

Comment on Kiser and Cai, ASR, August 2003

Spurious Causation in a Historical Process: War and Bureaucratization in Early China

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Professors Edgar Kiser and Yong Cai's (henceforward K&C) article, "War and Bureaucratization in Qin China," published in the August 2003 issue of *ASR*, is the first serious attempt to understand the role of wars in China's early bureaucratization process. I applaud the authors' insight in that warfare played a crucial role in China's early bureaucratization and agree with their assessment that China's early bureaucracy was only partial. At the same time, I also find that the article's main arguments need to be reexamined in the light of known historical evidence.

K&C's article claims to explain three issues centered on China's early bureaucratization: "(1) the causes of the bureaucratization of the Qin state and empire, (2) why the partially bureaucratic system created by the short-lived Qin dynasty outlasted the dynasty itself, and (3) why bureaucratization was only partial." (Kiser and Cai:512) However, its major focus and indeed its originality hinge on its approach to the first of the three questions. I will, therefore, focus on the problems associated with that part of the article.

In my view, the article has two related difficulties. First and most importantly, it argues that large-scale and severe warfare (indicated by numbers of casualties in a battle) in China during the Spring–Autumn (722–481 BCE) and

Warring States (480–221 BCE) eras facilitated the rise of bureaucracy. Yet during the entire Spring–Autumn period, almost all the wars were small and brief.¹ Even during the Warring States period, large-scale warfare with great severity did not start until 405 BCE (Yang 1998:292–94). Based on the *Records of the Grand Historian*,² I calculated that of the twenty Warring States wars with over 20,000 reported casualties, fifteen happened in the sixty-one years between 317 and 256 BCE. However, between 722 and 350 BCE, China had already experienced two waves of bureaucratization, the first during the seventh century BCE and the second between 450 and 350 BCE. Since bureaucratization *pre-dated* the large-scale warfare, such wars were more likely the consequence than the cause of the bureaucratization.³ Second, the article argues

¹ Most studies on the wars of that period acknowledge that, in comparison with Warring States warfare, Spring–Autumn warfare was not severe, involved much fewer forces, and lasted only for a very brief duration. See Hsu (1965:63–64), Lewis (1990:243) and Yang (1998:309–11).

² *The Records of the Grand Historian* (Shiji) was authored by Sima Qian (1983) (ca. 145–86 BCE), the greatest historian of ancient China. The *Records of the Grand Historian* and *Zuo's Commentary* (*Zuozhuan*) are the two primary sources on which the current comment relies. *Zuo's Commentary* is an extended commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which recorded the history of Lu between 722 and 481 BCE. Compiled during the Warring States era, *Zuo's Commentary* is by far the richest textual source on Spring–Autumn history.

³ K&C acknowledge the bureaucratization wave between 450 and 350 BCE: "Bureaucratizing reforms occurred not only in Qin but roughly the same time

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that warfare weakened the power of the aristocracy, a change that in turn facilitated the rise of bureaucracy. But as I shall show, warfare during the Spring–Autumn era enhanced aristocratic power in the important state of Jin. The second wave of bureaucratization (a major goal of the legalist reforms) was initiated by some of the most powerful aristocrats in Jin around the time they partitioned Jin into three states in 453 BCE (Yang 1998:ch. 5). Ironically, the ascendancy of aristocratic power—rather than its decay—led to the second wave of bureaucratization.

THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

Having summarized the critique, I now substantiate it with a briefest account of what I believe happened behind China's early bureaucratization and the role of wars in that process. I omit many historical details and only cite sources crucial to my argument. Most evidence in this account is not new and can also be found in the secondary literature used by K&C.

K&C's account starts in 722 BCE, the beginning of the Spring–Autumn era (Kaiser and Cai:519). My story here also starts roughly in the year, when, with the decline of Zhou feudal order, the feudal states formerly under the Zhou system started to engage in incessant wars. Around the mid-seventh century BCE, four major powers (Qi, Qin, Chu, and Jin) emerged in the conflicts and started to confront each other in or around China's central-plains region. In the process, Qi and Qin were downgraded to second-class powers. The remaining two states, Jin and Chu, more or less, reached a balance of power within the next hundred years.

