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Despotic and infrastructural power in Colombia

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RESUMEN

Se presenta una aplicación del modelo teórico sobre fuentes del poder social y estructuración del poder del Estado de Michael Mann, al Estado Colombiano para el período 2002-2009. En reacción a un prolongado conflicto armado y un proceso de paz fallido, el estado adelanta un proceso de reorganización militar para recuperar el monopolio de la fuerza apoyado por diversas elites económicas, ideológicas y militares. En este proceso de reorganización, el poder despótico aumenta (concentración del poder) y reduce el poder infraestructural; las instituciones de pesos y contra pesos sufren un debilitamiento significativo.

Palabras clave. Colombia, poder infraestructural, poder despótico, Michael Mann.

ABSTRACT

This paper applies Michael Mann's theoretical model of Sources of Social Power and state power structure to analyze the Colombian state during the period 2002-2009. Supported by several economical, ideological and military elites, and as a reaction to the prolonged armed conflict and a failed peace process, the state advances a process of military reorganization in order to recuperate its monopoly over force. Through this process of reorganization the despotic power grows (power concentration) and reduces the infrastructural power; hence, checks and balance institutions suffer a significant debilitation.

Key-words: Colombia, Infrastructural power, Despotic power, Michael Mann.

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Michael Mann has described a basic distinction on how the power of the state is exercised. Despotic power, he writes, “is the ability of the state elites to take decisions without routine negotiation with groups in civil society”. On the other hand Infrastructural power of the state is described as “the ability to actually implement decisions throughout its territories, no matter who takes the decisions”¹. Using this distinction to describe the state in Colombia it can be said that it presents a major concentration of despotic power and an incipient structural power². I shall not try to give detailed explanations for this statement for it is beyond my purpose and is rather well documented elsewhere³. It will be, however, the main purpose of this essay to describe a particular social mechanism that might explain why the Colombian state has become even more fragile structurally while invigorating despotically⁴ after almost eight years of authoritarian rightist government moving toward reelection. I will try to show how even if structural and despotic power are largely independent of each other throughout history, in the Colombian case, as a consequence of the violent conflict they have come to intermingle in a dialectical way.

Today Colombia is fighting a guerrilla war; in fact the oldest guerrilla war in the world. After a failed process on paramilitary “outsourcing” in the 80s and 90s at the turn of the millennium the state pursued –with the resources and technical support provided by the United States through the “Colombian Plan”– a massive process of centralization in military affairs that would allow it to concentrate coercion in the cities while sending punitive campaigns against rebel “zones” (mainly in agricultural places and high mountain). With this, the state took seriously the necessity to match its inherent centralized-territoriality with a centralized-coercive military power as most modern states have done. This process started under president Pastrana’s administration (1998-2002) at a time when he was preceding peace negotiations with the FARC guerrillas and continue in a more decided way under president Uribe’s administration (2002-).

After almost a decade of this strategy there are significant security improvements (tables 1-2-3). Colombia has now dramatically lowered the number of irregular forces; most of the paramilitary forces are now demobilized; the numbers in the guerrilla

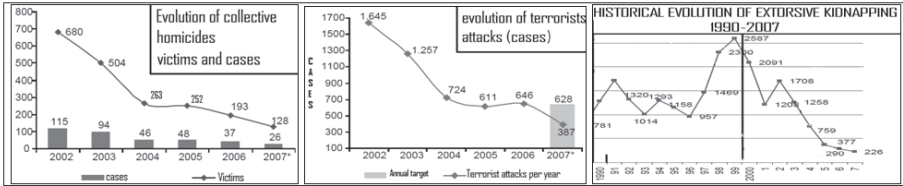
¹ Mann Michael, *The Crisis of the Latin American Nation-State*. 2002, p. 2. I am attaching my personal summary of Mann’s theory in the index.

² A generalization is proposed by Mann: “All advanced states of the global North today possess considerable infrastructural power; at the other extreme some sub-Saharan African states possess negligible infrastructural power (eg., Somalia or the Congo). Latin American states lie somewhere between these extremes”. *Ibidem*, pp. 2-3.

