

The Impact of Holy Land Crusades on State Formation: War Mobilization, Trade Integration and Political Development in Medieval Europe

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Abstract

Holy Land crusades were among the most significant forms of military mobilization to take place during the medieval period. This paper argues that crusader mobilization had important implications for European state formation. We find that areas with large numbers of Holy Land crusaders witnessed increased political stability and institutional development as well as greater urbanization associated with rising trade and capital accumulation, even after taking into account underlying levels of religiosity and economic development. Our findings contribute to a scholarly debate regarding when the essential elements of the modern state first began to appear. While our causal mechanisms — which focus on the importance of war preparation and urban capital accumulation — resemble those emphasized by Tilly (1992), we date the point of critical transition to statehood centuries earlier, in line with scholars who emphasize the medieval origins of the modern state. We also point to one avenue by which the rise of Muslim military and political power may have impacted European institutional development.

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1 Introduction

The rise and spread of Islam took place so rapidly that in the century following the death of the Muslim prophet, Mohammed, large parts of the Mediterranean basin — much of which previously had been under Roman rule — came under the leadership of Muslim caliphs. Islam’s success as a political-religious movement brought the Muslim religion to the Iberian peninsula in Western Europe and, eventually, to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople in Southeastern Europe. In response to a plea from the Byzantine emperor under threat of being overrun by invading Muslim Turks, in 1095 CE Pope Urban II appealed to Christians in the west to assist their eastern brethren, with a further goal of recapturing Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Muslim control. The military mobilization that followed came to be known as the Crusades, which took place for the next two centuries.

The Holy Land Crusades were, perhaps, the largest-scale military mobilizations of the medieval period and a defining feature of an era which was a critical period for the establishment of European states. Blaydes and Chaney (2013) argue that feudalism — first introduced in the 9th century — played a decisive role in the emergence of European institutional exceptionalism, particularly as feudal associations encouraged early forms of executive constraint. But feudalism also entrenched personal elite relationships which hindered productive economic and political competition (North, Wallis and Weingast 2009). Ruggie describes the shift from medieval feudalism — with its multiple and overlapping layers of sovereign authority — to a system of territorial states as “the most important contextual change in international politics in this millennium” (1983, 273).¹ Explanations for this transition abound, yet we are aware of none that consider how the rise of Muslim military and political power may have impacted European institutional development.²

We argue that the Holy Land Crusades — which arose in response to the expansion of Muslim polities in the East — impelled Western Europe to break from feudalism and move toward the creation of increasingly impersonal and consolidated states. While the state structures which emerged were not always highly capable or centralized, they nonetheless represented a significant discontinuity from those that existed in the recent past. European monarchs began to enjoy greater political power over what had previously been a loose network of decentralized local elites. Indeed, Spruyt argues the early 12th century was a turning point in the development of state formation in Western Europe during which time “taxation, administration, and the subsequent policing of society increased the ability of the state to intervene in all aspects of social life” (2002, 132). By 1500 CE — and the emergence of long-distance, Atlantic trade opportunities — European monarchs were already well on their way to developing the types of growth-enhancing institutions that seemed critical for industrialization and, eventually, democratic consolidation (North and Weingast 1989; DeLong and Shleifer 1993; Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2005; Stasavage 2010; Van Zanden, Buringh and Bosker 2012). Yet scholars specializing in political economy have paid relatively little attention to institutional developments in the late medieval period when Europe first began to enjoy the institutional advantages that facilitated colonial ventures, trade expansion and technological innovation.

¹Fischer describes the debate between structural realists and critical theorists over whether “anarchic power politics constitutes the universal condition” (1992, 433). Ruggie (1983) argues that structural realists who see systemic continuity in international politics are hard-pressed to describe, let alone explain, the emergence of the state system.

²See North and Thomas (1973) for one prominent political economy explanation for the decline of feudalism.

We explore four causal channels by which crusader mobilization strengthened nascent states. First, the departure of relatively large numbers of European elites for the Holy Land reduced the absolute number of elites who might serve as challengers to the king, increasing the stability of ruling monarchies. Second, crusade tithes were also among the first “per-head” taxes to be levied on European populations, creating precedent for later forms of centralized taxation and encouraging the development of representative institutions. Third, the large-scale sale of land by rural elites seeking to finance crusade expeditions undermined existing feudal institutional forms. Finally, the Crusades were a catalyst for the reintegration of Western Europe into global trade networks with implications for the rise of towns and urban governance structures. Using an original dataset of the geographic origins of elite crusaders, we find that areas with large numbers of Holy Land crusaders saw increased political stability, a higher probability of establishing parliamentary institutions, higher downstream levels of tax revenue and greater urbanization, even after controlling for a number of possible confounders.

Our findings contribute to a scholarly debate regarding when the critical institutions associated with the modern state first appeared. The existing literature on state formation has been focused on three key questions — When did nascent, territorial states first emerge? How did territorial states come to predominate over other forms of governance, like city states? And how did norms of state sovereignty evolve? Prominent existing work has focused on how territorial states came to displace other institutional forms of governance (Spruyt 1994a) and when and how sovereignty emerged and evolved as an international norm (Krasner 1995; Krasner 1999; Philpott 2001; Lake 2003). The origins of states and the state system, however, remain opaque. While our causal mechanisms linking the Crusades to state formation, particularly our focus on the importance of war preparation and urban capital accumulation, resemble those emphasized by Tilly (1992), we date the point of critical transition to modern statehood centuries earlier than Tilly.³ As a result, our focus on institutional developments in the 12th and 13th centuries is more in line with scholars who emphasize the medieval origins of the modern state (e.g., Strayer 1970; Levi 1988; Spruyt 1994a; Burke 1997).⁴

Our findings also relate to a small, but growing, literature which considers how developments in the Islamic world impacted the evolution of European political institutions. For example, existing scholarly work has considered how historical developments in the Ottoman Empire influenced religious reform and interstate conflict within Europe (Iyigun 2008; Iyigun 2013). This is the first paper, of which we are aware, that pushes back the historical time horizon to empirically examine how developments on Europe’s periphery influenced its history through an examination of interactions between Christians and Muslims during the medieval period. As such, we provide

³Indeed, Tilly (1992) neglects the Crusades both as a form of war mobilization and as a catalyst for the rise of capitalist interests focusing instead on changes in military technology that took place in the late 15th century, including the rise of mercenaries and development in firearm technology.

⁴Building on Tilly (1994) and Levi (2002), we take a relatively broad view of the state as a multi-dimensional constellation of related factors. Levi argues that the state is an abstract, composite concept that cannot be encompassed in a single variable (2002, 34). In particular, Levi defines the state as “a complex apparatus of centralized and institutionalized power that concentrates violence, establishes property rights, and regulates society within a given territory while being formally recognized as a state by international forums” (2002, 40). Similarly, Tilly applies the term “state” generously to organizations that command substantial means of coercion and successfully claim durability over other uses of coercion in at least one bounded territory (1994, 14). Branch (2011) argues the development of mapping technologies in early modern Europe changed the way political actors organized political space and authority with important implications for the creation of the sovereign state system. See Osiander (2008) for a discussion about the applicability of the concept of “state” to the historical study of international politics.

a “second image reversed” perspective on the question of European state formation by examining the *international* sources of Europe’s political development (Gourevitch 1978).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we provide a theoretically-motivated historical narrative linking crusader mobilization to social, political and economic changes associated with early state formation. Section Three empirically interrogates observable implications of our theory. A final section concludes.

2 Crusader Mobilization and Financing

Holy Land crusades of the medieval period were large, papally-sanctioned expeditions, undertaken on Christ’s behalf, typically with Jerusalem as the goal of the mobilization (Andrea 2003; Riley-Smith 2009). Madden (2002, 2) describes the Crusades as wars against enemies of the Church. Crusader expeditions shared some characteristics with pre-existing forms of Holy Land pilgrimage; yet, in terms of scale and objective, the preponderance of historians have argued that the Crusades constituted a previously unknown form of war. Indeed, Riley-Smith (2002a, 163) calls the First Crusade a “war of a type never experienced before and on a scale not known for six centuries.”

A number of factors distinguished the Crusades from other forms of conflict. While Byzantine and Iberian Christians were engaged in battle with Muslims on their own soil, other Europeans mobilized for war without concern for territorial defeat in their homelands. The battleground was extremely far from mobilization and recruitment locales, leading crusader expeditions to be extremely costly. Finally, recent historical accounts generally concur that crusader mobilization took place as a result of ideological and religious motivations rather than with an expectation of financial gain.

Yet, despite some of the important differences between traditional wars and mobilization for the Crusades, in many ways, leading social scientific accounts of the impact of war-making on societal change should have applicability. Tilly (1992) argues that the need to build and equip armies constituted among the largest single incentives for extraction over the long run of European statemaking. In Tilly’s account, however, war making alone does not a state make. The earliest full-fledged nation-states developed in capital-intensive polities where a “capitalized coercion mode” might predominate (Tilly 1992, 30). The account that we provide describes how crusading impacted both the rise of capital and the emergence of states with the capacity to extract broadly from their subject population. This section discusses the social origins of Holy Land crusaders, their strategies for how they financed their expeditions and the direct and indirect political economy implications of their efforts.

2.1 The Social Origins of Holy Land Crusaders

There is general agreement among historians on the numbering of the first five crusades: the First Crusade 1096-1102 CE, Second Crusade 1147-49 CE, Third Crusade 1188-1192 CE, Fourth Crusade 1202-1204 CE and Fifth Crusade 1217-1221 CE. Some have argued for the relevance of three additional numbered crusades (the Sixth Crusade 1227-1229 CE, Seventh Crusade 1248-54 CE and Eighth Crusade 1270-1272 CE) in addition to hundreds of smaller, minor crusades. But what do we know about the social, political and economic origins of Holy Land crusaders? A variety of sources suggest that the primary crusade participants were members of the European elite — including nobles, knights and monarchs — as well as the full complement of individuals who

might accompany elites on such a journey. In this section, we summarize the existing literature on the social origins of crusade participants as well as their motivations for participation.

The individuals primarily associated with participation in Holy Land crusades were representatives of Europe's economic and political elite. Part of the reason why elites were the primary participants in crusade was that the costs of raising the funds necessary to participate would be difficult, even for the affluent, and virtually impossible for poor nobles who might be required to raise up to four times their annual income (Riley-Smith 1997, 112). This is not to say that elites were the numerical majority of travelers to the Holy Land; historians have suggested that nobles and knights in the First Crusade, for example, traveled with at least three to four times their numbers in squires, grooms and other staff (Riley-Smith 1997, 109). Yet, it was the elites who "took up the cross" and most of what is known about the crusaders is drawn from charters which document the preparations of elite participants.