After expanding their territories, these states had to find ways to control them. Two approaches existed. The first was to appoint officials to

manage the new administrative units called counties, an action that constituted the first wave of bureaucratization. In the second approach, the new lands were granted to or taken by aristocrats. This is what Hsu (1999:570–72) called secondary feudalization.⁴ (Through it, war actually strengthened the power of aristocracy). The available historical records show that while secondary feudalization prevailed in Jin, bureaucratization gained the upper hand in Chu. In Jin, over time, even the counties became controlled by aristocratic families. By contrast, in Chu the state power was more centralized, officials were increasingly appointed by the kings based on their merits, and a complicated division of labor among officials was developed (Gu and Zhu 2001:284; Li 1999:ch. 6).

Although we still lack systematic knowledge on Chu's official system, some existing evidence does give us a sense of Chu's level of bureaucratization after the first wave of bureaucratization. For example, we know that the number of official titles existing in a state often indicates the level of bureaucracy of that state. Here, the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE) scholar Dong Yue (Yue 1998), based on the surviving records of the time, counted a total of ninety-one different titles for Chu officials. Based on Dong Yue's sources, I calculated that at least sixty-four of these official titles had existed during the Spring–Autumn period. On the other hand, the total number of official titles that Dong was able to find for Qin is only seventy-two, and most of these official titles were created after Qin's legalist, bureaucratic reforms in 356 and 350 BCE. The total numbers of official titles for the rest of the states listed in Dong's work are much smaller than those of Qin and Chu.

The sophistication of Chu bureaucracy after the first wave of bureaucratization can also be seen from another angle. In an entry in 598 BCE, *Zuo's Commentary* (Xuan 11) recorded

in several Chinese states . . . (Kaiser and Cai 2003) There were significant reforms in Wei in 445 BC, in Zhao in 403 BC, in Chu in 390 BC, in Han in 355 BC and in Qi around 356 BC" (p. 527). K&C may also know that most large-scale wars happened after this wave of bureaucratizing reforms because the two wars they listed in Table 1 of their article as the examples of the large-scale wars took place in 293 and 260 BCE. Obviously, what happened later in time (the large-scale wars) could not have been the cause of an earlier event (the bureaucratization).

⁴ Secondary feudalization was a process in which dukes granted the newly acquired territories or the newly consolidated old territories to their family members or able ministers in the form of fief. For the major wave of secondary feudalization under Duke Wen of Jin (r. 636–628 BCE), see Zou (1986).

how Chu's chief councilor,⁵ Sun Shu'ao, supervised the building of the city walls for Xi, a city about 200 miles away from the Chu capital. According to the said record, Sun first ordered a border officer to draft a plan, and then the border officer reported the plan to the minister of public works. The plan included such details as the site of city walls, nature of the surrounding environment, amount of labor and food required for the project, time needed to complete it, amount of earth and the other kinds of building materials needed, tools, and manpower for each task, sources of water and earth for each section of the city walls, and assignment of supervisors for different tasks. It is also mentioned that the project was to be completed in thirty days, and it was finished as planned. The whole description allows us to see the functioning of Chu's high-echelon bureaucracy. The complexity of the plan and the precision of its execution also imply a good deal of sophistication on the part of Chu's lower-level experts.

Following K&C's arguments, one might think that bureaucracy prevailed in Chu because Chu had experienced more severe wars or had superior road systems and trained personnel, but this was not the case (Kaiser and Cai 2003). There is no indication that Chu was significantly different in these aspects from other comparable states. What is known is that Chu came to exist in a different fashion (Zhang 1995). Chu did not originate from the Zhou royal families as Jin did and had always been on the margin of the Zhou state system. Therefore, it is not surprising that in comparison with Jin or other states closely related with Zhou, Chu's state power had been more centralized from the start (Li 1999:ch. 6). However, the level of bureaucracy in Chu was elementary by comparison with the level 200 years later. Even in Chu, the county in this period remained both a military and an administrative unit (the later counties became administrative units). Moreover, while most of Chu's official positions were not hereditary, the kings chose officials from a pool of aristocrats. The meritocratic element of bureau-

cracy was limited. To understand what caused the second wave of bureaucratization then, we need to turn to a new force other than war—the feudal crisis.