³ See for instance the Crisis State Program on State Fragility at: <http://www.crisisstates.com>. Currently we are preparing some papers precisely on this measurement of state fragility

⁴ Some details of this lack of structural capacity in Colombia, and how some specific communities within the territory have reacted see, *Constructing Authority Alternatives on the Periphery: Vignettes from Colombia*. Ann C. Mason. 2005.

forces have significantly decreased⁵ and some major successful campaigns against the guerrilla have shown an army better trained and equipped. Even if still the state has not achieved acceptable army control and accountability as the recent horrendous cases of civilians killed by the army to show “results” in the battlefield demonstrates⁶, there is a public wide perception that the war is winnable and that security in general (roads, countryside, touristic places) has improved.



TABLES 1-2-3. NATIONAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT

To explain how this centralization in military power has created a dramatic increase in the state’s despotic power while diminishing its structural power⁷ I will first do a summary of president Uribe’s ascendance to the presidential office and of his first seven years in power. Despotic power growth supported by widespread economic, military and ideological accolade accompanied with by a general underestimation of the state’s structural weakening will be the focus of this part. Then, I will explain how some elite’s support faded away with the current process of re-election when worries about the loss of structural power of the state became more acute. The focus here will be on explaining the social mechanism that has so far made impossible for these disillusioned elites to diminish Uribe’s popular support. Finally, I will use this social mechanism to explain Uribe’s sustained popular support; a truly “Teflon” effect, which has been so far the most startling aspect of his mandate.

Uribe’s rightist presidential candidacy was rather unpopular until the peace process with the FARC guerrilla failed resoundingly few months before the end of president Pastrana’s government. Overnight, his militaristic approach with the promise of defeating the guerrillas brought him major popular support. Denunciation about the disdain manifested by his closest advisors and Uribe himself on constitutional constraints, social rights and human rights were easily damped down under a growing guerrilla threat already going well into twenty fifth thousand men. Only leftist candidates denounced without major consequences Uribe’s close links to the paramilitary “establishment” while he was governor of Antioquia (the second major economical centre of Colombia); in general, however, Uribe was perceived by the

⁵ “In the period from 2006 - to May 2008, 5,316 FARC guerrillas demobilized, and from 2006 to 2007 the individual demobilizations from that organization went up from 1,565 to 2,480 combatants”. The FARC at their worst moment in history. Ministry of national defense. 2008.

⁶ See *Colombia’s False Positives* by Rachel Godfrey Wood at Council on hemispheric affairs: <http://www.coha.org/colombias-false-positives/>

⁷ I am assuming that it is quite unlikely that the structural power fade away once established because it’s diffusive existence. Still there must be some cases in which this happens to be true, as in Somalia since its collapse in the nineties, or Afghanistan between 1992 and 1996.

economical, ideological and military elite as the right candidate to enhance the state capacity to monopolize organized violence.

Fairly speaking, this is just the thing he did. He increased military expenditure, more or less successfully achieved the Paramilitaries demobilization (they were already counted around the thirteen thousand), improved the security throughout the territory and significantly lowered all major indexes of violent crime (kidnappings, extortions, etc.). All this has been a clear prove of Uribe's performance as military commander in chief. Uribe is popularly referred a "decision man", a "courageous man". Even if some constitutional checks and balances were removed and some legislative initiatives showed a clearly authoritarian bent⁸ they were "minors sins" compared with major achievements in more "urgent matters".

When the end of his first mandate was approximating, the idea of his reelection took off and the constitution was modified to allow him a second mandate. Although again the left denounced the process as dangerous for democracy, and some constitutionalist's demanded guarantees for the constitutional checks and balance system, it all went to deaf ears that were at that time listening attentively how the guerrilla was being debilitated, the paramilitaries demobilized and the kidnapping and extortion rate going steeply down. Uribe was reelected in the first electoral round with an astonishing majority over the next candidate⁹. In achieving this heady electoral success he managed also to absorb the most traditional parties in his new party "U-party" getting a dramatic increase in his legislative maneuver capacity, in fact achieving total control of the legislative if we add all Uribe's coalition parties¹⁰. "Uribism" became the most fashionable political brand only disputed by a rather small and even self-destructive leftist party¹¹ (Polo) and an almost emptied liberal party¹² (whose members went in herd to the U-party, being Uribe himself an ex-liberal) under the glowing leadership of the ex-OAS secretary and ex-president Cesar Gaviria.

