# Building Order from Chaos: war and regional order in Latin America

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses how the sequences, critical junctures, and outcomes of some wars were decisive for the regional order configuration in Latin America since the independence period. The main argument is that war defines (I) the relevant units in the regions, (II) the distribution of power among them, and, collectively, (III) the degree of autonomy that regions have in relation to the international system. In Latin America, war was instrumental in defining the contemporary regional order following a historical path consistent with our argument. Wars between 1800 and 1859 forged the main political units of the region. The region's distribution of power was also defined through wars that occurred between 1860 and 1939. Finally, the global conflicts between 1940 and 2000 (World War and Cold War events) reiterated the limits of regional autonomy in Latin America. Based on the critical analysis of Historical Sociology, Power Transition and Hegemonic Stability theories, the integration of levels of analysis and the reinterpretation of historical events, we intend to rescue the contingent character of conflictive interactions to demonstrate that war outcomes matter to understand structural change and order formation in the region.

**Keywords:** War. Regional Order. Latin America. Theory. International Relations.

## INTRODUCTION

The debate on the role of war in state and regional formation is controversial when referring to peripheral regions and, notably, to the Latin American case. According to one of the most influent studies on the topic, "war did not make states in Latin America" (Centeno, 2002, 163), in contrast to Charles Tilly's aphorism that "war made the state" in Europe's modern history (Tilly 1975, 42). Miguel Centeno's (2002) thesis presents that the wars in Latin America were more limited than the ones in Europe, because they mobilized a smaller proportion of the total population and were financed through external debt. As a result, states have become weaker (not stronger), and bargaining for rights has not occurred in the same way as in the formation of European states, limiting the scope of citizenship in the region. Although the fact that the war was, indeed, different and had a "weakening" role in the region, this does not mean that such a role was irrelevant.

Therefore, the main goal of this article is to bring a new perspective on the role of wars in Latin America's regional formation, analyzing the distinct effects that war historically had in the regional formation, despite its limited character. Admitting the importance of other variables to understand the complex phenomenon of state formation in the region[1], it is important to elucidate that the level of analysis addressed here is different from the state formation literature. Following a regional systemic perspective, we reclaim Centeno's

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[1] For instance, the international economy and economic cycles (Saylor 2014), aspects of social relations and the role of elites in the processes of decolonization and independence (Geddes 1996; Kurtz 2009; 2013; Mahoney 2010; Centeno and Ferraro 2013; Soifer 2015; Holden 2017).

statement when he says that "Latin American cases forces us to ask once again how war actually produces order from chaos" (Centeno 2002, 27) by focusing in a structural element of the regional system, the regional order. With some profligacy, we consider the independence period as the "chaos", the critical juncture from which the current configuration of the existing regional order in Latin America has been shaped over two centuries, questioning the role of war in that long-term structural process.

Our argument is that wars had a cumulative effect on different aspects of the regional order over time. From 1800 to 1859, wars of independence, civil wars, and wars of dissolution and/or conquest defined how many and which political units would exist in Latin America. New political units emerged after that (Cuba in 1902 and Panama in 1904, for example). However, most of the political units currently existing in the region were defined as the result of wars that occurred in the first half of the 19th century. In a second period, from 1860 to 1934, interstate wars and revolutions, either of greater or lesser success, defined the hierarchy between regional and local powers in Latin America. Winners became more powerful (as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), and losers lost opportunities to accumulate wealth and military power and their ability to dictate the rules in the region (Bolivia and Paraguay, for instance). Finally, in the period from 1935 to 2000, global conflicts between great powers (World War II and Cold War), or asymmetric conflicts involving extra-regional powers (Cuba and Malvinas/Falklands War) defined the limits of autonomy that the region (and its regional powers) could aspire in the international system. In a more abstract and potentially comparative terms, the hypothesis is that war defines regional order at least in three different mechanisms: a) war defines the relevant units in the regions; b) war defines the distribution of power among the units and, collectively; c) war defines the degree of autonomy of the regions vis-à-vis the international system.

Despite the existence of several contributions relating the international order formation to violent processes of change, mainly derived from power transitions and disputes over the governance of the system (e.g., Organski 1958; Kugler and Organski 1989; Gilpin 1981), such a debate is still incipient at the regional level of analysis, as pointed out by Lemke (2002). When considering regions as geopolitical spaces defined by the contiguity and interactions among units (Volgy et al. 2017, 458), with a degree of connection in relation to the international structure and specific dimensions of analysis[2], it becomes possible to recover the importance of the role of wars for the regional configuration and transposing the debate from the global to the regional level of analysis. In regions, the order is a connecting element between the region and the international order, consisting in the form by which the system is organized in terms of power (distribution of capabilities) and governance (institutional configuration). We follow Gilpin (1981) in our understanding of system and systemic change[3], considering these changes essential to comprehend the process of order formation on structural terms, extending it to the regional level of analysis as well.

In order to evaluate our hypothesis, the discussion is articulated in two main sections. In the first section, we approach the problem of the relationship between war and regional order from a critical review of the war-making/state-making thesis in Historical Sociology (Tilly 1975; 1985; 1990), the Power Transition Theory (Organski 1958) and the Hegemonic Stability Theory (Gilpin 1981). Although focused on different levels of analysis, these approaches complement each other to explain the effect of war on the regional order formation considering its different historical trajectories. The integration of the levels of analysis allows the construction of a theoretical model to analyze, in the second section, the effects of war on the

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[2] Thus, it is admitted that regions have particular structures and interactions, configuring regional orders with limited degrees of autonomy in relation to the international order.

[3] That is, changes in the nature/type of the units of the system (system change) and concerning the organization of the system (systemic change), like changes in the distribution of power and the *status quo* (order).

formation of Latin America's regional order between the 1800s and the 2000s. On this basis, we conclude by presenting the main results of the research and discussing advances and theoretical challenges for the study of the relationship between war, change, and regional orders, highlighting the importance of the effects of war to understand the characteristics of the Latin American regional order and its effects on state behavior and regional autonomy in the face of the constraints of the international system.

## BETWEEN IR THEORY AND HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

In IR literature, the debates about the relationship between war, change and order formation are usually restricted to the global level of analysis. Perspectives that mostly directly accessed these themes, as the Theory of Power Transition (Organski 1958) and the Theory of Hegemonic Stability (Gilpin 1981) placed war and order at the center of the debate of how and why change occurs in international systems, but with little discussion about its effects on regions (Lemke 2002). In the regional level of analysis, the literature associated with Regionalism tends to focus on regional organizations and levels of economic interdependence and/or integration[4], and does not discuss the enduring role of war in any of these processes or in the regional formation. Otherwise, Regionalism tended to associate the problem of war/peace more as a result of a given order[5] than as a catalyst of order formation, as approached here. On the other hand, the broader notion of Historical Sociology (HS) about the role of war in the configuration of political structures (Hintze 1975; Weber 1978; Tilly 1975; 1985; 1990; Elias 1982) focuses mainly on the level of units, but offers a robust theoretical-methodological approach to discuss the relationship between war and long-term structuring process.

