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STRUCTURE AND AGENCY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: STATE-BUILDING AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

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Introduction

How does competition[3] among agents impact the evolutionary processes[4] of *international political systems*? The answer to this question requires primarily the ontological delimitation of the objects in analysis[5]. It will be

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3 In this work, competition and conflict of interests are treated like synonyms and are defined as: "a form of interaction among individuals, groups, organizations and collectivities which implies shocks to the access and the distribution of the scarce resources" (Pasquino 1998, 225). Moreover, it should be pointed out, that the aim is not to identify the causes of conflicts, but its consequences to the evolving process of the delimited objects of analysis.

4 By evolution, one understands the sequence of transformations in the components of social systems, not implying the normative content of these changes (Vasconcellos 2013, 85).

5 It is important to emphasize that "systems" are understood as the logical models that represent entities formed by sets of elements interacting (Bertuglia and Vaio 2005, 3). Therefore, the ontological definition of a system deals with the "criteria of distinction that indicate what we speak of and specifies its properties as being, unity or object" (Maturana and Varela 2005, 47). However, defining them ontologically does not imply that physical and social reality is a de facto system (Wight 2006). In other words, the analytical validity of instantiation and operationalization of such models will always be subject to empirical conditions. As Reis (1997, 19) argues: "Whether these conditions are observed or not, so that we can describe the societies we study from those models, or if the system as we define it adequately describes the set of phenomena we want to analyze, are empirical questions, which we will answer affirmatively, or at times negatively. But we can perfectly, on a purely logical-analytical basis, discuss whether

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defined that international political systems (IPS) have an anarchic structure, being composed mainly by the interactions[6] that involve the use or threat of the use of the force among political organizations which are not subordinated to a higher authority able to impose limits on the behavior of agents (Waltz 1979; Buzan and Little 2000, 92). *National political systems*[7] (NPS), on the other hand, have a hierarchical structure, being formed by interactions between individuals and organizations in territories in which there is an organization that concentrates the coercive means and imposes limits for the behavior of the agents (Waltz 1979; Elias 1993; Geuss 2001). *States*[8], in turn, will be both the constituent units of international political systems and the organizations that monopolize coercive means in national political systems (Tilly 1996; Hui 2005; Levy and Thompson 2011).

It is assumed that the variations in the degrees of concentration of coercive means[9] distinguish the nature and consequences of competition between the agents of each system (Waltz 1979, 92). It is argued that the absence of central government makes competition in international political systems involved in the survival of state political organizations, which consequently constrains the possibilities of increasing the functional specialization between them. On the other hand, the concentration of the means of coercion in national political systems imposes limits on the use of force in conflicts of interest, which in turn reduces the insecurity of agents and allows the increase of division of labor in the system (Elias 1993).

According to the agents and means involved, three dimensions of

these or those conditions are really necessary or not for the reproduction of a system as it is defined in given work".

6 Interaction is understood as the set of relations that makes the parts of a system interdependent with each other.

7 It is emphasized that the concept of national political systems does not refer only to social systems in which there are political organizations called nation-states. The concept will be used to characterize any social system in which there was monopolization of the means of coercion by a state organization, whether that organization is a city-state, an empire, a kingdom, etc.

8 The terms political organizations, units, states and agents will be used as synonyms of the components of the international political systems. Furthermore, we will refer to states with "s" minuscule when dealing with political organizations that exercise or aim to exercise control of the means of force in a given territory. In this sense, the term can represent Empires, city-states, city leagues, kingdoms, etc. The term State with the capital "S" will be used when referring to political organizations formed after the end of the feudal order in Western Europe. That is, referring to the National States that are constituted like the predominant political organization in all the continents at the present time.

9 Coercion means the imposition of the will of one agent on the other through the use or threat of the use of force. Coercive means consist of the material resources necessary for one agent to exercise coercion over another (Giddens 2001, 37).

social competition will be identified: the International Competition, characterized by competitive interactions that comprise the use or threat of use of force between political organizations in IPS, and which involves the material capabilities and organizational elements that sustain the use of force in the international arena; the Construction of the State[10], characterized by the competitive interactions between the state, organizations and individuals around resource extraction and control in NPS, and which concerns the ways in which political organizations achieve the monopoly of the means of coercion and well establish legitimacy for their domination in a delimited territory; and, finally, Regulated Competition, characterized by disputes between non-state organizations and individuals on matters of distribution of life probabilities within national political systems[11], and which involves the ways that the regulation imposed by the states influences the distribution of life probabilities within the NPS.

Delimiting the objects of analysis, it is defined as a working hypothesis that the results of the interactions between the agents according to the strategies chosen by them to cope with the competition they face cause changes in the structure of the international political systems and in the characteristics of the state political organizations.

To demonstrate the argument, the article is divided into two sections. The first section questions the conditions under which competition between states engenders mechanisms that reinforce processes of concentration of coercive means in international political systems. Firstly, it is assessed that the assumptions of anarchy and low functional specialization present in the model proposed by Kenneth Waltz (1979) do not necessarily imply the existence of only one mechanism acting on the IPS. In fact, it is argued that, because international political systems are open systems, the interactions among its agents allow the emergence[12] of competing mechanisms, which may favor

10 The term "state-building" will be employed to characterize conflicts of interest between state, non-state organizations and individuals within national political systems. The term "state formation" will be used to characterize historical processes in which political organizations have been formed.

11 Thus, three sources of literature are evaluated. The understanding of how a structure of political systems in general constraints the behavior of units - International Relations Theory - is complemented by the weighting on how human resources produced and extracted in democratic systems - Historical Sociology -, as well as by the analysis of the logistical and operational conditionings that sustains the activity of war - Strategic Studies.

12 Emergence is the process in which phenomena that cannot be apprehended from the sum of the isolated behaviors of the constituent units arise at the systemic level (Holland 2012). There is no need for central planning. Organizational patterns emerge from interactions among agents and become irreducible to them (Abbot 2006).

both concentration and distribution of means of coercion. Finally, it will be analyzed the explanatory model proposed by Victoria Tin-bor Hui (2005) on the transformation of the kingdom system in China to an empire under the Qin dynasty during the period of 656-221 BC.

The second section questions how international competition influences the dimensions of state building and of regulated competition within national political systems. Firstly, it is distinguished ontologically the states from the other agents belonging to the NPS. It is considered that the specificity of the state political organizations consists in the execution of three activities: monopolization of the means of coercion within the NPS; imposition of orders of behavioral regulation to the other agents; and defense against other political organizations (Tilly 1996; Waltz 1979; Giddens 2001).

Then, it is argued that the regulatory orders are not neutral in relation to regulated competition. Indeed, they will tend to favor individuals and organizations that dominate the resources necessary for states to accomplish their purposes (North, Wallis and Weingast 2009). In addition, to the extent that state actors concentrate the resources needed to carry out these three tasks, they will have greater autonomy from other NPS organizations. In turn, if these resources are concentrated in other actors, state interventions will tend to reflect the interests of those actors. Finally, the explanatory model proposed by Tilly (1975; 1985; 1996) on the effects of international competition on the process of formation and consolidation of nation-states in Europe is analyzed.

International Political Systems: competition and evolution of the structure

Understanding the nature of competition in a social system requires the ontological delimitation of three elements: boundaries, mechanisms, and structure (Gilpin 1981). Borders refer to both the conditions necessary for the inclusion of components in the model and the interactions between the system and its environment. In other words, to the delimitation of what is inserted and what is excluded from the system, which allows us to understand how exogenous variables interfere with its functioning (Maturana and Varela 2005). Mechanisms are the plausible and often observed forms in which processes of change occur (Pierson 2000).

The structure refers to the way the units are ordered in relation to one another. The structural level indicates: "a general description of the ordered overall arrangement of a society written in terms of the placement of units

rather than in terms of their qualities" (Waltz 1979, 9). Identifying the elements that compose the structure matters for the evaluation of the constraints imposed on the units, as well as for formulating hypotheses about their behaviors (Carlsnaes 1992).