Throughout the second period (finishing next year), Uribe consolidated the paramilitaries demobilization, extradited its major leaders—in a somehow clear betrayal that paradoxically became widely denounced by human rights activists¹³—and got the liberation of some "stars" that were already a long time kidnapped by the guerrilla (four American paramilitaries, Ingrid Betancourt, etc).

For some elites supporting Uribe it came as a surprise to realize that he was planning again to be re-elected. True, the war has not finished. And, there are still major

⁸ For example the initiative to transform the Congress from two cameras to a single one of 120 senators.

⁹ Uribe won with a total of 62.35% of the votes (7'397.835). The next candidate from the Polo party got only 22.02% of the votes (2'613.157). Nation council for electoral affairs: (<http://www.registraduria.gov.co/resprelec2006/0528/index.htm>).

¹⁰ Uribe's coalition obtained more that 60% of the total votes (5'530.732). Nation council for electoral affairs.

¹¹ Polo obtained only 9.52% of the total votes (875.451). Nation council for electoral affairs.

¹² The Liberal party obtained 15.62% of the total votes (1'436.657). Nation council for electoral affairs.

¹³ These human rights activists denounced the extradition because it meant practically an obliteration of the process to know the truth about the violence committed by the paramilitaries.

difficulties in offering security in some parts of the territory (especially cocaine production places and way-out routs). However, they asked themselves, isn't this re-election a clear path toward dictatorship? What will happen with the constitutional checks and balances if the president can finally determine all the magistrates at the Constitutional Court¹⁴, Attorney General and even the board of directors of the Central Bank? Is this likely to polarize national policy across regional lines given Uribe's strong attachment to his region both personally and politically? Will his charismatic power outshine institutions that though imperfect have been very costly to achieve?

With some of these questions in mind some economical and ideological elites have rejected a third mandate for Uribe. The Catholic Church most of which has been supporting Uribe (with minor exceptions) has timidly suggested that a third mandate might not be desirable for the sake of democracy. Even some major economic groups have rejected the idea of a third period. They have walked also the "shy" way, suggesting a third period only after a "four year deserved rest".

Even some well known advocates of neo-liberal and MBA-state ideologies that zealously defended this government during the first period and part of the second one, have since a couple of years shown a swap in their preferences. They are now anti-Uribe. The Andes University, the most traditional pro-Uribe bastion, is now on retreat, heavily buffeted by the government disdain. Even some major traditionally rightist or in the best case centre-left media have now started to denounce many of Uribe's sins. What has been surprising is how all this has barely affect Uribe's march toward reelection, why?

Even if Uribe has been loosing some elite support that is earnestly concerned with checks and balances (constitutional affairs), human rights (international standing), and even economical affairs (chaotic regional relations, especially with Venezuela), there is a basic power mechanism that is under Uribe's current popularity and stature. I am referring to regional and local power exercised through local elites, military elites, and in general all the groups benefiting directly from the despotic power of the state (including poor people receiving money directly from the state's central government through social assistance programs). Indeed, after seven years of the Uribe's government style and security prioritization he managed to acquire great independence and manipulation capacity through these well established patron-client crony networks.

The commonest way of knowing president Uribe is by his "communal town hall meetings". Personally managed, these are weekly nationally televised meetings in which the President celebrates with the local elites their successes and scold them for their misdeeds. To be personally congratulated by the president in such town hall meetings is to get a direct ticket for local political success. Accompanying these meeting always are all the Ministers. The President shall ask each one about their local achievements and all too often proceed to declare responsible personnel for each task to be done. It is not unlikely that in those meeting the president make the most important announcements to be heatedly debated by the newspapers the following week.

¹⁴ The Constitutional Court is the counterpart of the Supreme Court in the United States. However, the magistrates are elected only for a period of eight years.