Therefore, when the three perspectives are isolated, none of them allows an adequate assessment of the problem of how wars define regional orders. Still, we believe that when together, they can provide an adequate framework for assessing the issue of how regional orders are formed and how they change, as well as the role of war in these processes. In order to discuss this problem, we will briefly review these approaches and then move to our argument.

### The problem of order and the Structural Change Approaches

Order is one of the main and most recurring concepts addressed in the International Relations literature. Such centrality contrasts with the lack of consensus on its definition and operationalization. Different interpretations of the concept of order also imply different possibilities for evaluating processes of formation and transformation in international orders. After all, how are international orders formed? Moreover, how do they maintain or change in the system? Although that these problems are broader than the purposes and scope of this paper, they relate to debates on the meaning of structural transformations for the configuration of the international system[6].

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[4] The Regionalism literature tend to associate the concept of order with the degree of regional cooperation and/or integration (Solingen 1998; Ayoob 1999; Acharya 2011; Paul 2012; Garzón Pereira 2014).

[5] For instance, David Lake and Patrick Morgan (1997) define regional order as "the mode of conflict management within the regional security complex" (Lake and Morgan 1997, 11). Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver (2003) follow a similar definition, associating the concept of order with patterns of relationship between states that are part of a given Regional Security Complex. Robert Stewart-Ingersoll and Derrick Frazier also restrict their definition to the security field, defining regional order as the "governing arrangements among the units of a regional system, including their rules, principles and institutions" (Stewart-Ingersoll and Frazier 2012, 20).

[6] About the limited explanatory potential of IR theory traditional approaches on change, check Ole Holsti et al. (1980), Barry Buzan and RJ Barry Jones (1981), John Gerard Ruggie (1983; 1989) and James Rosenau (1990).

In the 1960s, the contributions of Power Transition (Organski 1958; Kugler and Organski 1989) and Hegemonic Stability (Gilpin 1981) theories, which we refer here as Structural Change Approaches, gave centrality to war as an active element in the formation and transformation of international orders. Organski's Power Transition Theory (PTT) considers that order[7] is at the center of power transitions, which would be predominantly violent and would happen due to the dissatisfaction of states with the systemic status quo (order). Thus, war would trigger changes considering its direct effect on the distribution of power, leading to the definition of new dominant powers. After a war, this new configuration would give rise to a new order. This illustrates the opposition of PTT to realism and the balance of power approaches, which have a view of international order as a more continuous and recurrent pattern of behavior in the absence of world government (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001).

The relationship between war and change was deepened by Gilpin (1981) with the intention to understand more broadly the nature of change in international politics (Gilpin 1981, 3). Gilpin's understanding reinforces a view of order as the way a system is configured in a given historical moment, reflecting the "redistribution of power in the system and the other components of the system" (Gilpin 1981, 15), that would occur after the systemic changes resulting from hegemonic wars[8]. Although the relationship established by Gilpin focuses on a specific type of war, ignoring the role of violent conflict more broadly, he advances in relation to PPT by building a detailed framework regarding types of international change[9]. The author deepens the notion of war as a critical juncture by observing its effect on "[...] the nature and governance of the system itself and/or, more rarely, the character of the international actors themselves" (Gilpin 1981, 46).

Thus, the Structural Change Approaches consider the effects of war, at least, on the change of I. the nature of the units, II. the distribution of power; and III. the system governance (order). In contrast to more traditional realist approaches, which emphasize the structural anarchical character of the international order, Structural Change Approaches offer an initial framework to analyze the formation, transformation, and rupture of international orders. Although initially focused on the global level of analysis, the systemic character of these approaches signals the possibility of reproducing similar mechanisms at the regional level of analysis (Lemke and Werner 1996; Lemke 2002)[10]. Moreover, even the demarcation of the analysis at the global level leaves important gaps regarding both the regional and unit level. For instance, in order to further assess the "system change", which is directly related to the nature and type of the units, according to Gilpin's classification (1981, 40), one cannot ignore the problem of state formation and definition of the units, which is the focus of Historical Sociology discussion. We review the contributions of the literature on war and state formation, referring to these gaps and, therefore, advancing our argument and our analysis model design.

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[7] PTT characterizes order according to the distribution of power and the establishment of rules of governance and behavior that guarantees the stability of the system (Organski 1958, 465; DiCicco and Levy 1999, 684–85).

[8] In his definition, hegemonic war is a type of war that determines the order formation, since its objective would be to define "which state or states will be dominant and will govern the system" (Gilpin 1981, 15). This definition derives from (Aron 1964, 359), and the concept is further explored in Gilpin (1988).

[9] According to Gilpin (1981), systemic changes are changes in relation to the governance of the system (order), characterized by revisions in the distribution of power and in the systemic status quo. System changes occur when there is a change in the nature or type of system units – Empire, nation-states, etc. (Gilpin 1981, 40).

[10] Despite extending the PPT literature to the regional level of analysis, these authors focused more on the debate about the predominance of war or peace in the regions than to the original PPT debate about power transitions and systemic changes (Lemke and Werner 1996; Lemke 2002).

**War and change in Historical Sociology**

The link between war and change is also a central concern of the Historical Sociology[11] tradition, albeit at a level of analysis focused on the units. The emphasis on macro-processes of social change gained expression with the so-called New Historical Sociology theorists, giving rise to a research tradition focused on the analysis of war as one of the central factors that trigger these processes (Hintze 1975; Tilly 1975; 1985; 1990; Weber 1978; Skocpol 1979; Elias 1982; Giddens 1985; Mann 1988). The war-making/state-making thesis developed by Charles Tilly stood out for its extension and emphasis on the role of violent processes, especially war, in European state-building. From a relational perspective, which valued processes, context, and temporal-spatial specificities (Tilly 1975, 50), Tilly's historical-comparative method advanced in relation to the modernization theories on state formation[12].

Thereby, Tilly's work has been extensively revisited in different case studies. While some works corroborated and advanced the research agenda of the war-making/state-making thesis (Thies 2004; 2005; Leander 2004; Hui 2005), others concluded that the approach was limited in some cases and historical contexts (Migdal 1988; Spruyt 1994; Herbst 2000; Centeno 2002; Kurtz 2009; Taylor and Botea 2008). Especially in the Third World, scholars have suggested that war would have less relevance for understanding state formation (Sorensen 2001; Taylor and Botea 2008; Delatolla 2016). In studies about regions as Africa (Herbst 2000), Middle East (Lustick 1997; Jung 2006), and Latin America (Centeno 2002), the literature started to observe that the limited character of war lead these regions to a different outcome from the ones observed in Western Europe, therefore producing less capable states.

Concerning the Latin American case, the work of Centeno (2002) ended up leading to a proclivity to consider the predominantly negative effect of Latin American wars on the process of state formation, reinforcing violent patterns and indebtedness instead of the strengthening of the state (Centeno 2002, 269). If, on the one hand, these studies corroborated Tilly's study by presenting a counterfactual for the claim that war produced more capable states (as in the European case), on the other hand, they argued that the war-oriented approach did not explain the cases in the Third World and, therefore, needed to be overcome in favor of alternative explanations[13].