Primary crusaders in the First Crusade were drawn from across Europe's "arms-bearing class" (Riley-Smith 2002a, 161). While none of the participants in the First Crusade were monarchs themselves, sons, brothers and other relatives of kings participated in the First Crusade and monarchs themselves participated in later crusade waves (Andrea 2003, 117-8). Large numbers of crusaders came from the "political and administrative elite" including earls, sheriffs and royal agents (Tyerman 1988, 67). Tyerman (1988, 69) writes that the "most characteristic English *crucesignati* were local landlords, knights and gentry, who...travelled with their small groups of companions, relations, vassals and neighbors." By the middle of the 12th century, the crusading movement was an important part of the "collective consciousness" of noble and knightly families who constituted an important pool of potential crusaders (Riley-Smith 1997, 103).

What motivated individuals to take up the cross? The modern literature on crusader motivation seeks to correct previous arguments suggesting that crusaders left for the Holy Land in pursuit of economic fortune. Rather than crusading as pillaging, Riley-Smith sees pious idealism at the root of the crusaders — that crusading was a Christian act of charity reflecting love of God and love of one's fellow Christians in the Holy Land (Riley-Smith 2002b, 38).⁵ Participants in Holy Land expeditions also sought spiritual privileges, most important of which was the indulgence. An indulgence is defined by Brundage (1969, 145) as "a remission of the temporal penalties resulting from sin, granted after the eternal penalties for the sinful act have already been forgiven in sacramental confession."

What might crusaders hope to gain from participating in crusade?⁶ The cost of crusading was so staggering that historians deemed profit an unlikely motive for participation. Crusading was a voluntary endeavor and it is generally believed that individuals were not forced into the practice (Bull 2002). Crusaders did not come home wealthy, but they did enjoy status rewards as a result of their participation. Among the upper ranks of society there was enthusiasm for the practice as a key part of "chivalric culture" (Edbury 2000, 884). Religious rhetoric was typically also associated with medieval themes of "obligation, defence, honour and glory" (Tyerman 2002, 101). As a result of these status rewards, crusaders might expect to even "arrange more advantageous

⁵Indeed, Hall and Kratochwil (1993) argue that a preponderance of historical specialists find that crusaders were motivated by genuine religious sentiment, particular in the early waves.

⁶Crusaders were offered forms of privileged status as a result of their participation in Holy Land expeditions. Because crusading represented a specific form of pilgrimage (Brundage 1969, 3), the expectation was that crusaders would travel to the Holy Lands relatively unmolested. Also, once crusader taxes were implemented, individuals on crusade were also exempted from having to pay such costs. Other minor privileges included exemption from minor disciplinary regulations, like fasting (Brundage 1969, 187).

matches for their sons and daughters” (Riley-Smith 2002a, 158).⁷

A number of legal rights and customary privileges also came to be associated with the act of crusading. These dispensations were granted by successive popes and included protection of property and possessions during a crusader’s absence and legal privileges including the right to delay judicial procedures or to be judged in ecclesiastical, rather than secular, courts (Brundage 1969, 167-170). Perhaps the most important of these privilege was the right to “sell lands outright, and to mortgage or hypothecate them, even including fiefs” (Brundage 1969, 175). Before the Crusades a landholder would be required to receive the consent of his wife, heirs and lord, if he was a vassal, to sell land; and consent was not often given (Cazel 1989, 121). This change to customary law had an enormous impact on feudal landholding patterns in Western Europe (Brundage 1969, 177). The possibility also emerged at this time for the use of land as “security for loans of money,” establishing new financial procedures with wide-ranging consequences (Brundage 1969, 176). The ability to sell land without seeking the permission of others who might be impacted by the sale through interlocking feudal obligations was highly significant and we elaborate more on this point below.

2.2 Financing Expeditions to the Holy Land

Intimately linked to the class status of crusaders is the issue of how they financed their ventures. There is not a great deal of information about how non-elite crusade participants financed their activities.⁸ Much more is known, however, about how European elites financed Holy Land expeditions as a result of crusader charters which document financial and other arrangements. This section considers the way elite individuals engaged in crusade financing as well as how the church and state eventually began to engage in more general forms of fundraising in support of Holy Land expeditions.

2.2.1 Land and other Property Sales

Crusading was extremely costly; as such, it was typically individuals with resources who could participate in the Holy Land expeditions. Great lords were required to support the financial expenses associated with large vassal contingents of combatants and non-combatants. And the financing of a person’s participation was borne primarily by that individual, even after 12th and 13th century efforts by pope’s and king’s to raise funds for large-scale expeditions (Andrea 2003, 113). So, how did individuals typically raise the money in order to participate in crusades?

Land and other property sales were the dominate mode by which individuals financed their expeditions. While most crusade funds were raised through land transactions (Cazel 1989, 140-1; Murray 2000, 40; Andrea 2003), prospective crusaders also sold vineyards, mills, ovens, market rights and future revenue streams and even serfs (Constable 1982, 76; Riley-Smith 2002a, 166-7).⁹ Many of the properties were very large (Riley-Smith 2002a, 167) and the tendency for many individuals to seek cash for land in a relatively short period of time led to major declines in the

⁷That said, some individuals were driven to participate out of feudal obligation to local lords (Riley-Smith 1997, 90). There is also not considerable evidence that crusades were undertaken by second sons, whose economic prospects may have been unfavorable (Riley-Smith 2002a, 163).

⁸Indeed, the scholarly literature suggests some may have set off toward Jerusalem anticipating apocalypse, suggesting that financing their activities was not a great concern.

⁹Feudal lords also tried to extract more from vassals and Jewish communities, as well, but this represented small sources of financing.

value of land. For example, the prices that many received in 1096 CE were depressed because crusaders glutted the market with numerous estates (Murray 2000, 41; Andrea 2003, 114). As a result, crusaders sold their lands on highly unfavorable terms (Andrea 2003).

According to historians of the era, one's willingness to pledge or sell property was an "extreme measure" (Riley Smith 1997, 125) and there was no precedent for such widespread, nearly simultaneous, sale of landed estates. Indeed, up until this point, it was extremely rare for financially-healthy landholders to sell their estates, disinheriting their children in the process (Tyerman 1988, 208).¹⁰ The decision to embark on a Holy Land expedition, then, imposed on the crusader family "a medium-term or permanent diminution of estates and future profits" (Tyerman 1988, 209). Because the sale of land or other revenue streams created a huge burden for crusader family members, many crusaders sought to arrange for wives to enter religious houses and to secure places for themselves in monasteries upon their return from crusade (Constable 2002, 147). Such arrangements were often undertaken under conditions when religious institutions served as sources of credit (Cazel 1989, 120).

Before the Crusades, a landholder could not sell his property without the consent of his wife and heirs, or his lord, if holding feudal obligations (Cazel 1989, 121). Until the Pope granted crusaders the right to sell or pledge land without the consent of lords or relatives in 1145 CE, crusaders used forms of moral persuasion to seek consent for land sales. But after 1145 CE, crusaders were offered opportunities to liquidate real property more easily. The net result was the "the alienation of property by crusaders" (Cazel 1989, 119). And outright land sales were not the only option for crusaders as forms of mortgage also emerged during the medieval period in response to the need for cash on the part of crusaders. Crusaders borrowed from merchants, religious orders, monarchs and lesser lords (Cazel 1989, 120), using their land as collateral (Constable 1982, 71). Tyerman (1988, 195) characterizes the situation in a following way: "the problem was to capitalize land, rents, and rights of jurisdiction into bullion or war materials; the solution was sale, lease or mortgage."

The relatively widespread, rapid sale and lease of feudal lands privileged capital holders who had the ability to acquire property or offer loans (Constable 1982, 75). Under these circumstances, crusaders and their families were "habitual losers," from an economic and financial perspective (Tyerman 1988, 209). This redistribution of financial resources within medieval society — in a relatively short period of time and for reasons largely unrelated to the political economy of Europe, itself — represented a massive social, economic and political shock. The net result was that the ability to sell land as a result of crusader privileges "contributed to the destruction of feudal landholding patterns in Western Europe during the thirteenth century...a development of fundamental importance in shaping the future economic and social contours of Europe, for it made possible the spread of landholding among larger and more diverse sections of the population" (Brundage 1969, 177). In a later section, we elaborate on the implications of land sales for the rise of alternative modes of political and economic power.

¹⁰As a result of the existence of numerous crusader charters, historians have pointed to many examples of the specificities associated with this process. The example of Godfrey of Bouillon's case is informative, who sold his county in Verdun and other lands (Cazel 1989, 119). Selling of his properties "represented the wholesale transfer of the family tradition" (Murray 2000, 40).

2.2.2 Medieval Origins of “National” Taxation

The history of the Crusades is closely linked to the origins of national taxation in Western Europe. While the early waves of crusade were characterized by individual-level fundraising efforts of landed elite, over time more institutionalized forms of financing began to emerge. This occurred both in response to events taking place in the Holy Land, in particular the loss of formerly crusader-held lands, but also the growing participation of heads of state in crusader expeditions. In particular, the emergence of the “poll” tax — or general tax per head — in Europe is connected to exigent conditions associated with crusade financing.

Existing feudal structures provided the institutional basis upon which medieval kings might engage in general taxation of their subjects. In particular, “feudalism recognized the vassal’s obligation to aid his lord in extraordinary need” (Harriss 1975, 24). As a result, the ability of monarchs to demand these funds “could be justified as logical extensions of doctrines implicit in feudal relationships” (Strayer 1970, 43). While no kings were direct participants in the First Crusade, the kings of France and Germany were concerned with subsequent crusades and, over time, “with royal involvement came royal taxation” (Andrea 2003, 114). In 1146 CE, King Louis VII of France raised money with a “general levy on all subjects of the king” for which a “census was made through all France; neither sex nor order nor dignity excused anyone from giving aid to the king” (Constable 1982, 67). In 1166 CE, he levied a property and income tax on all subjects for the defense of Jerusalem (Andrea 2003, 114-5). King Henry II of England followed suit with a tax earmarked for paying mercenaries in the Holy Land and building fortifications (Andrea 2003, 114-5).