Even if very little of these meetings are more than political showing off, it has a dramatic effect on several aspects that most of Uribe's critics tend to forget. First of all, it enhances the perception of a benevolent despot that can have direct control of our lives no matter how far he is from us. Indeed, if infrastructural power does not work, as with local police, or local justice, or even local executive, there is a despot that might somehow manage to provide for the security of my property rights and some social benefits coming straight from his hands. This interpretation might be enforced by the perceived and very real security improvements. Being killed or abducted is the most real and immediate danger a peasant might wish the state to spare him/her off. And this is what the majority of them are actually getting from the current administration. It might be important that she/he gets a fair salary and not a covered slave relationship, or that he/she gets universal civil liberties, decent education or health services, but these are all second worries for a peasant fighting for his life. This is clearly understood by local elites and regional powers. They provide some security, as an exchange, they can loot the state. This is the basic social mechanism under Uribe's sustained popular support.

Infrastructural power has stated to loose momentum in Colombia, from the major developments in the nineties (with some impressive developments in taxing capacity, fundamental rights protection under simple justice proceedings, very real constitutional constraints, and strong central bank independence) we are now facing a less institutionalized state with severe increases in despotic power supported by direct connections with the local and regional power.

This is only resented by the elites that have interests in some more complex arrangements provided by a modern state than only protect their lives and property from the most direct and violent threats (which they perceive as already more or less achieved by this government). Seems that what disturb some elite's in major cities weight very lightly in the minds of local elites. Indeed, it seems as if each one would be concerned with a different way of state power exercise. Neo-Institutionalism and infrastructural concerns sound great in Bogotá city, nowhere else in Colombia.

Now, let's try to see how this social mechanism of despotic power dialectically related to infrastructural power through the Colombian violent conflict serves to explain why does Uribe keep his popularity well above sixty percent despite some Watergate-like scandals?¹⁵ I would like to comment three of such scandals to explain this "Teflon" effect.

- a) Paramilitarism in Uribe's coalition: In May 2005 Senator Petro (Polo) unveiled a mafia-like process of unity between local politics and paramilitarism that came to be known as Parapolitics (parapolítica in Spanish). He showed how several senators participating under Uribe's coalition (actually present in the debate) had contacted major paramilitary groups in their regions to get their "political" support during the immediately preceding election. While the Uribe's government

¹⁵ It has been impossible for me to get a time series on Uribe's popularity for the entire period of his administration. See, BBC: Profile: Álvaro Uribe Velez. "...His implacable stance against the rebels has kept his approval ratings above 70% for much of the time..." (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3214685.stm>).

strongly rejected the accusations, calling them “sophisms” the Supreme Court took seriously Petro’s denounces and initiated a criminal investigation. So far 36 senators and representatives¹⁶ from Uribe’s coalition have been prosecuted and formally charged with paramilitarism and other heinous crimes. Uribe’s popularity has been immune to this scandal.

- b) Positive false, civilian executions by the army to show battle “results”: At the end of 2008 a police investigation on some strange disappearances of young men in a small city near Bogotá, lead to the first denounces of what has come to be know as false-positives (*falsos positivos* in Spanish). Although the investigation is still underway, some clear evidence suggests that around 2800 people were killed by the army during Uribe’s presidency to inflate the statistics of guerrilla’s casualties. Uribe keep his minister of defense in his position, despite some strong opposition, and proceed to fire some generals and colonels. His popularity has been immune to this scandal.
- c) Bribes for re-election in 2004: During the legislative process to modify the constitution Uribe had some difficulties getting the required votes. A couple of senators are now in jail after pleading guilty for “selling” their votes for re-election. In the investigation it was clearly established that the President himself had spoken to these two senators offering them different unspecified rewards for their support. Two of his closest ministers apparently spoke directly with these senators to bribe them offering some official positions for friends or relatives. These promises were effectively fulfilled. Uribe’s popularity has been intact.

It is worth noting that all of these scandals have been widely known by the public either in television, radio or newspaper. How can we offer a satisfactory explanation of this “Teflon” effect?

I will suggest three explanations, all of them ultimately referring to despotic vs. structural state power.

It is possible to affirm that in an environment of permanent violence such as the Colombian one it has a stronger and more lasting effect to be lionized by military success than being accused for human rights, de-institutionalization, or any other misdeed associated with the abstract concept of structural power¹⁷. Uribe’s success is perceived in an idolized way, he is the only man capable of offering peace in a land of war. He might be surrounded by scoundrels, but he is personally good. Like an honorable king that had to take “difficult” decisions, Uribe’s scandals are seen as means to greater ends, in the worse case, as misdeeds that however nasty, had to be done¹⁸. This shows how weak are still the connections that people do between the state, the president and themselves. In fact, they easily separate Uribe from the state, easily attacking the state for the crimes announced while acquitting Uribe of any responsibility either personal or political.