In those states where secondary feudalization prevailed (the most typical cases being Jin, Qi, and Lu), the major aristocratic families after a few generations became so powerful that they reduced dukes (at the time only the heads of Zhou and Chu proclaimed themselves as kings) to puppets and started to fight among themselves for domination. I refer to this political crisis as the feudal crisis. Of the states experiencing the feudal crisis, the larger ones had more problems. Aristocrats had the potential to gain more territory and power in large states. The more power that the aristocrats had, the more stakes they had in protecting it.⁶ The feudal crisis, therefore, went deeper in Jin and Qi than in other smaller states, with Jin facing the most crucial one. It was Jin's feudal crisis that stimulated the second wave of bureaucratization.

To understand how the feudal crisis triggered the second wave of bureaucratization, we must start with a crucial turning point in that history—the 546 BCE truce agreed upon by Chu, Jin, and other smaller states (*Zuo's Commentary*, Xiang 27). By the middle of the sixth century BCE, the Jin-Chu rivalry had lasted for a century, and both states faced problems that forced them to the negotiating table. Chu's problems were geopolitical. The rise of Wu in the southeast had presented an increasingly serious threat to Chu since 584 BCE (*Zuo's Commentary*, Cheng 7). To avoid having enemies on two

⁵ Here, "Xuan 11" means the 11th year of the reign of Duke Xuan of Lu (that is 598 BCE). This is how the records in *Zuo's Commentary* are originally ordered and accordingly cited by later historians.

⁶ Early during the Spring–Autumn period, a major goal of wars was to acquire new land, and many states were consequently eliminated. Yet, after the feudal crisis deepened, the territorial desire of the states that experienced feudal crisis greatly declined. The feudal crisis thus changed the nature of warfare. Based on what was recorded in *Zuo's Commentary* and *Records of the Grand Historian*, I calculated that Jin conquered a total of seventeen states in the seventh century BCE (before 593 BCE, prior to the deepening of the feudal crisis). In the years between 592 and 453 BCE (Jin was partitioned by its three feudal ministers in 453 BCE), however, Jin only conquered three states. Even so, Jin gave Fuyang (one of the three states that Jin conquered) to Song. To give away conquered land to other states was not uncommon when the feudal crisis ran deep.

fronts, Chu wanted a truce. Jin accepted the 546 BCE truce because of an internal feudal crisis. The Jin aristocratic families gradually gained domination after Zhao Chuan killed Duke Ling in 607 BCE. By the middle of the 6th century BCE, Jin's aristocrats became so powerful that the dukes were not their real superiors or even their equals. Most domestic strife in Jin involved the powerful aristocratic families (Li and Li 1999:ch. 9). Jin politics were so troubled by internal aristocratic rivalries that coherent interstate policy became impossible.

After the 546 BCE truce, Chu remained haunted by Wu's military pressure (Gu and Zhu 2001:ch.2). It was the political development in Jin that facilitated the rise of the second-wave bureaucratization. While the Jin feudal crisis was longstanding, the 546 BCE truce spurred its further growth because, with a major outside threat removed, internal conflicts could run rampant. In the early part of the fifth century BCE, the six major aristocratic families engaged in a series of showdowns. By 453 BCE, three of the six aristocratic families were eliminated and the remaining three partitioned Jin and formed three new states: Wei, Han, and Zhao (so-called "Three-Jins").