From these new theoretical and empirical studies, much criticism arose against Tilly's approach, which came to be called "bellicist", "Eurocentric" and "Darwinist" (Spruyt 2017, 86), rejecting the argument that the intensity and the regularity of war in Europe would have enabled the construction of more capable states[14]. According to some critics, Tilly's approach tends to be seen normatively, as if total or recurrent war was desirable for the processes of social change and state-building[15]. In fact, it is necessary to recognize the explanatory potential of other variables, observing the local context and particularities, without rejecting the role of war in these processes or taking it as a desirable normative prescription[16].

Indeed, the war did not "make" states in Latin America in the same way as in Europe. However, it does not follow that war is not relevant to explain states' formation and other important structural characteristics in the region. The literature indicate that the effects of war

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[11] For more elaboration on the field of Historical Sociology, check Charles Tilly (1980), Theda Skocpol (Skocpol 1984; 2008) and James Mahoney (2004).

[12] On this point, see Lars Bo Kaspersen *et al.* (2017, 12–14) and Benno Teschke (2017, 31–34). On a discussion about method in Tilly's Historical Sociology, see Tilly (Tilly 1981; 1984; 2001).

[13] For instance, Robert Holden points out that Tilly's thesis "should be discarded, for Latin America at large and the Central American region in particular" (Holden 2017, 254).

[14] For a literature review on the debates about Tilly's thesis, check Thomas Ertman (2005), Tuong Vu (2010) and Hendrik Spruyt (2017). About Tilly and IR theory, see Hobden (1998) and Hobden and Hobson (2002).

[15] Check Herbst (2000, 22–23), Kaspersen (2002, 103), Centeno (2002, 106) and Spruyt (2017, 88).

[16] For a detailed answer to Tilly's critics, see Victoria Tin-bor Hui (2017, 269–73).

are significant and enduring in terms of low extractive capacity, tax injustice, capacity to defend national sovereignty, military autonomy in relation to the civil power, and repressive profile (anti-insurgent) of the armed forces in the region[17]. Therefore, if we recognize the effects of warfare, whether negative or positive, for this same reason it is also necessary to ask ourselves about other cumulative effects that war could have had on the formation of the states and the region instead of discard it as a less meaningful element.

**Bridging levels of analysis: war, timing, and regional orders**

In order to overcome these gaps and assess inconsistencies and challenges of the existing contributions on the problem of war, change, and order formation, it is necessary to first, recover the importance of war to understand macro-processes of change, in general, and secondly, to admit different temporal dimensions and different roles of war in international systems configuration, in particular.

To begin with, it is necessary that we differentiate the role of war on unit formation from its effect on the development of state capacity and material or institutional attributes of states[18]. As explored by the literature, the effect of war on the capabilities seems to be contingent and occur in different timings, because of the interaction of war with other conditions and variables, which are sensitive to specific contexts and mechanisms of the cases under analysis. The idea that "less war, or less intense war, leads to weaker states" (Taylor and Botea 2008, 30), reinforced by Tilly's critics, is restricted to thinking about the effects of war on material attributes from the states when compared to more "successful" cases, as the European one. Furthermore, a second problem is that these perspectives ignore the need to observe the context of the war's onsets, how these wars were fought and the effects, negative or not, that they triggered. Different types of war lead to different outcomes, so the relationship between war and attributes of state power is neither linear nor conclusive, producing cumulative effects to both state and regional formation.

Another aspect concerns the incorporation of HS findings and insights into the International Relations literature. According to Stephen Hobden, HS would be useful to International Relations only by providing it with a theory of the state, due to an "inconsistent approach to theorizing the international system" (Hobden 1998, 178–79). However, we argue that it is necessary to point out and recover its potential of observing structuring and changing processes that are broader, thus enabling the possibility to extend the debate to the other levels of analysis, including the regional one. As stated by Douglas Lemke, HS tradition provide us with lessons of the importance of observing cross-temporal connections and how "past events and outcomes influence subsequent events and outcomes" (Lemke 2019, 1006).

Moreover, the Historical Sociology literature provides not only the object and variables of analysis but also a theoretical-methodological framework that values and assists the observation of macro-processes of change and temporal-spatial specificities. Following that, we understand that it is possible to question the other effects of war in processes of system's formation beyond the definition of units. Authors who made the connection between Historical Sociology and International Relations theories highlighted their relationship with neorealist and neo-institutionalist approaches (Hobden 1998, 177; Hobden and Hobson 2002, 274). Although, they have been ignoring their affinity with other contributions, such as the Structural Change

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[17] For instance, such relevance was addressed by the works of Fernando López-Alves (2000); David Mares (2001); Cameron Thies (2005), Marcus Kurtz (2013), Sabine Kurtenbach (2011), Luis L. Schenoni (2020), among others.

[18] As Spruyt (2017, 85) observes, it is necessary to "distinguishing the state as a juridical entity from its governing capacity".

Approaches (e.g., the Power Transition Theory and Hegemonic Stability Theory)[19], which are much closer to the HS in terms of its focus on understanding structural processes and changes as well as the emphasis given to war as a central variable in these processes.

If we connect these perspectives, the state formation processes can be framed as part of the fundamental ordering principle formation and/or change, since both are related to the definition of the units of the system. According to Gilpin's model, changes in the nature of the actors or entities (Gilpin 1981, 39–40) are system changes. Thus, the definition of the structural foundation of the systems is related to the processes of definition of units[20]. However, in addition to these changes, the Structural Change Approaches also emphasize the role of war in the processes of structural change, i.e., the internal changes to the system regarding the distribution of power and its characteristics and rules of structuration and governance (order).

Therefore, war is a crucial variable for analyzing the formation and transformation of structures in different contexts and levels of analysis. Tilly's legacy is especially relevant when he demonstrates that history is a critical component for analyzing mechanisms and processes of change (Tilly 2001). As explored by the Historical Sociology tradition, we should recall that such effects vary in time, space and context.