It is defined as necessary conditions for a unit to belong to the IPS: (i) a political organization that concentrates the means of coercion in a delimited territory and (ii) has the capability of action at the international arena (Waltz 1979; Rosenau 1997; Jervis 1997; Cusack and Stoll 1994)[13]. In other words, agents in IPS are entities composed of various subgroups, organizations, communities, and many individuals that are sufficiently cohesive to possess agency quality (Buzan and Little 2000, 101). This means that the IPS units (aggregates of institutions and individuals) are able to interpret, plan and execute actions that do not derive solely from constraints and structural incentives[14] (Friedman and Starr 1997).

However, although we recognize that states interact in a number of ways, we will not include all kinds of interactions in our analysis. This is because, as Barry Buzan and Richard Little (2000, 76) point out, different types of interaction, and therefore different types of units become more or less prominent depending on the sectoral lens used to analyze the international system. Therefore, even recognizing the importance of cultural and economic interactions for international relations (Watson 1992; Wendt 1999; Arrighi 2010), the model is restricted to interactions involving coercion, that is, the use or threat of use of force (Geuss 2001)[15].

The structure of the system will be described based on two assumptions presented in the model proposed by Kenneth Waltz (1979). The first is that international political systems are ontologically anarchic, that is, they have no central authority. This assumption derive from the conception that the capacity of action of political organizations in the international arena depends on their prerogative (and their capacity) to define and execute independent external actions[16]. Because of this, the distribution of the means of

13 The ontology and evolutionary processes of agents of international political systems will be evaluated in the next section. For the moment, it should be pointed out, that the autonomous capacity for action in the international sphere is a necessary condition for the membership of a political organization in the IPS model of this study (Waltz 1979; Buzan 1984; Watson 1992).

14 Like Waltz (1979), one assumes that, although they have several objectives, all states seek first to ensure their survival in international political systems.

15 Cultural economic interactions will be evaluated as exogenous variables to the model, that is, to the extent that they influence how competitive interactions involving the use or the threat of use of force between states influence the evolution of the IPS structure.

16 It is important to emphasize that to assume that international political systems are ontologically anarchic and that their units have an autonomous capacity of choice does not imply the

coercion[17] in the system cannot be concentrated to the point where one unit is able to totally regulate the actions of the others. In other words, it is obvious that there is no agency without the capacity of action (Buzan 1984).

Decentralization of the means of force in an IPS creates in itself uncertainty about the behavior of its agents. In other words, the absence of central government makes international competition[18] permeated by constant informational incompleteness about the intentions and real capabilities of the units. Thus, only possessing the means of force necessary to defend oneself from others is that states can ensure the continuity of their own existence (Waltz 1979, 74)[19].

Once the anarchic ontology of the IPS structure is delimited, one can deduce how the socialization-selection mechanism operates in its evolutionary process. According to Checkel (2006, 364): "socialization refers to the process of inducting new actors to the norms, rules and ways of behavior of a given community". That is, the tendency for agents' behavior to conform to the constraints imposed by the structure (Elias 1993). As argued above, the anarchic structure of the IPS makes the nature of international competition involve the survival of states. Because of this, war becomes a fundamental element of socialization-selection in international political systems, both by eliminating agents who do not adapt to structural pressures and by encouraging the emulation of perceived winning strategies (Levy and Thompson 2011, 61; Posen 1993, 82).

The second ontological assumption of the structure model proposed

absence of hierarchical relations between states. What, in fact, the absence of central authority implies is that it is the distribution of the means of force in the system that defines which units will suffer the greatest structural constraints in their actions (Gilpin 1981, 28).

17 Anthony Giddens (2001, 85) argues that "the resources involved in the reproduction of social systems that have some degree of continuity in space and time form aspects of the structural properties of these social systems." In this sense, it was delimited in this study that the international political systems refer to the interactions that involve the use or threat of the use of force between states. Because of this, the way in which the means of coercion are distributed is also a defining element of the structure of this type of system.

18 To suppose that international political systems are ontologically competitive does not mean to exclude the possibility of cooperation between states. It implies only recognizing that cooperation initiatives will always be permeated by mistrust derived from informational uncertainty regarding the motivations of the parties involved, as well as the inexistence of a central authority capable of ensuring behavioral control.

19 It is emphasized that the ability to defend militarily from external aggressions is not the only means that allows the survival of a state in the IPS. In fact, there are innumerable cases of states that do not have the means necessary to withstand external aggression and continue to exist. However, it is argued that such states have their capacity for action in the IPS extremely constrained.

by Waltz is that there is low functional differentiation in the IPS. According to Buzan and Little (2000), functional differentiation in social systems occurs when units specialize, assuming specific tasks and objectives. In these cases, the agents become interdependent due to the social division of labor. This condition acts as a constraint on individual action, since the survival of a unit depends not only on its own capabilities, but also on the activities carried out by the others. Agents that perform similar functions[20] will depend less on each other and, consequently, will maintain greater autonomy in the systems in which they are inserted (Elias 1993, 206).

It is argued that different levels of coercion imply different possibilities of functional differentiation. The lower the concentration, the greater the behavioral uncertainty and the greater will be the insecurity. Therefore, the smaller will be the structural incentives for increasing the division of labor. As the monopolization of force increases, behavioral uncertainty decreases, and insecurity is reduced with it. Consequently, the division of labor between the units may intensify (Waltz 1979, 104). According to Norbert Elias (1993, 198, emphasis added):

> [...] societies without a stable monopoly of force are always those in which the division of functions is relatively small, and the chains of actions that bind individuals to one another relatively short [...]. By forming a monopoly of force, peaceful social spaces are created, which are normally free from acts of violence. The pressures acting on these spaces are different from those that existed before.

Thus, one disagrees with Hendrick Spruyt's statement that "the condition of anarchy implies the existence of a particular type of unity" (Spruyt 1994, 13). In the context of interactions involving force, when one or a few political organizations monopolize the means of coercion and impose orders of behavioral regulation on others, anarchy begins to change. At the limit, such a change would alter the structural constraint that induces agents to build means of coercion that ensure their survival. In this case, states would become "free to specialize because they have no reason to fear the increased interdependence that goes with specialization" (Waltz 1979, 104). We would be facing the end of a system composed of the interaction between independ-

20 It is important to point out that this study refers to the functional similarity between states only in the context of international competition and the concentration of the means of coercion in the NPS. That is, it is considered as a necessary condition for defining the agents in the IPS that political organizations are able to defend themselves against external aggressions and concentrate the means of coercion in their respective NPS. However, it is clear that, in addition to these two functions, each state can perform specific tasks.

ent political organizations and the subsequent formation of a single global political system.

Therefore, although one can agree with the assumptions of anarchy and the low functional specialization present in the Waltzian model, it presents a theoretical gap by omitting certain dynamics that act in the evolutionary processes of the IPS. According to Waltz, his definition of structure necessarily implies the emergence of the balance of power mechanism (Waltz 1979, 121). That is, according to him, as long as there is no single central authority, the behavior of the units will result in a tendency to restore the deconcentration of the means of force in the system (Waltz 1986, 53).

However, it is argued that the assumptions of anarchy and low functional specialization do not necessarily imply the existence of only one mechanism, which would always encourage the restoration of the deconcentration of force in the system. In fact, there is the emergence of multiple mechanisms that strengthen distinct and even conflicting evolutionary trajectories (Hui 2005, 1).

The concept of mechanism, in turn, is the subject of intense controversy in the literature (Elster 1989; Tilly and Goodin 2006; Archer 2015). Nevertheless, it is noted that there is relative consensus in the conception that they represent the ways in which one variable produces effects in another (Hedstrom and Ylikoski 2010). Roy Bhaskar (1998 34) argues that "mechanisms combine to generate the flow of phenomena that constitute the present states and events of the world". Charles Tilly and Richard Goodin (2006, 13) point out that mechanisms generate energy transfers between elements and rearrangements in the positioning of units. Anna Grzymala-Busse (2011, 1268) considers that "the analysis of mechanisms and processes involves temporality, to the extent that mechanisms specify change: how and why transformations, trends and developments occur".