The Three-Jins faced two immediate tasks. First, as direct beneficiaries of the feudal crisis, they knew the best what powerful feudal aristocrats could do to undermine the power of a state. Therefore, even before they partitioned Jin, the Three-Jins had already tried to alter the feudal arrangement by appointing meritocratically selected bureaucrats to manage the territories under their control and by engaging in reforms ranging from land tenure and taxation to the legal system (Li and Li 1999:ch. 9). Once they acquired full power, they naturally started bureaucratic reforms that could free them from the feudal crisis. Secondly, after becoming independent states the Three-Jins were no longer in a geopolitically favorable position. While Jin had had a complete domination in the north, after the partition, two of the three states (Wei and Han) were now located in a position that faced potential enemies from all directions. In addition, the territories of the Three-Jins were intertwined. The main body of Wei, for example, was separated by Han into east and west parts that were connected only by a thin corridor in the north in the Shangdang region (Yang 1998:279–80). Facing these problems, all three

states initiated reforms and military expansion, thus commencing the second wave of bureaucratization.

As K&C have noted, the reforms, at the time, benefited from the rise of a school of political thought later called Legalism, which advocated bureaucratic government, totalistic control of the domestic population, and militarism (Kaiser and Cai 2003). Among the Three-Jins, perhaps because of its most unfavorable geopolitical position, Wei was the first to engage in a thorough legalist reform and to turn itself into a centralized bureaucratic state. With its newly acquired state power, Wei then started military expansion in 419 BCE. Moreover, once freed from the feudal crisis, the warring states became very territory-thirsty. This changed the purpose of wars from domination to territorial expansion. Newly acquired state power enabled states to mobilize much of the adult male population to engage in total wars with longer durations (Yang 1998:ch. 7). The same mobilization also sustained ambitious road and water projects to enhance communication, agricultural production, and extraction capacity, all for the purpose of war. Naturally, Wei's ascendancy posed threats to the neighboring states, and as a result waves of reforms in other states ensued. In the process, in part because of its more successful bureaucratizing reforms in 356 and 350 BCE, Qin gradually gained the upper hand in military competition. This reform-war synergy, in conjunction with territory-thirsty warfare, became the engine of history and paved the way for the Qin unification in 221 BCE. It is this synergy, then, that explains why the large-scale wars with great severity during the entire Spring–Autumn and Warring States period were mostly concentrated in the sixty-one years between 317 and 256 BCE. By then, however, the second wave of bureaucratization had already reached its end. After the second wave of bureaucratization, the basic institutional features of bureaucratic government were established. No other major waves of bureaucratization happened in Chinese history between the mid-fourth century BCE and the time of Qin unification in 221 BCE, even though the scale and intensity of war greatly increased. In other words, Qin's territorial expansion after the second wave of bureaucratization only extended an already existing Qin bureaucratic model. The history thus indicates clearly that

large-scale warfare was the consequence rather than the cause of the bureaucratization process.

CONCLUSIONS

Let me conclude this comment with two general remarks. First, our story shows that warfare is not the only mechanism that facilitates the rise of state bureaucracy. The instability of the feudal political order could also compel the state toward the adoption of a bureaucratic form of government. Second, the relationships between war and society are not unidirectional as K&C's article implies (Kaiser and Cai 2003). Our story shows that small-scale wars were responsible for the first wave of bureaucratization as well as for secondary feudalization during the Spring–Autumn era. After the feudal crisis (which was the result of secondary feudalization) became a major problem, the states that were pestered by the crisis turned inward and became less interested in interstates military competition; now the state structure shaped the nature of warfare. Finally, the development of feudal crisis led to the partitioning of Jin and the second (and much larger) wave of bureaucratization guided by the legalist doctrines. With the rise of the bureaucratic government, the state's power was strengthened, its capacity to organize society greatly increased, and the kings' territorial desire grew. Consequently, a new kind of warfare—total wars—rose to become the engine of development. The interactions between the state and warfare are relational and dynamic, rather than unidirectional and static.

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Early Chinese Bureaucratization in Comparative Perspective: Reply to Zhao

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Professor Zhao raises three important questions in his article about the relationship between war, aristocratic power, and bureaucratization in early Chinese history. He makes two empirical claims suggesting that warfare could not have caused bureaucratization in Warring States and Qin China, because bureaucratization preceded it. First, he argues that “large-scale” warfare came after the initial stage of bureaucratization in the Warring States era. Second, he claims that there was an earlier period (a “first wave”) of bureaucratization in Chu in the seventh century BCE that preceded major war. Zhao’s third criticism is that warfare did not weaken the aristocracy in Warring States, but in fact strengthened it, and that this increasingly powerful aristocratic class carried out bureaucratic reforms.