The ability to tax emerged from a feudal lord’s right to seek financial aid during times of emergency — like the Crusades and the ransom for King Richard when he was kidnapped while returning from the Holy Land — and it was through the use of emergency aid that general taxation emerged (Strayer 1970, 43; Ames and Rapp 1977, 172-3). Indeed, Ames and Rapp (1977, 172-3) argue that “tax systems originated with the need of medieval governments for ‘extraordinary’ revenues.” Appeals made by the Pope to support the crusaders efforts in their “hour of need” (Harriss 1975, 22) assisted monarchs who sought to implement widespread taxation (Cazel 1989, 129).¹¹

The most famous of the exigent taxes was the Saladin Tithe. The loss of Jerusalem to the Muslim sultan, Saladin, in 1187 CE “led to greater efforts by monarchs and popes alike to create large-scale means for raising crusade funds” (Andrea 2003, 115). The kings of France and England both imposed an “uncustomarily steep, one-time levy of ten percent on all income and nonessential movable goods” in support of the reconquest of Jerusalem (Andrea 2003, 115). The Saladin Tithe has been described as novel in its severity (Tyerman 1988, 76; Cazel 1989, 127). In England, the tax was collected at the level of the parish using an elaborate bureaucratic “machinery” that had not existed previously. According to Cazel (1989, 127), “each taxpayer assessed himself (and)...paid his tax before committees composed of the parish priest, the rural dean, and the clerk of the baron on the local level, and of a Templar and Hospitaller, and clerks of the bishop and king on the diocesan level...if the collectors questioned the man’s payment, a sworn jury of four to six men in the parish was called to assess him.” Punishment for non-payment included excommunication and imprisonment (Tyerman 1988, 76-7). Even though Philip II

¹¹The institutional basis for more general taxation was also aided by the existence of general taxes on the clerical establishment. According to Wolfe (1972), clerical taxes constituted a significant method for raising funds in support of the Crusades. In France, the “first timid steps toward national taxation were clerical tithes (*décimes*), also called ‘crusader tithes’” (Wolfe 1972, 10).

of France eventually abandoned the Saladin Tithe because of strong protest, his difficulty in collecting the tax led him to put into place administrative reforms in 1190 CE which “materially and later crucially improved Capetian financial resources” (Tyerman 1988, 77). This view is consistent with Ruggie’s argument that the Crusades “were not designed to suggest new modes of raising revenues for territorial rulers, but they ended up doing so” (1993, 166).

Efforts to collect taxes in support of the Crusades were not restricted to France and England. The first general tax known to have been levied in Germanic lands was decreed by Philip of Swabia, who — in 1207 CE — “ordered a general almsgiving for the Holy Land to be paid for five years” to be assessed by collectors appointed by bishops with nobles taking responsibility for enforcement (Cazel 1989, 128). While nobles were asked to give as they saw fit, non-nobles “paid on each plow and in the towns two pence on each house” (Cazel 1989, 128). In 1221 CE, Emperor Frederick II imposed a tax on clerical and lay subjects in Sicily for a planned crusade (Cazel 1989, 128; Andrea 2003, 115). Although not related to the Holy Land expeditions, Spanish monarchs levied a sales tax on all goods — the *alcabala* — as a source of income to defray costs associated with the reconquest of Spain from Muslim rule (Ruiz 2007, 130; Ames and Rapp 1977, 164). The *alcabala* eventually became a permanent royal fiscal tool (Ruiz 2007, 130). Ames and Rapp (1977, 172) write that “when the basic tax structure of Castile was set down in the 1200s the citizenry had every expectation of indefinite conflict....the consequence was a perpetual tax system.”

2.3 Trade, Urbanization and State Formation

The Crusades also had significant economic effects beyond the area of taxation. While there had been a flourishing trade in the Mediterranean region during the Roman period, the fall of the empire was associated with a reduction in cross-regional trade. The Crusades opened eastern Mediterranean ports to northern and western European traders after being largely closed for five centuries; in this process, “Eastern” goods were able to reach Western Europe without having to move through Byzantine territory (Runciman 1987).¹²

Abu-Lughod (1989) provides a well-developed elaboration of the mechanisms by which the Crusades increased commercial activity in northwestern Europe. She argues that there had existed a significant political, social and economic bifurcation during the early medieval period between relatively underdeveloped northwestern Europe and a more prosperous southern Europe on the Mediterranean coast. When Crusaders from northern and western parts of Europe began to travel to the Holy Land on Italian ships this encouraged a reintegration of northwestern Europe “into a world system from which she had become detached after the ‘fall of Rome’” (Abu-Lughod 1989, 47).¹³ Her contention is that the Crusades were crucial in breaking northwestern Europe out of its relative isolation with associated long-term impacts on trade, growth and urbanization.

Increased trade was spurred, in part, by the creation of a growing taste for “Eastern” products which were introduced to Western Europe as a result of the Crusades. These products included spices, silk, porcelain and other luxury goods (Abu-Lughod 1989, 47). Flemish nobles who participated in the Crusades discovered tradable goods from the East for which their cloth might be exchanged (Abu-Lughod 1989, 82-3). Indeed, Abu-Lughod argues that “the revival of

¹²Crusader expeditions also encouraged the development of financial institutions. “Modern” banking began in the medieval Italian cities — like Venice — in response to the commercial interests of crusaders.

¹³Holy Land crusaders from northwestern Europe initially traveled overland through eastern Europe and Byzantine territories.

the Champagne fairs in the 12th century can be explained convincingly by both the enhanced demand for eastern goods stimulated by the Crusades and...the increased supplies of such goods they could now deliver” (1989, 108). The net result was a rapid urbanization of northwestern European cities, like Flanders and Bruges, which served as important trade hubs (Abu-Lughod 1989, 47). Abu-Lughod concludes that the 13th century was one of economic “efflorescence” on the European continent, at least in part, because of expanded horizons and trade opportunities associated with the Crusades (Abu-Lughod 1989, 47).¹⁴

This period of growing trade and economic exchange in Europe coincided with the rise of city-states, many of which were controlled by merchant guilds (Spruyt 1994, 538). Few scholars in political science have pointed to the way urbanization has aided in processes of state formation.¹⁵ Urban governments were frequently territorial rulers, serving as “nodes of control, both economically and militarily, within vast rural spaces” (Isaacs and Prak 1996, 234).¹⁶ In addition, urban historians have long pointed to the city as the model for the early modern state from an institutional development perspective, suggesting that cities served as pioneers for the development of legal codes, new bureaucratic forms and institutions of conflict management. Dilcher (1997, 219), for example, reports that medieval cities created “a detailed law of privileges, conferments, statutes, unions, customs, and precedents, which went far beyond the archaic medieval territorial law.” Isaacs and Prak (1996, 219-220) describe cities as “laboratories of political technique” arguing that medieval city-states developed many of the essential tools of modern statehood in the realms of military, diplomatic and fiscal affairs. Finally, urban governance forms were also important because of the constituencies they created. Spruyt argues that “the growth of towns caused a new political group to emerge: the burghers or town dwellers” (1994b, 538). Tilly (1994, 23) concurs and suggests that the growth of urban oligarchies led rulers to seek to incorporate those interests, often in representative institutions.¹⁷

Stasavage (2014, 339) suggests that autonomous cities first arose when groups of actors, particularly merchants, sought to create more secure forms of property rights protections by avoiding management by a feudal ruler. Stasavage (2014) explains why autonomous cities enjoyed initially strong, and later stagnant, economic growth but does not focus on why autonomous cities developed where they did. Our historical explanation of the impact of the Crusades, and the associated empirical analysis, offers one interpretation for why autonomous cities developed when and where they did across medieval and early modern Europe.

2.4 Implications

Thus far, we have argued that at least some part of the tremendous societal changes in Western Europe of the 12th and 13th centuries might be attributed to the long-term impact of Holy Land Crusades. There are at least three causal channels by which crusader mobilization impacted economic and political structures in medieval Europe.

¹⁴Spruyt (1994b, 538) describes this period as one of important economic transformation for Europe but is fairly agnostic about the causes of the economic revival, discussing a variety of possible explanatory factors. The one he emphasizes, however, is the transformational role associated with the revival of long-distance trade.

¹⁵Rather, large literatures have been dedicated to using urbanization as a proxy for economic development.

¹⁶For example, Isaacs and Prak (1996, 221) find that cities were indispensable for state consolidation as urban centers created “capillary systems of territorial control.”

¹⁷According to Blockmans (1994, 244), as long as urbanites did not challenge the legitimacy of sitting rulers, cities and monarchs collaborated fruitfully. This alliance between the monarchy and bourgeoisie was to the detriment of landed, feudal interests.

First, crusading led relatively large numbers of European landed elites to leave northwestern Europe with the aim of reaching the Holy Land. While most crusaders sought to return to their homes (Riley-Smith 2002a, 161), many did not and — for those who were able to return — the cost of financing their expedition left them in a vastly different economic position than when they set out. The absence of these individuals reduced the absolute number of elites who might serve as challengers to the king while simultaneously reducing the financial capital of the landed class. In some cases, the individuals who undertook crusade were ones on bad terms with sitting kings (Riley-Smith 1997, 91), thus having the most to gain from monarchical overthrow. *As a result, we posit that crusader mobilization should have a positive impact on the durability of monarchical rule.*

Second, historians have pointed to the 13th century as a critical point in the development of systems of taxation (Ames and Rapp 1977). In particular, states began to move away from feudal financial obligations to more centralized tax systems. While general poll taxes began as demand for “extraordinary” revenue, these levies ultimately became “the fiscal basis of government” (Ames and Rapp 1977, 162). The precedent established as a result of extraordinary taxation was critical in the consolidation of state power and central authority in England, France, Germany and, eventually, the Low Countries (Tyerman 1988, 325). The crusader expeditions and, associated taxation institutions, provide a vital bridge between feudalism and more modern states. The link between taxation and the development of representative institutions is well-established; with regard to the Crusades, Andrea (2003, 109) describes how councils were convened for the purpose of decreeing crusade-related legislation. Eventually, national assemblies were called to approve a variety of royal decisions (Wolfe 1972, 22), many of which were related to taxation. *As a result, we posit that areas with high levels of crusader mobilization were more likely to develop representative parliamentary institutions and greater downstream capacity to raise tax revenue.*

Finally, there was a major reorganization of societal wealth as elite families sold or mortgaged their landed estates within a relatively short period of time, driving down the relative price of land. Because crusading was often “ruinously expensive” for participants (Tyerman 1988, 188), the losses incurred by crusader families accrued to holders of capital and these changes became a “vehicle for social mobility” (Tyerman 1988, 214). Cazel (1989) argues that the economic transactions that took place as a result of crusader mobilization had profound economic effects:

“The borrowing and lending necessary for most of the crusaders stimulated credit formation and the development of credit institutions and instruments. Indeed, the money economy as a whole must have been stimulated by these great enterprises which took so much money. The transformation of gold and silver altar ornaments into coin for crusaders may have helped to heighten the inflation that occurred during the Crusades, especially in the later 12th century. The sale of land to finance most assuredly helped to make the market in real estate which was bringing about a new social order in the age of the Crusades. The principal beneficiaries of all these financial transactions were the bourgeoisie, who loaned the money, bought the land, sold the provisions, furnished the transportation, and generally benefited from the financial activity of the crusaders” (Cazel 1989, 148-9).

