts of comparison will become a more common practice. With comparative methods, historians can make the histories they study more clearly relevant to our understanding of more recent times across the globe and help create more robust theories able to account for the diversity of state formation and transformation experiences that occurred across different world regions.

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