

CONTRIBUTOR BIO

ZACHARY ANTOYAN studies political theory. He isn't sure why, but is pretty sure that he enjoys it. Unfortunately, however, jobs are hard to come by with a focus in that area, so what he does is limited to the title of student. At least, until the diploma comes, that is. While he searches for ways to construe his area of study into something businesses would want, he is riding on the hopes that his senior project, a new system of taxation, will bridge the gap and provide its own job. Until then, he'll just keep reading more theory, which really isn't so bad.

BOURNE'S MESSAGE REVEALED
USING CHARLES TILLY'S *WAR MAKING AND STATE MAKING AS ORGANIZED CRIME* TO UNDERSTAND RANDOLPH BOURNE'S UNFINISHED FRAGMENT ON *THE STATE*

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“War...war never changes.”

Voice of Ron Perlman, *Fallout 3*

Introduction:

Perhaps I've been spending too much time studying political theory, because my understanding of how states are formed has, to some extent, been skewed for a while. It would seem that as people leave the state of nature, the mutual benefits of creating a society are not explicitly laid out. There is no instantaneous transition from the state of nature to a social contract, and to think so would be folly. Rousseau may have had the idea right, but his time-frame was a bit off, as it appears to me that this transition is still taking place.

Within the state, the accomplishment of a social contract between the members of society is a major step forward in avoiding violence and protecting rights. However, between states, no such doctrine exists, and all states act

accordingly by being at each others' throats a majority of the time. History is littered with wars and conflicts that have shaped the world as we know it. And as it turns out, there is a plethora of theoretical and empirical work being done to examine this aspect of international relations. The primal instincts that drive action in the state of nature for individuals are the same forces that incite power struggles at the state level, and one political theorist attempts to explain how this state of nature for states is where they are truly in their prime. "For war is essentially the health of the state,"⁴⁷ explains Randolph Bourne in his unfinished essay entitled *The State*. But what is most perplexing about Bourne's piece is that he holds this notion while being a pacifist, which forces the reader to consider two perspectives on the article: either Bourne is writing satire, or he is a liar.⁴⁸

Assuming that Bourne is not a liar, the statement above must be further clarified, such that we define what the health of the state really is. In order to see the true meaning of Bourne's message, we must consider that the health of the state is a bad thing. Perhaps after we understand this, the lens we look through to view Bourne's article better links his argument to his anti-war sentiment. To do this, Charles Tilly's "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" will suffice.

What Tilly aims to do in his paper is argue that war and state making are forms of legitimized crime, where the state attempts to extract power, resources, and wealth from as many entities as possible. The state in this sense is not to be confused with the populace that lives within the state, and he spends a portion of the paper explaining the role that capitalism and capitalists play in using the legitimacy of government to exploit that very populace. For Tilly, war plays a very large role in this exploitation, and the connection between organized crime, the state, and war manifests itself in the protection racketeering that exists in the relationship between state and people.

So, for the purposes of this essay, the thesis that comes out of the examination of these two pieces of political theory is thus: Charles Tilly's article complements Randolph Bourne's argument by revealing the true nature of health of the state, by shedding light on the fact that the health of the state is in no way

⁴⁷ Bourne, Randolph. "Unfinished Fragment on the State" from *Untimely Papers*. New York: B.W Huebsch, 1919. 141

⁴⁸ Riggensbach, Jeff. "Randolph Bourne." *Randolph Bourne Institute*. *Antiwar.org*, n.d. Web. 29 Nov. 2013.

equivalent to the health of the people within the state. Instead, the health of the state represents the health of legitimized violence, corruption, and in a more extreme form, crimes against humanity. In order to better understand this, I will examine relevant information from both articles, then revisit Bourne's argument from the perspective of Tilly's lens, and finally cover the implications of the thesis as a whole.

Health of the State:

It is almost humorous what Bourne begins his article with: "Government is synonymous with neither State nor Nation ... Government is the only form in which we can envisage the State, but it is by no means identical with it."⁴⁹ The distinction that Bourne gives so blatantly at the beginning of his article between the government, state, and nation serves to show how aware he is of the consequences of a state fully realized.

What he does in this opener is distinguish between the state and government by claiming that "Government is the idea of the State put into practical operation in the hands of definite, concrete, fallible men."⁵⁰ Essentially, the government is the vessel through which the values of the state can be achieved, but it falters when certain conditions are not met. These qualifications are necessary to the state being enabled to act according to its own agenda. In order to reach the full potential of the State, where the herd works at peak efficiency, the state of war must become a reality. However, Bourne carefully withholds who really is at the helm of this vessel of government, and what it truly means for a government to reach this peak, as the state.