The relative empowerment of holders of capital to holders of land encouraged city growth where towns increasingly represented “a distinctive juridical space ‘immune’ from the substantive and procedural rules characteristic of the feudal system” (Poggi 1978, 40).¹⁸ The rise of towns

¹⁸Dincecco and Onorato (2015) also find positive impact of war on urbanization though operating through

was particularly significant as urban areas emerged as entities capable of claiming rights of a corporate nature (Poggi 1978, 37) with long-term implications for the development of executive constraint. The net social result was that the Crusades redistributed wealth away from nobles and toward a nascent bourgeoisie (Cazel 1989, 149). Our logic here is similar to Acemoglu et al. (2005) in their argument that Atlantic trade strengthened commercial interests outside of the royal circle; in this case, we argue that crusader mobilization created early opportunities for the emergence of political institutions to protect merchant interests. This bourgeoisie was further empowered as increased demand for “Eastern” goods — combined with greater trade opportunities via Italian merchants — led to a renaissance of trade and exchange. *As a result, we posit that crusader mobilization should have a significant impact on the rise of towns in Europe, measured in terms of both urban population growth and city autonomy.*

The areas of impact that we have described do not exist independently of each other. For example, the growing opportunities and inclination to sell or mortgage feudal fiefs impacted both the consolidation of states and the rise of a town-dwelling merchant class. Similarly, increased capacity and incentive for the collection of taxes by a centralized authority encouraged the formation of representative assemblies while simultaneously contributing to the growth of consolidated state institutions. Finally, a number of studies have suggested that the existence of representative institutions is correlated with urbanization (DeLong and Shleifer 1993; Van Zanden et al. 2012). Constable (1982, 88) sums up our position well when he argues that the Crusades impacted almost every aspect of life in the 12th century by breaking the old social and economic order through an exchange of property and transfer of treasure into liquid assets as well as “development of centralized financial administration.” This leads him to conclude that “how the crusaders got to the East may have had a more profound influence on the West than what they brought back with them when they returned” (Constable 1982, 88). Figure 1 provides a schematic of some of the channels by which crusader mobilization impacted political and economic structures.

3 Empirical Analysis

The previous section lays out a series of testable empirical implications associated with the theoretically-minded narrative we have developed based on the historical record. In this section, we operationalize these hypotheses and undertake a series of statistical tests as a step toward understanding the impact of the Crusades on the development of the modern state in Europe.

3.1 Data

In this paper we make use of both original and existing data for our analysis. A major contribution of this project relates the collection of the first dataset (that we are aware of) which documents the geolocational origins of Holy Land crusaders across multiple waves of the Crusades. We also create the first dataset (again, that we are aware of) on the location of cathedrals built across Europe in the medieval period. We will argue that cathedral locations provide information about underlying levels of both religious commitment and wealth; as such, cathedral locations serve as an important, previously unanalyzed, control variable in our analysis.

different mechanisms; while we focus on the social, economic and political impacts of war mobilization, Dincecco and Onorato see urbanization as increasing as peasants seek “safe harbor” from conflict zones.

3.1.1 Crusader Dataset

For our data on crusader mobilization, we collect information on the name, title and geographic place of origin for elite Holy Land crusaders mobilized from across continental Europe. Why focus on *elite* crusader mobilization? As we have described, crusaders were “overwhelmingly nobles or knights and their military households” (Tyerman 1988, 69). The primary source for this information includes modern historical accounts which depended on primary sources, 19th century historical accounts as well as some primary sources.¹⁹ For example, Riley-Smith (1997) includes an appendix of Holy Land crusaders, including their place of origin, based on his reading of the narrative sources, cartularies and other collections of documents.

In order to create the crusader location points, if there existed a map of crusader origins, these points were projected onto the historical maps of the EurAtlas project by Nussli (2011). EurAtlas provides historical maps on Europe from the year 0 CE to 2000 CE every 100 years. For each century, the maps provide political boundaries of different units within the continent, their sovereign rulers and their dependent states. We use the 1200 CE map to calculate crusaders who mobilized during the First through Fourth Crusades for each sovereign entity in the map. That is, we count the number of recorded locations from which crusaders were mobilized and use it as a measure of crusade mobilization.²⁰

Where a projection of crusader points did not exist from existing historical maps, location points were identified using Google Maps based on the place of origin information collected. If no place of origin information was available for a particular individual but the noble’s name indicated his place of origin (i.e., for “de Coucy” or similar, Coucy would be searched and, if found, used as the location) this location was used as place of origin. If the locational information could not be identified at the level of a particular town, village or identifiable family home, such as a castle, the point would be placed within the county borders of his home county at the time which he embarked upon the crusade. Individuals for which no location information existed were dropped. This crusade variable is our proxy for the level of crusade mobilization in each entity.

We focus on crusader mobilization through the Fourth Crusade (which ended in 1204 CE) for two reasons. First, these were the largest and most significant of the Crusades. Indeed, out of 1,051 elite crusaders whose home locations that we have identified, 916 are categorized as participating in the first four waves. In addition, if we believe that crusader mobilization had an impact on stability and institutional development, we might be concerned that the later crusade waves (those initiated in the late 13th century and after) may have been impacted by the processes that we are describing. As a result, we focus on mobilization over the roughly one-century interval between 1096 and 1204 CE (i.e., First through Fourth Crusades).²¹ By the

¹⁹The particular texts from which the crusader identities are determined are listed here (with the relevant crusade wave): Chester Wilcox’s translation of Ansbert’s *Historia De Expeditione Frederici Imperatoris* (Third Crusade), James Cruikshank Dansey’s *The English Crusaders* (All Crusades), Appendix I of Jonathan Riley-Smith’s *The First Crusaders: 1095-1131* (First and Second Crusades), Corliss Konwiser Slack’s *Crusade Charters, 1138-1270* (Second and later Crusades), Geoffrey de Villehardouin’s *The Conquest of Constantinople* (Fourth Crusade).

²⁰This measure clearly differs from the actual number of individuals mobilized, which we do not have from the sources described above. Our measure is intended to capture the overall impact of crusader mobilization across Europe rather than provide a ratio of crusaders to population. Indeed, population data at the polity level does not exist for this period though we are able to make use of urbanization measures as a control variable in some of our specifications.

²¹As a robustness test, we have re-run all of our analysis with all crusader mobilization locations, and find that the main results remain unchanged.

end of the Fourth Crusade, there were 31 mobilization locations per political entity, on average. The standard deviation is high, however; the most common place of origin for crusaders was in France with 423 by 1204 CE. The Holy Roman Empire (270) and England (178) also saw large numbers of crusaders.

3.1.2 Dependent Variables

We test our hypotheses using a number of dependent variables which have been drawn from a variety of sources. First, in order to test whether crusader mobilization has a positive impact on the durability of monarchical rule, we use data on ruler duration drawn from Blaydes and Chaney (2013). In the paper, the authors determine the length of rule for every monarch in Europe that assumed power in each political entity for every EurAtlas map layer on the interval 700 to 1400 CE. We convert these time lengths to a set of mean values of duration of rule in each locale for each century. That is, for a given sovereign entity we take the *average* of years of rule for all rulers within each given century from 700 to 1400 CE. Second, we use the Blaydes and Chaney (2013) measure of parliament, an indicator for whether at least one parliament meeting was held between 1100 to 1400 CE.²² Next, in order to test whether areas with high levels of crusader mobilization were better able to collect tax revenues, we rely on data from Karaman and Pamuk (2013) on tax revenue between 1500 and 1800 CE. We also use data drawn from Bairoch et al. (1988) on urban population on the interval 800 to 1800 CE to test whether crusader mobilization had a significant effect on the rise of towns in Europe. To test the impact of crusader mobilization on the development of autonomous cities, we use data from Stasavage (2014) on both the degree and duration of city autonomy. Finally, we use data from Stasavage (2010) on the frequency of French provincial assemblies to conduct analysis on the within-France impact of crusader mobilization.

3.1.3 Alternative Causal Channels

Our strategy for dealing with the question of causal identification is to develop a series of empirical specifications that seek to minimize omitted variable bias within the constraints of our historical data collection. We include a number of key control variables that were — to the greatest degree possible — fixed at, or around, the time the regressor of interest was determined as a way to rule out alternative mechanisms through which ruler duration, parliament formation and taxation, and urbanization might have occurred. We enumerate each of these alternative causal channels below and also discuss how we seek to operationalize each channel.

One alternative explanation to the one that we have put forward is that *geographic factors* were associated with both crusader mobilization as well as our outcomes of interest. We include a number of geographic control variables in order to address this possibility. For example, latitude and agricultural suitability are both included as control variables as, together, they may determine the agricultural productivity of land.²³ Given the importance of agricultural productivity in the medieval period, we believe that latitude and land suitability are likely a product of, and an explanation for, a variety of social, economic and political outcomes. Per Stasavage (2010),

²²For further explanation on these two variables refer to the on-line Appendix.

²³We measure the agricultural suitability of a political entity as the fraction of land suitable for agriculture, obtained from <http://www.sage.wisc.edu/iamdata>. This measure has been used in a number of studies looking at the effect of land quality on socioeconomic processes; see for example Michalopoulos (2012) and Blaydes and Chaney (2013)

geographic scale may determine the likelihood of forming representative assemblies and may also be associated with certain polity forms, like city-states. Therefore, we include polity size as a control variable. Finally, we include a measure of terrain ruggedness in order to account for the possibility that crusaders were more likely to be recruited from flatlands; both wealth and heavy cavalry may have been more common in areas with flat terrains. This, in turn, may have led to greater crusader mobilization. Our measure for ruggedness is based on the Topographic Ruggedness Index (TRI) (Riley et al. 1999; Blaszczyński 1997), which measures the mean variance of terrain roughness based on elevation for each state.²⁴

We also believe that the social, economic and political impact of the Crusades must be considered in the context of preexisting *feudal institutions*. In order to identify the incremental effect of crusader mobilization after controlling for feudalism, we include the fraction of the political entity in 1200 CE that was under the Carolingian Empire in 800 CE per Blaydes and Chaney (2013). In addition, crusader mobilization may have been impacted by the interaction between feudalism and geography.²⁵ In particular, crusader mobilization may have been most common in feudal areas with relatively flat terrains, as those areas would have cultivated mounted shock combat warriors and also would have had the ability to support relatively large populations. We capture this potential channel by introducing an interaction term between TRI and the fraction of a political entity in 1200 CE that was Carolingian in 800 CE.