Our response begins by addressing Zhao’s two empirical criticisms of the causal order of our argument. We show that: (1) Zhao’s exclusive focus on large-scale warfare gives a misleading picture of the relationship between war and bureaucratization and our use of multiple indicators to measure the amount of warfare is preferable; and (2) there was no “first wave” of bureaucratization in Chu in the seventh century BCE; it had no more bureaucratic features than many other patrimonial states. We then demonstrate that his claim that warfare strengthened the aristocracy, and that this strong aristocracy initiated bureaucratization in the Warring States era, is theoretically flawed due to his failure to distinguish between aristocratic class interests and the interests of the

rulers of states. Although the rulers of the Warring States were individual aristocrats, when they bureaucratized administration they acted on their interests as rulers and contrary to aristocratic class interests. They were only able to do this because the aristocracy as a whole had been weakened by centuries of warfare (Finer 1997:451; Hsu 1965:62, 68; Lewis 1990:5).

It is always difficult to adjudicate between competing accounts of any one case, since more than one causal argument will often be able to “explain” the main contours of the history. This problem is especially severe when data are sparse and fragmentary (as they are in this case), since that makes it difficult to test the more fine-grained implications of alternative arguments. It is for this reason that most historical sociology must also be comparative, since using comparative cases provides the additional data needed to more fully evaluate alternative arguments. Thus, although our response to Zhao’s criticisms focuses mainly on Chinese history, we also use several comparative cases to help adjudicate between his arguments and ours.

MEASURING THE AMOUNT OF WARFARE

Zhao’s first criticism of our article is that large-scale warfare in China came after the bureaucratization of the warring states, and thus could not have caused it. The only data he provides to substantiate his claim are counts of the number of casualties in particular wars, which he incorrectly asserts is the empirical foundation of our argument, as well. In fact, in both our discussion of China and in our comparative cases (Kiser and Cai 2003:519–20, 522–25), we use *four empirical indicators* to measure the amount of war: duration (the duration of empire-building warfare), frequency (percentage of years during that period in which a war was taking

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place), militarism (army size as a percentage of total population), and casualties (the highest reported casualties in a particular battle or war). Zhao's claim that warfare came after bureaucratization in China can only be supported by his narrowing of the empirical focus to "large-scale" warfare, focusing on only one of our four empirical indicators and ignoring the other three.¹

Zhao's narrow focus on casualties in particular wars gives a misleading picture of both the timing of warfare and the nature of the causal effects of war on bureaucratization. First, Zhao does not dispute our claim that frequent warfare occurred in China long before bureaucratization. In fact, he notes in passing that warfare was "incessant" in China for about three centuries before the period of Warring States bureaucratization. Second, and the reason that this distortion of our empirical indicators is theoretically important, our argument about the effect of war on bureaucratization does not rely on the number of casualties being high in any particular war. The *cumulative effect* of frequent warfare over a long period of time (in this case, wars were in progress about 75 percent of the years between 722–222 BCE [Kiser and Cai 2003:523]) can weaken the aristocracy just as easily as a couple of large-scale wars.² This is why we used four empirical indicators of warfare instead of relying only on the one employed by Zhao.

¹ Even Zhao's argument about the temporal relationship between large-scale warfare and bureaucratization in the warring states is only partially correct. Contrary to his claim that the bureaucratization of the warring states predated large-scale war, five of the six instances of initial bureaucratization in the warring states (including our main focus, the Qin state) occurred *after* the beginning of large-scale warfare in 405 BCE (Zhao in 403 BCE, Chu in 390 B.C, Qin in 384 BCE, Qi in 357 BCE, and Han in 355 BCE), only Wei in 445 BCE actually preceded it (Kiser and Cai 2003:527–28).