¹⁶ See the reports of the organization “Open Truth” at: <http://www.verdadabierta.com>

¹⁷ A clear example of what I am saying is Israel.

¹⁸ I don’t know any poll on paramilitaries and their popularity. This, however dark side of Colombian public opinion, might show an astonishing benevolence toward them.

Its is also possible to affirm that given the lagging structural power exercised by the state some of these scandals are perceived as distant conflicts related to a particular region or local people. In a greatly despotic state “false-positives” might be seen as problems affecting a particular “federative” local power that do not represent a threat to the confederation. If the state is not perceived as an entity reaching every body’s lives everywhere, some otherwise apocalyptic events could be seen as distant problems affecting quite alien people. Again Uribe can enjoy the advantages of being at the centre of such confederation with changing expectations, all depending on him.

Finally, this “Teflon” effect might be explained by the capacity the despot has to attack the state institutions as if they were there to impede the correct development of his social project. Uribe has systematically attack several institutions perceived as obstructing his decisions. The paradigmatic example, both for its scope and implications, has been the espionage onto the magistrates of the Supreme Court as retaliation for its decision regarding the “Parapolitics” investigation. After some of his senators –including his cousin– went to jail because of some of the Courts rulings, Uribe went as far as contacting well known paramilitaries, secretly inviting them to the presidential palace and inquiring them to offer incriminating evidence to stain the Court’s prestige regarding its “Parapolitics” investigation. All this espionage was leaked to the press; however, so far Uribe has managed to keep his attack on the Court without losing his stature as defender of the *statue quo*.

As I write this article it blurts to my mind how far we have walked the despotic way. In a coffee conversation with friends it comes as a not so interesting issue anymore to talk about politics. It all seems clear for anyone (off course I am talking of sociologists, political science researchers, economists, etc.) that we are touching the bottom. Not so, I tell them, we are able to speak in a coffee shop with no fear of being secretly recorded or worse, being tortured. We are not yet in a dictatorship. What all of us find discouraging, even infuriating is how little Uribe’s popularity is affected by all this; as if Colombian people habituated two different countries; that’s my point.

But there are some positive signs that must be annotated. After all, if there is a dialectic relation between despotic and infrastructural power there must be a turning point that shall keep security improvements achieved by the despot while protecting other more complex arrangements that are fundamental to have modern democracy. What we are seeing today could be one of those processes by which the state despotically penetrates society bringing popular resistance to it. I am afraid we are much still in the first part of it.

APENDIX Michael Mann: State theory and IEMP system¹⁹

1. THE STATE

The state contains four defining elements:

1. “A *differentiated* set of institutions and personnel, embodying
2. *Centrality*, in the sense that political relations radiate outwards for a centre to cover a
3. *Territorially demarcated area*, over which it exercises
4. a monopoly of *authoritative binding rule-making*, backed up by a monopoly of the means of physical violence²⁰.

This definition already highlights what will be the main thesis which is that State autonomy flows principally from the state’s unique ability to provide a territorially centralized form of organization.

Let us first notice that states appeared as a necessity of the people for a binding rule-making authority. Only the primitive societies have been stateless²¹.

Second, most states have been multifunctional. The four most persistent types of state activities are: a) The maintenance of the internal order, b) Military defense/aggression, c) Maintenance of communications infrastructures and d) Economic redistribution.

These four tasks are necessary, either to society as a whole or to interest groups within it. They are undertaken most efficiently by the personnel of a central state who become indispensable. And they bring the state into functional relations with diverse, sometimes cross-cutting groups between whom there is room to maneuver. The room can be exploited. Any state involved in a multiplicity of power relations can play off interest groups against each other²².

¹⁹ This appendix summarizes my reading of Michael Mann’s theory. It quotes extensively from his books and articles.

²⁰ The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results, p. 112.