While few would argue that northwestern Europe was wealthier than Byzantium or Europe along the Mediterranean coast at the start of our study period, it is possible that forms of *economic development* both allowed for crusader mobilization and was also associated with ruler stability, the rise of towns, parliaments and centralized taxation. To control for levels of wealth and development *before* the first wave of crusaders, we use the number of important cities by 1000 CE in each political entity as defined in Nussli (2011).²⁶

As the recent historical literature on the causes of crusade mobilization suggests, the number of crusaders mobilized in each political entity may simply be a reflection of how devout the region was to the Christian values of salvation, and these values, not crusaders, could potentially explain the subsequent political and socioeconomic outcomes associated with state formation. In other words, *religious fervor* was a common cause for both crusader mobilization and our outcome variables of interest. In order to take this causal channel into account, we have collected original data on the number of cathedrals built in each political entity before the start of the Crusades. We collected this data from a variety of sources but most notably non-profit websites aimed at providing information about the location of Catholic Churches worldwide. This measure has the added benefit of helping to control for levels of societal development. Because cathedral building in the medieval period was costly and required a sizable non-agricultural labor force, we make the assumption that cathedrals were built in places that had the capacity and religious desire to dedicate funds and manpower to such efforts.

Figure 2 maps three of the variables used in our analysis — elite crusader mobilization between 1096 and 1204 CE, locations of major urban centers by 1000 CE and cathedrals built by 1100 CE within the “sovereign state” boundaries of 1200 CE, as defined by Nussli (2011).

²⁴See Nunn and Puga (2012) for a detailed description of the index.

²⁵We thank Carles Boix for this insight.

²⁶Given the scarcity and paucity of population data preceding the year 1500 CE in Bairoch et al.(1988), we expect the count variable from Nussli to be a viable alternative measure. Further details on the classification of important cities and the count variable are available in the on-line Appendix.

3.2 Empirical Findings

This section reports our main empirical findings. Table 1 displays the statistical relationship between crusader mobilization — our key independent variable — and ruler duration. The unit of analysis for these empirical tests is the “sovereign state” as described by Nussli (2011); it is a territory delimited by borders where an authority exercises effective public power on the population and territory with the capacity for absolute control. This differs from a dependent, or vassal state, which would be subject to a higher political entity.²⁷ In the following estimates, we restrict the sample to entities in Europe that existed in 1200 CE and run an ordinary least squares regression of the following form:

$$Duration_{it} = \sum_{t=700}^{1400} \alpha_t \cdot d_t + \sum_{t=1100}^{1400} \beta_t \cdot Crusades_{it} \cdot d_t + X_i \gamma + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

where $Duration_{it}$ is the mean duration of ruler in state i in year t , d_t are century dummy variables, $Crusades_i$ is the number of crusader mobilization sites recorded during the first four campaigns, X_i are control variables and the standard errors ε_{it} are clustered by state. The set of controls include geographic variables such as the latitude, polity area, the agricultural suitability of the polity and the ruggedness measure (TRI). We also include the percentage of area under Carolingian rule to control for the impact of feudal institutions (Blaydes and Chaney 2013), and the interaction between our measure of feudal influence and TRI. Lastly, we include the number of important cities by 1000 CE as a measure of pre-crusader economic development, and the number of cathedrals built before the year 1100 CE as a measure of both economic development and religious fervor.²⁸

No crusaders mobilized before 1096 CE; as a result, the by-century results from 700 to 1000 CE simply reflect the mean duration of rulers in Europe (with and without controls, depending on the column). From 1100 CE and onward, however, each column reports the mean duration of non-crusader states, as well as the difference in mean duration between crusader states and non-crusader states (reflected by the interaction terms).²⁹ Our estimates suggest a positive effect on the mean duration of rule in the 12th century, and this effect is statistically significant with the inclusion of a variety of control variables. The coefficient value displayed in Column 4, for example, suggests that each additional crusader mobilized led to an additional half-month (0.042 years) in the monarch’s mean duration of rule. For 1100 CE, the mean duration of rule was 17.1 years (standard deviation, 7.5 years). A one standard deviation increase in crusader mobilization represents a 3.5 year increase in mean duration, which explains 47 percent of the

²⁷The definition of sovereign states and guidelines for state classification is described in further detail in the on-line Appendix.

²⁸We use least squares regression with standard errors clustered by sovereign entity throughout the paper. Our main interest lies in examining the interaction effects between each century and crusader mobilization. That is, we focus on investigating the differential impact of crusader mobilization across centuries as we believe that the mobilization effort may have had a differential impact depending on the relevant outcome variable and associated causal mechanisms. An alternative approach would be to estimate the *average* effect of crusader mobilization, without interaction terms but controlling for century effects. We find that crusader mobilization had strongly positive and statistically significant effects using this empirical specification as well.

²⁹Since the first crusader wave started in 1096, which is much closer to 1100 CE and not 1000 CE, we assume that there was no crusader mobilization in our 1000 CE observation. That is, the first wave of crusaders are treated as having occurred at the beginning of 1100 CE.

standard deviation in the mean duration of rule.³⁰

A second implication of our historical narrative suggests that areas with higher levels of crusader mobilization were more likely to develop representative institutions, like medieval parliaments. Using data from Blaydes and Chaney (2013) on medieval parliaments over the period 1100 and 1400 CE, we find that roughly half of the non-Muslim polities in Europe witnessed parliament formation.³¹ Figure 3 displays the partial regression plot of the conditional effect of crusader mobilization on the number of centuries a parliament existed in a polity between 1100 and 1400 CE. After controlling for agricultural suitability and pre-Crusades urbanization — two variables that would seem to be important predictors of parliament formation — we find that states with higher levels of crusader mobilization had parliaments meet in more centuries across the interval 1100 to 1400 CE. Although we have a very small number of observations, there appears to be a positive relationship between crusader mobilization and parliament formation.

To corroborate our expectation about the institution-building capacity of crusader mobilization we consider an additional dataset which reflects institutional development. Karaman and Pamuk (2013) have compiled state-level total revenue collection data in the early modern period, in particular, for a variety of European polities for the years 1500, 1600, 1700 and 1800 CE. The mean total revenue over the four centuries is 307 tons of silver; over the years the mean increased rapidly from 48 tons of silver in 1500 CE to 696 tons by the year 1800 CE. In our analysis, again, we include only the sovereign entities that existed in 1200 CE; these include England, France, Russia, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Venice.³² Figure 4 displays the partial regression plot of the conditional effect of crusader mobilization on total state revenue over the interval 1500 to 1800 CE. Again, after controlling for agricultural suitability and pre-Crusades urbanization, we find that states with higher levels of crusader mobilization enjoyed higher levels of total revenue in the early modern period.³³

Next we test the impact of the Crusades on the rise of towns, which we measure using two proxies — urban population growth and city autonomy. First, we investigate the effect of crusade mobilization on city growth using data from Bairoch et al. (1988). There are 2,204 cities included in the data, with city population estimated at multiple points over the interval 800 to 1850 CE. We focus on the average effect of crusader mobilization on the subsequent growth of urban populations.³⁴ In this part of the analysis, we use each city instead of sovereign entity as the unit of analysis. This approach circumvents the problem of having to aggregate missing city population figures at the political-entity level. We also create 50-kilometer buffer zones around each city location to calculate crusader mobilization in the vicinity of the city, as well as the number of cathedrals and the fraction of arable land as control variables. The reduced-form estimation equation is the same as before:

³⁰See the on-line appendix for summary statistics over all centuries.

³¹These polities include Connacht, Denmark, Castile, Navarre, France, Norway, Gwynedd, England, the Papal States, the Holy Roman Empire, Scotland, Mann, Deheubarth, Aragon and Portugal.

³²Note that Venice is included in the revenue dataset but missing in our mean duration and parliament formation results, due to missing data in Blaydes and Chaney (2013).

³³A partial regression plot of the same estimation without England also yields a positive sign, although it has a much weaker statistical significance. In the discussion of robustness, we also provide an alternative way to take into account changing state boundaries and this analysis yields a strong, statistically significant relationship between crusader mobilization and revenue, after controlling for agricultural suitability and pre-Crusades urbanization.

³⁴To facilitate comparison with Stasavage (2014), we use the data from 1000, 1200, 1300, 1400, 1500, 1600, 1700, and 1800 CE. The year 1100 CE is not included in the Bairoch et al. (1988) dataset. Including additional population data at half-century frequencies after 1700 CE (1750 and 1850), and centuries prior to 1000 CE (800 and 900) does not change our results.

$$Urban_{it} = \sum_{t=1000}^{1800} \alpha_t \cdot d_t + \sum_{t=1200}^{1800} \beta_t \cdot Crusades_{it} \cdot d_t + \sum_c \gamma_c I_i^c + X_i \gamma + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

where $Urban_{it}$ is the population in city i in time t , I_i is the state dummy, and the controls X_i include latitude, agricultural suitability, TRI, an indicator for whether the city was part of the Carolingian Empire and the interaction between TRI and the Carolingian indicator. Coefficient β_t captures the estimated impact of crusader mobilization on urban population in year t .

The first set of estimated coefficients in Table 2 report the mean population of cities (in thousands) by each century without crusader mobilization. Interaction terms are introduced starting from 1200 CE to report the difference in mean population between the crusader and non-crusader cities. These estimates show that in the subsequent centuries after 1200 CE, crusader mobilization in each city has a statistically significant and positive impact on city population. The coefficient value displayed in Column 3, for example, suggests that each additional crusader mobilized led to between 1,582 and 2,901 additional residents in urban population, depending on the century. For 1300 CE, a one standard deviation increase in crusader mobilization represents an increase by 5,060 inhabitants, or 30 percent of the standard deviation in urban population.

