

The London School of Economics and Political Science

The Emergence of Global Power Politics

Imperialism, Modernity, and American Expansion 1870-1914

Joseph Leigh

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of International Relations of the London School of Economics & Political Science for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

London, March 2020

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ABSTRACT

While the discourse of great power politics is an intellectual commonplace of International Relations theory, its roots in nineteenth-century conceptions of imperialism have rarely been the subject of any sustained historical analysis. Rather, the prevailing literature on great power competition relies on transhistorical theoretical claims about the permanence of geopolitical rivalry under anarchy, in conjunction with a common imaginary of early modern Europe as the birthplace of modern international politics. In contrast, this thesis locates the origins of a specifically modern condition of global power politics in the strategic and ideological conflicts which drove the New Imperialism, c.1870-1914. With a particular focus on the evolution of the American Empire, it traces the international, societal, and geopolitical transformations which made possible the flourishing of imperial ambitions for world power in the century after the first Industrial Revolution (1780-1815).

On this basis, the thesis makes three overarching contributions to the study of International Relations. First, to the debate over the origins of modern international politics, it contributes a sociohistorical account of the novel conceptions of grand strategy, empire, and geopolitics associated with the nineteenth-century transition to modernity. Moving beyond the so-called ‘Westphalian narrative’ of international modernity, it locates the production of a distinctively modern conception of national-imperial expansionism and civilizational hierarchy in the lived unevenness of industrialization and colonialism. Second, to the literature in historical sociology and international security, it contributes an intersocietal approach which challenges the conventional ‘states-under-anarchy’ framework and links power-political competition to the unevenly experienced constraints of global social structures. In so doing, it explains how the international pattern of the industrial revolution — the uneven and combined development of an empire-centered world economy and international order — interacted with emergent ideologies of social progress to shape and legitimize imperial projects of political order building. More generally, the thesis recovers the nineteenth century experience of a globalized struggle among empires as a critical counterpoint to apolitical accounts of globalization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following work owes a huge amount to the guidance, criticism, and inspiration of others. My first and greatest thanks are to my supervisor, George Lawson, who has been an immense source of moral and intellectual guidance throughout the PhD. Any strengths which this thesis may possess owe a great deal to his influence and example. Financially, this project was made possible by a scholarship from the Economic and Social Research Council. I would like to thank the ESRC for their generous financial support.

Several scholars, teachers, and colleagues shaped the evolution of this project. Throughout my time at LSE, Tarak Barkawi has been a major source of advice and inspiration, compelling me to think seriously about both the military and cultural dimensions of imperialism. I am also grateful to Margot Light, James Morrison and Iver Neumann, who commented on various draft chapters. Before I started the PhD, my tutors at Wadham College, Oxford — Jane Garnett, Matthew Kempshall and Aribert Reimann — provided a model example of historical scholarship. Their advice often returned to me when theoretical generalizations threatened to obscure the historicity of international relations. I have also benefitted greatly from the critical intelligence of my PhD cohort at LSE and beyond. I would particularly like to thank Sarah Bertrand, Mia Certo, Evelina Gambino, Kerry Goettlich, Rob Logan, Maia Holtermann Entwistle, Chris Murray, Adrian Rogstad, Will Rooke, Alireza Shams Lahijani and Asad Zaidi. For his solidarity throughout the final months of the PhD, a special acknowledgement is owed to Chris Murray, who was a constant source of insight and ideas. Will Rooke was among the most important interlocutors of this project, commenting on many draft chapters, and shaping my understanding of historical sociology considerably. I am especially grateful to my fellow Millennium editors, Mia Certo and Adrian Rogstad, for their stellar work at the journal.

Academic work is a collective labour that would be impossible without intellectual comradeship. Here, I am deeply grateful to Lewis Bassett, Patrick Fleming, Ewen MacArthur, Rebekah Sparrow, Michael Walker and Jack Young, who all read various drafts and shaped my thinking about world politics through years of ongoing conversation. For the past four years, George Bodie has been the mainstay of this project, improving its argument immeasurably with his historian's eye for context and specificity. I am also indebted to my sister, Clare, who has always been a vital source of insight into the realities of social struggle far beyond the academy. In the final stages of the project, Michael Neve offered sage editorial advice which helped bring the work to completion. Even in his last days, his searing intelligence brought a clarity to the thesis which it would otherwise have lacked.

My most pleasurable debts are to my partner, Grace Benton. Her love and intelligence bring light to even the most difficult days. Without her, the struggle of intellectual work would be unthinkable.

My parents have made all things possible. By teaching me to love books and history, they set me on the path to this thesis, and gave me every support I needed to complete it.

1. INTRODUCTION

POWER POLITICS IN THE GLOBAL CONDITION, 1870-1914

World history has not always existed. History as world history [is] a result.¹

— Karl Marx (1858)

Among a plurality of co-existing polities, some, the Great Powers, usually ascribe to themselves and usurp an interest in political and economic processes over a wide orbit. Today such orbits encompass the whole surface of the planet.²

— Max Weber (1910)

I. Historicizing Power Politics

According to conventional wisdom, the modern geopolitical order is marked by a recurrent pattern of great power politics.³ In a formally anarchic universe of multiple sovereign states, the struggle for power and position among independent actors is widely viewed as an inexorable force of history, rooted in the “essentially conflictual” nature of political life.⁴ Given the fragmentary character of the modern political field, where human existence is divided into a plurality of sovereign polities, power and security constitute the primary motivations of collective action, generating a repetitive dynamic of inter-group conflicts mediated by force. In this bleak perspective, the external field of statecraft remains defined by the timeless imperatives of *Realpolitik*.⁵ For according to the realist tradition of International Relations (IR) theory, surely the twentieth century’s most influential body of international thought, a competitive system of strategic rivalry is the inevitable consequence of geopolitical anarchy — the absence of overarching authority at the interstate level.⁶ To the degree that the international system comprises a plurality of independent states, the practice of power politics — strategic action

¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 109.

² Max Weber, “Structures of Power,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. C. Wright Mills and H.H Gerth (London: Routledge, 1991), 161.

³ Classic statements of this theme include: Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 4th ed. (1948; repr., New York, NY: Alfred A Knopf, 1967), 5, 8, 211–15; Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (1959; repr., New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 160; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 128, 186; Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 111–12, 256; Martin Wight, “Why Is There No International Theory?,” *International Relations* 2, no. 1 (1960): 44, 48; Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), 131–33, 151–52; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 7, 228.

⁴ Robert Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (1984): 290. For two more recent accounts along these lines, see, John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, NY: WW Norton & Company, 2001), 5, 31–37; Nuno P Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31–36.

⁵ Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” 304.

⁶ For the seminal statement of this view in contemporary IR, see Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, esp. 88, 91, 105.

oriented to the pursuit of power and influence rather than the realization of ethical or other nonpolitical goals — will remain the *ultima ratio* of international relations.⁷ While the modern connotations of this schema actually stem from the late-nineteenth century — when the notion of “*Machtpolitik*” first emerged from a wider discourse on the newly conceived problems of “world politics” and “national statecraft”⁸ — the realist tradition has elevated the power-political interpretation of international affairs to the status of a perennial law of politics. From this perspective, the “timeless wisdom” of *Realpolitik* has unfolded continuously since the era of the Peloponnesian War (c. 431 BC – 404 BC), when Thucydides purportedly described the balance of power between states as the essence of international politics.⁹ This transhistorical outlook has perhaps found its most famous expression in Kenneth Waltz’s dictum that: “The enduring anarchic character of international politics accounts for the striking sameness in the quality of international life through the millennia, a statement that will meet with wide assent.”¹⁰ Anarchy, violence, and self-interest: the realist tradition depicts world politics as a ceaseless struggle for survival, where political communities appear as oppositional conflict-groups, and universal values give way to the tragic conflict between particularistic identities.¹¹

While the formal theoretic foundations of this states-under-anarchy framework are, properly speaking, non-historical,¹² its intellectual force and prevalence owe much to IR’s own circumscribed historical imaginary.¹³ For the argument that international relations is defined by a perennial system of anarchy finds broad support in the idea of the “Westphalian states

⁷ This definition of power politics is consistent with the way the term power politics is used by most authors in the realist tradition and related fields. For an overview, see, Stacie E. Goddard and Daniel Nexon, “The Dynamics of Global Power Politics: A Framework for Analysis,” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 5; Murielle Cozette, “Realistic Realism? American Political Realism, Clausewitz and Raymond Aron on the Problem of Means and Ends in International Politics,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1, 2004): 438–43; Michael C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6–7.

⁸ The clearest historical account of the nineteenth-century origins of these institutional spheres and conceptual categories, the nation-state model and the image of “the world” as a single geopolitical system, is provided by Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), xv, 83–88, 394–95. On the nineteenth-century origins of the idea of “world politics” and other indices of global political consciousness, see, Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and The Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 261–66; Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 52–53, 67–78; Mathias Albert, *A Theory of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 81–131. On the origins of the ideas of “*Realpolitik*” and “*Machtpolitik*” during the same historical period, see, Keya Ganguly, “*Machtpolitik*,” in *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 2224–25; John Bew, *Realpolitik: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 7–8, 68–76 85–87.

⁹ Barry Buzan, “The Timeless Wisdom of Realism,” in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 60; Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 357.

¹⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 66.

¹¹ On this ethical dimension of realist theorizing, see, Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (1946; repr., London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), esp. 195–196, 199, 220–223.

¹² For a good overview of the structural-functionalist assumptions of Waltzian neorealism, see, Stacie Goddard and Daniel Nexon, “Paradigm Lost? Reassessing Theory of International Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2005): 9–61.