²¹ “There are good sociological reasons for this. Only three alternative bases for order exist, force, exchange and custom, and none of these are sufficient in the long run. (...) in the long run normally taken-for-granted, but enforceable, rules are necessary to bind together strangers or semi-strangers. It is not requisite that all these rules are set by a single monopolistic state. (...) Nevertheless most societies seem to have required that some rules, particularly those relevant to the protection of life and property, be set monopolistically, and this has been the providence of the state” (The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results, p. 119 y 120).

²² The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results, p. 121.

Third, the state has an institutional, territorial, centralized nature. This is the most important precondition that makes the power of the state so distinctive. Indeed,

*Only the state is inherently centralized over a delimited territory over which it has the authoritative power. Unlike, economic, ideological or military groups in civil society, the state elite's resources radiate authoritatively outwards from a centre but stop at defined territorial boundaries*²³.

The state uses the general techniques or means of power in society: economical, military and ideological. However they are by no means exclusive to it. However, there is a peculiarity in the way the state use and articulate these sources of power, creating its own autonomy, that ultimately comes from It's institutional, territorial and centralized nature.

Differences with Economic power groupings –classes, corporations, merchant houses, manors, plantations and oikos, etc.– can be summarized in three. 1. The state is not oriented outwards, and its economic power expansion is clearly commanded not “diffused” informally. 2. The state's scope is territorial; they do not –as corporations– control a specialized function and seek to extend it “transnationally”. 3. In those cases where economic institutions have been authoritative, centralized and territorial they have been subject to a higher level of territorial, central control or they have become themselves “mini-states” by acquiring political functions. “Thus, states cannot be the simple instruments of classes, for they have a different territorial scope”²⁴.

Differences with ideological power movements as religions arise from the spectacular diffusiveness of ideologies allowing them to move in a nationally and transnationally way. Even if ideologies develop “central, authoritative, church-like institutions”²⁵ they do so taking in account more its functions than the territory.

Finally there are some important differences with the military that if rarely present in modern states –who usually monopolize the means of organized violence– are especially significant to study fragile states having poor monopolistic performance. The effective scope of military power covers two different territorial radii of effective control. The first is named “concentrated coercion” meaning control of everyday behavior. It “requires such a high level of organized coercion, logistical back-up and surplus extraction that it is practical only within close communications to the armed forces in areas of high surplus availability”²⁶ This is the reason why an invading army cannot pretend to be a governing state; even if successfully achieving the demise of the government through a massive attack in the capital, then, when requiring to expand its radii of control to the rest of the country they will face the incapacity to effectively control people's everyday lives. And this connects to the second raddi of military action that we shall call “striking coercion or punitive” consisting in the capacity the military have to punish “the failure to comply with broad parameters such as the handling of

²³ The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results, p. 123.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 123.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 124.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 124.

tribute, the performance of ritual acts of submission, occasional military support (or at least non-rebellion)". Its worth noting that the radii of military striking power has been usually far greater than that of the state political control (*see the final digression on despotic vs. structural power*)²⁷. Let us note that this is not the organizational way adopted by the state, especially, this is not the only structure that it uses to project its power in its territory as we shall see.

If we sum up all these three differences between the kind of organization adopted by the state and the ones adopted by the classes, status and the military on the one hand, and the common functions that a state use to undertake we can have the following conclusion:

*The estate, unlike the principal power actors of civil society, is territorially bounded and centralized. Societies need some of their activities to be regulated over a centralized territory. So do dominant economic classes, churches and other ideological power movements, and military elites. They, therefore, entrust power resources to state elites which they are incapable of fully recovering, precisely because there own socio-spatial basis of organization is not centralized and territorial*²⁸.

But how this power entrusted to the state becomes its source of autonomy? Even more, how this transference process does make the state the strongest institution in most contemporary societies?

On explaining this phenomena Mann introduces two central concepts characterizing two ways in which the state exercises its territorial centralized power: despotic power and infrastructural power.

By despotic power Mann understands "the ability of state elites to take decisions without routine negotiations with groups in civil society"²⁹. This despotic power was the at least until the eighteen century the most prominent way of state's power. However, this despotic power was always accompanied by an acute lack of structural power, it is, "the state's ability to actually implement decisions throughout society, no matter who takes the decisions"³⁰. Broaching on Alexander the Great and the Romans maximum unsupported march capacity, 60 to 75 miles, 100 miles in the best case, Mann demonstrates how a very despotic power in fact "rules through local notables.