**Figure 1 – Theoretical model: levels and impacts of war on regional order**
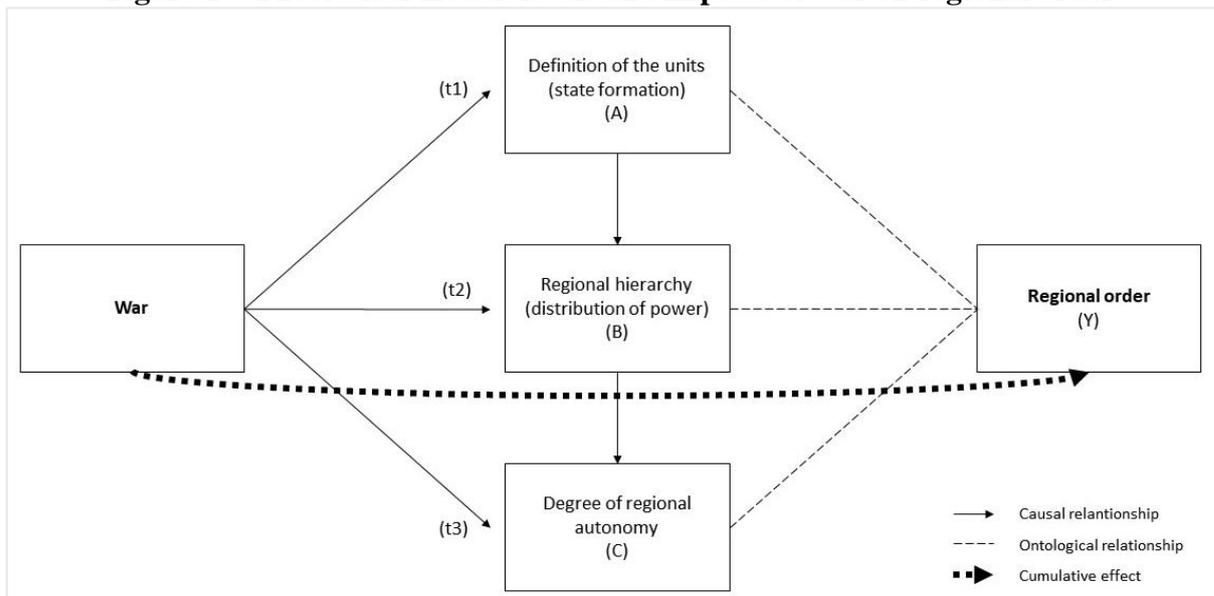


Source: author's elaboration.

Figure 1 illustrates our theoretical model, that considers these specificities to analyze how war defines regional orders. Based on the critical review of these different approaches, we reclaim the contingent character of war outcomes on macro-historical processes (Hanagan and Tilly 2010, 247). Through the study of a critical factor (war) and a macro-historical approach, we can make an approach to understand the formation of a "big structure" (order) through a "large process" (the formation process of the order), to use a pair of expressions enshrined by Tilly (1984) regarding the historical-sociological comparative analysis.

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[19] About Historical Sociology affinity with systems theory in IR, check Spruyt (1998). About other theoretical-methodological insights on these approach, check Lemke (2019).

[20] Such a mechanism is also approached by Buzan et al. (1993). The authors consider the structural foundation as the "deep structure" of the systems, defined by its organizational principle (hierarchical or anarchic) and the functional differentiation of the units (unit's type). The flexibility of its model admits the possibility of change in deep structures, in contrast to structural neorealism (e.g., Waltz 1979, 96).

The effect of war on the definition of regional orders would be cumulatively produced through three predominant mechanisms that correspond to at least three different timing and contextual phases, that can be considered "inherently contingent, discontinuous, and open-ended" (Sewell 2005, 110). Initially, by its effects on the definition of the units of a given region (state formation processes). Secondly, the outcomes of wars would change the distribution of power, thus defining the regional hierarchy. Finally, the degree of regional autonomy[21] would be determined both by the cumulative effects of the other phases and the role of war (global conflicts). Therefore, wars are manifested both as events[22] and as processes[23], which are characterized as critical junctions with contingency properties and cumulative effects, identifying a path-dependent process of change (Mahoney 2000).

This framework can help the task of analyzing the origins and conditions of order formation from violent processes that enhance both structural and unit-level changes. Considering these perspectives, we could also heighten a debate about the role of war to regional formation and overcome the understanding of order as a simple result of institutional processes, as usually reproduced by the literature of Regionalism. Through an intra-case comparison, which seeks to analyze the different effects of war on aspects of the Latin America's regional order in different historical periods, the proposed framework suggests that the transition from a heteronomous regional order (in the colonial period) to another regional order, potentially more autonomous (since the post-independence period) is long, contingent and was decisively influenced by the role that the war played in different critical situations and formative periods. We investigate this argument in the following section.

## REGIONAL ORDER FORMATION IN LATIN AMERICA

Focusing on the three predominant mechanisms of the definition of regional orders (unit selection, hierarchization and autonomy), as described in our theoretical model previously, we move to the evidence of the Latin American case to analyze our argument. First, we trace back the effects of independence wars and post-independence conflicts on the definition of the main political units in the region (1800-1859). Then, we analyze the relation between the main interstate conflicts of the region and the definition of power distribution in the region (1860-1939). Finally, we discuss the implications of both local and global conflicts (such as World Wars and Cold War) regarding the levels of regional autonomy (1940-2000).

It should be pointed out that is not necessarily a matter of discussing which wars had or did not have effects on the regional order definition, but of analyzing how the interaction between war and order formation takes place, using the Latin American case as empirical evidence of this process. Because of that, for the purposes of this piece, the role of war over these three dimensions is more important than the identification of the types of war[24] or their classification considering intensity or scope.

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[21] That is, the relative position of the region in the international system and the capacity of its existing states to articulate interests and make decisions in the face of the constraints imposed by the international structure. For a more in-depth discussion of the concept of regional autonomy, see Russell and Tokatlian (2003).

[22] Namely, "[...] temporally concentrated sequences of actions that transform structures" (Sewell 2005, 273).

[23] In Tilly's definition, the "combination or sequences of mechanisms", being the mechanisms a "delimited class of events that change relations among specified sets of elements" (Tilly 2001, 25–26).

[24] For a discussion about the taxonomy of Latin America wars, check Tássio Franchi et al. (2017).

**War defines the units (1800-1859)**

Decolonization and independence processes that led to the formation of political units in Latin America erupted in the region at the beginning of the 19th century. Between the 1810s and 1830s, the formation of political units took place predominantly through conflictive dynamics, mainly by wars of dissolution and reconfiguration of the previous political units. In Spanish America, the conflict led to the fragmentation of political units, while in Portuguese America, to the confluence into a single unit (Carvalho 2003, 13)[25].

Of the five existing units during the colonial period – four Spanish vice-kingdoms and colonial Brazil –, 17 independent states were formed by the end of the 1830s. On that context, events in Europe (French Revolution, the reforms, and the Napoleonic Wars) and in the United States (American Revolution) served as "catalysts for Independence" (Scheina 2003a, 19), accelerating and influencing ongoing processes that led to colonial separations (Bushnell 1985, 95)[26]. In Spanish America, the disintegration of the Viceroyalties was engendered by the crisis of legitimacy of Spanish domination in the Americas, after the reforms of Carlos III in Spain and the Napoleonic occupation (Rodríguez O. 1998). In the 1810s, the establishment of colonial *juntas* claiming autonomy led to major independence conflicts across the region.