Another way to measure the rise of towns is to look at the extent to which these localities were autonomous. We use two outcome variables from Stasavage (2014): the fraction of time (in centuries) that the town was autonomous, and the number of years it remained independent. The city autonomy variable takes a value between zero and one, representing the fraction of the time period for which a city was politically autonomous; the independence variable is the average number of years a city was autonomous over a given century. We estimate a specification of the form:

$$Autonomy_{it} = \sum_{t=1000}^{1800} \alpha_t \cdot d_t + \sum_{t=1000}^{1800} \beta_t \cdot Crusades_{it} \cdot d_t + \gamma_t Population_{it} + \sum_c \delta_c I_i^c + X_i \gamma + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

where $Autonomy_{it}$ is city i 's level of autonomy or years of independence, $Population_{it}$ is the city i population in time t , I_i is the state dummy, and X_i include the control variables used in Stasavage (2014) including dummy variables for oceanic ports, riverine ports, bishop's seats, Roman settlements, latitude and longitude. We present the results in Table 3 for the eight centuries between 1000 and 1800 CE. In Columns 1 and 2 the mean autonomy level for Europe and the difference between crusader and non-crusader cities are presented with and without controls, respectively. In Columns 3 and 4 the dependent variable is the mean years of independence. These results show that crusader mobilization had a positive impact on city autonomy throughout the four centuries from 1200 CE to 1500 CE.

Figure 5 summarizes the effects of our main regression tables. The empirical models used to generate the predicted probabilities for the outcome variables are the specifications with the greatest number of control variables. The upper-left panel emphasizes the immediate, positive effect of crusader mobilization on the mean duration of rule.³⁵ Because the causal mechanism that we describe suggests ruler duration increases as a result of the depopulating of elites from polities during the time of the Crusades, it is not surprising that these effects did not persist. The upper-right panel displays the effect of crusader mobilization on growth of urban populations.

³⁵This effect is also robust to the exclusion of France, the Holy Roman Empire and England.

Although there is no immediate effect in 1200 CE, on the interval between 1300 and 1600 CE there appears to be a positive, statistically significant impact of crusader mobilization, conditional on a variety of control variables. The two lower panels display the over-century impact of crusader mobilization on urban autonomy and years of autonomy. The Crusades effect is relevant for each measure on the interval 1200 to 1500 CE. We have suggested that urbanization and urban autonomy were both important contributors to the development of the European system of sovereign states.

3.3 Robustness

Although we have attempted to devise a fairly stringent set of empirical tests, there remain important concerns about the robustness of our empirical findings. In this section we run additional tests to interrogate the robustness of our main results. The following sections provides empirical findings associated with 1) an analysis of our findings for two outcome variables across French provinces and 2) a discussion of how an alternative measure of polity boundaries impacts our results.

3.3.1 Within-France Analysis

In a previous section we analyzed patterns of crusade mobilization at the level of the “sovereign state” as described by Nussli (2011). In this section, we explore the impact of crusader mobilization at the provincial level *within* France for two variables — urbanization and the frequency of assembly meetings. France provides an ideal case study for within-state investigation since it witnessed the highest level of crusader mobilization in Europe.

Stasavage (2010) discusses provincial assemblies in 15th century France, which met in addition to a national representative institution (the Estates General). These provincial assemblies played a significant political role, both in managing local affairs and administering taxes. Stasavage (2010) uses the frequency of assembly meetings as a proxy for the degree of control exerted over expenditures and explores the extent to which province size (his key explanatory variable) explains variation in meeting frequency. We investigate the correlation between crusade mobilization and the frequency of provincial assembly meetings using the Stasavage (2010) dataset.

In a bivariate regression, there is a positive relationship between meeting frequency and crusader mobilization; with the small number of observations, however, the coefficient is statistically insignificant. Following Stasavage (2010), we repeat our analysis after dropping two outliers, Bourgogne and Poitou, and the relationship between meeting frequency and crusader mobilization is much stronger. Because Stasavage (2010) demonstrates the relevance of province size as a predictor of meeting frequency, we include area in square kilometers as a control variable. Figure 6 displays the partial regression plots showing the effect of crusader mobilization and province area on meeting frequency. Crusader mobilization is positively and statistically significantly correlated with meeting frequency and province area is negatively associated with meeting frequency, as per Stasavage (2010).

In addition to testing the relationship between crusader mobilization and the frequency of provincial assembly meetings, we also investigate the effect of the Crusades on urbanization within France. Using Bairoch (1988) city population data, we calculate the total urban population (in thousands) for each of 91 geographic areas within France in 1500 CE. As a control, we also calculate the total urban population in 1000 CE by combining all of the cities reported by

Bairoch within each French region. Table 4 reports regression results which suggest that, with or without controls for unit size, agricultural suitability and urbanization in 1000 CE, the impact of crusader mobilization on urbanization at the regional level remains positive and statistically significant. The coefficient values suggest that a region with an additional crusader mobilization location by 1200 CE has a three to four thousand person larger urban population by 1500 CE. The magnitude of the effect is large when we consider the average urban population in 1500 CE to be 15,500; we also find that a one standard deviation change in crusader mobilization explains between 59 and 78 percent of the standard deviation in urban population. Overall, these findings support our hypotheses and corroborate our cross-“national” results.

3.3.2 Alternative Polity Boundaries

One of the primary challenges to our analysis is associated with the relatively small number of data observations. A related potential concern for some of our outcome variables is that we confine our analysis only to non-Muslim polities that existed in 1200 CE. We first focused on these polities because our goal is to measure the effect of crusader mobilization on outcome variables after controlling for prior levels of development and other influences. We also take entity boundaries in 1200 CE as fixed, and assign control variables accordingly. While this approach allows us to look at polity boundaries in 1200 CE as the historical arrangement for analysis in subsequent centuries, it also drastically reduces the number of observations for some outcome variables.

Since we know how the boundaries changed over the time period, we can take an alternative approach when estimating the impact of crusader mobilization. We obtain the number of crusader mobilization sites for *all* the polities by counting the number of sites under changing boundaries. We also obtain a new set of control variables by counting the number of important cities and cathedrals for each year. Using this “flexible boundaries” approach, we can estimate the impact of crusader mobilization on mean ruler duration, for example, by including observations in which the region saw the rise of a new polity in place of the old. Both $Crusades_{it}$ and control variables now vary over time with changing state boundaries, taking into consideration boundary changes over the time period. We find that the results on ruler duration remain similar to the “fixed” boundary main estimates presented in the main empirical section of the paper.³⁶ Allowing for boundary change provides a different interpretation than our preferred approach, however; while we increase the number of observations with flexible boundaries, we can only interpret a regional effect rather than the effect associated with a particular polity.

We might also consider validating results on the existence of medieval parliaments and tax revenue collection in the early modern period with this approach as both suffer from relatively small numbers of observations. Allowing for flexible boundaries means that we are able to include additional states to the dataset. Again, we reproduce the partial regression plots for parliaments and revenue, respectively, when controlling for pre-Crusades urbanization and agricultural suitability. With these additional observations, the positive relationship between total revenue collected and crusader mobilization is much stronger; results on the existence of a medieval parliament are similar to what has been reported in the main results section.³⁷

³⁶A full set of associated regression results are reported in the on-line Appendix.

³⁷These figures are presented in the on-line Appendix.

4 Conclusions

Understanding the conditions which led to the rise of the state, and the associated state system, is foundational to the study of the field of international relations (Frieden et al. 2012, 45). Although a number of important scholarly works in international relations have explored the origins of the state system, Fioretos (2011) has argued that the field — as a whole — has not engaged sufficiently with a growing literature on historical institutionalism across the social sciences. The question of how the state system took form would seem to be an ideal case for understanding how the timing and sequence of political events — primary foci of historical institutionalism — have impacted governance forms over time.

We argue that the Crusades were a turning point in the emergence of a system of sovereign, territorial states and offer a number of key empirical findings associated with this argument. The first is that areas with high levels of crusader mobilization witnessed more political stability in the centuries to follow. The causal mechanism that we put forward is that the departure of relatively large numbers of European landed elites for the Holy Land reduced the absolute number of elites who might serve as challengers to the king. This interpretation is supported by historical accounts which suggest that sitting monarchs benefited from the Crusades in that “foreign responsibilities kept the knights away, resulting in more power for the monarchs who stayed at home” (Burke 1997, 88). Political stability, in turn, had important implications for processes of state formation. Indeed, Strayer (1970, 17) argues that increased political stability in the late medieval period was one of the “essential conditions for state-building.”

We also find that areas with large numbers of Holy Land crusaders had a higher probability of establishing parliamentary institutions and a downstream advantage in the collection of revenue. The relationship between war mobilization and building of state institutions has been elaborated most famously by Tilly (1992, 20) who has argued that “preparation for war, especially on a large scale, involves rulers ineluctably in extraction.” Crusade tithes were among the first national poll taxes levied on European populations and, even where attempts to collect crusader tithes failed, monarchs were able to build fiscal and extractive capacity as a result of their efforts to do so. Centralization of fiscal capacity has been closely linked to processes of state formation (Dincecco 2011; Karaman and Pamuk 2013, 603). Levi has gone as far as to argue that “the history of state revenue production is the history of the evolution of the state” (1988, 1).

Lastly, we find that crusader mobilization is associated with higher rates of urbanization and urban autonomy across Europe. We posit two causal channels by which this occurs. The first is related to the large-scale sale of land by nobles who sought to raise funds to participate in the Crusades. Through these land sales, capital holders were empowered relative to feudal land holders, encouraging the rise of towns. The sale of land by nobles participating in the Crusades also facilitated the transition from feudalism to a system of consolidated sovereign states. The second causal channel is related to the economic impact of northwestern Europe’s reintegration into Mediterranean trade as a result of the Crusades. Increased trade was also spurred by the creation of a growing taste for “Eastern” products which were introduced to Western Europe as a result of the Crusades.

We contribute to a scholarly debate regarding “when” and “why” the essential elements of the modern state first began to appear. On the question of “when,” we tend to concur with Strayer (1970) — who argues that the key elements of the modern state emerged starting in 1100 CE — and disagree with Tilly (1992) — who sees the late 15th century as the critical moment of transition to the modern state. On the question of “why,” however, we tend to concur to a

greater extent with Tilly — who focuses on the importance of both war preparation and urban capital accumulation — compared to Strayer — who focuses on the growing influence of the Latin church and higher levels of elite education, among other factors. This argument suggests that although the military elite of Latin Christendom eventually gave up on taking back the Holy Land, developments in the Islamic world had a lasting impact on state formation in Europe.

Our findings also contribute to a growing literature in political economy which considers the historical origins of institutions which encourage economically productive behaviors. In other words, how do countries arrive at the “doorstep conditions” which make it possible to transition to an “open access order” with its associated constellation of political and economic rights (North, Wallis and Weingast 2009)? Prominent existing accounts emphasize the cumulative and lasting effects of small political, social or other differences at critical junctures (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). Rather than viewing the development of growth-promoting institutions as a function of small, virtually random perturbations, we consider how the rapid rise of Islam — a large change in the political ecology of the world system — impacted institutional development in Europe. As such, we provide a new perspective on the historical origins of Western Europe’s inclusive economic and political institutions that takes into account the interactive and interdependent nature of influences across world cultures.