²⁷ See also Conversations with History: Michael Mann "you can concentrate forces, you can take Iraq militarily with only 100,000 troops. But once you move to implementing empire, which is to control politically the situation on the ground, or to control the aftermath of the military victory, then you raise all the problems that you just discussed, which is that the weak also have [militarily] empowered. Right. The offense: when you go into battle, into the capital, Baghdad, you concentrate your forces. And given our offensive firepower superiority, we didn't need all that many. We needed considerably less than 100,000 troops to do this. But once you've done that and you try to pacify the country, you have to disperse them, and that needs many more". At <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people4/Mann/mann-con4.html>

²⁸ The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results, p. 135.

²⁹ The Crisis of the Latin-America Nation-State, p. 2.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

All extensive societies were in reality “territorial federal”. Their imperial rule was always far feebleness that traditional images of them allows for”^{31,32}.

In explaining how the states somehow “evolved” from being mainly despotic but weak, to mainly infrastructural but strong Mann describes the following dialectical mechanism: The state appears as a necessity of society, in exercising its functions it becomes despotic because of its unique position to manipulate the economical, ideological and military elites. In controlling its territory the state makes arrangements with local powers and some infrastructural techniques are pioneered by these despotic states. However, these new infrastructures cannot be kept within the body politic of the State.

*Its agents continually “disappear” into civil society, bearing the state’s resources with them. (...) land grants to military lieutenants, the fruits of office, taxes, literacy, coinage all go through a two-phase cycle, being first the property of the state then private (in the sense of “bidden”) property. And though there are cases where the fragmentation phase induces social collapse, there are others where civil society can use the resources which the despotic state has institutionalized, without needing such a strong state*³³.

As these power infrastructures “disappear” into civil society, general social power increase. Indeed,

*even if the state’s every move towards despotism is successfully resisted by civil society groups, massive state-led infrastructural reorganization may result. Every dispute between the state elite and elements of civil society, and every dispute among the latter which is routinely regulated through the state’s institutions, tend to focus the relations and the struggles of civil society on the territorial plane of the state, consolidating social interaction over that terrain, creating territorialized mechanisms for repressing of compromising the struggle, and breaking both smaller local and also wider transnational social relationships*³⁴.

A central conclusion of this model will be that through this dialectic movement between the state and the society not only the state evolves but what is called “society” is actually different things in different times. “How territorialized and centralized are societies? (...) Where states are strong, societies are relatively territorialized and centralized”³⁵.

³¹ The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results, p. 135.

³² These difficulties in applying concentrate-coercive military power have to do with the cost/benefit relation. Mann specifically shows that this way of using militaristic power has been of little help “in normal dispersed agriculture, industry where discretion and skill are required, or to the dispersed activities of commerce and trade. *The costs of effectively enforcing direct coercion in these areas have been beyond the resources of any known historical regime. Militarism has thus proved useful where concentrated, intensive, authoritative power has yielded disproportionate results*”. *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 26.

³³ The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results, p. 130.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 132.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 136.

Let's see a clear cut example of the mechanism described above:

Western states originated as war-making monarchies. Wars were frequent, armies large and expensive, and taxes and conscription were heavy. The first efficient state bureaucracies concerned armies and navies and the tax-gathering machinery necessary for them. But since tax gatherers and recruiting-sergeants were extracting larger and larger resources, popular resistance to them was strong. Resistance did not succeed in reducing the burden of taxation and conscription - for wars continued and became even larger and more expensive in the 20th century. But resistance did bring about representative government, making bureaucracies ultimately responsible to legislatures. The slogan of "no taxation (or conscription) without representation" led toward democratization. This movement of resistance gathered up considerable cross-class & cross-ethnic solidarity against despotic state elites. Property owners and the propertyless were intermittently allied against the state in a struggle for representative government. Provincial elites joined the movement and so lost their regional autonomy. States became more centralized. The fiscal-military origins of representative government have been emphasized by a recent school of historical sociology, by Charles Tilly, Theda Skocpol and myself, among others. It is again deeply ironic that Westerners' tendency to kill each other led toward democracy³⁶.

³⁶ The Crisis of the Latin American Nation-State, p. 3,4.

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