In the Viceroyalty of Peru, the center of Spanish colonial power in South America, the general captaincy of Chile claimed its status as an autonomous republic in 1810, but the independence followed a long conflict, which lasted until 1826. Peru became independent only in 1821, after Argentine and Chilean involvement in the armed conflict. In its turn, the Viceroyalty of New Granada disintegrated first in 1811, with the declaration of Venezuela's independence, the formation of the United Provinces of New Granada, after Great Colombia. As a result of the armed conflict with Peru over disputed territories, the dissolution of Great Colombia, in 1831, gave origin to Ecuador, Venezuela, and the Republic of New Granada (present-day Colombia). In the Viceroyalty of the River Plate, Paraguay's independence was achieved in 1811. A series of conflicts between Buenos Aires and the provinces extended from 1820 to 1861. The Cisplatine War, a conflict against the Brazilian Empire in the territory of Banda Oriental, led to the independence of Uruguay in 1825. Conflicts also resulted in Bolivia's independence in 1825. Only after a series disputes involving the disjunctive federalism and union between the remaining provinces, the Argentine Republic was established in 1861.

In the Viceroyalty of New Spain, the *Grito de Dolores* led by Miguel Hidalgo in 1810 initiated an eleven-year war of independence, which ensured the independence of the Mexican Empire in 1821. Independent Mexico inherited a politically fragmented nation, struggling to secure its territory (Scheina 2003a, 98). In 1823, the United Provinces of Central America dissociated from the empire, leading to a series of internal conflicts between 1826 and 1840. These conflicts led to the end of the union and gave rise to Nicaragua (1838), Honduras (1838), Costa Rica (1838), and El Salvador (1841), with the rest of the territory forming Guatemala (1841). The remaining territories of the former Viceroyalty were divided between the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Both islands in the Caribbean were ceded to the United States after the Spanish defeat in the Spanish-American War in 1898.

The Brazilian independence, proclaimed by the Portuguese Emperor Dom Pedro I in 1822, was another exception in the context of Latin American independences. With British support and early international recognition, Brazil ensured a less violent and more conservative transition towards independency (Bethell 1985, 196). Nonetheless, Brazil also went through a

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[25] An exception to this initial phase of independence is the Haitian Revolution (1791-1803), which led to the independence of Haiti. Subsequently, conflicts of independence in Santo Domingo, which became the Dominican Republic (1820-1844), and Cuba (1868-1898) also produced new states in the region.

[26] This contrasts with the approaches in which independence resulted exclusively from external processes, as for Centeno, independence wars "did not result from internal changes in the colonial societies" (Centeno 2002, 157).

series of rebellions: internal and external conflicts that conditioned its formation, even though they did not trigger a formal war of independence. Brazilian involvement in military activities before independence, such as the occupation in French Guiana (1808-17) and Banda Oriental (1821), outlined the path towards a united territory. In 1825, after winning over the Confederation of Ecuador[27], Brazil ensured its post-independence unit (Carvalho 2003, 13).

After the independence period, conflicts involving territorial disputes and internal rebellions, which sought to shape and remodel the units, continued to mark the state-building process and regional order formation. For instance, in Brazil, even after guaranteeing its unit after colonial liberation, a series of separatist revolts between 1831 and 1849 continued to challenge the boundaries of the independent state. In the Platine region, conflicts involving geostrategic issues linked to River Plate Basin, such as the *Guerra Grande* (1836-1852) and the *Platine* War (1851-1852), led to an enduring rivalry with significant implications for state formation in the Southern Cone (López-Alves 2000, 81). Another important attempt to reconfigure the political map of the region came with the Peru-Bolivia Confederation[28]. The Chilean victory forced the dissolution of the Confederation in 1839, guarantying Chile the re-establishment of the balance of power in South America (Burr 1965, 57).

From 1835 to 1848, Mexico faced the most critical disputes in its territorial definition in conflicts with Texas and the United States[29]. The defeat, fixed by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), resulted in the annexation of Texas by the United States in 1845 and the loss of a great area of territory to the US, almost equivalent to the current size of the Mexican territory. Regardless of the degree of social mobilization and the way the wars were financed, the importance of the outcome of these wars is emphasized by Robert Scheina (2003a, 196), who says that while the war allowed the United States the necessary resources to develop the country into a great power, for Mexico, the result defined its lower position in the hierarchy of power. The Mexican case clearly illustrates the effects of the war outcomes on the definition of units (and their hierarchy) in the region.

Following that, the conditions under which these states integrate the international system and constitute the region determine how the regional system would be organized[30]. Contrary to Centeno claims that in Latin America war "does not have built states because they were too isolated in time and space to have the necessarily cumulative effect" (Centeno 2002, 269), the influence of the international context on the processes of independence and the engagement of external powers in conflicts (both wars in the colonies as interventions in regional conflicts) illustrates that Latin America was no longer isolated or fully subordinated to the international system at the beginning of the 19th century[31]. In addition to the important temporal and contextual differences of the region when compared to state formation in European countries, even in the face of contextually similar processes there are important factors that illustrate that war had important cumulative effects on the region. For instance, the independence of Latin American countries takes place in a context of declining colonial powers.

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[27] One of the most expressive revolts in 1824 led to the temporary formation of the Confederation of Ecuador, in Northeastern Brazil, as an independent republic.

[28] The dispute involved the Chilean conflict with Bolivia over the Atacama region and the competition between Valparaíso and Callao as the main ports on the South American West coast. In 1837, Argentina also declared war on the Confederation, fighting for the province of Tarija with Bolivia and seeking to guarantee influence in the nearby provinces (Scheina 2003a, 143).

[29] The period comprises the Independence of Texas (1835-36), the wars between Mexico and Texas (1836-44) and the Mexican American War (1846-48).

[30] Although focused on a different problem, i.e., how the origins of states influence their subsequent war experiences, the term "birth legacies" proposed by Lemke and Carter (2016, 497) can be useful to describe the mechanism pointed here.

[31] About the position of Latin America in the 19th century international society, check Carsten-Andreas Schulz (2014).

In North America, on the other hand, independence occurs in the context of a conflict between great powers. In both, however, the effects of the international order are relevant, demonstrating the connection between the region and the international system since its formation.

War, in its different forms and scales, played a fundamental role in the formation of the political units that made up the political region later called Latin America. Although the effects are multiple and could be further explored, the aspect that we emphasize when analyzing the problem of the order and the regional system is precisely the political formation of the units in *number* (as a result of the fragmentation disputes), and in *dimension* (territorial delimitations and boundaries setting). This initial phase corresponds to the formation of the regional system itself and, employing Gilpin (1981) terms, to a *system change*, i.e., a change in the nature and type of the units.

Therefore, independence and state-building conflicts mark the transition from a colonial order to a post-colonial, independent order formation in the region. An important feature of this order, fundamental to the current definition of the regional order, is defined by which and how many units will exist in this system. Moreover, taking into account the contingent and non-linear process characteristic of the state formation in Latin America (Knöbl 2011, 15) and the continuous character of its influence on the attributes of the units, changes in their capabilities begin to be delineated as a result of the definition of borders and demographic aspects, with significant losses and gains in territory and population. The definition of capabilities and the distribution of power, which characterizes a *systemic change*, is mainly expressed in the following period, with the main regional interstate conflicts that occurred in the region.