² For a more detailed argument about how the cumulative effect of warfare can be more important for state formation and state growth than the immediate effect of particular wars, see Kiser and Linton (2001) on early modern England and France.

MEASURING BUREAUCRACY: WAS THERE AN EARLIER WAVE OF BUREAUCRATIZATION IN CHINA?

Zhao's second criticism, also leading him to conclude that the causal order of our argument is incorrect, is that there was a "first wave" of bureaucratization in Chu in the seventh century BCE, which preceded the effects of warfare. This criticism is also misguided—there was no such "first wave" of bureaucratization. The Chu state in this period had no more bureaucratic elements than many other patrimonial states.³

The indicators of bureaucracy used in our article are derived from Weber's ([1921–22]1978:217–23) ideal type, so by the level of bureaucratization we mean the extent to which the administration matches the features outlined by Weber (Kiser and Cai 2003:533). Weberian bureaucracy primarily consists of officials: (1) appointed and promoted on the basis of merit; (2) organized and monitored in a centralized hierarchy based on written regulations; and (3) paid fixed salaries in money. These indicators provide the best measures of the basic features of agency relationships: forms of recruiting, monitoring, and sanctioning officials.

The only way Zhao can make the argument that there was a "first wave" of bureaucratization in the seventh century is by using three very different and very problematic indicators of bureaucracy: the appointment of officials to manage territories, the high number of official titles, and the use of complex construction plans. While we are very sympathetic to the lack of systematic data in this period, and thus the necessity of using available measures, these indicators are neither part of Weber's ideal type ([1921–22]1978:217–23), nor are they used in contemporary work on bureaucracy (e.g., Evans and Rauch 1999). The reason they are not used as indicators of bureaucracy is that all three are present in many patrimonial states, and thus do

³ Few states are ever pure types, thus most patrimonial states had some bureaucratic elements. As we noted (Kiser and Cai 2003:519), there were even some bureaucratic elements present much earlier in Chinese history, in both the Shang (ca. 1766–1122 BCE) and Zhou (1066/1027–771 BCE) states.

not distinguish between patrimonialism and bureaucracy.

Zhao's first indicator of seventh century bureaucratization in Chu is that rulers appointed officials to manage territorial units (counties). However, Chinese historians (Bodde 1986; Creel 1964; Hsu 1999) agree that these counties were managed in a much less bureaucratic and centralized manner than they were in later periods. Moreover, the appointment of officials to manage territorial units was used in many clearly patrimonial states, including the Russian *voevoda*, the Ottoman *timar* system, and early modern French governors (Pipes 1974; Inalcik 1973; Mousnier 1979). Whether these officials are bureaucratic or not depends on how they are chosen, organized, and paid. The evidence Zhao gives (p. 605) suggests that seventh century Chu officials were no more bureaucratic than appointed officials in many other patrimonial states—aristocrats had a monopoly on positions, the meritocratic element was “limited,” and some positions were even hereditary.

The second indicator of bureaucracy Zhao uses is the high number of official titles in the administration. However, the presence of many different titles in administrative systems can just as easily reflect patrimonial as bureaucratic dynamics. For example, the *meshchestvo* system used in Russia from the late 15th through the late 17th centuries contained many more official titles than the semi-bureaucratic system that Peter the Great installed after it, because it mirrored the complex ranking of aristocratic titles on which it was based (Pipes 1974:90–91; Riasanovsky 1969:208). Another example of patrimonial dynamics increasing the number of official titles comes from early modern France and Spain. Since these states got a great deal of revenue from selling official titles, they repeatedly multiplied the number of positions in the state in order to increase their income (Doyle 1996; Swart 1949). As these cases of aristocratic closure and venality illustrate, the number of official titles in an administrative system tells us nothing about how bureaucratic it is.