It is argued that the distinctions in the meanings attributed to the concept of mechanisms lie in the fact that their explanatory logic depends on the ontology of the evaluated system. In closed systems, in which interactions with the environment and number of elements can be controlled, mechanisms describe functional relationships between pairs of variables. That is, the trajectory of events that starts with changes in a certain independent variable and generates changes in a dependent variable (Vasconcellos 2013, 81). In this case, the evolutionary trajectory of the system will tend to be linear, since the sum of the individual actions is equal to the aggregate behavior (Mitchell 2009, 22).

On the other hand, in open systems in which the influences of ex-

ogenous variables and the number of interactions between units are high[21], mechanisms do not operate in the same way (Bhaskar 1998). Due to the interconnection between agents, it is impossible to act alone in this type of system (Hardin 1963). Because of this, small modifications at a specific point can trigger disproportionate and/or unexpected consequences in their general state (Elster 1989). Thus, "organizations may not fully appreciate the implications of what they are doing, and it may take a long time for the consequences of their actions to emerge in full form" (Levy and Thompson 2011, 11). Furthermore, the causal relationships between its components may be recursive (Jaccard and Jacoby 2009). That is, although one particular entity X has an effect on another entity Y, there is nothing to prevent that in a second moment Y also has an effect on X.

Thus, the evolution path of open systems is not linear. Since "a continuous change of the value of one variable may lead to discontinuous behavior of the entire system" (Wimmer 2006, 8), transformations can occur both gradually and abruptly. In such contexts, mechanisms that reinforce tendencies of change (mechanisms of positive feedback), and mechanisms that operate in the restoration of the initial state (negative feedback mechanisms) both act according to Thelen (2003) and Hui (2005).

Finally, due to interactions with the external environment, the changes in the system are irreversible (Prigogine and Stengers 1984). In other words, systemic dynamics depend not only on changes in variables but also on the specific time trajectory in which these changes occurred (Pierson 2004). Therefore, not only can similar actions produce different effects depending on when they occur, but also choices in a given period constrain the possibilities of alternative paths in the future (Thelen 2003).

International political systems are open social systems and composed of the interactions between a significant number of units. Therefore, their evolutionary processes are necessarily unpredictable and the result from the strategic interactions between agents, exogenous variables and competing mechanisms (Hedstrom and Ylikoski 2010, 60). In other words, interactions involving the use or threat of the use of force between states do not necessarily imply the deconcentration of the means of force in the system, and indeed there are multiple possible trajectories of evolution for the IPS.

In this sense, it is possible to summarize the relationship between

21 The number of elements matters, since as it expands, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify exclusively independent variables, as well as the measurement of effects (Pierson 2004).

agents and structure in the IPS in the following stages: in a first moment[22], the international competition in an anarchic structure constrains the behavioral variability of the states. Such pressures encourage the units to seek means to ensure their survival, but are assimilated and answered according to the specific characteristics of each agent. In a second moment, from the interactions between the strategies chosen by each state to face international competition emerge transformational mechanisms[23] that produce effects on the structural level. Tendencies are generated both towards the decentralization of the means of force and their concentration (Braumoller 2012).

Therefore, to the extent that "the contingency and flux of the social world, in where multiple mechanisms are also constantly interacting, mechanisms cannot be deterministic" (Wight 2015, 52). In this sense, the inconsistency of the Waltzian model consists in the omission of mechanisms that could overcome the tendency to balance[24]. Thus, the question is to know under what conditions international competition engenders mechanisms that reinforce processes of concentration of coercive means in international political systems.

Victoria Tin-bor Hui (2005) advanced in this regard by analyzing the process of transformation of the IPS formed by sovereign kingdoms in ancient China into a unified national political system in the Qin Dynasty during the period 656-221 BC[25]. The author assumes that this IPS was characterized by anarchy and intense competition among its units (Hui 2005, 5). This diagnosis is in accordance with the analysis of Kiser and Cai (2003, 519), who consider that: "there were only 38 peaceful years between 772-485 BC, and only 89 between 463-222 BC". However, with the expansion of the Qin Kingdom, the anarchic structure of the system did not engender mechanisms that

22 Starting the analysis by the effects of the structure on the units does not mean assigning temporal precedence to them. As argued in the first part of this paper, to discern the effects on agent-structure relations, one must consider the time trajectory in which they occur (Friedman and Starr 1997). Thus, one could have begun by evaluating the effects of the units on the structure without any analytical impairment.

23 According to Hedstrom and Ylikoski (2010, 59), **situational mechanisms** are those by which social structures constrain individual actions. On the other hand, **transformational mechanisms** are those by which individuals, through their actions and interactions, generate several intentional and unintentional results and change the structure.

24 In fact, despite not elaborating the argument, Waltz suggests at certain moments the possibility of overcoming the logic of anarchy by the IPS agents.

25 The work of Hui (2005) will be analyzed, since the author uses the model of international political system of Kenneth Waltz like theoretical presupposition. However, it is important to note that there is a consistent research agenda on the influence of war in the process of Qin kingdom expansion. See: Mann (1986), Wong (1997), Kiser and Cai (2003), Lewis (2006, 2007).

would impede the concentration of the force means.

Hui (2005) argues that initially the Chinese international political system evolved according to the assumptions of the Waltzian model. That is, international competition and the mechanism of socialization homogenized the behavior of agents. Thus, not only did political organizations become militarized, they also waged wars, formed alliances, and established diplomatic contacts during periods of peace. Moreover, in the period from 656 BC to 284 BC, balancing alliances and increased power projection costs[26] sustained the anarchic structure. That is, all the states that tried to dominate the agency of the other units in that period "perished as a result of the mechanism of the balance of power and the rising costs of expansion" (Hui 2005).

However, although the structure of the IPS has led to the adoption of similar behavior by the units, each kingdom opted for different strategies to face international competition. According to the author, the Qin Kingdom would have responded through internal administrative reforms which assured it relative advantages over its competitors. Victoria Tin-bor Hui called this type of action a strengthening reform: "efforts to increase military and economic capabilities by enhancing the state's administrative capability" (Hui 2005, 79). Three dimensions are fundamental to the success of this strategy: the establishment of conscript national armies, the bureaucratization of administrative staff and the imposition of a centralized tax system. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of each dimension as well as its effects from the external and internal point of view on the capacities of the states:

Table 1: Strengthening Reforms: International Competition and State Formation

Strengthening Reform	International Competition	State Formation
Conscripted and permanent national armies.	Increased number of combatants and effectiveness in combat.	Monopolization of means of coercion and creation of administrative apparatus
Bureaucratization: meritocratic criteria for the training of administrative staff.	Mobilization of resources and control of conquered territories.	Increased administrative capacity and facilitation of behavioral control.

26 The increase in the costs of force projection refers to the fact that it becomes economically costly for the state to sustain the material and human resources necessary to secure domination in places far from its base (Gilpin 1981, 103). It is based on this observation that the concept of loss of the force gradient is conceived, which indicates the increase in the difficulties of projecting military power in regions geographically distant from the state base, mainly through large bodies of water (Boulding 1962; Mearsheimer 2001).

Centralized tax system.	Larger and more reliable sources of funding for wars.	More resources for internal domination. Reduced influence of other organizations and private actors.
Source: Adapted from Hui (2005).		

The beginning of the strengthening reforms in the Qin Kingdom comes with the arrival of Prime Minister Shang Yang in the middle of 359 BC (Kiser and Cai 2003)[27]. Taking advantage of technological innovations in military equipment[28], Yang established large-scale conscription in Qin-controlled territories (Lewis 2007, 31)[29]. Thereafter, all men between the ages of 15 and 60 could be recruited to combat (Kiser and Cai 2003, 520). In this context, the fighting forces of the kingdom began to be composed not only of carriage-mounted cavalry formed by fighters from the agrarian aristocracy but also by infantry made up of masses of peasant soldiers (Hui 2005, 80). In addition, systems of punishment and inducements for cowardice or bravery in combat were instituted: "Anyone who gained merit in battle by slaying enemies or commanding victorious units was rewarded with promotion" (Lewis 2007, 32). This model became "the most important form of achievement in this era", as "military merit was to be more important than noble birth" (Hsu 1965, 73, cited in Kiser and Cai 2003, 521). In addition, the formation of ever larger armies led to the construction of institutions capable of managing the necessary logistical imperatives to sustain such a force projection (Lewis 1990, 9). Therefore, it is noted that not only did Qin's capabilities increase in relation to the other IPS states, but also that the state strengthened vis-a-vis private power holders (Kiser and Cai 2003, 520).