¹³ On the (a)historical dimensions of realist theorizing, see, George Lawson, “The Eternal Divide? History and International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 206–8; also, B. de Carvalho, H. Leira, and J. M. Hobson, “The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths That Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and 1919,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 3 (May 1, 2011): 735–58.

system” that has traditionally shaped the discipline’s understanding of modernity.¹⁴ In this orthodox perspective, it is the rise of the “balance of power” principle in the period between the Peace of Westphalia (1648) and the Peace of Utrecht (1713) which marks the onset of modern geopolitical relations. After the Protestant Reformation, the break-up of European Christendom is said to have generated an increasingly multipolar interstate system, defined by the structural dualism of political hierarchy and geopolitical anarchy. As the means of legitimate violence were gradually monopolized by a plurality of independent sovereign powers, the interstate order emerged as anarchical realm populated by autonomous war-states.¹⁵ On this basis, the putative foundations of modern geopolitics — state sovereignty, territorial independence, impersonal *raison d’état*, the balance of power, interstate war, sovereign equality, and formal anarchy — were institutionalized across the emergent European states system during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁶

This historical narrative has been foundational for IR’s prevailing conceptions of the modern geopolitical order. Its overall thrust — the evolution of an autonomous sovereign war-state from the competitive pluriverse of European geopolitics — casts the rise of an anarchical balance-of-power order as the defining hallmark of modern international relations. Although the treaties of Westphalia recognized neither the absolute sovereignty nor the independence of their signatories, who remained patrimonial-dynastic polities rather than modern-bureaucratic nation-states, a highly selective understanding of early modern Europe has been allowed to dominate IR-theoretic models of modern international systems and power politics.¹⁷ This conception of *modern* international relations not only obscures the historical continuity of the *ancien régime* post-1648.¹⁸ It has also served to naturalize and justify the core themes of the realist international theory — the primacy and autonomy of an anarchical interstate system comprising independent sovereign actors.¹⁹

¹⁴ For this conception of Westphalia, see, for example: Leo Gross, “The Peace of Westphalia, 1648-1948,” *The American Journal of International Law* 42, no. 1 (1948): 28; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 264; Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 101–7.

¹⁵ For an early statement of this view, which sees interstate power politics as both the causal driver and essential condition of the modern geopolitical order, see Otto Hintze, “Military Organization and the Organization of the State,” in *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. Otto Hintze and Felix Gilbert (1906; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), here at 199. For the contemporary version of the argument, see, Charles Tilly, “Reflections on the History of European State-Making,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).

¹⁶ Martin Wight, “The Balance of Power,” in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, ed. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966); Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (1946; repr., New York, NY: Leicester University Press, 1978).

¹⁷ For the most systematic critique to date of the idea of Westphalia as the origins of the modern states system, see, Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso, 2003).

¹⁸ On the variety of feudal, religious, and aristocratic forms of *ancien régime* political organization which survived and sustained the Westphalian settlement, see, Andreas Osiander, “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth,” *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001): 251–87; Andreas Osiander, “Before Sovereignty: Society and Politics in Ancien Régime Europe,” *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 5 (December 2001): 119–45.

¹⁹ On the historical limitations of this view, which effectively obscures the reality of imperial hierarchies in world politics, see also Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, “Retrieving the Imperial: Empire and International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31, no. 1 (2002): 109–127.

Yet it was not before the nineteenth century that the state and international system as we know it today emerged. Contrary to the expectations of the Westphalian narrative — and against the transhistorical thrust of the neorealist schema — it was only in the period after the first industrial revolution (1780-1815) that the ideologies, practices, and structures of interstate politics began to converge around a recognizably modernist nation-state model of institutional and political organization.²⁰ Now, for the first, time, it became possible to define the state as an impersonal corporate entity, rather than the personal patrimony of an absolutist monarch. Quite unlike the world of European feudalism, international politics could now operate as a clash of separate “national interests,” structured by the parliamentary, civic, and socioeconomic institutions of the first nation-states.²¹ Far from being timeless, the first formal theories of *Realpolitik* and power politics began to emerge in this context. Centered on the problem of how to manage the affairs of state in a rapidly changing international order, they announced the emergent sense of global interdependence and volatile military and economic competition generated by the new industrial age.²² In the final decades of the nineteenth century, these power-political conceptions of the modern geopolitical order began to coalesce around a distinctly imperialist form of “high nationalism,” which gave expression to the increasingly rivalrous international conditions being generated by the spread of industrial capitalism to new power-centers in the United States, Germany, Russia, and Japan.²³ Neither the states-under-anarchy framework, nor the Westphalian modernization narrative, have much purchase on this process of historical development: the highly uneven nineteenth-century transition to an international order dominated by industrializing capitalist states, and organized along national-imperial lines. This long-term dynamic of social and geopolitical transformation can hardly be explained as an outgrowth of the European states system. Westphalia c.1648 or Utrecht c.1713 were separated from the imperial capitals of London, Berlin and Tokyo c.1880 not just by the passage of time, but by an industrial revolution which had transformed the social sources of state power itself. Even if the existence of an anarchic geopolitical structure can be traced far back into the timelines of human history, coming to terms with the implications of power transformation on this scale — the rise of a recognizably modern epoch of industrial societies enmeshed within the single global space of the world market — requires something more than a general theorem of balance-of-power-politics.

The genesis of this thesis derives from a desire to break free from such ahistorical models of analysis, to transcend the Westphalian narrative of modern international politics, and to reexamine our understanding of modern geopolitical behavior in light of the historical conditions which engendered the first sustained ideologies and practices of imperialism on a global scale. I conceived its title, *The Emergence of Global Power Politics*, in part as a description of the new form of international competition that marked the evolution of New Imperialism, and

²⁰ Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 1–4, 24–38, 147ff.

²¹ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 394–98; cf. Osiander, “Before Sovereignty,” 144.

²² For the general point, see, Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 214ff; Bew, *Realpolitik*, 32; George Steinmetz, “Geopolitics,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012).

²³ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “The Varieties of the Nation State in Modern History: Liberal, Imperialist, Fascist, and Contemporary Notions of Nation and Nationality,” in *The Rise and Decline of the Nation-State*, ed. Michael Mann (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 210–26. I elaborate on this point in detail below.

in part as an allusion to the historically emergent character of different possible forms of geopolitical behavior and rivalry. As this emphasis on history and emergence implies, my intention is to analyze such foundational theoretic categories as “power” and “world politics” in explicitly historical terms: examining their evolving social character, and providing evidence for the belief that the transformations in political life which marked the New Imperialism constitute a transitional phase in the historical unfolding of modernity. On this basis, I shall evaluate the relative adequacy of various theories of power politics in international relations through an extensive historical analysis of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century era imperial rivalries. Given the historical oversights and theoretical indeterminacy of the states-under-anarchy model,²⁴ there are good reasons to re-examine the conceptions of power politics that dominate existing IR theory, and to try to formulate an alternative method of analysis that is more attuned to the empirical diversity of modern international power struggles. My core argument is directed at a question which remains implicit in the legacy of political realism: What does rejecting the conventional interpretation of the modern geopolitical order — understood as an anarchical interstate system, organized around the balance of power, and defined by the competitive national security strategies of independent sovereign states — imply for our understanding of the nature and evolution of power politics in modernity?

My overarching answer is that it implies that a turn toward historical sociology is essential for reconceptualizing and reconstructing the nature of power politics as a modern category of international thought and practice. My position is that the phenomena usually studied under the title of power-political competition — state power, foreign policy, grand strategy, international systems, geopolitical competition, and interstate war — need to be properly historicized in order to identify and theorize their conditions of possibility, modes of operation, and unfolding international dynamics. As such, I seek to develop a historical sociology of international relations focused on the unfolding pathways for strategic action generated by the variable relations between economic, coercive, and ideological structures. This analytical perspective aims to induce broader theoretic and conceptual explanations for the nature and dynamic of global power politics by focusing on the sociopolitical conflicts, socioeconomic transformations, and ideological frameworks which motivated the architects of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperial foreign policies. This inductive method of analysis is guided by a historicist conception of social science that seeks to embed broader theoretical

²⁴ The logic of anarchy is causally indeterminate since its fundamental criterion — absence of governmental authority at an interstate level — specifies permissive conditions rather than causal mechanisms. This is perhaps why Waltz, in a strange aside, could argue that even the process of European integration post-1945 — not typically an example of *Realpolitik* — could exemplify the nature of state-behaviour under anarchy. *Theory of International Politics*, 71. Given the indeterminacy of anarchy, many international relations scholars now emphasize the variety of forms and causes of geopolitical behaviour within multi-state systems, undermining the core realist premise of international politics as an invariant, anarchy-generated, system of power-balancing and security-maximization. For an overview see, Daniel Nexon, “The Balance of Power in the Balance,” *World Politics* 61, no. 2 (April 2009): 330–59. On the limits of realist balance-of-power theory see also Victoria Tin-bor Hui, “Toward a Dynamic Theory of International Politics: Insights from Comparing Ancient China and Early Modern Europe,” *International Organization* 58, no. 1 (2004): 175–205; Møller Jørgen, “Why Europe Avoided Hegemony: A Historical Perspective on the Balance of Power,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December 11, 2014): 660–70.

abstractions in the concrete practices of international relations, understood as a lived field of social multiplicity.²⁵

My emphasis on historicism in this context is not just intended to invoke the contextual specificity of particular forms and relations of “international power.” More fundamentally, it is an attempt to comprehend the international character and geopolitical implications of the transition to modernity which IR has conventionally associated with the era of the Westphalian settlement. Specifically, I seek to better understand the changes which the conduct, structure, and dynamics of international relations underwent during the onset of the global industrial era in the nineteenth century. In what follows, I therefore develop a sustained dialogue between international theory and international history by consistently tracking between the practices of conceptual elaboration, historical analysis, and theoretical explanation, in order to build a coherent understanding of the nineteenth-century emergence of global power politics. The underlying ethos of this account can be described as a form of *global historical sociology* — an approach which combines the principles of historicism with an attempt to grasp the operations of social power on multiple scales of social and intersocietal interaction.²⁶

Towards this end, I focus on the era of the New Imperialism (c.1870-1914) as a transitional phase in the emergence of a fully globalized international order and world economy — a new arena for the exercise of state power and strategic force. This focus is motivated by my conviction that the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperial era was grounded in a distinctively modern geopolitical configuration of national-imperial states bound together within the emergent global sphere of a single yet highly uneven world market. This evolving condition of intersocietal conflict and interdependence constituted a world-historical departure from the balance-of-power order associated with early modern Europe: rather than the dynastic-absolutist states of the late-feudal period, its constitutive actors were capitalist societies organized as national-imperial states; in contrast to the essentially agrarian world of the pre-nineteenth century, its power hierarchies of industrial growth, colonial rule, and naval supremacy reflected the socially uneven and regionally differentiated development of the industrial revolution; centered on the political authority of a secular-rational sovereign states, its constituting ideologies, of “high nationalism” and “civilizational imperialism,” were modern forms of cultural universalism, radically opposed to the personalized and religious authority structures of European absolutism.

As such, the late-nineteenth century age of empire needs to be recognized as a key phase in the so-called *medieval-to-modern shift*:²⁷ the transition from feudalism toward a modern geopolitical system defined by politically and militarily centralized states, capitalist socioeconomic relations,

²⁵ On multiplicity, the significance of which I return to below, see Justin Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science,” *International Relations* 30, no. 2 (2016): 127–53.