Bourne continues that "Wartime brings the ideal of the State out into very clear relief ... For war is essentially the health of the State."⁵¹ The nation necessarily unifies, seeking to act offensively or defensively against another state. The reasons behind a conflict are of no concern to the people, as their purpose is now to ensure the survival of the state by assisting the war effort.⁵² The "central purpose" of war that Bourne claims to exist as a result of conflict

⁴⁹ Bourne, 140.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 140.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 141.

⁵² This is a point that Tilly will provide a counter-argument to, claiming that "popular resistance to war making and state making made a difference. When ordinary people resisted vigorously, authorities made concessions: guarantees of rights, representative institutions, courts of appeals. Those concessions, in their turn, constrained the later paths of war making and state making" (Tilly 1985)

allows the state come forward to take control of “men’s businesses and attitudes and opinions.”⁵³ This is one of the ideals of the state, wherefore “within its territory its power and influence should be universal.”⁵⁴

One major effect that this shift in power has is the integration of the individual into the function of the State; almost instantaneously, the rights and protections of the individual and of the minorities are eliminated. Opinions critical of the state are met with harsh legal punishment; all the while, actions taken by people and their motivations for doing so, exist solely to serve the purpose of the state. As loyalty to the state becomes the paramount value, the individual is forced to fade into the ether. This control that the state now exerts over the individuality of its citizens should be a clear indication of the disparity between the health of the state and the health of the people. Uniformity becomes a major aspect in the health of the state, and this is further supported by Bourne’s claim that:

[War] automatically sets in motion those irresistible forces for uniformity, for passionate cooperation with the Government in coercing into obedience the minority groups and individuals which lack the larger herd sense...the nation in war-time attains a uniformity of feeling, a hierarchy of values culminating at the undisputed apex of the State ideal. ⁵⁵

Take note of the mention of coercion, as this will become central to the link to Tilly’s argument in the future.

What ultimately results from war is the unification of the individual with his state and society, and thusly: “In a nation at war, every citizen identifies himself with the whole, and feels immensely strengthened in that identification.”⁵⁶ Now that the individual has a defined purpose contributing to the success of the state, they can feel at ease in their place in society. Finally, Bourne believes that “The individual as social being in war seems to have achieved almost his apotheosis.”⁵⁷ This is the perfectly realized elimination of the individual, where

⁵³ Bourne, 142.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 141.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 145.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 146

⁵⁷ Ibid, 147.

the problems of society can be done away with, if only the very things that make us different are controlled and suppressed. What is meant by the individual as a social being is the elimination of the individual. But what results is greater peace within the society, and the thriving of the state. This forces the reader to believe that in order for the state to work at its best possible level and for the citizen to find their perfect place in society, war is a necessity. But as the state works at its peak level, we must ask the question, who is the health of the state really good for?

Organized Crime:

Tilly's argument is simple, and is the first sentence of his article. If the protection rackets of the mob are the most efficient form of organized crime, then war making and state making, which Tilly likens to protection rackets themselves, represent the most legitimate form of organized crime. His definition of the state allows him to see "war makers and state makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs."⁵⁸ This is significant in that rather than the state being the upholder of rights and freedoms for individuals and society or the regulator of an economy, the state exists purely as a function of a small minority in power to acquire more wealth and maintain that very power. Already, we see the word "coercion" come into play again, and it bears heavy weight upon the idea that the government controls the means to legitimately coerce its citizens to do whatever it wants. The specific conceptualization of this type government is a "relatively centralized, differentiated organizations the officials of which more or less successfully claim control over the chief concentrated means of violence within a population inhabiting a large, contiguous territory."⁵⁹ What he fails to include in this concept in the modern day is the influence of interest groups representing big businesses and industries, but this will come later as well.

Tilly then moves on to describe the idea of protection itself, where in one sense, it is the defense of a one entity from another aggressor entity. This, he states, is a legitimate function of government, yet one that can be easily exploited to appear more like a protection racket: "Someone who produces

⁵⁸ Tilly, Charles. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime." *Bringing the State Back In*. 1985. Cambridge Books Online. 169

⁵⁹ Tilly, 170.

both the danger and, at a price, the shield against it is a racketeer.”⁶⁰ The ways that governments can fall under this classification are usually cases in which the threats that the government offers protection from are imaginary, or are caused by the actions of the government. The War on Terror comes to mind, as does the Cold War, and perhaps even the War on My Taste-Buds from the ever present threat of my aunt’s cooking during Thanksgiving, only remedied by my mother’s pie.