The bureaucratization of the administration, by diminishing the influence of the agrarian elites, was another element that contributed to the increase of the capacity of intervention of the state in the national political system. Gradually, instead of the nobility, the state was dominated by a single autocratic ruler, whose agents recorded and mobilized the peasants for state service, as well as collecting the taxes that sustained the military expansion (Lewis 2007, 32). The territory was divided into 36 administrative districts

27 Shang Yang had previously served in the Wei Kingdom, where he also introduced strengthening reforms on a smaller scale. Its importance in implementing reforms in the Qin Kingdom suggests the relevance of the diffusion of technological innovation as a mechanism that mediates the effects of international competition on agents.

28 Among the technological innovations that have contributed to the massification of armies are the invention of the beast and the development of cheaper brass swords and spears.

29 Despite difficulties in obtaining reliable data for this period, Kiser and Cai (2003) estimate that the total contingent of the Qin army would reach between 500,000 soldiers.

that were identical to military recruitment units and were divided into subunits controlled by officials nominated by the sovereign (Rosenstein 2009). In these districts, designations of officers by merit have increased over those achieved by heredity. In addition, codes with central state laws began to be published in all regions of the kingdom and civil servants were required to send detailed annual reports on the conditions of each locality.

In order to reduce the costs related to the behavioral control of the other NPS agents, the population was divided into groups formed by 10 families at most. If an individual committed any transgression, the whole group to which he belonged was held accountable. However, if the criminal was reported to the authorities, the group would receive benefits on lands and official positions. According to Kiser and Cai (2003, 528), the advantage of such a form of control was that "[t]his kind of social control mechanism held everyone under fairly constant local supervision and thus made tax collection and military recruitment much easier".

Regarding the mobilization of resources, it is noticed that the agricultural activity was perceived as essential for the sustenance of military forces (Lewis 2007). Thus, while the commercial and handicraft sectors suffered penalties, agriculture in small farms received state incentives. The irrigation canals and roads created at that time were intended to flow more efficiently and to increase military mobility (Hui 2005, 172). Besides, according to Rosenstein (2009, 26), a strict redistribution of land was promoted, in exchange for the recognition of land ownership for the peasants to be acquiescent about paying taxes and providing military service. On the other hand, the population increase was pursued through subsidies granted to couples with more than two children and incentives for the entry of immigrants. Thus, not only the population of Qin increased in absolute terms, but also compared to the other kingdoms. In this context, "with the ability to engage in total mobilization of national resources, Qin's power and wealth reached a new height" (Hui 2005, 84).

Increasing their material abilities compared to their competitors enabled more aggressive external actions[30] on the part of the Qin Kingdom. Victoria Tin-bor Hui argues that, by having a bureaucratic body formed in a meritocratic way, Qin developed strategies that exploited the collective action problems[31] inherent in the balancing alliances eventually articulated against

30 For an analysis of the relationship between increased state power in the domestic sphere and more aggressive external policies, see Zakaria (1998).

31 As Mearsheimer (2001) stresses, "Putting together balancing coalitions quickly and making them function smoothly is often difficult, because it takes time to coordinate the efforts to prospective allies or member states, even when there is wide agreement on what needs to be done.

them (Hui 2005, 100). Thus, while in the period 656-357 BC the kingdom began only 7% of the wars involving the largest states of the system, between 356-221 BC, it initiated 54% and won 92%. Of this total, only eight of the fifty-two wars fought by the kingdom found resistance in the form of alliances (Hui 2005, 78). Moreover, "anti-Qin alliances formed very slowly and infrequently, they did not have enough member to overpower Qin, they rarely had unified command, and they readily disintegrated" (Hui 2005, 79). As a result, in 293 BC Qin had already defeated the main forces of his close neighbors: the kingdoms of Wei, Han and Chu. Around 257 BC, the kingdom controlled about half of the system's territory. In 236 BC, he launched a final war of unification against the Qi state. As a conqueror of this conflict, the concentration of force in the system was completed under the command of the Qin Dynasty in 221 BC (Hui 2005, 64-79).

One may question why the mechanism of socialization has not encouraged the emulation of the reforms and strategies pursued by the Qin Kingdom by rival political organizations. The author suggests that the specific trajectory of events made the accumulation of power a process of positive reinforcement[32]. In the first place, Qin's peripheral position made its initial expansion seem little threatening in relation to the multiple threats faced by each kingdom[33]. Second, after Qin conquered more than half of the system, "even the combined capabilities of all six states would not match that of Qin" (Hui 2005, 77). In this way, the perception that the most appropriate behavior to ensure survival was not resistance, but submission to the strongest state[34], spread among the other realms.

It is worth summarizing the evolution of the agent-structure relationship in the Qin Kingdom expansion process, according to the model proposed by Victoria Tin-bor Hui. At first, the anarchic structure of the system (E) induced competition and encouraged similar behaviors among its units. Then the combination of exogenous variables (innovation and technological diffusion) with responses from a specific agent (empowering reforms) changed

Threatened states usually disagree over how the burdens should be distributed among alliance members. After all, states are self-interested actors with powerful incentives to minimize the costs they pay to contain an aggressor".

32 According to Hardin (1963, 71), social power is a process of positive reinforcement. Through numerous stratagems a monopolist may attempt to manipulate the machinery of society in order to eliminate threats which aim to restore a natural balance. A monopolist in one area will try his power for others, without limits.

33 It is important to note that not even the rulers of the Qin kingdom initially aimed at dominating the system. According to the author, only in 287 BC was the first mention of such an objective in military strategy documents (Hui 2005, 100).

34 On the relation between perceived threat and inability to form balancing alliances, see Schweller (2004).

the distribution of capabilities in the system and made the conquest and administration of the dominated territories less costly. At last, the interactions, exemplified by the conflict between the anti-balancing strategies and the disorganized collective resistance of the other realms, favored the tendency of force concentration and resulted in an increase in the functional specialization of the system (E'). Therefore, the transformation of an international political system into a national political system took place.

In conclusion, Hui's work suggests that the conjunction of technological transformations, empowering reforms, and strategies of destabilizing alliances can overcome the mechanism of the balance of power and make the concentration of means of coercion a process of positive reinforcement. Thus, the continuity of the existence of the IPS formed by the Chinese kingdoms was not assured, but was dependent on historical contingencies derived from the strategic interactions between the agents and the influence of contextual variables. In the following section, the ontology and evolution of national political systems and states is evaluated. In this case, not only international competition matters, but also interactions between states, non-state organizations and individuals belonging to the different NPS.

National Political Systems: state-building and regulated competition

Political systems are constituted by political organizations that centralize the coercive means, allowing the advance of labor division among the other agents. However, as there is in international political systems, there is no iron law that ensures the continuity of the structure. Thus, it is not only the IPS existence, but also the survival of the states and NPS continuity are contingent phenomena.

First, it is necessary to differentiate the states from the other units of the national political systems. According to Charles Tilly (1993, 46), states are coercive organizations, distinct from families and kinship groups and in some aspects have a manifest priority over all other organizations within extensive territories. In turn, Stein (2008, 129) understands that organizations are "conceptually recognized entities that combine groups of people who follow defined common rules". Therefore, states constitute only one of the agents that form the NPS, which is also composed of non-state organizations and individuals. Its specificity lies in its claim to a monopoly on the legitimate use of the means of force in the demarcated territory (Weber 1999).

State-forming processes occur when organizations monopolize the means of coercion in a social system (Tilly 1996). Such deals face opposi-

tion from rival political organizations internally, as well as threats from other units belonging to the IPS. In order to consolidate, states need to develop the means to extract and convert the resources produced in the national political system into material capacities for coping with domestic resistance and international competition (Giddens 2001).