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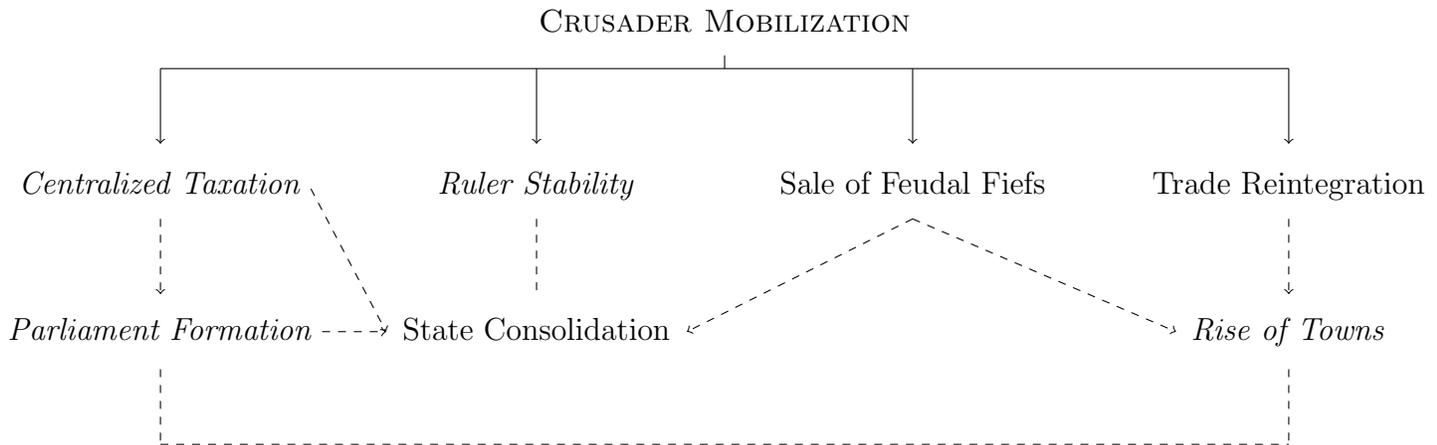


Figure 1: *Causal channels by which crusader mobilization impacted political and economic outcomes associated with state formation. Solid lines indicate where we see more direct effects; dotted lines suggest more loosely associated factors. Arrows suggest the theorized direction of causation. Italicized variables are ones for which we provide associated empirical evidence.*

Crusader Mobilization 1096-1204 CE

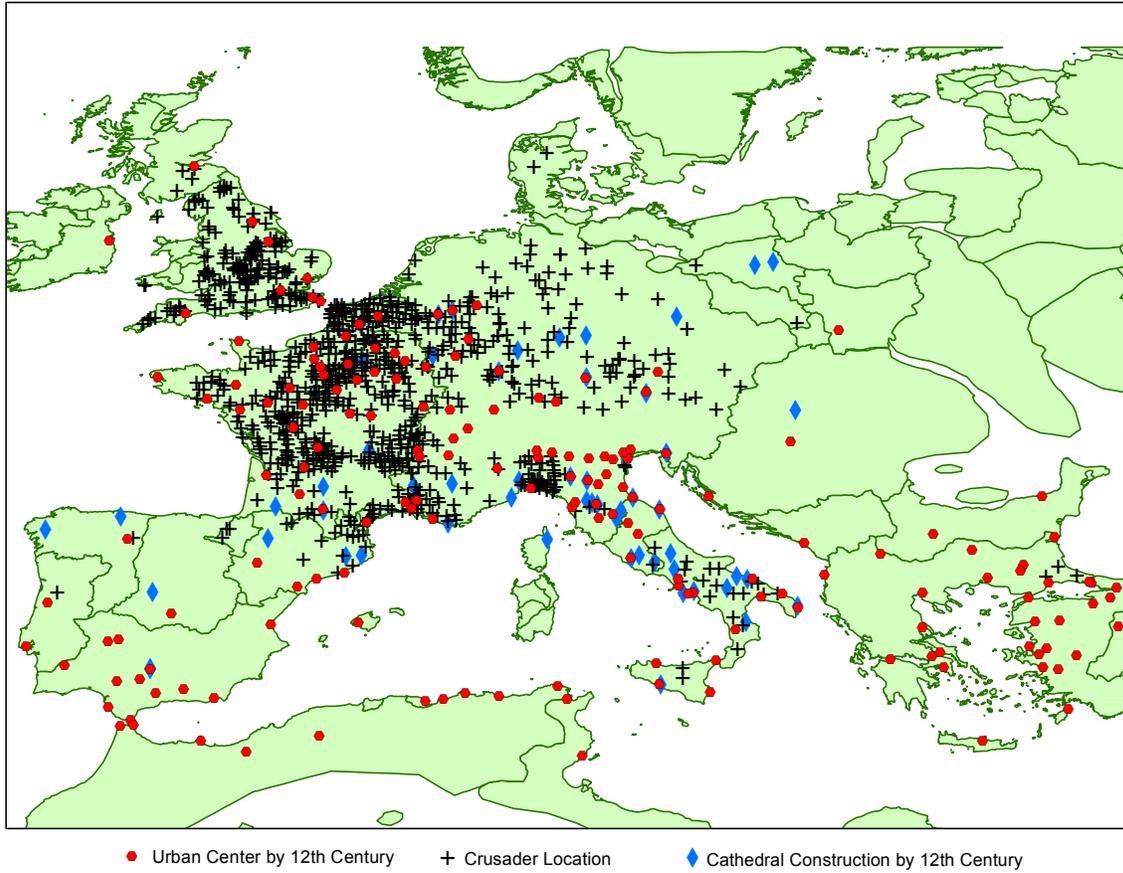


Figure 2: Map of first through fourth wave elite crusades, 1096-1204 CE (marked with a cross); urban centers by 1000 CE (marked with a circle); and cathedrals built by 1100 CE (marked with a diamond).

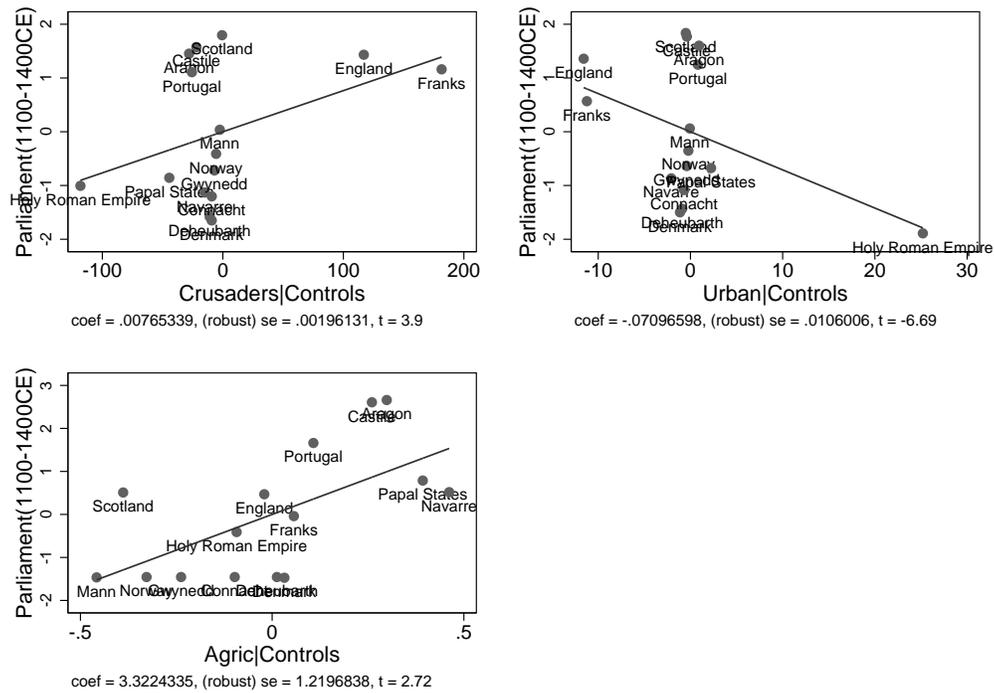


Figure 3: *Partial regression plots of the conditional effects of crusader mobilization (upper-left panel) on centuries of parliament existence after controlling for pre-Crusades urbanization and agricultural suitability.*

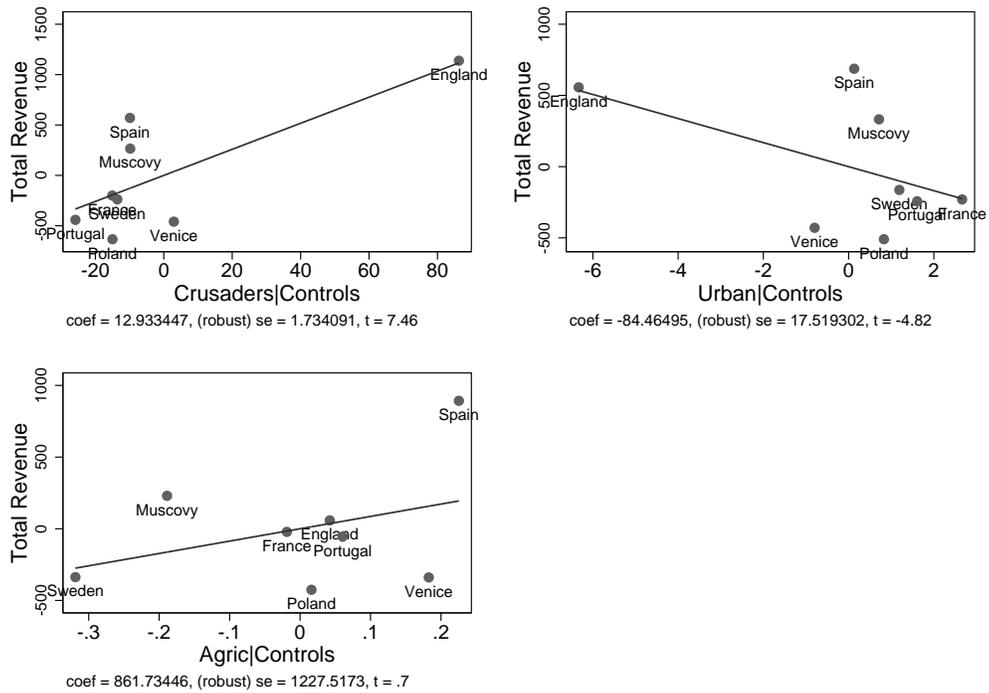


Figure 4: *Partial regression plots of the conditional effects of crusader mobilization (upper-left panel) on total revenue 1500-1800 CE after controlling for pre-Crusades urbanization and agricultural suitability.*