²⁶ For an overview, see, Julian Go and George Lawson, eds., *Global Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

²⁷ John Gerard Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis,” *World Politics* 35, no. 2 (1983): 273, 279, 282.

and the universalization of secular-rational standards of political authority.²⁸ As I will illustrate, the imperial power struggles which spawned the first ideas of *Machtpolitik* and world politics were anchored in a security problematic which only became possible in modernity. Far from being timeless, the political and ideological underpinnings of the New Imperialism reflected a widely-felt need to manage the pressures of a universalizing yet highly uneven and crisis-prone capitalist world market, and to stabilize the pressures of societal and cultural difference that were being brought into a single global orbit. This emergent sense of world-scale geopolitical and security imperatives was marked and made by the transformation of the international order into an arena of intersocietal conflict between the first industrial societies and national-imperial states, *the emergence of global power politics*.

The central claim of this thesis thus takes the form of a characterization and periodization of global power politics as a modern form of geopolitical behavior. This interpretation rests on a conception of the contradictory pattern of the industrial revolution — that is, the uneven and combined development of industrial capitalism within the empire-centered interstate system and world economy of the long-nineteenth century.²⁹ In this historical process, I suggest, the regionally differentiated pattern of industrial capitalism, together with the global structures of social interaction it helped generate, engendered hierarchies of wealth, status, and coercive capacity that encouraged expansive strategies of imperial competition. On the one hand, the steep unevenness of the long-nineteenth century industrial revolution fostered a highly competitive international dynamic. The specific power hierarchies generated by the uneven spread of industrial growth — the development of a sustained military and economic “power gap” between “early” and “late” industrializers³⁰ — made the evolving world economy into an arena of competitive coexistence, rooted in the tensions between societies undergoing the transition to industrialization at very different speeds. On the other hand, the distinctive pattern of intersocietal interdependencies forged by this nineteenth century conjunction of social processes — including the experience of spatio-temporal restructuring enabled by new forms of transportation and communications technology, the deepening of socioeconomic ties and regional interactions brought about by industrialization and colonialism, the generalization of a world market in trade and financial transactions, and the proliferation of novel ideologies of inter-cultural comparison (e.g. civilizationism, developmentalism, and nationalism) — promoted what can be best described as the globalization of modern political horizons.

As a consequence, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century conceptions of imperial competition revolved around various *national idioms of world politics* that figured the conflict

²⁸ This understanding of the transition to modernity is an amalgam of various approaches in the literature. See, Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London: Verso, 1994), 126; Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 38–56; Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 3ff.

²⁹ The resurgence of the theory of uneven and combined development in contemporary international theory has been pioneered by Justin Rosenberg. For the early development of the idea, see, Justin Rosenberg, “Isaac Deutscher and the Lost History of International Relations,” *New Left Review* 215 (1996): 3–15; Justin Rosenberg, “Why Is There No International Historical Sociology?,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 307–40.

³⁰ This follows Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 9.

dynamics and external environment as a single global arena. It was in this specific context, as this thesis illustrates, that the making of a national-imperial state with expansive spheres of external influence overseas came to be viewed as a legitimate and necessary political response to the intersocietal pressures produced by the historical unevenness of the industrial transition. In this sense, the emergence of global power politics was anchored in a process of societal and geopolitical transformation that was *only possible* in modernity. The pursuit of world power envisioned by the architects of the New Imperialism announced the advent of a novel security problematic rooted in the industrial-era experience of capitalist unevenness.

Before introducing the empirical material and theoretic principles which underpin this argument, my emphasis on the modernity of global power politics requires some further clarification. While parts of this thesis illustrate the qualitative differences between the inter-imperial system of the late-nineteenth century and the pre-industrial geopolitical orders of the Utrecht balance-of-power and the Concert of Europe (c.1713-1815/1848),³¹ the following work is not designed as a systematically comparative study. Rather, it is primarily intended as a sustained analytic narrative of the political, strategic, and ideological projects that sustained the New Imperialism. With a particular focus on the American Empire, I seek to provide an interpretation of the international contexts that produced imperial ambitions for world power, to illustrate the structural and historical forces that produced the emergent geopolitical order, and to explain how American grand strategy was shaped by the United States' competitive coexistence with rival empires. This research design does not lend itself to a full analysis of the *differentia specifica* of modern international systems and practices; for it lacks the kind of systematic historical comparison that such a procedure would require. Consequently, while I can claim to specify the distinctively *modern* characteristics of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century global power politics — by illustrating that the historical emergence, ideological foundations, and geopolitical trajectory of nineteenth century imperialisms were inseparably tied to the conjunction between uneven capitalist development and national-imperial state-formation — it would be an exaggeration to describe my argument as an account of the origins of power politics *per se*. In other words, though I will emphasize that the core idea of great power politics as we know it today — where the very idea of a “great power” is tied to the ability of the state to manage the global pressures of socioeconomic and political unevenness — is very much rooted in the historical conditions of nineteenth century modernity, I do not seek to rule out the possibility of some pre-modern forms of power-political behavior, perhaps with a meaningful family resemblance relationship to modern geopolitical conditions. This qualification has two main sources.

Firstly, this study is not organized around a systematic comparison of modern and pre-modern geopolitical systems (ancient, feudal, dynastic, monarchical-imperial, absolutist, etc.). As a result, while there are likely aspects of power-political thought and practice — for example, the idea that sovereignty is primarily a reflection of power-capacities rather than natural or political rights — which are exclusive to the modern era of impersonal statehood and capitalist political economy, the design of this thesis is not intended to specify the distinguishing characteristics of

³¹ See especially, *Chapter 1*, section III and *Chapter 3* sections III-IV.

modern geopolitical systems *in general*.³² Instead, its purpose is to identify and theorize the new pathways and orientations for international rivalry and geopolitical projection generated over the course of the nineteenth century. On this basis, it is possible to make generalizations about the qualitative modernity of global power politics, and to historicize the conflict dynamics of the New Imperialism, but it is not possible to define the generative grammar of modern geopolitical relations as a whole. The kind of macro-historical comparison of geopolitical systems which this analysis would require is a project I hope to pursue in future work, but it is not the main objective of this thesis.³³ Secondly, there are a number of good theoretical reasons to treat a minimal understanding of power-political behavior as a general abstraction that needs to be historicized in relation to a particular societal and geopolitical context. While I adopt a critical attitude toward the transhistorical outlook of much classical and neorealism, this is because realist thought has generally failed to analyze the historical production of specific forms of state power and geopolitical competition, not because it is wrong to identify power struggles (of some kind) as a general feature of international affairs. Unlike other traditions of social and political theory, such as Marxism and liberalism, realist thought has long-emphasized how the fragmentary character of the geopolitical domain exercises competitive and developmental pressures on all human societies, whose insertion into a decentralized international field has profound consequences for the ensuing character of politics itself.³⁴ My position in this thesis is not that realists are wrong to think that power and domination are likely pervasive features of this fragmentary international-political condition, but rather that a meaningful analysis of its implications needs to abandon the supra-historical framework of states-under-anarchy, in order to better establish the diverse ways in which the geopolitical domain is produced and encountered as a field of human practice. This explains why the following chapters place such a great emphasis on historical analysis as a method and foundation for theory-building: to better understand what power politics and geopolitical fragmentation actually mean in modernity, we need to begin from a detailed conception of how the international field has been mediated — politically, strategically, and culturally — by living historical actors.

In particular, I suggest that a focus on the emergent “global condition” which shaped the late-nineteenth century experience of modernization — such as uneven expansion of industrial capitalism, the increased centralization and territorialization of national-imperial states, and the symbolic ties between empire and civilization — is crucial for overcoming anarchy-centric understandings of power politics as a timeless geopolitical form.³⁵ In rejecting this broadly realist view, this study draws attention to the constitutive impact of intersocietal

³² In this sense, the argument does not operate on the scale of Rosenberg, *Empire of Civil Society*, chapter 5.

³³ For a leading example of this type of work, see, Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁴ For a discussion of the importance of realism’s emphasis on anarchy and power politics from *outside* the realist tradition itself, see especially Justin Rosenberg’s comments on the status of realism in Alex Callinicos and Justin Rosenberg, “Uneven and Combined Development: The Social-Relational Substratum of ‘The International’? An Exchange of Letters,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 21, no. 1 (2008): 90–98; and, Andrew Davenport, “Marxism in IR: Condemned to a Realist Fate?,” *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 27–48.

³⁵ Defined more fully below, the idea of the global condition is from Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, “Benchmarks of Globalization,” in *A Companion to World History*, ed. Douglas Northrop (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2012), 285–300.

interdependence on the character of interstate conflict and the power dynamics underpinning it. In this regard, it places strong historical and analytic emphasis on the unevenly experienced dynamics of societal and geopolitical transformation engendered by the late-nineteenth century development of a single international hierarchy. Leon Trotsky summarized this feature of the modern imperial era in the following way: “imperialism links up incomparably more rapidly and more deeply the individual national and continental units into a single entity, bringing them into the closest and most vital dependence upon each other and rendering their economic methods, social forms, and levels of development more identical.”³⁶ As a result, it is not only “impossible to approach the fate of one country” without locating it within a wider conception of “world development.”³⁷ It is also crucial to examine the ways in which the intersocietal character of the emergent international order produced mechanisms of conflict and domination that were rooted in the deep unevenness of industrial development. Drawing on this conception of uneven and combined develop, the argument of this thesis depends on what can best be described as *an intersocietal perspective* on international relations which traces the causal mechanisms and drivers of global power politics to the interactional constitution of the modern international order. By extension, such an approach presents a significant challenge to the ahistorical dichotomy between “anarchy” (competitive power politics) and “interdependence” (cooperative globalization) that informs much contemporary IR theory.³⁸

Rather than seeking to identify a single mechanism or driver of international competition, this thesis develops a historical sociology of international power transformations that focuses on the unfolding pathways of, and orientations for, strategic action generated by the variable relations between economic, coercive, and ideological structures.³⁹ Where anarchy-centric approaches tend to see power politics as a product of the military rivalries generated by the *absence* of state-like authority at a geopolitical level, the historical sociological approach I elaborate in this thesis rests on deeper conception of the forms of power and competition generated by the international *coexistence* of societies.⁴⁰ In particular, I identify three main intersocietal structures or dynamics that contributed to the strategic and ideological power struggles unleashed with the evolving New Imperialism: (1) the tensions between “advanced” industrial powers (Britain,

³⁶ See, Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, trans. John G. Wright (1928; repr., New York, NY: Pathfinder, 1996), 20; also, Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (1932; repr., London: Penguin, 2017), 4–6.

³⁷ Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, 42.