Tilly further asserts that governments have a tendency to amass and control the main methods of violence. Creating a standing army, it would seem, is not just a function of government, and Tilly points to the fact that just because we give the government the legitimacy to create this army does not mean that this is where that power should reside. In fact, this is where the transition from the state of nature into a society comes into play. Utilizing European history as his example, Tilly argues that governments and monarchies were nothing more than loosely affiliated groups of powerful people controlling the masses through this power. His argument is best summed up here: “Power holders’ pursuit of war involved them willy-nilly in the extraction of resources for war making from the populations over which they had control and in the promotion of capital accumulation by those who could help them borrow and buy. War making, extraction, and capital accumulation interacted to shape European state making.”⁶¹ Even though governments technically existed, they only existed because the powerful person at the top could afford to be there, and exploited everyone under them to stay there. It was only until more recently in the history of governance that masses of people did begin to demand rights, liberties, and protections lest they revolt and start making some rich peoples’ heads roll.

Legitimacy, then, was not something that a group of people simply distributed, and in many cases, it was just claimed as being of divine right, or in the case of King Arthur a product of “strange women lying in ponds, distributing swords... [and] farcical aquatic ceremonies.”⁶² In large part, it is because these

⁶⁰ Ibid, 171

⁶¹ Ibid, 172.

⁶² White, Michael, Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, Michael Palin, John Goldstone, Mark Forstater, Connie Booth, Carol Cleveland, Neil Innes, Bee Duffell, John Young, Rita Davies, and Terry Bedford. *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Burbank, CA: Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, 2001. (The relevance of this scene to my paper is so uncanny, it’s hard to believe. I highly recommend the constitutional peasant scene as supplemental reading to this essay.)

entities controlled the means of violence that they were able to influence so much, and it was only until masses of people fought back that legitimacy and the social contract become something of a reality. However, since these entities had no initial interest in controlling or creating nation-states, they sought only to acquire more wealth and power, and offering the protection of their power was one way to do this. As these large entities became states however, these practices of racketeering did not wear off. In order to more effectively control and extract from the regions in which they lorded, governments needed to eliminate the power struggle within their borders, which Tilly claims “all came down to massive pacification and monopolization of the means of coercion.”⁶³ By creating police forces that answered to the government, eliminating lords with control over militias, and by slowly building up their own standing armies, governments were able to expand their scope of extraction.

The next stage in history that is relevant to this topic is how capitalism played into the amassing of the means of violence. Tilly argues through another author, Frederic Lane, that there are four main managers of the government: the citizens themselves, a single self-interested monarch, the managers themselves, and one that Tilly adds, a dominant class. All of these players would interact and control the government in a different way, but as it turns out, the dominant class won out, simply because it was able to manipulate the flow of money to provide for the functions of government, chiefly the function of violence.

According to Tilly, the driving force behind the connection between capitalism and governments was the increase in military size, where “Both the trade and the capital served the purposes of ambitious rulers.”⁶⁴ He furthers this point by maintaining through yet another thinker Jan de Vries, that “One cannot help but be struck by the seemingly symbiotic relationship existing between the state, military power, and the private economy’s efficiency in the age of absolutism. Behind every successful dynasty stood an array of opulent banking families. Access to such bourgeois resources proved crucial to the princes’ state-building and centralizing policies.”⁶⁵ The role that capitalists played increasingly became a staple of preforming government, and if the current debt of the United States is any indication of where this relationship has gone, then we know that borrowing and paying interest is still a viable option for many governments.

⁶³ Tilly, 175

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 179.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 179.

Consequently, governments and rulers needed excuses to increase taxes to pay off the debt. War making became that excuse, such that in order for a government to wage war that it claimed was for a justified cause, it needed to raise taxes. This was an extremely lucrative move, and even as the war ended, governments did not lower the taxes back down to pre-war rates. Tilly acutely describes what happened: “When public revenues and expenditures rose abruptly during war, they set a new, higher floor beneath which peacetime revenues and expenditures did not sink.”⁶⁶ Taxes rose as a result of the ever increasing cost of waging a war.

For Tilly, the states carried out four main activities to increase their own power:

1. War making: Eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have dear and continuous priority as wielders of force.
2. State Making: Eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside their territories
3. Protection: Eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients
4. Extraction: Acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities: war making, state making and protection.

While with these four there is some overlap and some independency, they all rely on the monopoly of violence to achieve their goals. Additionally, effective combination of the four yields better results than if one is taken by itself. For instance, if a country is able to effectively justify a war that protects its interests and all the while increasing taxes and creating a more connected and productive populace, then it will be more well off than if it just raised taxes.