Thus, it is noted that states are not formed by means of agreements between the sovereign and society, as suggested by contractualist approaches[35], but they result from the efforts of monopolization of the coercive means by one organization to the detriment of others. Therefore, state-building processes necessarily involve conflicts of interest between political organizations and the other components of NPSs. Indeed, Tilly (1985) argues that before providing security, they would be the main potential threat to individuals and non-state organizations.

In the previous section, it was argued that the insecurity and the low functional specialization between the units predominated in the IPS in function of the anarchy. In turn, it has now been pointed out that states concentrate the means of coercion on the famous systems. The difference in the distribution of the coercive means in each system has implications in the mechanisms that act in its evolutionary processes. In other words, a competition between NPS agents is subject to the pressures derived from a structure different from the one found in IPS.

It follows from this distinction that, while in the IPS the action of the units is constrained by the insecurity derived from the uncertainty about the intentions of the other units, in the NPS the behavioral variation is delimited by a *regulatory order* imposed by the state organization. Max Weber defines regulatory order as the set of rules "that regulates other social actions and guarantees by means of this regulation the probabilities provided to the agents" (Weber 2010, 99). Because of this, the NPS diminishes individual insecurity insofar as the order restricts the means tolerated in the competitive interactions between the units.

It is noted that competition and the mechanism of socialization are not eliminated, but operate differently. It is argued that the fundamental difference is that in a system in which there is a regulatory order imposed by the state, the survival of agents does not depend on their own capabilities. Consequently, in these systems the incentives and constraints derived from the

35 By contractualism, it is meant: "all those political theories that see the origin of society and the basis of political power in a contract, that is, a tacit agreement or expressed between the majority of individuals, an agreement that would signify the end of the natural state and the beginning of the social and political state" (Matteucci 1998, 272). For an evaluation of contractualist approaches to state formation processes, see Moore (2008).

structure make it possible to increase the functional specialization between the units (Elias 1993).

According to Waltz (1986, 324), the increase in functional specialization occurs when the division of labor between the units of the system increases. No longer concerned with physical threats, agents may fail to seek coercive means and perform specific activities that are embedded in the functioning of the collectivity. Hence, if IPS were characterized by functional similarity between sovereign units, the social division of labor that makes them interdependent would integrate NPS agents (Doyle 1986).

Thus, the increase in functional specialization is inextricable from the formation of political organizations that concentrate coercive means and ensure orders of behavioral regulation. That is, it is only when "peaceful social spaces are created that the pressures that act upon people in these spaces are different from those that existed before" (Elias 1993, 198). In these spaces, socialization constrains the agents to repress impulses of physical aggression. Because of this, the nature of competition differs, with the survival of the unit no longer at stake, but its positioning in a wide and integrated network of interactions (Elias 1993, 132).

However, it is argued that increasing functional specialization in a national political system does not entail eliminating conflicts of interest between its units. So, what is the nature of competition in a system in which there is a regulatory order imposed by state organization? We use Max Weber's distinction between the concepts of power and domination[36] to advance this issue. According to Weber: "power means all probability, within a social relation, to impose self-will even against resistance, whatever the basis of that probability" (Weber 2010, 102). In turn, "domination will be called the probability of finding obedience to an order of certain content in certain people" (Weber 2010, 102).

Due to the absence of a central authority, relations of power predominate in IPS. That is, there is no strong regulation of the means by which one political organization tries[37] to impose its will on the others[38]. In turn, it was

36 On the concept of power, see Dahl (1961), Giddens (2001), and Lukes (2004). The Weberian definition is used to emphasize the distinction between social systems in which there is no superior regulation of the means by which an agent can impose his will on another, of social systems in which there is a regulating order delimiting the acceptable behaviors by the units.

37 It is important to emphasize the importance of the term to try, since, as Giddens (2001, 36) points out, "an agent may be in a position of power in order to be able to employ a range of resources. Nevertheless, how far these resources can be used to ensure specific results depends on ensuring any consents that are needed from other agents".

38 As argued above, such a configuration does not imply randomness of results or even chaos,

defined that the states concentrate the means of coercion and establish regulatory orders on the behavior of the other agents of the NPS. Thus, in this type of system, obedience to the delimited behavioral limits is configured as a relation of domination and authority between governors and the governed.

Weber argues that a regulatory order "exists when there is a probability that it will be maintained by a specific cadre of people who will use physical compulsion with the intention of achieving order compliance or enforcing penalties for their violation" (Weber 1981 , 61). In other words, to the extent that: "for the very fulfillment of a 'minimal' agenda, the State cannot completely avoid interfering in the economic life of the community that sustains it" (Reis 2003, 65), its consolidation requires not only the concentration of means of force, but also the creation of administrative institutions necessary for intervention in society (Bendix 1976, 23)[39].

That is, although the possession of coercive means is a necessary condition for the imposition of the regulatory order, state domination becomes unsustainable if it is based only on coercion (Buzan 1984, 53). As Wong (1997, 74) argues: "coercive control is expensive, labor intensive, and sometimes capital intensive". Therefore, even though the concentration of the means of force is fundamental to behavioral regulation, states are unable to sustain themselves without the acquiescence of other organizations within society[40]. Thus, "the question of legitimacy becomes fundamental, since it alone would be the ultimate guarantee of the subsistence of a political association" (Bianchi 2014, 100)[41]. Hence, state agents would strive to consolidate the relations of domination by "acts of persuasion, such as the creation of beliefs in the morality, sensibility, necessity, or desirability of a certain kind of social order" (Wong 1997, 74). In other words:

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but behavior patterns that emerge in a decentralized way from behavioral expectations derived from the distribution of force in the system.

39 According to Max Weber (1991, 96): "The qualitative and quantitative development of administrative tasks inevitably favors, in the long term, the effective continuity of at least some of the employees, because technical superiority in the administration of public affairs, In a more sensitive way, in training and experience. Therefore, there is always the probability that a special and perennial social formation will be constituted for administrative purposes, and this at the same time means: for the exercise of domination".

40 According to Miguel Centeno (2002, 106): "the capacity of a state to extract resources will be closely linked to the willingness of the population to accept these burdens".

41 Legitimacy is defined as "an attribute of the State, which consists in the presence, in a significant part of the population, of a degree of consensus capable of ensuring obedience without the necessity of resorting to the use of force, except in sporadic cases. It is for this reason that all power seeks to reach consensus, so that it is recognized as legitimate, transforming obedience into adhesion" (Levi 1998, 675).

> If the State can rely on the population's adherence to the norms in force, not only to comply with them routinely, but also to punish recalcitrant or at least denounce them to the competent authorities then it is licit to expect a more efficient performance of political institutions (Reis 2003, 63).

That is, "states must have a physical base of population and territory; they must have governing institutions of some sort which control the physical base; and there must be some idea of the state which establishes its authority in the minds of its people" (Buzan 1984, 40). In short, state domination over the other components of the NPS is sustained by the concentration of coercive means and the legitimacy of the regulatory order[42].

However, it is still necessary to explain how the concentration of the means of force, the establishment of a regulatory order, and the functional specialization themselves condition the interactions between individuals and non-state organizations.

It has been argued that the survival of units (organizations and individuals) is reasonably guaranteed in the interactions that take place within national political systems where there is a state monopoly of coercive means and a regulatory order. However, conflicts of interest do not occur exclusively through coercion. In fact: "there is a whole set of means whose monopolization allows man, as a group or individual, to impose his will on others" (Elias 1993, 146)[43]. Therefore, in the NPS "groups, whose social existence is mutually dependent, through the division of functions, still struggle for certain opportunities. They are both opponents and partners" (Elias 1993, 147). Thus, as Lockwood (1956, 139) points out, the increased division of labor resulting from pacification is also the cause of new conflicts of interest.

In this case, Weber argues that competition occurs around specific life opportunities, arising from the positioning of units in the distribution structure of economic and social orders (Weber 1981, 62-63). The author called this type of competition as regulated competition: "to the extent that it is directed, in ends and means, by an order" (Weber 2010, 72)[44]. That is,

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42 It is important to note that the use of coercion is not restricted to the international arena. The relevant distinction for this article is that in national political systems, with the exception of state organizations, agents do not organize collectively to threaten or use physical force to defend their interests. When they do, they are subject to the penalties defined in the regulatory order and imposed by the state organization.