³⁸ The primary context for such intellectual dichotomies — “anarchy” vs. “interdependence,” “power politics” vs. “globalization” — was the seminal divide between realist and liberal IR theories. Walter Russell Mead, “The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2014): 69–79; G. John Ikenberry, “The Illusion of Geopolitics,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2014). The authors and positions associated with these debates are examined in the next chapter.

³⁹ It seems necessary to emphasize that recognition of the analytical power of Trotsky’s conception of uneven and combined development does not equate to an endorsement of the political-strategic conclusions he drew from it, especially with regard to the so-called “permanent revolution” thesis associated with twentieth century Trotskyism. For the argument that this strategy might, in fact, have been in contradiction with an analysis of the Russian Revolution’s trajectory based on the premise of uneven and combined development, see, Justin Rosenberg, “Trotsky’s Error: Multiplicity and the Secret Origins of Revolutionary Marxism,” *Globalizations*, September 30, 2019, 15, 18.

⁴⁰ As discussed below, this insight is central to Rosenberg’s conception of “the international” such as a product of societal multiplicity. See, Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science.”

USA) and “catch-up” empires (Germany, Japan, Russia); (2) the progressive nationalization of political-economic and sociocultural relations in response to the processes of global interdependence; (3) symbolic competition among national-imperial elites for recognition of their civilized status. This combination of dynamics took various historical forms, but the crucial point is this: the interrelations between unevenly industrializing empires, in the context of a growing nationalization of the societal and political orders, engendered the strategic and symbolic conflicts that articulated into the wider dynamics of imperial expansionism and rivalry.

In order to develop a sustained analytical narrative of the contribution of this causal configuration to the development of specific imperial strategies, ideologies, and projects, I focus on the logics of external power-projection developed by American elites in the decades of escalating international rivalry that unfolded after 1870. During the final quarter of the nineteenth century, American capitalism, its industrial productivity now surpassing that of its major economic rivals, emerged as a key factor in the unstable international power hierarchies from which imperial rivalries grew. By placing the strategic drives and ideological vocabulary of US expansionism in this inter-imperial setting, I aim to make visible the sociohistorical forces that shaped the logics of “world power” and “world politics” through which American political-military elites confronted the challenge of increased global interdependence. I thus seek to shed light on the ways in which the strategic and ideological coordinates of American expansion were reconstituted in relation to the societal and geopolitical transformations which marked the onset modernity.⁴¹

The dates I have chosen for the thesis — 1870-1914 — act as a rough indication of its chronological range rather than a precise definition of the materials covered in each chapter. In some chapters, it is necessary to reach back into the long-nineteenth century pattern of industrial development and territorial restructuring in order to capture the developmental trajectories of American capitalism and its imperial rivals. In others, it is necessary to look forwards in time to grasp the longer-term rationales of US global power projection, which crystallized as a project of international-ordering building during the unfolding crisis of the First World War. While the United States’ entry into the war in 1917 serves as a kind of coda to the argument developed here, the much-debated origins of World War One are not its object.⁴² Instead, it aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformations of international order and imperial competition that shaped the development of a global form of power politics on the eve of US world hegemony. Far from being a chronological history of foreign-policy

⁴¹ My understanding of “modernity” and the “modern international order” as a nineteenth-century constellation of growing intersocietal interdependence Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*. On this view, modernity refers to a constellation of social structures and international power dynamics wrought by such nineteenth-century processes as the industrialization of the capitalist economy, the growth of nationally-constituted states and society, the rationalization and bureaucratization of state institutions, and the increasing prevalence of secular, progressive forms of ideological power like nationalism and liberalism. On the forms of cultural and socio-symbolic hierarchy that accompanied the nineteenth-century expansion of Western dominance see Zarakol, *After Defeat*.

⁴² For a recent interpretation, based on the idea of uneven and combined development, see Alexander Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War: Class Conflict and Geopolitics in the Thirty Years’ Crisis 1914-1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014). I discuss Anievas’ important work in the following chapter.

decisions, the purpose of this account is to provide an analytical reconstruction of the generative historical conditions which enabled the development of global power politics, defined the motivations of some its central actors, and engendered the repertoire of cultural forms that legitimized the use of force on a world scale.

This chapter establishes the foundations of the thesis by defining its key analytical terms (Section II), outlining a historical-sociological understanding of the power transformations that shaped the modern global condition (Section III), and describing the structure of its overall argument (IV). It uses insights from IR theory, historical sociology, and global history to conceptualize some of the key transformations in coercive, ideological, and socioeconomic power structures which enabled the globally-oriented ideologies and strategies of external expansionism characteristic of the 1870-1914 imperial era.

II. Foundations of the Argument

Unlike other major academic disciplines, International Relations (IR) theory has not produced much sustained analysis of the historical character of its core analytic categories.⁴³ In this respect, a wider objective of this thesis is to historicize the idea of the “struggle for power” that stands at the heart of much IR scholarship.⁴⁴ Given that the terms “power” and “conflict” so often seem invoke near-timeless features of the international system, this interest in the practice of historicization might appear misplaced. After all, the core relations figured by the concept of power politics — of conflict and domination among political communities — have often been considered eternal forces of political life as such. Whether it is couched in terms of an enduring struggle for human survival,⁴⁵ as a functional requirement of an anarchical states-system,⁴⁶ or as a reflection of the essential nature of military strategy,⁴⁷ the domain of power politics has often been situated outside any meaningful sense of historical time. Influenced by the realist tradition of IR theory, such analyses effectively reduce the international “struggle for power” to a series of timeless conceptual abstractions — human nature, systemic anarchy, strategic violence.⁴⁸ This thesis elaborates several critiques of such broadly a-historical

⁴³ This is now changing. See, for example, Nicholas Guilhot, ed., *The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 1954 Conference on Theory* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011); Patricia Owens, *Economy of Force: Counterinsurgency and the Historical Rise of the Social* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Tarak Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire: Indian and British Armies in World War II* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁴⁴ For a classic discussion, much broader in its conceptions of “political economy” and “political order” than many contemporary treatments, see E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis 1919-1939*, ed. Michael Cox (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 94–100, 108.

⁴⁵ Wight, “Why Is There No International Theory?,” 60; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 5ff.

⁴⁶ For an especially clear statement of this view, see, Kenneth Waltz, “Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 329; see also, Buzan, “The Timeless Wisdom of Realism.”

⁴⁷ This Clausewitzian argument is prominent in the Strategic Studies literature: Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), ix; Charles Hill, *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft, and World Order* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 5–7; Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2009), 409.

⁴⁸ For a seminal critique of this a-historical form of realist IR theory, see, Rosenberg, *Empire of Civil Society*.

perspectives. For now, I highlight two broad analytical principles which inform the argument of the entire work. These relate to the *form* of the international as an object of inquiry and the *content* of global power politics as a historical formation.

AN INTERSOCIETAL PERSPECTIVE

First, in what has become the traditional realist interpretation of power politics, the international, the overarching domain of conflict among political communities, is defined by the absence of sovereign authority at an interstate level. Lacking the overarching security of a state-like authority, states exist within an anarchical environment that produces security rivalries — power-political struggles driven by the imperative of survival — as its single timeless dynamic.⁴⁹ Yet such a negative definition of the form of the international is both unnecessary and misleading.⁵⁰ Rather, international orders, despite the lack of any so-called world state, are constituted by the interactions between the different societies which comprise and constitute them.⁵¹ While the scale, density, and structure of intersocietal interaction is historically variable, the interactive multiplicity of human communities is likely a general feature of world history, expressed in the forms of exchange, communication, and conflict that have long-operated between separate social formations.⁵²

This constitutive feature of social life, the fact that human social organization is comprised of multiple interacting societies, indicates that the textures of international relations are not adequately conceived by metaphors of “anarchy” that portray the absence of centralized rule as the generative principle of international relations.⁵³ For this condition of political fragmentation exists together with positive mechanisms of historical development produced and reproduced through the processes of intersocietal interaction associated with such core features of historical development as trade, warfare, and cultural exchange.⁵⁴ Whether in the form of the substantial power gaps generated by the uneven spread of the Industrial Revolution, in the patterns of cross-cultural comparison figured by colonial ideologies of civilizational hierarchy, or in the geopolitical pressures engendered by the pursuit of imperialism, the distinctively empire-centered international order of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries brought the dynamics of intersocietal multiplicity to a new scale and intensity.⁵⁵ The proliferation of such highly competitive forms of intersocietal interaction — economic, ideological, and coercive — brought into being the perceived imperatives for global penetration and sustained self-strengthening which were articulated in imperial ideologies of external

⁴⁹ The key statement of this view in the neorealist tradition is Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 66.

⁵⁰ Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science,” 136.

⁵¹ Rosenberg, 135–41. For an account of the modern international order that emphasizes the centrality of intersocietal interaction, see, Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 19, 32, 325.

⁵² Justin Rosenberg, “Basic Problems in the Theory of Uneven and Combined Development. Part II: Unevenness and Political Multiplicity,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2010): 185.

⁵³ *Pace* Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, here at 93.

⁵⁴ My definition of the international as a product of societal multiplicity follows Rosenberg, “Why Is There No International Historical Sociology?,” 308.

⁵⁵ This tallies with Barkawi and Laffey’s argument about “the imperial” as “a space within which processes of mutual constitution are productive of the entities which populate the international system.” Barkawi and Laffey, “Retrieving the Imperial,” 111; see also, Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire*, 256.

expansionism. This is the meaningful sense of historical development elided by many existing accounts of power politics: the interplay between structural transformation and political action shaped by the interaction between multiple societies. The study of power politics in this context is centrally about examining the novel pathways and orientation for international competition generated by the competitive coexistence of societies within a single world hierarchy of economic, coercive, and ideological power.