Zhao's third indicator of a “first wave” of bureaucratization is that there were complex plans for the construction of a wall in a Chu city in 598 BCE. This is also a poor measure of bureaucratization, since complex plans precisely carried out are also found in many patrimonial states. Wittfogel (1957:22–48) provides

long lists of complex projects with detailed instructions for state officials to build palaces, tombs, and canals in many patrimonial states (including Babylon, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and others). The building of the pyramids (a more complex task than city walls) in Old Kingdom Egypt provides perhaps the best known example of very detailed and precise plans carried out by a decentralized, patrimonial state (Finer 1997:149–61; Jackson and Stamp 2003:49–70; Kamenka 1989:17; Tompkins 1971:217–35).

ARISTOCRATIC POWER AND BUREAUCRATIZATION

In contrast to our claim that warfare weakened the aristocracy, Zhao argues (p. 3) that Spring and Autumn warfare increased the power of aristocrats, and that it was the ascendancy of aristocratic power that led to Warring States bureaucratization. This scenario seems unlikely—if a powerful aristocracy controlled state policy, why would they eliminate a system in which they had a monopoly of profitable positions in state administration and replace it with a bureaucratic one in which meritocratic competition would eliminate their institutional monopoly and decrease the resources available to them? More generally, why would a powerful aristocracy support a legalist philosophical system (the theoretical foundation of bureaucratic reform) that rejected the principle of aristocratic privilege and advocated similar treatment for aristocrats and commoners (Yang 1997:389)? We know of no other historical case in which a strong aristocracy willingly gave up so much power and privilege.

The problem with Zhao's argument becomes clear when we look closely at his historical narrative. His focus is on Wei, the first of the warring states to bureaucratize around 445 BCE. Wei (along with Han and Zhao) was formed in 453 BCE, when three aristocrats who had been fighting for decades (what Zhao calls the “feudal crisis”) partitioned Jin and formed three independent states. After this partition, the ruler of Wei began significant bureaucratic reforms (limited reforms had been initiated in the three proto-states prior to the formal partition).

While Zhao's claim that these reforms were initiated by aristocrats is true, it is misleading since it is based on a misreading of their institutional position and their interests. Almost all

rulers of premodern states were aristocrats, and the rulers of Warring States China were no exception, but this does not mean that they acted as aristocrats or that their policies reflected aristocratic class interests. Zhao recapitulates the well-known problem with Marxist theories of the state by eliding the interests of rulers and dominant classes (see Skocpol [1979] for a compelling critique). As the rulers of states, individual aristocrats are always potentially autonomous from aristocratic class interests and control. When dominant classes are weak, as historians agree they were in this case as a result of the long period of warfare (Finer 1997:451; Hsu 1965:62, 68; Lewis 1990:5), rulers are actually autonomous and can act on their interests as rulers. This is exactly what happened in Wei and several other Warring States. The shift to bureaucratic administration guided by legalist principles was obviously contrary to aristocratic class interests, but they were too weakened by centuries of constant warfare to prevent it. However, it was in the interests of the individual aristocrats who ruled these states. The aristocracy was not strengthened by war, they were weakened, and as a result the rulers of states were autonomous and strong enough to initiate bureaucratic reforms.

CONCLUSION

Although Zhao's three criticisms of our article raise important issues and provide a good opportunity to clarify the theoretical foundations of indicators of the amount of warfare, bureaucratization, and aristocratic class power, none of them are compelling. His two attempts to suggest that the causal order of our argument is wrong are based on poor measures. His argument that significant effects of war came after bureaucratization requires replacing our multi-dimensional measure of the amount of war with a narrow focus on large scale wars, and his claim that there was a prior "first wave" of bureaucratization rests on very dubious indicators of bureaucracy. This does not mean that we believe the relationship between war and bureaucratization is unidirectional, as Zhao claims.⁴

⁴ In fact, in earlier work, the first author has focused explicitly on how variations in the structure of states affected the frequency of warfare in early modern Europe (Kiser, Drass, and Brustein 1995).

Our article simply focuses on one direction of that complex relationship, and Zhao has produced no evidence to show that our account of that part of the relationship is wrong. Finally, Zhao's claim that warfare in fact strengthened the aristocracy is also incorrect. It clearly weakened the aristocracy as a class and thus made the rulers of states relatively stronger. Bureaucracy emerged as a result.

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