Additionally, if a state wanted to increase its frequency in one aspect of these actions, the result would be a lasting bureaucratic effect on the state and on the people. Wars beget armies, state making creates greater control over rights and liberties, protection results in the protected asking for what is owed them, and extraction yields a larger taxation and accounting entity. The bigger the project, the larger the government needed to be to deal with the project, and the floor was raised ever higher.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 180.

Tilly goes on to explain how the gradual creation of these bureaucracies is what helped first-world nations today become the powers they are, and that the second and third world states that now try to skip steps in this process, routinely falter in the endeavor of nation-state building. Their use of coercion in many cases is much worse, and subject to greater levels of illegitimacy, behind the veil of “democracy.” Next we will examine how government still attempts to exploit the population it controls by using these four actions.

Bourne Revisited:

Now, with our understanding of how governments use war making, state making, and protection to exploit the people, we can look at Bourne’s interpretation of war as it relates to the state. Bourne openly speaks of the coercion that governments use to bring minorities in line during a time of war. But what is the act of bringing in all members of society into one mindset of war if not coercion? Consider the following statement: “A state that successfully eradicates its internal rivals strengthens its ability to extract resources, to wage war, and to protect its chief supporters.”⁶⁷ When a government is able to act in whatever way it wishes without opposition and with the necessary funds to carry out any task, hasn’t it taken control of the populace? Through this, we can see the positive yield a state may garner from having a homogenous populace with little opposition and a large subject for extraction. Here, we can also see that the health of the state, in truth, means the health of those who control the state or those who control it through a proxy. It is in this sense that the health of the state means the subjugation of the people, and the stifling of individual rights and liberties. If a country can justify a war, then it can justify the increased control of its citizens and the increase in extraction.

What the government provides is the means to an end for the dominant class to exploit all those under them, and do so “legitimately.” The creation of government was never intended to be for the protection of people and not to ensure positive rights when leaving the state of nature. Instead, it was a workaround for the dominant class to legitimize exploitation. Government, in this case, provides the one thing that capitalists cannot have: legitimacy. They cannot, for fear of retaliation, blatantly exploit the common man, but through the veil of government legitimacy, anything is possible.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 181.

It is easy to construe Bourne's obsession with uniformity as the motivation for war. I thought that Bourne believed in order to achieve a more collective community, the differences of cultural values had to be done away with. However, this notion that Bourne's justification for war was the resulting social good, is utterly wrong. It is at this point that his argument is so brimming with satire, that I could easily imagine Stephen Colbert reciting it in a sarcastic tone; "Other values such as artistic creation, knowledge, reason, beauty, the enhancement of life, are instantly and almost unanimously sacrificed."⁶⁸ This is Bourne's warning, that what we achieve in social cohesiveness and connection to the state through war, we lose in sacrificing other core values. Uniformity creates the structures necessary for the legitimate exercise of power over the individual, shunning liberties and violating rights. The rest of the quote further contributes to the idea of an upper class at the helm of the vessel of government "...and the significant classes who have constituted themselves the amateur agents of the State, are engaged not only in sacrificing these values for themselves but in coercing all other persons into sacrificing them."⁶⁹

Bourne's article is at first glance something that doesn't quite add up, where we are faced with a conclusion that is a far stretch from the mentality of the author. But after we are able to see state making and the health of the state in a negative light, it easier to understand Bourne's article as a warning, as compared to a suggestion. Tilly's argument fits perfectly with Bourne's, as the health of the state is war, and in a war environment the government and those controlling it get exactly what they want. War is essentially the most effective tool for a government or those behind it to marginalize class to exploit each itself. Screw you capitalism: you create war for profit at all costs.

Legitimacy and Corruption:

Now it would be easy to claim that a state such as this, that uses a racketeering method to extract more from its populace and other states, is harder to find in the modern-day government, since representation and the relevant documents protecting rights are there to ensure equality and fairness. Alas, there is difficulty in finding an example of this government, and in fact, there is much evidence to the contrary. Ask the question, what if those in power aren't the

⁶⁸ Bourne, 146.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

ones who are interested in this organized crime, but are influenced and even controlled by those who wish to profit from the legitimate exercise of power?