Secondly, therefore, taking seriously the intersocietal form of the modern international order leads directly toward a more historically specific approach to the content of power-political competition: for it demands the identification of the particular conjunction of social processes and interactions which drive intersocietal conflicts, define the capacities and proclivities of political actors, and determine their cognitive conceptualizations of international competition.⁵⁶ In this respect, it is telling that the language of “world politics” is a distinctly nineteenth century invention. For although terms denoting “world” and “globe” featured as articles of political discourse in earlier historical periods, it was not until nineteenth century that concepts like “world politics” or “*Weltpolitik*” — “world power,” “*Weltreich*” or “*la politique mondiale*” — became used widely and systematically to conceptualize the purposes and environment of modern statecraft.⁵⁷ A fully intersocietal understanding of the international demands attention to social processes which produced and enabled such a basic transformation of epistemological categories. Rather than treating the international as an already constituted geopolitical structure — like “anarchy” or the “balance of power” — this requires an analysis of the generative historical developments which made “world politics” into a widely-felt social reality. Towards this end, it is necessary to visualize the range of sociohistorical transformations contained in the nineteenth century conversion of “the world” into a “single system.”⁵⁸

DIMENSIONS OF THE GLOBAL CONDITION

Throughout this thesis, I refer to this process of growing intersocietal interdependence as the *global condition*. Taken from the work of the historians Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, this term encapsulates a historical periodization and developmental process that is crucial for understanding for the trajectory of international power relations during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century era.⁵⁹ The core idea is that, over the course of the nineteenth century, the growing scale and density of intersocietal interconnection meant that previously semi-independent regions and societies could no longer produce “discrete or autonomous

⁵⁶ This echoes Justin Rosenberg’s argument about the greater historical specificity derived from an internationally-oriented historical sociology, as opposed to an “internalist” understanding of historical development: “Uneven and Combined Development: ‘The International’ in Theory and History,” in *Historical Sociology and World History: Uneven and Combined Development over the Longue Durée*, ed. Alexander Anievas and Kamran Matin (London: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2016), 29.

⁵⁷ See, Albert, *A Theory of World Politics*, chapter 3.

⁵⁸ Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 2.

⁵⁹ Bright and Geyer, “Benchmarks of Globalization”; cf. Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, “For a Unified History of the World in the Twentieth Century,” *Radical History Review* 1987, no. 39 (September 21, 1987): 69–91; Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, “Regimes of World Order: Global Integration and the Production of Difference in Twentieth Century World History,” in *Interactions: Transregional Perspectives on World History*, ed. J.H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Anand A Yang (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005).

histories.”⁶⁰ From the mid-nineteenth century on, neither physical distance nor the time costs of long-distance travel served to divide societies as they once had; the breakdown of the land-based, Old Regime empires of Eurasia, together with the rapid proliferation of new means industrial growth and global mobility eroded physical barriers of intersocietal interaction on a world scale.

It was in this historical transition that the global condition crystalized as a multidimensional struggle for power and autonomy with the interior spaces of the world; now, “all were forced, with a new immediacy, to secure and maintain control over their futures by means of a greater, more sustained engagement with all others.”⁶¹ By drawing social orders into a single international hierarchy, the deepening of intersocietal interdependence through the expansion of capitalist and colonial social systems engendered a range of interlocking efforts to reconstitute the bases of political order in relation to increasingly systemic forms of global competition. As result, while the phenomenon of uneven and combined development is an intrinsic feature of capitalist development — indeed, perhaps, an inherent tendency of multi-society historical processes in general⁶² — the constitutive unevenness of industrial expansion assumed a highly particular ideological and political form in the newly-compressed global condition of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century modernity. Indeed, this thesis emphasizes how the power gaps generated by the staggered pattern of the industrial revolution were articulated with, and even activated by, the highly ideological expectations of civilizational advancement and social progress that were invested in the national-imperial state. This articulation of coercive, ideological and economic power structures was central to the emergence of external expansionism as the core purpose of national-imperial state projects. This process unfolded as part of the development of wider efforts to construct internationally competitive social and political orders in the rapidly industrializing societies of North America, Europe, and Japan. These emergent linkages between societal and geopolitical conflict were intrinsic to the form of competitive coexistence engendered by the modern global condition, which produced a whip like burden of external pressures expressed in the form of a struggle to acquire the most advanced forms of military and economic power capacity.⁶³

As a consequence, political elites on both sides of the Atlantic confronted the increasingly visible interdependence of industrial societies as a profound restructuring of modern social life. The advent of the Second Industrial Revolution (1870-1914) brought a highly-integrated world market into existence, its trade and capital flows supercharged by the connective force of the first global telegraph networks, inter-oceanic canals, and trans-continental railways.⁶⁴ These economic and technological transformations were accompanied by a simultaneous integration of regional political systems, wrought by the violent intensification of European colonialism

⁶⁰ Bright and Geyer, “Benchmarks of Globalization,” 290.

⁶¹ Bright and Geyer, 290.

⁶² Rosenberg, “Unevenness and Political Multiplicity,” 169.

⁶³ This echoes Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 5.

⁶⁴ This periodization mainly follows Osterhammel’s conception of an “1880 threshold” — a kind of “hinge period” that links a “long nineteenth century” (1780-1914) to a more tightly compressed “*fin-de-siècle*” (1880-1914). Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 63–67. I return to this periodization in more detail below.

during the 1880s, and molded by the interstate conflicts which made up the evolving New Imperialism.⁶⁵ Now, for the first time, it was possible to envisage the spaces of the world as a single global whole.⁶⁶ This was how Rear Admiral George W. Melville, a leading figure in the ongoing process of US naval expansion, described the character of American interests in an evolving global age:

Either by reason of our material wealth, force of circumstances, or manifest destiny, we have become a World Power. The Navy is the best instrument that can be used for the extension of trade, protection of commerce, securing justice to those weaker nations of this continent who are helpless to resist stronger Powers, and even for the preservation of that honor and self-respect which are essential to keep alive the spirit of liberty.⁶⁷

Like many of his contemporaries, Melville saw the pursuit of world power through maritime force as a necessary adjunct to the strategic and ideological priorities of American statecraft; he joined numerous American military strategists and political elites in advocating a project of global expansionism backed by the full the weight of US state power.⁶⁸ Across the Atlantic Ocean, Kaiser Wilhelm II, offered a similarly globalist depiction of German foreign policy aims. In a speech at Bremen in 1905, he announced that:

The World-Empire of which I have dreamed is that of the newly-created German Empire enjoying on all sides the most absolute confidence as a tranquil, honourable, peaceful neighbor. If peradventure history should ever speak of a German world-empire, or a Hohenzollern world-dominion, it shall not be based on conquests won by the sword, but on the reciprocal confidence of nations possessing the same aims — briefly expressed, as a great poet says, “limited externally, unlimited internally.”⁶⁹

Such direct engagements with the reality of global interdependence index the shifting horizons of geopolitical aspiration that accompanied the novel systems of military and economic power generated over the course of the nineteenth century. In societies like the United States and Germany, where rapidly industrializing socioeconomic systems were combined with the development of modern battleship navies and powerful political-military elites, a new language of “World Empire” and “World Power” expressed the new landscape of modern statecraft in a discourse of heroic expansion into far-flung world arenas.⁷⁰ Revolving around rival systems

⁶⁵ John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* (London: Penguin, 2007), 298–99.

⁶⁶ Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, 214–16, 228–29.

⁶⁷ George W. Melville, “Our Actual Naval Strength,” *North American Review* 176 (1903): 390.

⁶⁸ On the advocates of naval expansionism see, especially, Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism*. (1972; repr., Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008); Robert L. O’Connell, *Sacred Vessels: The Cult of the Battleship and the Rise of the U.S. Navy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); and chapter 4 of this thesis. For the broader ideological context, see also, Anders, Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

⁶⁹ Kaiser Wilhelm II, Speech at Bremen, March 22, 1905 cited in United Kingdom Foreign Office, *German Opinion on National Policy Prior to July 1914: Part I*, Handbooks Prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office, No. 155 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920), 52.

⁷⁰ For works stressing the increasing centrality of notions of “the global”, “world power” and “world politics” to late-nineteenth century conceptions of interstate politics and grand strategy, consult especially, Geoffrey Barraclough, “From the European Balance of Power to the Age of World Politics,” in *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 93–123; Anthony D’Agostino, *The Rise of Global Powers: International Politics in the Era of the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Andrew Heffernan, “Fin de Siècle, Fin Du Monde? On the Origins of European Geopolitics, 1890–1920,” in *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought*, ed. Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson (London: Routledge, 2000), 27–51; Rolf Hobson,

of national imperium, such conceptions of world conflict cast the globe as a single geopolitical system, structured by the relationships between powerful industrial states, and driven by the intensely competitive projects of global influence figured by nineteenth-century ideologies of manifest destiny and imperial prestige.⁷¹ In a distinctively *fin-de-siècle* language of civilizational power struggles, American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan expressed the combination of threat and possibility felt by many who confronted this developing global condition. In a time when the dynamics of “imperialism” seemed to make the “conditions of world politics” an increasingly inescapable reality,⁷² Mahan argued that:

No state lives to itself alone, in a political seclusion resembling the physical isolation which so long was the ideal of China and Japan. All, whether they will or no, are members of a community, larger or smaller; and more and more those of the European family to which we racially belong are touching each other throughout the world, with consequent friction of varying degree...The field of external action for the great European states is now the world, and it is hardly doubtful that their struggles, unaccompanied as yet by actual clash of arms, are even under that condition drawing nearer to ourselves. Coincidentally with our own extension to the Pacific Ocean, which for so long had a good international claim to its name, that sea has become more and more the scene of political development, of commercial activities and rivalries, in which all the great powers, our selves included, have a share. Through these causes Central and Caribbean America, now intrinsically unimportant, are brought in turn into great prominence, as constituting the gateway between the Atlantic and Pacific when the Isthmian canal shall have been made, and as guarding the approaches to it. The appearance of Japan as a strong ambitious state, resting on solid political and military foundations, but which scarcely has reached yet a condition of equilibrium in international standing, has fairly startled the world; and it is a striking illustration of the somewhat sudden nearness and unforeseen relations into which modern states are brought, that the Hawaiian Islands, so interesting from the international point of view to the countries of European civilization, are occupied largely by Japanese and Chinese.⁷³

The range of international power struggles figured in this passage illustrate the highly competitive world economy and international order that emerged during the era of the New Imperialism. Mahan’s world-imperial frame of reference sheds light on a variety of geopolitical transitions engendered by increased global interdependence: the formation of a universal field of worldwide imperial competition, the contestation of military and industrial hierarchies by “late-developing” societies like Japan or China, the designation of “domestic” and “foreign” actors according to normative categories of race, nationality and civilization. In this context, a miscellany of commercial opportunity, strategic imperative, and the perceived escalation of international antagonisms along both civilizational and racial lines called political elites to

Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power, and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875-1914 (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States Before World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2016).

⁷¹ For Max Weber “the sentiment of prestige” was a crucial underpinning of great power politics, especially that involving empires. Max Weber, “Structures of Power,” 161.

⁷² Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Motives to Imperial Federation,” in *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 111; Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Considerations Governing the Disposition of Navies,” in *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 180; also, Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” in *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 216.