43 As Pasquino (1998, 226) argues, "violence can be considered a usable instrument in a social or political conflict, but not the only and not necessarily the most effective one".

44 According to Weber (1981, 63): "we can call 'social order' the form by which social honor is distributed in a community among typical groups participating in that distribution. The

even if there is regulation of the means tolerated in social competition, the agent's position in the division of labor will provide greater - or less - access to the resources needed to defend his interests in the NPS (Hay and Wincott 1998, 956)[45]. Therefore, although the means used by regulated competition are variable, it is considered that:

> The processes of constitution of society are very often simply commitments of antagonistic interests, which neutralize only part of the object or the means of struggle, but leave, in the end, opposition of interests and competition around probabilities. And the ordering of social action, regardless of its kind, leaves, as it were, any effective selection in the competition of the different human types around the probabilities of life anyway (Weber 2010, 80).

Three distinct dimensions of conflict involving the states are thus evidenced: international competition, due to the behavioral insecurity derived from the anarchic structure of the IPS; the construction of the state itself, fraught with tension between the state and the other organizations and individuals of the NPS (especially regarding the extraction of resources for external defense, monopolization of internal coercion and imposition of the regulatory order); and regulated competition, represented by conflicts of interest between non-state organizations and individuals around the distribution of resources, provide access to specific life opportunities (Table 2).

Table 2: Dimensions of the Conflict involving the IPS and NPS Agents

Types of Conflict	Agents	Means
International Competition	States belonging to IPS	Material Capabilities for War
Construction of the State	State, organizations and individuals belonging to the NPS	Coercion and legitimacy formation
Regulated Competition	Non-state organizations and individuals	Delimited by the regulatory order imposed by the state
Source: Elaborated by the authors		

social order and the economic order are both, of course, related to the 'legal order'. However, the social and economic order are not identical. The economic order is for us only the way in which economic goods and services are distributed. The social order is obviously conditioned to a high degree by the economic order, and in turn reacts to it".

45 According to Elias (1993, 105): "thanks to centralization and monopolization, opportunities that were previously to be won by individuals with military or economic force become amenable to planning. From a point of development, the struggle for monopolies no longer aims at their destruction. It is a struggle for control of what they produce, for a plan according to which their burden and benefits are further divided, in a word, by the keys to distribution".

The three types of conflicts are linked. It should be noted, for example, that the regulatory order imposed by the state is not neutral in relation to regulated competition. That is, "the structure of any legal order directly influences the distribution of power, economic or otherwise" (Weber 1981, 61). Thus, the benefits derived from the order sustained by the states tend to be directed towards the agents who dominate and provide them with the resources necessary for their purposes (Mann 1992, 13). This condition is made explicit in taxation, whose stipulation is the result of political pressures and counter pressions (Reis 2003, 65).

Hence, the existence of a regulatory order implies the continuation of conflicts of interest in the system, since "the imposition of order necessarily resolves the conflict on terms favorable to either party" (Clarke 1991, 4). Thus, the other agents dispute the nature of the order imposed by the state, insofar as it defines the behavioral expectations of the competition between them (Lustick 2011, 2). That is, although states establish relations of domination over individuals and non-state organizations, they are also a necessary condition for increasing the division of labor that allows the integration of NPS themselves. However, the order that underpins the increase in functional specialization is not neutral, favoring the interests of certain agents in exchange for acquiescence and support for state domination (Elias 1993). At the limit, it is such asymmetries and biases that fuel revolutions and/or reforms in national political systems over time (Cepik 1999).

In addition, state domination is contextually variable (Stein 2008, 164). To the extent that governors legitimately concentrate the resources necessary to survive in the IPS and monopolize the means of coercion in the NPS, they will not only have greater freedom of external action but also greater autonomy from the other organizations and individuals that make up the political systems national authorities. On the other hand, if the resources needed to implement these imperatives are concentrated on other actors, state interventions will tend to be constrained and reflect their interests (Giddens 2001, 160).

Among the mechanisms that interfere with the way in which international competition influences state-building and regulated competition, war (Posen 1993; Tilly 1975; Tilly 1985; Tilly 1996; Herbst 2000; Centeno 2002; Hui 2005).

Charles Tilly, for example, argues that the evolution of nation-states in Europe in the period 990-1990[46] was the result of rulers' efforts to mo-

46 It is important to emphasize that the analysis of long temporal processes generates as weakness the omission of specific events in the evolutionary trajectories of each case. It is recognized that such contingent events on certain occasions play a decisive role in determining

nopolize means of coercion internally and to face international competition (Tilly 1996). Compelled by external threats, the states increased the extraction of resources from the other components of the NPS[47]. To the extent that such agents resisted state-owned enterprises, conditions for the provision of resources were barred[48]. Thereby, in exchange for the material and human resources necessary for wars, the state organization granted political and / or social rights by modifying the NPS regulatory orders.

However, there were regional variations in the construction trajectories of nation-states. The author points out as a factor responsible for these distinctions the differences of state capacity that each ruler possessed to impose his domination over the holders of capital in each territory. This difference would have been responsible for changes in two dimensions: how resources were extracted; and what are the characteristics of the orders that regulated the behavior of the units. Three ideal types of trajectory would be observable: intensive in coercion, highly capitalized, and an optimal trajectory (from the point of view of the nation-state) of capitalized coercion (Tilly 1996, 203).

At one extreme, in the predominantly agricultural areas, few cities with little capital (Russia, Hungary, Poland, Sweden, Sicily and Castile), rulers used coercive strategies to extract resources, wage wars and control order in their territories[49]. The confrontation of international competition was

which organization would triumph over the other. However, it is considered that the selection mechanisms derived from the structure of the European international political system acted generally independently of such accidents, encouraging the centralization of political power in larger states. On the advantages and disadvantages of evaluating long time processes, see Tilly (1983).

47 Although, at the end of the period evaluated by the author, this process has promoted the convergence of the formats of the European political organizations towards the nation-state, this trajectory would not have occurred in a linear way. In fact, there have been the formation of political organizations with extremely varied characteristics. City-states, city leagues, kingdoms, ecclesiastical potentates, and empires coexist in the European international political system. See Spruyt (1994).

48 According to Kliemt and Ahlert (2013, 47), bargains occur when: "humans are engaged in 'antagonistic cooperation' and have to negotiate agreements on matters such as prices, wages, and regulations concerning personal, group, and international relations. Bargaining parties have partly opposing interests and need to negotiate how to compromise them to the advantage of all concerned". About the relationship between bargaining, taxation, and state formation, see Moore (2008, 37).

49 According to Tilly, the Russian case is the ideal model of the coercive strategy. After Tsar Ivan IV (1533-84) conquered conflicts with the agrarian nobility, he would have come to benefit state officials with expropriated lands. In a second moment, agrarian landowners and state agents lined up around the exploitation of peasant labor. By imperial decrees, the peasants were fixed or transferred to certain territories. In 1700, Peter the Great issued a decree according to

financed by the exploitation of a peasant mass subject to a regulatory order maintained more by the alliance between rulers, landowners and state officials (Tilly 1996, 213).

At the other extreme, in areas with dense networks of cities and abundance of capital (Flanders, northern Italy, and the Netherlands), rulers employed capital-intensive strategies. The presence of a powerful merchant class established "serious limits to the direct exercise by the state of controlling individuals and families, but facilitated the application of relatively efficient and painless rates on trade" (Tilly 1996, 161)[50]. In the absence of agricultural areas, the conflicts in which these states were involved were borne by loans, customs duties, and excise taxes. Control of trade routes was defined in quick battles fought by low-cost mercenary forces. Such means did not require large bureaucratic apparatus, being administered by employees of the families of merchants and bankers. Therefore, the preparation for international competition and the regulatory order was sustained by commercial and financial profits (Tilly 1996, 223).