Assume for the sake of argument that inside of some great representative government, there exists a representative with a connection to a major oil company. This oil company wants to expand its scope of business, so it taps its representative friend on the shoulder and asks if he can help them out. The representative then, in kind, vehemently suggests to the administration that the country should go to war with another country over oil deposits. Now, it would never pass in this day and age to just go and take something from some other country. Instead, this country wants to appear righteous. So it collects its propaganda machine, and fashions a War on Terror that it can use to justify involvement overseas. It might even blow up a couple of its own buildings and kill a few thousand of its own people to sell the threat. Now it has a case, and next thing you know, it's twelve years later and the occupation is finally winding down, all the while Haliburton has all the contracts for oil extraction in the Middle East. Conspiracy theories like these are always an interesting thing to read, but represent a possible truth about the actions of government, and perfectly highlight the racketeering relationship that governments have. This shows people outside of power influencing 'legitimate' power as a means of getting what they want through violence and fear mongering. A more concrete example would be the Patriot Act, which allows the government to tap phone calls and view emails, among other things. Originally this notion would have been ludicrous. With the justification of national security, anyone could be tuning into my conversations. There are plenty of buzz words that can be used to create the imaginary threat that the government has to protect its citizens from, but whether it be the War on Terror or the Cold War, it always circles back to state making, war making, or protection. This is the sort of relationship that President Eisenhower warned us about with regards to the military-industrial complex, where the government creates the war that is supplied by weapons and munitions manufacturers and fought by average men and women in the armed services. The worst possible scenario includes top military brass, legislators, and the heads of these companies working with each other to perpetuate conflict in the name of profit, paid for by the United States government. So as it turns out, when Edwin Starr asks the question "War, huh, yeah, what is it good for?" in his song *War*; and answer with: "Absolutely nothing;" what he neglected was that war is actually pretty profitable for a select group of people.

Tilly's argument assumes that those with power, influence, and money wish to keep it, and also want to expand it. This is a very dark perspective, one where it assumes much about the head of the government, and who is in power. At what level of government is this all decided? What level of influence is condemnable; wanting to simply increase the budget for your department/project? The social contract is an extremely important doctrine, and with it comes the legitimacy to use violence in ways that government deems necessary. This would lead me to believe that any exercise of power that would otherwise be illegitimate, could in part be considered corruption. While I can understand that this notion is idealistic and that this flaw in the system is inherent, I cannot shake the fact that this is an issue that isn't immediately evident to many people. Apparently I'm not alone in this thought, as there are some who wish to deem corruption as a crime against humanity.⁷⁰ If we are at all concerned with the efficient and ethical exercise of power through government, we should hold the ability to control the peoples collective will in the highest regard. Any infringement upon that exercise of power would be akin to the most severe abuse of that collective will and our rights.

Additionally, the health of the state comes at the expense of the health of other states, and the livelihoods of those outside of the state. Considering that war is a selfish tool used by the few to exploit the many, we cannot justify using violence to "protect our interests." Under these circumstances, no war to "maintain the interests of the state" can be legitimate, because it is killing and stealing in the name of profit, and all those who support this are complicit in crimes against humanity. These, of course, are the theoretical ethical implications, but they begin to manifest after we truly consider the nature of Bourne's paper and his anti-war sentiment.

Conclusion:

For me, the state had always been the people. It had always been the conglomeration of the group. The health of the state through war was ethically acceptable because it positively affected the people, which made Bourne's paper confusing, because he was a pacifist. But through the lens of Tilly's argument, the true nature of Bourne's article reveals the sinister motivation behind war. The health

⁷⁰ Migiro, Katie. "Make Corruption a Crime against Humanity – US Lawyer." Thomson Reuters Foundation. N.p., 14 Oct. 2013. Web. 25 Nov. 2013.

of the state has nothing, in this case, to do with the people, and everything to do with the very select few beneficiaries of war. Freedom, eliminating terror or communism, are all proxies to hide the truth, the mad grab for more profit. This method of profiting from war is the worst form of corruption in government; utilizing legitimacy to take what you want. That may be what politics is, but it is not what government should be allowed to be. Society should hold it to a higher standard than that.

Contemporary thought that focuses on reducing the role of government, like that of the libertarian, correctly disassociates government from business practices. It does this in the interest of allowing individuals to carry out their lives as they wish without government interference, driven by fear of this very corruption. But it is limited in its scope because it assumes that the core of the problem lies in government, when I am inclined to say that while government is the vessel, those at the helm who use that power to exploit others, are truly to blame. The key to a successful government, the key to a state that is made for the people, is severing the connection between capitalistic intentions and government action.⁷¹ This also means eliminating the avenues of corruption in political positions (talk about idealistic). The health of the state is the exploitation of the masses, and society should therefore, be wary of the actions a government takes that it claims are in its interest.

⁷¹ Perhaps a more feasible form of direct democracy? Maybe even a system that allows people to choose the projects that government takes on. Perhaps there is a way for people to use money to be politically active, without just contributing to campaigns.

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