⁷³ Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Future in Relation to American Naval Power,” in *The Interest of America in Sea Power: Present and Future* (1895; repr., London: Sampson Low, 1897), 160–62.

pursue world power in the form of extensive spheres external influence.⁷⁴ Operating at a more extensive, global scale than older land-based systems of regional power-balancing and diplomacy, these ideologies and practices of international competition helped fashion such archetypally modern political forms as: the dichotomy between a national social-territorial order and a boundless world economy; the sense of the external environment as an interlocking system with specific structural and material imperatives; and the discourse of cultural difference and hierarchy so central to the idea of “the West.” They figured the novel arena of intersocietal conflicts that defined the emergent dynamic of global power politics.

III. Power Transformation in the Age of Empire: Theory and History

In this work, I develop this conception of the global condition in an attempt to historicize the novel pathways of international power-projection and intersocietal interaction which marked the development of the New Imperialism from 1880 on. This entails a sociohistorical conception of international change and power transformation that differs from several prominent approaches to IR theory and historical sociology. At this stage of the argument, three are worth highlighting.

First, in contrast to approaches which focus exclusively on changes in the distribution of power, I emphasize the relationship between changes in intersocietal interaction and the reconstitution of the ideological, coercive, and economic power sources that defined the ways in which states competed with one another at a global level.⁷⁵ On this view, the nature of power-political conflict depends on the kinds of societies, international orders, and social structures through which relations of conflict and domination are mediated and constructed; it ceases to be a timeless struggle for survival. Second, I seek to move beyond unproductive dichotomies between “material” and “cultural” conceptions of power. While the IR-theory problematic of moving beyond the reified conception of state power inherited from realism has been enriched by the development of constructivist perspectives, an exclusive emphasis on the identity dynamics and sociocultural constituents of interstate rivalry risks replacing realist materialism with an equally one-sided culturalism.⁷⁶ Rather, a sociohistorical perspective demands an analytical approach that is attentive to the simultaneously strategic and symbolic character of power politics, the intersocietal dynamics that shaped modern ideologies of imperialism, and the historical processes that make such dominant cultural forms as “the nation” or “the West”

⁷⁴ For ample documentation of the linked themes of racial and civilization conflict in US international thought in this period, see, Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2015), 29–54.

⁷⁵ As discussed in the next chapter, this is a characteristic feature of the realist tradition. See, Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*; Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

⁷⁶ This is not true of all constructivist work. For an important account of the historical development of international stigmatization dynamics, see the argument about the modernity of Western-centric normative power structures in Zarakol, *After Defeat*, 17, 37. The literature I have mind here is reviewed in the next chapter: Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

into authoritative forms of social power. Finally, the intersocietal analytic that underpins this work also challenges conceptions of state power as a highly autonomous military infrastructure. For historical sociologists like Anthony Giddens, Michael Mann, and Theda Skocpol, states and other power constellations tend to represent fixed or autonomous institutional spheres.⁷⁷ An emphasis on the dynamics of uneven and combined development introduces an intersocietal logic of global interactivity that is missing from such frameworks of analysis. As will become clear, this intersocietal analytic entails a strong emphasis on the dialectical entwining of strategic, ideological, and economic logics of international competition — a sense of contingent yet systemic interconnection that is missing from such broadly neo-Weberian accounts of state autonomy.⁷⁸

POWER TRANSFORMATION IN A GLOBAL AGE

The core conception of international power transformations analyzed in this thesis traces the historical and structural linkages between a range of co-evolving and co-constitutive social processes. It rests on a broadly dialectical, internationally-oriented understanding of historical development, rather than any particular micro-foundational assumption about the essence or agents of power *per se*. This argument can be encapsulated by defining five distinctive yet deeply interlinked features of the global condition.

1. *GLOBALITY*. The global dimensions of the modern international order can be understood as a product of the multisided, highly uneven, and regionally differentiated condition of intersocietal interactivity engendered by the intensification of capitalist development and colonial expansion during the mid to late-nineteenth century.⁷⁹ Together with the rapid redivision of world territory wrought by European colonialism, the formation of a world market brought all societies into ever increasing contact. Long-distance trade and financial transaction now began to displace domestic producers at an increasing rate, from European farmers to Indian textile merchants. Industrialization and its associated revolutions in communications, transport, and military technology helped produce an imperially-organized international order that was at once highly interdependent and deeply unequal.⁸⁰
2. *UNEVENNESS*. The political consequences of intersocietal interdependence were centrally shaped by the uneven historical geography of the industrial revolution. The fact that national industrialization processes took place in a staggered historical sequence produced

⁷⁷ The key texts in this broadly neo-Weberian tradition are: Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence: A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁷⁸ For an illuminating critical discussion of the kind of power analysis associated with such neo-Weberian perspectives, see, Perry Anderson, *A Zone of Engagement* (London: Verso, 1992), 76–86, 149–68, 182–97.

⁷⁹ This section draws on Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 16–17; and Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 1–10.

⁸⁰ Ronald Findlay and Kevin H O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 385, 387–91.

a series of military and economic power gaps: between an industrially preponderant Anglo-American industrial core and such later-developing states as Germany, Russia, and Japan, on the side, and between the imperialist powers of Europe and North America and those societies subject to colonial rule, on the other.⁸¹ Unevenness was a fluctuating historical process rather than a fixed state of affairs: its dynamic revolved around the relational construction of societies through forms of competitive coexistence and interaction. Industrial power hierarchies were continually subject to contestation in the form of national-developmental strategies that involved the emulation and restructuring of the most advanced economic forms. These forms of combined development entailed a range of institutions, practices, and cultural schema that radically impacted political life. Examples include the regimes of national economy formation associated with protective industrialization strategies; the preparation of societies for military competition; and the pursuit of national efficiency as central ideological principle of industrial states.

3. *THE NATIONAL-IMPERIAL STATE*. This deeply uneven global condition was a medium of strategic and symbolic conflicts revolving around the transformation of states into consolidated centers of strategic power-projection and political authority. A remarkably general feature of this advancing process was the reconstitution of modern states along national-territorial lines.⁸² The restructuring of intersocietal relations proceeded in tandem with a number of top-down efforts to transform regionally and sectionally fragmented state forms into centralized national-imperial states; the nationalization of previously aristocratic or semi-feudal authority structures; and the transformation of imperialism into a colonialist nation-building project defined by the developmental or civilizational ambitions of national empires. In different forms and with uneven success, this combination of processes impacted political development in all the major industrializing states of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries: Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the USA. Like other forms of modern state, the national-imperial state had a strong symbolic foundation in its claim to hold authority in a legitimate rational form. While these claims were structured by local political conflicts and cultural traditions, the legitimization of national-imperial rule had general characteristics that resonated with the pressures of the global condition. These included claims to civilizational greatness and national cultural distinction; modernist conceptions of political authority as the progressive transformation of society; and the proliferation of hierarchical systems of symbolic classification defined in terms of race, ethnicity, and cultural development.
4. *EXPANSIONISM*. This combination of economic, coercive, and ideological developments shaped the convergence of many late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century elites on the desirability of external expansionism. Territorial expansion in the form of overseas

⁸¹ For particulars, see the tables and analysis presented in chapters 3-4, which demonstrate the distribution of these power hierarchies in detail.

⁸² For the general point see, Manu Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 4 (2002): 770–99; Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (June 2000): 807–31.

conquest, settler colonialism, and forcible annexation was one of the most general forms of this process, from the United States' turn from westward expansion to territorial empire in the Philippines, to Germany's struggle for *Lebensraum* in the form of a greater-German sphere of transcontinental settlements.⁸³ Expansionism also took a number of deterritorialized forms, such as the expansive system of American-dominated but formally independent world markets envisaged by the architects of the Open Door policy (1899), and the kinds of gun boat diplomacy pursued by the USA in Japan (1854-1855), Japan in Korea (1876-1877), and Germany in Venezuela (1902-1903). What united these practices was their common effort to expand the global influence of the national-imperial state via coercive policies of territorial, military, and economic penetration.

5. *THE STRUGGLE FOR ORDER.* Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperialisms involved a contest for influence within the interior spaces of a common international order and world economy. This emergent field of interaction was both a systemic form of geopolitical and economic power structure — defined by the regular imposition of competitive pressures on all actors — and an open arena of political and ideological struggles — marked by a proliferation of attempts to redefine the terms of worldwide interdependence. In this respect, the conduct of power politics and the development of the global condition were deeply linked in the form of a struggle for order on multiple spatial scales and through a diversity of strategies and techniques. These involved efforts to reshape internal social orders through highly nativist projects of political reform (such as the Pan-German and Russification movements of the late-nineteenth century, or the Americanization Movement of the 1910s) in conjunction with the aggressive strategies of external expansionism unleashed during the escalating tariff wars and naval-arms races unleashed by the breakdown of the *Pax Britannica* in the 1880s.⁸⁴

For the purposes of my argument, the precise origins of these economic, coercive, and ideological power transformations are less important than their conjunctural intersection during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries imperial era. What bears emphasis here is the distinctive clustering of such transformations within a particular historical moment and intersocietal context. In political-economic, sociocultural, and geopolitical terms, the era of the New Imperialism defines a transformative historical conjuncture in the co-development of capitalist society and the modern states-system. As Jürgen Osterhammel has argued, “in 1880s and 1890s such a jolt passed through the world that it is appropriate to describe those decades as the beginning of a further subperiod.”⁸⁵ This was the *fin-de-siècle* age of empire, not the first age of global imperialism, but a highly distinctive moment in the unfolding of

⁸³ For the political and intellectual linkages between these colonial projects, see, Jens-Uwe Guettel, *German Expansionism, Imperial Liberalism and the United States, 1776-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chapter 2.

⁸⁴ Geyer and Bright's idea of a struggle for “self-transformation” captures the inside/outside dimension of this struggle for order well: “Benchmarks of Globalization,” 290.

⁸⁵ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 58; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).

modernity on a world scale.⁸⁶ To flesh out this periodization, I now elaborate the basic dynamic of international change with the above sketched conception of the global condition implies.