**War defines regional hierarchy (1860-1939)**

Following the definition of the main political units at the end of the 1850s, the period from 1860 to 1939 allowed these states to start acting on behalf of their capabilities. For instance, the Mexican Revolution (1910-1914) had important effects on Mexico's state capacity, political organization, and social integration (Garfias 2018). In Central America, a series of failed wars seeking to recreate the Central American Confederation ended up reaffirming the division and the weakening of the political units in that subregion[32]. In South America, the new phase was marked by major interstate conflicts that challenged the position of states in the hierarchy of power and the regional order. The War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870), the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), and the Chaco War (1932-1935) are the cases that stand out for their great impact on the configuration of the system in terms of power distribution, as a result from the involvement of the leading regional powers (Brazil, Argentina and Chile) in the conflicts and the negative effects for Paraguay and Bolivia on the regional hierarchy[33].

The War of the Triple Alliance or the Paraguayan War (1864-1870), was remarkable because it had its causes in an inherently regional dynamic centered in a power struggle (Doratioto 2002, 20), moved by a rising state dissatisfied with the configuration of the regional order at that time (Schweller 2006, 116). In search of territorial expansion and control of the River Plate region, Paraguay's reaction in defense of Uruguay before Brazilian intervention in 1864 initiated the rivalry between the countries (Scheina 2003a, 302). After invading Brazilian territory in the region of Mato Grosso and having transit to access Brazilian territory denied in

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[32] The COW Project refers to the series of interstate conflicts as "First Central American War" (1876), "Second Central American War" (1885), "Third Central American War" (1906) and "Fourth Central American War" (1907) (Sarkees and Wayman 2010). Among other factors and specific contexts, the conflicts were aimed to recreate the Central American Confederation.

[33] As noted in the previous section, examples of internal disputes are also important factors in understanding capacity building in the region. In this second phase, they also played a role reinforcing the definition of the hierarchy of power.

Argentina, the Paraguayan intervention led to the union of the countries of the River Plate region in the Treaty of the Triple Alliance (1865), in opposition to Paraguay. The weight of the alliance surpassed Paraguayan capabilities, culminating in the destruction of Paraguay in demographic, territorial, and political terms.

The war outcomes frustrated Paraguay's aspiration to consolidate its leadership and military preponderance in the region (Schweller 2006, 116) and "confirmed that it would remain a small, landlocked nation" (Scheina 2003a, 316). For Uruguay, the war enabled the end of a long cycle of conflicts in the River Plate region involving Brazil and Argentina, consolidating its existence as a buffer state between the two regional powers (Buzan and Wæver 2003, 316). In Argentina, the conflict led to a rise in terms of capabilities, enabling the guarantee of its national unity. For Brazil, the war was an opportunity to strengthen the national army and regain its preponderant role in the region (Doratioto 2002, 484).

In the context of the Chilean dispute over the Bolivian coast territory[34], the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) took place because of the Bolivian decision in 1878 to increase in ten cents the taxes on mineral exploration in the region. This decision opposed to the agreement of the 1874 treaty[35], leading Chile to claim the domain over the territory (Burr 1965, 138). The refusal of Peru, Chile's traditional rival in the region, to remain neutral in the conflict became a central issue in the dispute involving the preponderance of power in the region. Even with the Bolivian truce, Chile ended the war with dominion over the coast. The country gained sovereignty over the region's territory and mineral resources, which left Bolivia as a landlocked nation. In relation to Peru, Chile conquered the territory of Tarapaca and occupied the regions of Tacna and Arica[36]. In addition to increasing its capabilities and territory, the result of the war allowed Chile to reduce Peru "to the status of a third-rate power" (Burr 1965, 166), defining a new distribution of power in the region and confirming Chile's role as a dominant power on the South American West coast (Scheina 2003a, 365). For Peru and Bolivia, the destruction of infrastructure, loss of territory, and scarcity of economic resources ended up confining the fate of these countries as secondary powers in the regional hierarchy of power.

As a result, the War of the Triple Alliance and the War of the Pacific had significant implications for the distribution of power in Latin America. Both wars suppressed Bolivia and Paraguay states, which became since then less powerful states in the regional dynamics (Mares 2001, 35). Nonetheless, this condition was reaffirmed in the context of the dispute over the Chaco Boreal region, which led to the Chaco War (1932-1935). As a background, the conflict stemmed from the defeats in the Paraguayan and Pacific wars. Both nations sought to claim part of the territory and to recover their capabilities. As Bolivia had lost access to the sea to Chile in the War of the Pacific, the access to the Paraguay River by the Chaco Boreal region was essential. In Paraguay, the conquest of Chaco was seen as a compensation after the catastrophe of the War of the Triple Alliance (Farcau 2011). The collapse of the Bolivian army in 1935 allowed Paraguay to control 90% of the Chaco region, ending with twice as the territory it had at the beginning of the conflict (Scheina 2003b, 108; Farcau 2011, 3).

Thus, when Centeno says that marginal conflicts like the Chaco War "mattered little to even their own neighbors" (Centeno 2002, 59), the author overlooks their enduring and cumulative effects on the regional hierarchy of power. Although the Chaco War and other low-intensity conflicts, such as the Conflict of Leticia (1932) and the Zarumilla War (1941), had

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[34] The dynamics involving Chile, Bolivia and Peru have roots in other conflicts, such as the War of the Confederation (1836-1839). Chile's victory against the Confederation both dismembered the union and strengthened Chile's position in the hierarchy of power. This version is reinforced by the Peruvian historiography, which tends to relate the cause of the war to Chilean expansionism (Burr 1965, 138).

[35] According to the agreement, Bolivia would ensure that taxes on Chilean exploration in the region would not change over the next 25 years (Burr 1965, 138).

[36] The tension between Chile and Peru over these territories would only be solved in 1929, with the Tacna-Arica Agreement, when the Tacna region were returned to Peru, and Chile remained with the territory of Arica only.

limited character and involved small states in the region, they considerably influenced the dynamics of the regional order. For example, the Zarumilla War (1941-1942), the conflict between Peru and Ecuador, resulted in the Peruvian occupation in the Zarumilla region. In this war, Ecuador lost about 40% of the claimed territory. In the same period, the series of wars in Central America prevented again a political unit in a Confederation, which could have configured a stronger state in Latin-American regional dynamics (Mares 2001, 35). By exposing defeated states to conflict, these wars determined the lower position of these units in the hierarchy of power, as smaller states in regional dynamics, as shown in Figure 2. The historical variations in the capabilities of the main Latin American states over the entire period slightly changed the distribution of power among the units.