In an intermediate position were the rulers who used strategies of capitalized coercion (England, France and Prussia). In these cases, there was less asymmetry between landowners, merchants and petty bourgeois in cities. The greater balance ensured less reliance on coercive aspects in extractive activity - compared to strategies of intensive coercion - while at the same time resulting in increased state capacity for penetration into society - compared to those who adopted capital intensive strategies. Consequently, the regulatory order in these NPS counted "with the acquiescence of both landowners and merchants" and established regulated competition in which "nobles faced financiers, but in the end ended up collaborating with them" (Tilly 1996, 161). Finally, Tilly (1996, 268) states that this type of state prevailed over others because of its greater ability to support armies with its own resources.

The hypothesis of Tilly's model is that international competition was intermediated by the way in which regulated competition and the construction of the state - represented by the interactions between mercantile classes, agrarian nobility, peasants and state agents - was structured in each region (Tilly 1996, 76). In addition, it suggests that the consolidation of the nation-state as the predominant unit in the system was not the only possible path of evolution (Spruyt 1994). That is, although the increase in international competition led to the mobilization of resources by the units, there was a time lag until the socialization mechanism operated to converge the regulato-

which every freed servant was to go immediately to military service, and if he was refused he should submit to another master (Tilly 1996, 212).

50 In this case, the trajectory of Venice is the ideal case presented by the author.

ry orders of the NPS (Tilly 1994, 94).

If the variation in the relations between coercion and capital were pointed out as the cause of the initial divergence in the nation-state formation processes, transformations in the shape of military and police forces would be responsible for subsequent convergence (Finer 1975; Tilly 1975; Paret 1986)[51]. That is, if international competition initially led to the mobilization of resources, after the transformations in the means that sustained the use of force the mechanism of socialization selected the political organizations whose reforms best adapted to such changes.

First, there was an increase in the scale of resources used in international competition. According to Mann (1993, 371), "states were fighting major wars for two-thirds of the time, involving progressively greater demands on manpower, taxation, and agricultural and industrial production"[52]. Therefore, the number of combatants has increased consistently. In this context, it was evidenced that armed forces formed only by knights of the nobility and mercenaries were not able to face armies composed of thousands of conscripted, trained and disciplined soldiers (Jones 1987, 150). As a result, the establishment of established and permanent forces gradually took over (Porter 1994).

Second, the entry of the masses into the theaters of operations was made possible by technological innovations in military equipment that diminished the predominance of the nobility in the fighting. Lighter cartridges, as well as the inventions of musket, shotgun and bayonet increased the efficiency of light infantry over heavy cavalry (Jones 1987)[53]. The spread of gunpowder increased the range of artillery and diminished the importance of castles as military fortifications (Giddens 2001, 132).

The nature of the new equipment required more standardization of collective actions, which in turn required discipline, hierarchy, and constant training of soldiers in times of peace (Finer 1975)[54]. The achievements

51 It will follow the model proposed by Finer (1975, 90), who considers that the "format of the military forces" consists of two dimensions: (i) the recruitment and the service of the soldiers: if they are native or foreign, or voluntary, ad hoc or permanent; and (ii) the size of the armed forces, the composition of arms, and the social stratification of force.

52 In addition, the number of deaths per combat increased from 3,000 per year in the 16th century to over 223,000 per year during the 20th century (Tilly 1996, 131).

53 According to Barry Posen: "The widespread employment of skirmishers in "open order" seems to have spread fairly quickly after the revolution, and persisted to some degree in most European armies. It was hard to fight the French without adopting their methods" (Posen 1993, 94).

54 Black (1991, 83) considers that "the ability to strike first and hard, as France did against the Dutch in 1672, and against Austria in 1733 and 1741, and as Prussia did against Austria in 1740,

of states that adopted such measures pressured their opponents to emulate them (Black 1991). Consequently, "the modern command army thus emerged on the stage of Europe, highly disciplined and conceived as a pliant instrument of state authority" (Porter 1994, 162).

Both the need to supply and coordinate larger contingents, and the imperative of mass production of equipment, the financial costs and logistical, strategic, and operational requirements of war have expanded (Finer 1975)[55]. Such needs have led to an increase in state's ability to intervene on NPS. According to Michael Mann (1993, 369): "It is probable that late eighteenth-century states had the highest fiscal extraction rates the world had seen before the wars of the twentieth century". Bruce Porter (1994, 166) points out that in this period "finance departments, reeling from the spiraling costs of war, faced drastic overhaul and rationalization"[56]. Thus, preparation for the inter-state wars produced consequently states with increasingly robust administrative apparatus.

The changes in the resources needed to cope with the war in Europe evidenced that the survival of the states depended on the extraction of resources from the entire NPS (Hobsbawm 1992). Consequently, the parameters of competition between states, individuals and non-state organizations have also been altered. On the one hand, the lesser role of the nobility in wars increased the autonomy of state agents in relation to this group (Kennedy 1989). That is, "war has taken a course which has made fragmented and small-scale sovereignty a clear disadvantage" (Tilly 1996, 121). Hence, the ability of aristocracies to maintain armed forces independent of central governments has deteriorated (Black 1991, 83)[57]. Thus, the tendency of centralization of the means

produced obvious benefits for rulers who retained a large peacetime army. Their actions were watched with concern by other powers and only they enjoyed a real freedom of manoeuvre in international relations. As a result there was considerable pressure in certain states to increase the level of military preparedness, an expensive business". On the other hand, according to Finer (1975, 99), the first permanent military forces arose in 1445 in France, in 1645 in England, in 1660 in Prussia and in 1707 in Russia.

55 Posen (1993, 83) argues that the essence of the mass army is its ability to maintain combat power in the face of the challenges posed by friction in the campaigns. Thus, not only are the imperatives of command, control, and logistics enormous, but maintaining political motivation, education, and training large contingents are challenges for state agents.

56 According to Mann (1993, 393), the percentage of state employees in relation to the total population between 1760 and 1910 increased from 0.06% to 1.17% in Austria, from 0.26% to 1.4% in France, From 0.18% to 0.64% in England and from 0.33% to 1.57% in Prussia/Germany.

57 According to Black (1991, 83), "the armies retained by weaker powers did not compare with those of the major states, one of the significant military and political developments of the post-1660 period being their increasing discrepancy".

of force in political units with greater territorial extension was consolidated.

On the other hand, the participation of the masses in the fighting led to the reformulation of the terms in which state domination was legitimized. The effects were the emergence of the national ideal as a source of legitimacy; and the increasing civil demands on states, including, at the limit, the revolutionary action of the previously subaltern working masses (Hobsbawm 1992). That is, if nationalism was operationalized by European rulers as a tool for ideological mobilization and homogenization of populations within their territories, it also served as a justification for claims for the extension of access to civil, political and social rights in the regulatory orders (Marshall 1973)[58]. The contrast between Admiral Nelson's speech before the Battle of Trafalgar in 1808: "England expects every man to do his duty" (Hobsbawm 1992, 150), with the slogan "one man, one vote, one gun" spread during the conflicts surrounding the extension of suffrage in Sweden at the beginning of the twentieth century (Bendix 1976, 115) illustrates the relationship between mass military mobilization, a national ideal, and increasing demands on the state.

Therefore, if reforms in this period increased the capacity for state intervention in the NPS, they also altered the correlation of forces among the agents involved in regulated competition[59]. Bendix (1978, 28) argues that, as public administration expanded, access to official positions was separated from hereditary or proprietary criteria. Other authors note that the establishment of free public education systems (Posen 1993) accompanied policies of linguistic unification[60]. Michael Mann (1993) points out that state spending

58 T. H. Marshall (1973) distinguishes three types of citizenship rights: civil, political and social. Civil rights would be those that would guarantee freedom of association, speech and justice in relation to accusations of inappropriate behavior. Political rights deal with the participation of individuals in the exercise of political power. Social rights refer to the prerogative of each individual to have minimum standards of security and economic well-being within the NPS.