THE ORIGINS OF WORLD POLITICS

In the winter of 1814, the leading ministers of Russia, Austria, Prussia and Britain prepared an international concert of European powers to negotiate the conclusion of the war against the French Emperor, Napoleon I. After the protracted warfare of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the restoration of European order was a widely-felt priority, impelled by the rising demands for the extension of popular sovereignty associated with the advent of Jacobinism.⁸⁷ For Prince Metternich of Austria, the “general reorganization of Europe” was now a “subject of domestic policy,” demanding the forcible reassertion of absolutism and aristocratic supremacy as the central pillars of the *ancien régime*.⁸⁸ For Castlereagh, architect of British diplomacy, European “security” required a more limited process of alliance-building, so as to reconstitute the traditional “union against France,” a conception of European diplomacy which looked back to the paradigm of the “balance of power” inaugurated in the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht.⁸⁹ With the Treaty of Paris, in March 1814, the coalition agreed the terms for the restoration of Bourbon Monarchy in France, confirming themselves as the principal regulators of an exclusive hierarchy of great powers.⁹⁰ By the signing of the Final Act of the Vienna Congress on June 9th 1815, the formalization of this interstate system was

⁸⁶ For this periodization, see especially, Heinz Gollwitzer, *Europe in the Age of Imperialism, 1880-1914*, trans. David Adam and Stanley Baron (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969), 9–13, 35–36; Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*, 59ff; C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 228–30; Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 170ff. On the distinction between informal imperialism and formal colonialism, and the rise of the later after c.1880, see George Steinmetz, “Return to Empire: The New U.S. Imperialism in Comparative Historical Perspective,” *Sociological Theory* 23, no. 4 (December 1, 2005): 344–48. On an earlier era of global imperialism, see, C. A. Bayly, “The First Age of Global Imperialism, c. 1760–1830,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 26, no. 2 (May 1, 1998): 28–47.

⁸⁷ On the fear of French Jacobinism see, for example, Viscount Castlereagh to Lord Liverpool, October 15th 1815, in Charles K. Webster, *British Diplomacy, 1813-1815: Select Documents Dealing with the Reconstruction of Europe*. (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1921), 387. For the struggle against popular sovereignty in this context see Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, 146–47.

⁸⁸ Cited in Reinhard Stauber, “The Reorganization of Europe as ‘Subject of Domestic Policy,’” in *Decades of Reconstruction*, ed. Ute Planert and James Retallack (Washington, DC: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 85; see also, Genevieve Peterson, “Political Inequality at the Congress of Vienna,” *Political Science Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1945): 534.

⁸⁹ See Castlereagh to Liverpool, Chaumont, March 10th, 1814, LXXXIX in Webster, *British Diplomacy*, 165. For the British emphasis on the “Balance of Power” see the “Memorandum of Cabinet,” December 26th, 1813 *F.O. Cont. Arch I* in *British Diplomacy*, 126. On the idea of the “équilibre des puissances” inaugurated at Utrecht see Stella Ghervas, “Balance of Power vs. Perpetual Peace: Paradigms of European Order from Utrecht to Vienna, 1713–1815,” *The International History Review* 39, no. 3 (2017): 409ff.

⁹⁰ This was confirmed in Article I of the Treaty, which states: “The High Contracting Parties shall devote their best attention to maintain, not only between themselves, but inasmuch as depends upon them, between all the States of Europe, that harmony and good understanding which are so necessary for their tranquillity.” See the reproduction of the text of the ‘Definitive Treaty of Peace between Great Britain, Austria, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Sweden and France’, Paris, 30th of May, 1814 in Edward Hertslet, *Map of Europe by Treaty*, vol. 1 (London: Harrison and Son, 1875), 1–17, here at 4. For an interpretation of this legalized system of great power hierarchy see Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 91–126.

confirmed, establishing a comprehensive framework of European public order backed by military force.⁹¹ The Concert of Europe thereby enshrined a shared commitment to “political equilibrium” — a balancing of mutual interests, independent spheres of influence, and diplomatic status — among recognized great powers.⁹² With the formation of the Holy Alliance, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Prussia expanded these commitments into a full-blown defence of the old regime, arrogating to themselves the right of intervention into the internal affairs of states where revolution threatened the principles of absolute monarchy. By 1820, this struggle to freeze the existing composition of European states saw the crushing of uprisings in Naples, Piedmont, Spain and Portugal, all under the name of the Congress system.⁹³

The Vienna Order thus crystallized a paradigm of European statecraft with deep roots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By design, it upheld a prevailing hierarchy of aristocracy and rural land-ownership in order to buttress the social foundations of dynastic rule.⁹⁴ In conception, it derived from a series of archetypes of interstate ordering — ideals of political equilibrium, the balance of power, and European public law⁹⁵ — originally forged in the context of an earlier struggle against the threat of “universal monarchy” — the domination of Europe by a single dynastic imperium, typically associated with the House of Bourbon, now revived by the rise of Napoleon.⁹⁶ In effect, it replayed an opposition between the ideals of the early-eighteenth century “Utrecht Enlightenment,” which saw the first sustained efforts to reconstitute European politics on the basis of secular diplomatic norms,⁹⁷ and the older framework of continental absolutism embodied by the Holy Alliance. Conceived in a world still lacking the global spread of industrialization — where economic and political systems

⁹¹ Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 42.

⁹² For the idea of European equilibrium and its role in the Vienna Order see the work of historian Paul W. Schroeder: “The Nineteenth Century System: Balance of Power or Political Equilibrium?,” *Review of International Studies* 15, no. 2 (1989): 137ff; “Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?,” *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 3 (1992): 695; *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 482.

⁹³ Jennifer Mitzen, *Power in Concert: The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Global Governance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 105ff; also, Marco D’Eramo, “After Waterloo,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 94 (August 2015): 80; Stella Ghervas, “The Long Shadow of the Congress of Vienna: From International Peace to Domestic Disorders,” *Journal of Modern European History* 13 (January 1, 2015): 458–63.

⁹⁴ Charles S. Maier, “Leviathan 2.0: Inventing Modern Statehood,” in *A World Connecting, 1870–1945*, ed. Emily Rosenberg (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012), 68.

⁹⁵ The latter was raised in debates at the Congress about the rights of intervention within a European “society of peoples.” In this context, the difference between the powers was typified by Baron Wilhelm von Humboldt’s argument that the great powers lacked the authority to intervene in the internal affairs of other states, given that Europe was not a “constitutional whole.” ‘Proposal of Baron Humboldt to Publish a Declaration, Vienna, September 1814, Appendix V’, reproduced in: United Kingdom Foreign Office, *The Congress of Vienna, 1814–1815*, vol. Handbooks Prepared under the Direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office, no. 153 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920), 162–64.

⁹⁶ Ghervas, “Balance of Power vs. Perpetual Peace,” 408, 413.

⁹⁷ See, J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737-1764*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 130; and “Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, Revolution and Counter-Revolution; a Eurosceptical Enquiry,” *History of Political Thought* 20, no. 1 (1999): 128; also, Morten Skumsrud Andersen, “A Genealogy of the Balance of Power” (Unpublished PHD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, LSE, 2016), 205, <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3326/>; Edward Keene, “The Naming of Powers,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 48, no. 2 (June 1, 2013): 268–82; Richard Devetak, “Historiographical Foundations of Modern International Thought: Histories of the European States-System from Florence to Göttingen,” *History of European Ideas* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 71ff.

continued to be locally organized and almost entirely agrarian — the Concert of Europe upheld an early modern framework of land-based competition among absolutist or aristocratic states; one in which the external purposes of state power tended to be articulated through juridical frameworks of territorial distribution or regional power-balancing. In these respects, the Vienna Order was locked into a world still basically suspended between the yoke of the “semi-feudal...absolute monarchy” and the advance of “modern bourgeois society,” as Marx and Engels highlighted in their famous assault on the foundations of the post-Napoleonic states-system.⁹⁸

By the era of the New Imperialism, however, great power politics could no longer be contained within the framework of the Vienna Order. Central to the new climate of imperial competition that took shape during the 1880s and 1890s was the evolving reality of global interdependence forged by the advent the world market. Between 1875 and 1913, the total volume of visible trade trebled against the background of an unparalleled global export and investment boom while the commodity market integration — now a favored measure of economic globalization — became worldwide in extent by 1900.⁹⁹ After 1870, the mileage of the railway system expanded by some 1053 percent worldwide, rising from 130,000 miles of track to half a million miles globally by 1900. Sustained by a new system of ports, canals, and telegraph networks, inter-oceanic connections rose precipitously, linking the continental economy of the United States to commodity chains in Europe and East Asia, the financial markets of New York to those of Paris and London.¹⁰⁰ Organized under the international gold standard, between 1870 and 1914 financial capital achieved levels of mobility and transnational integration not seen again until the late 1970s, with net foreign liabilities rising from 7 to 20 percent of global output, and expenditures on foreign direct investment reaching some 9 percent of world GDP (1870-1914).¹⁰¹

In the words of the early-twentieth century British Geographer Halford Mackinder “for the first time we can perceive something of the real proportion of features and events on the stage of the whole world.”¹⁰² In this way, “whether we think of the physical, economic, military, or political interconnection of things on the surface of the globe, we are now for the first time presented with a closed system.”¹⁰³ In Germany, Friedrich Ratzel developed a similarly systemic conception of the “spatial unity of life,” insisting that the power of states followed from the mastery of space.¹⁰⁴ On the other side of the Atlantic, meanwhile, the historian and lecturer

⁹⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Verso, 1998), 33.

⁹⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day*, Revised Edition (1968; repr., Penguin Books, 1999), 129; Findlay and O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty*, 404–5; Edward Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers: How Economies Have Developed Through Natural Resource Exploitation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 374–78.

¹⁰⁰ Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 73.

¹⁰¹ Maurice Obstfeld and Alan M Taylor, *Global Capital Markets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 56; Kevin H. O'Rourke, “Globalization and Inequality: Historical Trends,” Working Paper (National Bureau of Economic Research, June 2001).

¹⁰² Halford Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): 422.

¹⁰³ Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in The Politics of Reconstruction* (New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt, 1919), 40.