**Figure 2 – Latin America: material capabilities, CINC, 1840-2010**
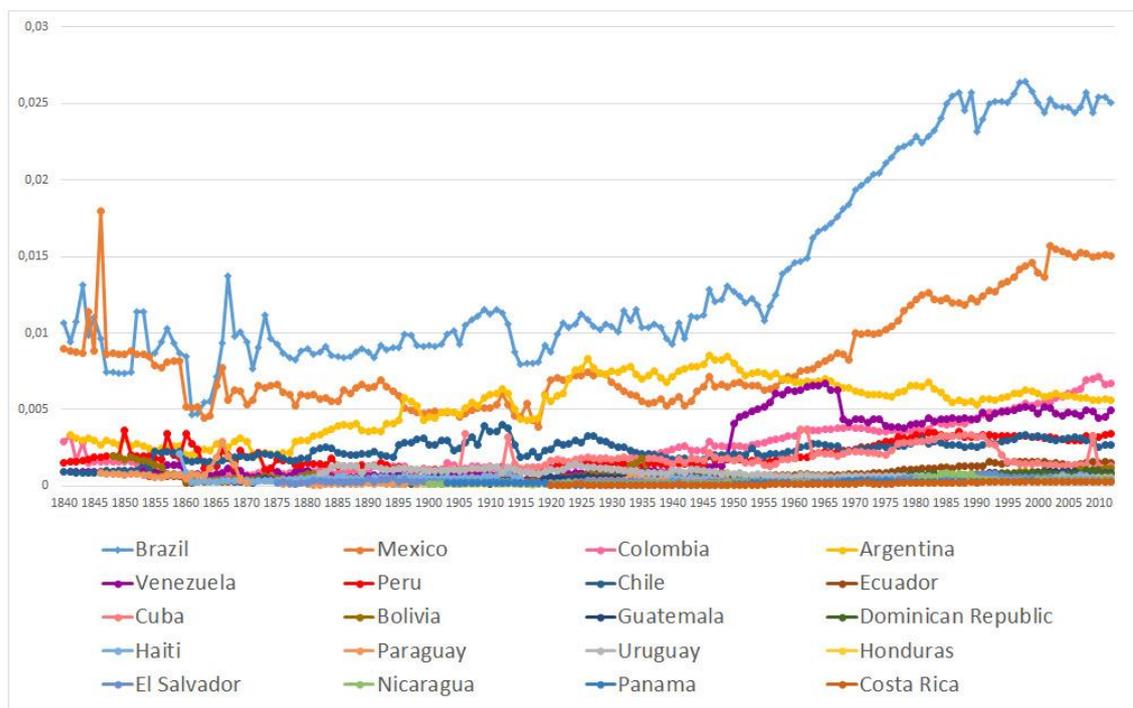


Source: author's elaboration, based on data from Correlates of War-COW (2017).

The War of Triple Alliance led Brazil and Argentina to rise as regional powers, destroying Paraguay aspirations. Similarly, the War of the Pacific allowed Chile to remain a dominant power in the sub-region, minimizing Peru and Bolivia positions. In the Chaco War, the conflict between the main losers of these wars reinforced their lower position in the regional hierarchy, deeply damaging its capabilities. Moreover, in addition to interstate wars and civil wars, this second phase was also marked by the possibility that social revolutions could change the hierarchy of power in the region. The most emblematic case was that of Mexico. Despite having bequeathed social, economic, and institutional advances, the Mexican Revolution was insufficient to reverse the unfavorable power distribution when compared to the United States. The US own interventions during the revolution and the extent and intensity of the conflict reinforced the constraints to which the Mexican state was subjected to its power projection.

Thus, as a result of the wars, the regional hierarchy of power was defined in a pattern that lasted until the end of the 20th century: winners ascended the regional hierarchy of power, and losers saw their aspirations and capabilities collapse. Without disregarding their particularities, war was a political phenomenon that significantly impacted the configuration of

the regional order. The resulting distribution of power remained relatively stable until the end of the century, defining the bases of the hierarchy of power in the region until nowadays.

**War defines the degree of regional autonomy (1940-2000)**

The 1940s led to a new phase in the configuration of the regional order. Interstate conflict in the region decreased significantly during this period (K. J. Holsti 1996; Kacowicz 1998; Centeno 2002; Martín 2006), but violence remained a "consistent trait" of Latin America's international politics (Mares 2001, 28). On the other hand, social revolutions, the emergence of global conflicts, and the involvement of regional actors in hemispheric disputes demonstrate the growing connection of the region with the international dynamics. This change occurs in the context of the globalization of capitalism, indicating the growing expansion and reach of the system. The mobilization of Latin American countries during World War II and the Cold War also meant the consolidation of the United States as a global power and a regional hegemon. Thus, the effect of global conflicts on the region's dynamics cannot be dissociated from the analysis of the United States-Latin America relations, giving rise to a growing hemispheric position under American influence.

In that context, the weakening of the region's commercial and financial ties with Europe after the First World War favored the relationship of the region with the United States. For Latin America, the interwar years inaugurate "a new form of external domination" (Albert 1988, 4), marked by the oscillation between Pan-Americanism (and the Good Neighbor Policy) and the direct interventions of the Big Stick policies. In the period that preceded World War II, the change in extra-regional threats, with the growing concern on Germany and Japan's actions, renewed the United States' role in the region. In 1942, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Central American and Caribbean countries signed the United Nations Declaration and declared war on the Axis countries. Despite not signing the initial declaration, Mexico declared war in May 1942 and Brazil in August of the same year. Most of the other countries assumed a neutral position, maintaining cooperation and alliance with the United States, except for Argentina and Chile[37]. In that context, economic, military, political, and ideological ties between Latin America and the US were strengthened (Bethell and Roxborough 1992, 6).

The engagement in the alliance with the US considerably limited the possibility of external economic bargaining. The closure of markets and the impact of the war on foreign trade produced inflation in local economies (Bratzel 2006, 20). However, it also served as an instrument of internal bargaining for many countries. As a result of direct participation in the war, the American military and economic assistance to Brazil and Mexico allowed a significant increase in their capabilities during this period. In the Brazilian case, a series of treaties, loans, and economic and military benefits was reached in exchange for the strategic position in the Northeast of Brazil (Bratzel 2006, 19). Countries with ongoing industrialization projects, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, experienced accelerated industrial and urban growth during and shortly after the war (Bethell and Roxborough 1992, 21). The high oil prices also benefited Mexico and Venezuela. Colombia had its army modernized as a result of its participation in defense of the Panama Canal (Bratzel 2006, 20–21).

After the end of World War II, the articulation of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (ITRA) in 1947, the Bogotá Pact and the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948, and other bilateral military assistance treaties strengthened hemispheric collective defense mechanisms under the United States hegemony. In the Cold War context, these mechanisms were selectively mobilized against "subversive" threats of the communist Soviet

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[37] Argentina and Chile opposed cutting relations with the countries of the Axis. As a result, these countries received significantly less military aid from the US when compared to the others (Bratzel 2006, 16–22).

Union (Weiffen 2012, 369). Competition among global powers has intensified, especially after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, with the emergence of a third world perspective of non-alignment in the region (Domínguez 1999, 34; Brands 2010, 3). With the emergence of social revolutions[38], the American agenda reinforced the subordination of the local, national, and regional dynamics to the US interests as a global power, inaugurating a new cycle of diplomatic pressures, covert operations, and interventions (Smith 2008, 208; Wright 2017, 206)[39].