59 For a detailed evaluation of the process of centralization of public administration and the means of force in state political organizations during this period, see Bendix (1976), Elias (1993), Giddens (2001). The passage from the work of Reinhard Bendix (1976), which sums up the fundamental distinction between the way in which the regulative orders was sustained in the medieval period and in the nation-states, is reproduced here: "In the medieval conception the "building block" of the social order is the family of hereditary privilege, whose stability over time is the foundation of right and of authority, while the rank-order of society and its transmission through inheritance regulates the relations among such families and between them and the supreme ruler. The modern nation-state presupposes that this link between governmental authority and inherited privileges in the hands of families of notables is broken" (Bendix 1976, 138).

60 As Posen (1993, 120) points out: "mass literacy makes it possible for states to train larger armies in peacetime and mobilize them in wartime with greater speed. In addition, it makes

on education and well-being between 1870 and 1910 increased by 500% in France, 399% in Germany and 638% in the United Kingdom. Benedict Anderson (2008) assesses that the development of the press not only increased the ability to disseminate law codes, reporting and gathering information, but also strengthened national identity through the mass media. On the other hand, Helleiner (1998) and Lauer (2008) demonstrate how the creation of national currencies facilitated taxation, increased the capacity of intervention in the economy and spread messages with national content. In other words, from the conjunction between technological transformations and the strategies of control and social mobilization used by the rulers emerged the conditions that transformed the subjects into citizens of the nation.

Thus, the consequences of the preparations for competition in the European IPS during the nineteenth century engendered a tendency not only to increase centralization of political authority in the NPS but also to transfer control of the monopoly of the means of force and the sphere's regulatory order Private - monarchy and nobility - to the public sphere (Elias 1993)[61]. That is, through measures that broadened the political participation of the population; Bureaucratized the administrative apparatus; and expanded the social expenditures and social functions of the states, "regimes obtained from peasants and workers not, as in agrarian societies, a particularistic loyalty to lineage and locality but an emerging loyalty to the universal nation-state" (Mann 1993, 501).

Here again, it is worth summarizing the relationship between agents, structure and exogenous variables in the process of nation-state formation in Europe. Initially, states with distinct resource mobilization strategies and regulatory orders (A) coexisted on the continent. In a second step, the scale of the resources needed to cope with the constraints imposed by the structure of the European IPS (E) changes as a result of technological and organizational innovations in the form of military forces. Finally, the socialization-selection mechanism removes the units incapable of adapting to the new demands of international competition, consolidating the nation-state as the predominant political organization in European IPS (A').

soldiers more accessible to propaganda, both as children and as adults, which facilitates the spread of nationalist ideology".

61 Norbert Elias describes such a process as: "the monopoly privately owned by a single individual or family falls under the control of a broader social stratum and becomes a central organ of the state in a public monopoly" (Elias 1993, 101). Anthony Giddens stresses, "while the road to sovereignty generates a centralization of resources in the hands of rulers, it fosters a widespread awareness that political power depends on collective capabilities, that the figure of the monarch May perhaps symbolizes, but for which the traditional adornments of the real domain have little relevance" (Giddens 2001, 217).

In conclusion, two hypotheses are considered implicit in Tilly's explanatory model. The first is that the way in which the competition in the European NPSs was delimited during the medieval period constrained the options of strategies used by the rulers to face the international competition. Thus, it is noted that the trajectory of the interactions that determined the evolution of the structure of the European IPS was dependent on the course of events that occurred previously within each national political system. In addition, the long period of coexistence between states with regulatory orders and strategies for mobilizing distinct resources suggests the difficulty (and possible undesirability) of establishing ideal models of political organization. In fact, exogenous variations were necessary for the socialization-selection mechanism to converge the shape of the military forces and to consolidate the nation-state as the predominant unit in the system.

The second is that an exogenous variable - technological innovation of military systems - has had effects on the dimensions of state building and regulated competition. The increase in the scale of the necessary resources and the changes in the nature of the equipment made the participation of the masses in the wars condition necessary for the survival in the European IPS. Because of this, the correlation of forces between the rulers, non-state organizations and individuals was altered: the influence of the nobility on the state was reduced; Conditions have arisen for the claim of the extension of civil, political and social rights in the regulatory orders; and nationalism consolidated as a source of legitimacy for state domination.

Simultaneous analysis of contemporary processes of international and national competition would enable us to better understand how the mechanisms involved (especially war) are producing the emergence of new, regulated orders, structures of authority, and even altering the very nature of the international system.

Conclusions

The article investigated the ontology of international political systems, national political systems and states, as well as the effects that competition between their respective agents produces in their evolutionary processes. In order to do so, we resorted to the critical revision of theoretical categories from three areas of knowledge: International Relations Theory, Historical Sociology and Strategic Studies. The resulting model sought to integrate the constraints imposed by the IPS structure, the constraints of state domination in the NPS, and the role of the use and threat of the use of force in international competi-

tion.

It has been assumed that both IP and NPS are open systems. Therefore, the relation between units, structure and exogenous variables is not deterministic in any sense. It is only possible to integrate analyzes of the agency's role with assessments of structural constraints and incentives if the epistemological limits and contingent character of the historical evolution of social systems are recognized (Braumoller 2012).

In the first section, the relevance of the concepts of anarchy and low functional specialization present in Waltz's IPS model (1979) was defended. It was considered that these two elements do not imply the absence of hierarchical or cooperative relations between states, but rather that such asymmetric interactions are conditioned by the distribution of power and permeated by the behavioral uncertainty between the agents. That is, international politics remains "the realm of power, dispute and accommodation" (Waltz 1979, 112). However, it has also been argued that these elements do not limit the possible trajectories of evolution of international political systems, but rather they enable multiple paths. In this way, there is nothing to ensure the reproduction of an anarchic political system over time. In fact, the result of the interaction between states, exogenous variables and competing mechanisms may favor both decentralization and concentration of the force means. To illustrate the argument, the explanatory model of Hui (2005) on the process of transforming the IPS formed by Chinese kingdoms in 656 BC into an NPS dominated by the Qin Dynasty in 221 BC was followed. After all, Qin Kingdom rivals were also Political organizations that aimed to survive in an anarchic system. However, the mechanisms for restoring power decentralization were not enough to prevent system integration. In that context, strengthening reforms and strategies to destabilize alliances have made the coercion means concentration a process of positive reinforcement.

In the second section, we analyzed the effect of international competition on the evolutionary process of national states and political systems. It has been found that the concentration of the means of coercion in a specific unit the state alters the means used in competition between the agents forming the NPS. According to the actors and means involved, three dimensions of conflict were delimited: international competition among IPS units; construction of the state; and regulated competition between non-state organizations and individuals around the specific life opportunities in NCPs centralized in national states. It was argued that the preparation of the agents and the result of the clashes in each dimension generates consequences for the evolution of the objects of analysis in the other dimensions. In the end, the formation of the nation-states in Europe was evaluated from the explanatory

model proposed by Tilly (1996). In that case, the ways in which state-building and regulated competition stabilized constrained the strategies available to rulers to face international competition later; the long period of coexistence between states with regulatory orders and distinct resource mobilization strategies has suggested the impossibility of establishing ideal models of political organization; And technological and organizational variations in the format of the military forces competing in the IPS have had effects on state-building and regulated competition.

Finally, we concluded that the research agenda that deals with the necessary requirements for the "defense of the state" must be inseparable from discussions about "what (or whom) the state serves for". In addition, the analysis indicates the progressivity of the following research problem: under what conditions competitive interactions between agents contribute to the emergence of political organizations capable of surviving, acting in the international political system, and providing security, welfare, and political rights for its citizens? This remains a central political issue in the 21st century.

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts are intrinsic to social systems and constitute an irreducible part of their development. This article analyzes the conflict between states and its effects on the evolutionary dynamics of the international political system. We discuss the ontology of each object of analysis and the causal mechanisms that connect their respective evolving trajectories. Then, the analytical model is evaluated regarding to the processes of formation of the Qin Empire in China and the construction of Nation-States in Europe. The working hypothesis is that the interactions among the strategies chosen by the agents to cope with the structural constrains and competition conditions they encounter cause changes in the international political systems, as well as on the actors themselves.

KEYWORDS

International Systems; State building; Structure.

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