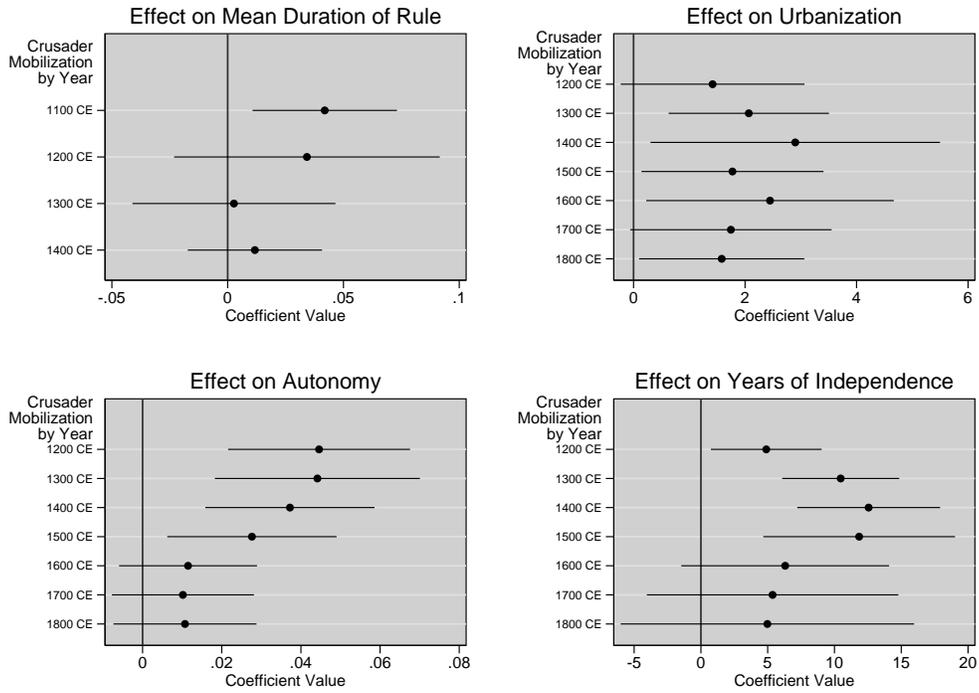


Figure 5: *Predicted probability of the impact of crusader mobilization on mean duration of rule (upper-left), urbanization (upper-right), urban autonomy (lower-left) and years of urban autonomy (lower right).*

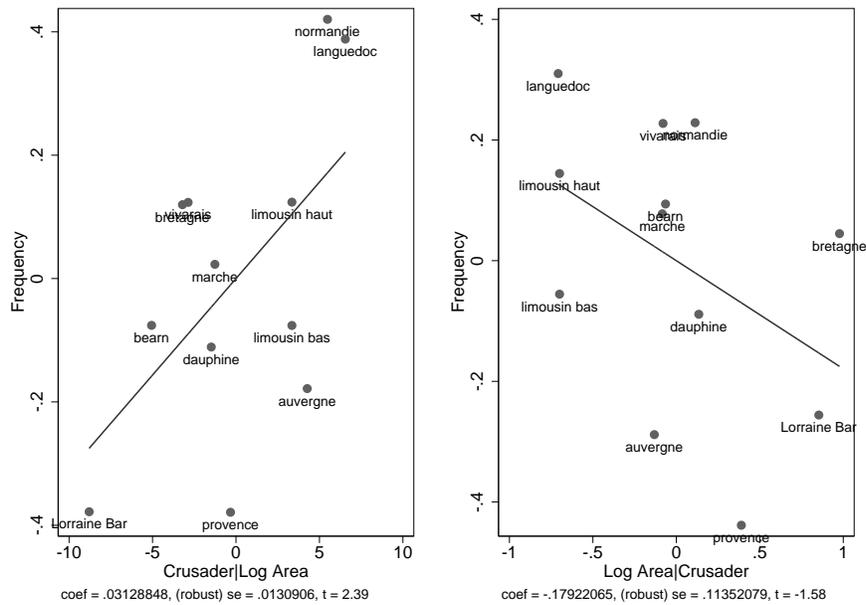


Figure 6: *Partial regression plots of the conditional effects of crusader mobilization (left-panel) and province area (right-panel) on French provincial assembly meeting frequency.*

Table 1: *Impact of Crusader Mobilization on Duration of Rule*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
[700,800)	17.000*** (3.999)	9.638 (22.848)	6.747 (22.821)	8.718 (25.098)
[800,900)	22.141*** (5.388)	14.671 (21.578)	11.737 (21.651)	13.519 (24.219)
[900,1000)	16.613*** (1.811)	9.127 (23.073)	6.262 (23.067)	8.085 (24.959)
[1000,1100)	13.433*** (1.758)	6.259 (23.373)	3.387 (23.208)	5.169 (24.997)
[1100,1200)	16.341*** (1.671)	8.830 (22.683)	6.102 (22.765)	7.721 (24.657)
[1200,1300)	16.404*** (1.914)	8.912 (22.553)	6.144 (22.577)	7.771 (24.494)
[1300,1400)	19.241*** (1.444)	11.863 (22.461)	9.154 (22.444)	10.733 (24.316)
[1400,1500)	18.430*** (2.409)	11.297 (22.602)	8.661 (22.552)	10.275 (24.281)
Crusader Mobilization X 1100	0.030*** (0.010)	0.040*** (0.010)	0.041*** (0.013)	0.042** (0.018)
Crusader Mobilization X 1200	0.025 (0.020)	0.033 (0.023)	0.034 (0.026)	0.034 (0.034)
Crusader Mobilization X 1300	-0.005 (0.009)	0.003 (0.012)	0.003 (0.015)	0.003 (0.026)
Crusader Mobilization X 1400	0.005 (0.010)	0.012 (0.008)	0.012 (0.008)	0.012 (0.017)
Geographic Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Carolingian	No	No	Yes	Yes
Cities and Cathedrals	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	148	148	148	148

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 2: *Impact of Crusader Mobilization on Urbanization*

	(1)	(2)	(3)
1000	18.634*** (3.080)	-11.012 (11.188)	-5.339 (12.980)
1200	18.304*** (3.042)	-11.295 (11.664)	-5.837 (13.424)
1300	13.850*** (2.761)	-14.966 (11.275)	-9.195 (13.101)
1400	13.784*** (2.930)	-14.924 (11.607)	-9.274 (13.490)
1500	13.840*** (2.788)	-15.393 (11.396)	-9.670 (13.233)
1600	14.408*** (2.821)	-14.535 (11.390)	-8.813 (13.267)
1700	14.182*** (2.743)	-14.670 (11.241)	-8.956 (13.108)
1800	14.700*** (2.621)	-14.048 (11.107)	-8.280 (12.945)
Crusader Mobilization X 1200	1.539 (1.003)	1.403 (1.006)	1.418 (1.002)
Crusader Mobilization X 1300	2.240*** (0.867)	2.108** (0.871)	2.068** (0.874)
Crusader Mobilization X 1400	3.091** (1.571)	2.923* (1.577)	2.901* (1.578)
Crusader Mobilization X 1500	1.904* (0.979)	1.796* (0.991)	1.775* (0.992)
Crusader Mobilization X 1600	2.650** (1.339)	2.474* (1.346)	2.448* (1.349)
Crusader Mobilization X 1700	1.911* (1.096)	1.760 (1.095)	1.746 (1.097)
Crusader Mobilization X 1800	1.750* (0.898)	1.610* (0.896)	1.582* (0.901)
Geographic Controls	No	Yes	Yes
Carolingian	No	No	Yes
Observations	4,369	4,369	4,369

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3: *Impact of Crusader Mobilization on Urban Autonomy and Years of Independence*

	DV: Urban Autonomy		DV: Years of Independence	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1000	0.650*** (0.089)	-0.552 (0.425)	186.669*** (37.743)	-105.799 (134.479)
1200	0.743*** (0.100)	-0.442 (0.424)	183.100*** (38.228)	-105.479 (133.826)
1300	0.955*** (0.094)	-0.236 (0.420)	195.415*** (38.352)	-94.708 (133.574)
1400	0.849*** (0.077)	-0.338 (0.409)	199.735*** (35.689)	-88.254 (131.544)
1500	0.804*** (0.075)	-0.383 (0.409)	215.568*** (35.469)	-72.559 (130.413)
1600	0.724*** (0.074)	-0.457 (0.408)	213.619*** (35.165)	-72.268 (129.003)
1700	0.690*** (0.075)	-0.489 (0.410)	216.504*** (35.600)	-68.514 (128.989)
1800	0.683*** (0.075)	-0.496 (0.410)	227.986*** (36.217)	-57.115 (128.616)
Crusader Mobilization X 1200	0.043*** (0.016)	0.036** (0.015)	5.484** (2.211)	3.814* (2.017)
Crusader Mobilization X 1300	0.048*** (0.016)	0.044*** (0.016)	11.355*** (2.890)	10.461*** (2.668)
Crusader Mobilization X 1400	0.041*** (0.014)	0.037*** (0.013)	13.179*** (3.618)	12.553*** (3.257)
Crusader Mobilization X 1500	0.031** (0.014)	0.028** (0.013)	12.342** (4.804)	11.844*** (4.366)
Crusader Mobilization X 1600	0.015 (0.012)	0.011 (0.011)	6.983 (5.399)	6.306 (4.744)
Crusader Mobilization X 1700	0.014 (0.012)	0.010 (0.011)	6.078 (6.413)	5.361 (5.734)
Crusader Mobilization X 1800	0.014 (0.012)	0.011 (0.011)	5.469 (7.373)	4.971 (6.682)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$

Table 4: *Impact of Crusader Mobilization on Urbanization within France, 1500 CE*

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Crusader Mobilization	3.942*** (0.842)	4.047*** (1.054)	3.007*** (1.134)
Area		6.045 (339.948)	128.036 (306.483)
Agricultural Suitability		7.391 (12.495)	4.522 (9.654)
Total Urban Population in 1000 CE			0.983 (0.603)
Constant	-4.951 (3.117)	-12.606 (10.564)	-10.090 (8.670)
Observations	91	73	73

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$