Following that, the growing cycle of economic dependence[40] and military intervention in the post-Cold War period posed direct challenges to the region's autonomy. The crises in Central America in the 1980s, the militarization of drug trafficking with the war on drugs in Colombia (1982-2001), and the various interventions in regional conflicts continued to reaffirm the North-American securitization and militarization in the region[41]. Episodes such as the Malvinas/Falklands War, in 1982, and the Cenepa War between Peru and Ecuador, in 1995, also reinforced the region's low autonomy. In Malvinas, the Argentine decision to recover the territory and claim sovereignty over the islands ended up frustrated by the defeat against the British forces. At the regional level, Argentina's decline allowed Brazil's rise as a regional power in South America (Schenoni 2018). Malvinas' outcomes also demonstrated the disparity of power and the limits of regional autonomy vis-à-vis the global powers. The United States declaration of support for the United Kingdom in the conflict, which contradicted ITRA's interpretation as a mutual assistance mechanism in the inter-American system, led to a crisis in hemispheric security. Another example is the conflict between Peru and Ecuador in the Cenepa valley, in which the US mediation led to a declaration of peace resorted to the Rio Protocol[42]. The behavior of the US in the conflicts restates its dominant position in the regional hierarchy.

After the 9/11 attacks, the American presence in the region was strengthened again, aimed at the recovery of hemispheric defense mechanisms in the context of the War on Terror, imposing a security agenda based on the US global interests (Cepik 2013, 318). The limits of autonomy and structural constraints were reiterated on the prolonged regional hegemonic heritage forged by the US in World War II and the Cold War. Even facing the gradual growth of China's importance to Latin America[43], the preponderance of the United States constitutes an important structural feature of both international politics and the Latin America's regional order. This findings supports David Lake's (Lake 2009) claims about the co-constitution of hierarchy, order and regional dynamics.

For instance, even during and after the attempts to organize political cooperation through sub-regional and regional organizations (MERCOSUR, UNASUR and CELAC) these limits are evident. These organizations were vital mechanisms to challenge the limits of autonomy and ensure a more institutionalized regional order. However, they are currently undergoing a severe crisis, leaving the future of regional institutions uncertain and evidencing the limits of building a more autonomous regional governance. The limited systemic alignment conditions under the US hegemony, the states' low mobilization capacities and the limits of regional autonomy restrain the possibilities of a more autonomous political action in the region through

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[38] Examples are the Bolivian Revolution (1952), the Cuban Revolution (1956-1959), the Venezuelan Revolution (1958), and several urban *guerrillas* that were characteristic of the Cold War in Latin America (Brands 2010).

[39] The overthrow of the government of Jaco Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954, the interventions in the Dominican Republic in the 1960s, the support for the coup against Salvador Allende in Chile and the interventions in Nicaragua in the 1980s are examples (Domínguez 1999, 42).

[40] The main proposals of that period occurred in the context of the Washington Consensus, in 1989, and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), in 1994.

[41] The military invasion of Panama in 1989 and the occupation of Haiti in 1994 are examples.

[42] Signed in 1942 because of the Peruvian-Ecuadorian War of 1941-1942, the Rio Protocol aimed to solve the historical disputes between the countries, with the United States, Brazil, Argentina and Chile as guarantors.

[43] On China's relations and influence in Latin America, see R. Evan Ellis (2014) and Kevin P. Gallagher (2016).

these initiatives. Therefore, besides other conjectural conditions, the order itself limited the advance of the regionalist and cooperation processes in Latin America.

In this regard, it is worth noticing that the lower position of Latin American countries in the global hierarchy of power and the intrinsic connection between the international and the regional order are inseparable from military conflicts' outcomes. The regional order in Latin America is characterized by the asymmetric distribution of power between the great powers (mainly the United States) and a few regional powers such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Mexico; with origins in the macro-historical, cross-temporal legacy of wars. For this reason (and not because of some cultural aversion to war), the region presents a distinct pattern of conflict, and regional polarization is low. As discussed, despite the decrease in the level of interstate conflicts, the existence of "enduring rivalries" (Goertz and Diehl 1993; Thies 2005) and a "violent peace" (Mares 2001) in the region confirm the longevity of critical regional tensions, which disallows treating Latin America as an anomaly, inherently "peaceful" region.

**CONCLUSION**

Contrarily to the arguments that war would have no relevance for understanding the state formation process in peripheral regions, this paper argues that war should not be underestimated in studies on the formation of the units neither in other attributes of the regional systems. After all, as demonstrated through the evidence of the Latin America case, without considering the macro-historical origins and the role played by the war in regional formation, we could not understand the current configuration of the regional order – because of its structural, long-term character – nor the reason why the region occupies a subordinate position in the international system. By rescuing the contingent character of conflictive interactions and integrating different levels of analysis, based on the framework of Historical Sociology and the Structural Change Approaches (Power Transition and Hegemonic Stability Theory), we show that the outcomes of wars are important to the structural formation of the region. They were decisive in the regional order formation at least in three main aspects: a) in the definition of the system units (1800-1859); b) in the definition of the regional hierarchy (1860-1939); c) in the definition of the degree of regional autonomy (1940-2000).

The definition of the region's political units, in number and extent, was primarily determined by the wars of independence and the series of civil conflicts in the first half of the 19th century. The development of the units' capabilities and the definition of the region's distribution of power are primarily related to the result of interstate conflicts since the winners became regional powers (e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Chile), and the losers were restrained as local powers (e.g., Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru). Regarding the degree of regional autonomy, world conflicts are the critical juncture that consolidated the US preponderance over Latin America and restrained possibilities of more autonomous agency. The limits of a collective bargain against the international system and the global powers illustrate this structural dependence and the limits of regional autonomy. The failure of important cooperation processes (UNASUR, CELAC) that sought to expand Latin America's regional autonomy can also be seem as evidence of the limits of agency and international insertion for the region's states.

These results demonstrate that, despite the lower position in the hierarchy of power and the region's limited autonomy, Latin America is not isolated from the world and neither from traditional IR theory concerns. Even with the decrease of interstate conflict in the 20th and 21st centuries, and the changes in the nature of the conflicts, war remains an important variable to understand the configuration (and transformation) of regional structures. As we sought to argue based on historical evidence, wars in the region were crucial to understanding the unit and regional hierarchy definition, as well as global conflicts and US' hegemony also have enduring consequences for regional dynamics. Besides that, the links between the international order and

regions are enhanced after the Cold War and the regionalism initiatives. Ultimately, understanding the structure of regional orders remain important to question the future of the international order as they test the global power capabilities (strength and consensus) and challenges the international order by (trying to) build regional alternatives of governance in the face of the structural constraints.

Furthermore, recognizing the limits of autonomy and the restrictions to which the region is subjected does not mean adopting a normative position of resignation in the face of global constraints. Given the challenges and limits encountered, it is possible to rethink strategies and guide the formulation of foreign policies capable of recognizing and responding to the constraints of the international structure. By investigating the historical conditions of the regional order formation, which demonstrates the legacy of wars on the current regional order's configuration, it is possible to contribute to further studies on the limits of agency, the possibilities of international insertion for peripheral regions and countries, and the in-depth connections between the international and regional orders.

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