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 276; see also, Friedrich Ratzel, “The Laws of the Spatial Growth of States,” in *The Structure*

at the US Naval War College, Brooks Adams, formulated a prophetic account of US expansionism, which cast the American Empire as the center of an encompassing imperial system and world economy:

With the completion of the Panama Canal all Central America will become a part of our system. We have expanded into Asia, we have attracted the fragments of the Spanish dominions, and reaching out into China we have checked the advance of Russia and Germany, in territory which, until yesterday, had been supposed to be beyond our sphere. We are penetrating into Europe, and Great Britain especially is gradually assuming the position of a dependency, which must rely on us as the base from which she draws her food in peace, and without which she could not stand in war. Supposing the movement of the next fifty years only to equal that of the last, instead of undergoing a prodigious acceleration, the United States will outweigh any single empire, if not all empires combined. The whole world will pay her tribute. Commerce will flow to her both from east and west, and the order which has existed from the dawn of time will be reversed.¹⁰⁵

This sense of collapsing distances and systemic interconnectedness — the dynamics of spatio-temporal restructuring associated with emergence of industrial-capitalist societies¹⁰⁶ — became central to the ideologies of geopolitical conflict and expansion which emerged with the coming of the New Imperialism. The vast expansion of colonialism and imperial competition which ensued after Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1882 not only established a new form of international hierarchy centered on the leading industrial states of the time. It also entailed new ideologies of international power struggle which recast the imperatives of international competition in distinctively global terms.¹⁰⁷ In his late-nineteenth century lectures on German politics, the National Liberal historian Heinrich von Treitschke summarized this struggle for world primacy as follows:

The domination of Transatlantic territory is becoming the first task of the Navies of modern Europe, for since the goal of human civilization will be the establishment of the aristocracy of the white races over the whole globe, the importance of each nation will ultimately depend upon its share in that Transatlantic domination. This is the reason why the Navy has grown in importance in our own times.¹⁰⁸

One of the central figures of the modern *Realpolitik* tradition, Treitschke served as an influential advocate of German expansion and colonialism, promoting a militaristic strategy of global power politics and state-centered nationalism which resonated with the high command of the

of *Political Geography*, ed. Roger Kasperson and Julian Minghi, trans. Ronald Bolin (1897; repr., Chicago, IL: Aldine, 1969), 17–28.

¹⁰⁵ Brooks Adams, *The New Empire* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1902), 208–9.

¹⁰⁶ For a seminal discussion of the relation between time-space compression, capitalism, and *fin-de-siècle* modernity see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), chapter 16.

¹⁰⁷ D'Agostino, *The Rise of Global Powers* here at 14.

¹⁰⁸ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politics*, trans. Blanche Dugdale and Torben De Bile, vol. vol.II (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 448.

Imperial Navy.¹⁰⁹ His advocacy of *Machtpolitik* (force-based power politics) bore the imprint of a world transformed by the rise of naval power and the consolidation of an imperial international hierarchy, conceived here under the sign of the “aristocracy of the white races.”¹¹⁰ In this context, Treitschke viewed the “colonizing impulse” as a fundamental basis of great power status,¹¹¹ insisting that: “The rational task of a legally constituted people, conscious of a destiny is to assert its rank in the world’s hierarchy and in its measure to participate in the civilising mission of mankind.”¹¹² Epitomized by the expansion of the British Empire and its North American extension, this struggle to assert control over “barbarian lands” was a necessary stage in the cultural and economic development of a national *Machtstaat* within the encompassing spaces of “the globe.”¹¹³ For Germany, it offered a solution to the problems of “overproduction” and mass-emigration thought to be hindering the development of German national industry.¹¹⁴ At the end of the nineteenth century, such problems had been thrown into sharp relief by the “economic energy” of “North America”, now the home of “giant” cross-continental “railways,” and the destination for many German migrants — “a present given to a foreign country without any equivalent compensation.”¹¹⁵

While this dimension of the *Machtpolitik* thesis centred around the disjuncture between national development and global economic rivalry, Treitschke’s conception of German strategy also opened out onto a broader conception of nation-building colonialism in the emerging spaces of the globe. “With the crossing of Africa begins the last epoch of great discoveries. When once the center of the Dark Continent lies open, the whole globe, with the exception of a few regions which will be always inaccessible to civilisation is also opened before European eyes.”¹¹⁶ On the eve of the Congo Conference of 1884-85, the pursuit of *Machtpolitik* signified an imperial nation-building project, an attempt to fashion a kind of Greater Germany as an outlet for socioeconomic problems seen in the mirror of British and North American prosperity.¹¹⁷ “The great German seaport towns, at present imbued with a half-mutinous spirit toward the Government, have the prospect of a new period of revival; it is from the Hansa towns that the bold pioneers of our nation in Africa come.”¹¹⁸

¹⁰⁹ Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age*, 258; for Treitschke’s wider political and intellectual impact see Bew, *Realpolitik*, 68–76.

¹¹⁰ Such racism was a common feature of *fin-de-siècle* international politics. For an overview see Christian Geulen, “The Common Grounds of Conflict: Racial Visions of World Order 1880–1940,” in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s*, ed. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 69–96.

¹¹¹ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politics*, trans. Blanche Dugdale and Torben De Bile, vol. vol.I, 2 vols. (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1916), Book 1, 116-117.

¹¹² Treitschke, Book 1, 22.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 113ff

¹¹⁴ “For a nation that suffers from continual over-production, and sends yearly 200,000 of her children abroad, the question of colonisation is vital.” Heinrich von Treitschke, *Treitschke: His Life and Works*, trans. Adolf Hausrath (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1914), 203.

¹¹⁵ Treitschke, 196, 203, 205.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹¹⁷ Opposition to British attempts to curb German expansion is perhaps the central theme of Treitschke’s colonial programme. “If the Congo Conference succeeds in checking the high-handed arbitrariness of England in Central Africa, the first united repulse of English encroachments will not be the last, since, outside Europe, there is no need for the interests of the continental Powers to collide.” Treitschke, *Life and Works*, 212.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, .212.

The vision of imperial rivalry and colonial expansion crystallized in this seminal conception of *Machtpolitik* provides a portal into the larger condition of global power politics forged at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. *Fin-de-siècle* figures like Mahan, Treitschke, Adams, Ratzel and Mackinder, were deeply embroiled in a struggle to grasp the evolving conditions of a rapidly changing international system and world economy. They offered a consciously progressive image of international politics wherein a globally-organized system of states and political economies figured as the medium of rival political futures. Consider, in these terms, the following quotations:

Every country must look to its “sea power,” not only to defend its coasts, but also to protect all its interest beyond its coast; and every civilized, and many uncivilized, countries have extended and varied interests all over the world... We must begin to seek our share in the new parts of China that are now about to be thrown open to the world, as is foreshadowed by the opening of the West River in the south and the calling for bids for many tons of steel rails in the north. We must strengthen our trade with Japan, we must seek for a market in all portions of the globe; but above all we must develop our commerce with Mexico, Central and South America... Let us have a military power, both sea and land, such as will command respect and will insure the safety of our citizens in life, liberty and property in any and every portion globe.¹¹⁹

— Lieutenant-Commander Richard Wainwright, US Navy (1898)

The primary object of the call for the First Conference — the accomplishment of the great design which Henry IV of France conceived three centuries ago for the limitation of armaments in Europe — failed for the time; yet the Conference accomplished other things of the highest value to humanity, and it demonstrated for the first time in the world’s history the potent and epoch-making fact that a congress of the world’s powers convened, not to deal with some concrete question demanding immediate solution, but convened to consider and discuss the application of the general and fundamental principles of justice and humanity under all circumstances and to all international questions, can be made a practical and effective agency in the government of the world; it developed a new method and a new power for the betterment of international conduct, far superior to the ordinary rules of diplomatic intercourse, far broader in its scope, far nobler in its purpose.¹²⁰

— Elihu Root, US Secretary of State (1907)

It is worth reproducing these statements at length because they help to illustrate the emergence of the world as a distinct cognitive reality and political horizon. For Richard Wainwright, the world was similarly highly competitive and interconnected social space, where economic power

¹¹⁹ Richard Wainwright, “Our Naval Power,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, no. 24 (1898): 40, 43, 46. A future Rear-Admiral, Wainwright was an important advocate of US naval expansion and imperialism. For extensive documentation of American fixations on the widely vaunted “China Market” see David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Involvement: American Economic Expansion Across the Pacific, 1784-1900* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001) chapter 9.

¹²⁰ Elihu Root, “Address in Opening the National Arbitration and Peace Congress,” in *Addresses on International Subjects*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 136. In preparation for the Hague Conventions of October 1907, Root spoke extensively on the subject of expanding the scope of arbitration to resolve international disputes in to the National Arbitration and Peace Congress in New York, April 15, 1907. Occasioned by the increasing risk of naval warfare among the major industrial states, National Arbitration and Hague conferences were linked attempts to organize the emerging conditions of world politics on a systematic legal basis, efforts that would later materialize in the creation of the League of Nations. For an account of Root’s influence on the growing legalism of American foreign policy during the early-twentieth century see Benjamin Allen Coates, *Legalist Empire: International Law and American Foreign Relations in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 116ff.

rested on military capacity, and the expansion of “uncivilized” countries demanded a global conception of American geopolitical strategy. Likewise, the notion of a nascent world government elaborated by US Secretary of State Elihu Root registers a keenly felt need to assert control on a truly global scale. In its emphasis on the advent of international law as a “new method” for the constitution of a global political order, it indicates the conscious novelty and modernizing ethos of *fin-de-siècle* world politics. Despite their differences in emphasis, such statements illustrate the concrete interplay between American grand strategy and an evolving world economy. At the turn of the twentieth century, political and military elites in the United States, as elsewhere, confronted the global as lived horizon of political action.

IV. The Structure of the Thesis

In the twenty-first century, this sense of systemic global connectedness is perhaps one of the most basic features of social existence. It is embedded as a structural reality within the present historical condition of national-states existing inside a capitalist world economy; and it is called into being through the prevalent discursive oppositions between locality and globality, native and foreign, inside and outside.¹²¹ During the 1990s and early 2000s, the highpoint of the “globalization theory” debates prompted by the end of the Cold War, the notion of a systemic global condition was conceptualized mainly in the form of evolutionary narratives of technological development and spatio-temporal change. From this perspective, the process of globalization signified an almost inevitable pathway of human social development.¹²² In these terms, globalization was often conceived as engendering a permanent decline in the military and geopolitical rivalries associated with great power politics as such.¹²³ Today, by contrast, such assessments of globalization fail to convince.¹²⁴ Against the background of escalating great power antagonisms, it seems necessary to recover an understanding of the global that makes room for the existence of power politics as a central international dynamic. As this thesis suggests, viewed from a historical perspective the emergence of the international as a worldwide political-economic space and competitive global whole can be better understood in terms of a series of active political projects and distinctively modern socio-historical transformations. The global condition of *fin-de-siècle* world politics is best understood neither as the natural evolution of the globalization process, nor as the repetition of an eternal geopolitical dynamic. The political and ideological dynamics associated with the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century globe need to be specified in relation to the socio-historical conditions which mediated and constructed them.

¹²¹ Fredric Jameson, “Globalization and Political Strategy,” *New Left Review* 4 (2000): 66.

¹²² For an overview, see, David Held, A Godblatt, and J. Perraton, eds., *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999); David Held, *A Globalizing World? Culture, Economics, Politics*, Introduction to the Social Sciences (London: Routledge, 2000).

¹²³ For arguments along these lines, see, Erik Gartzke, Quan Li, and Charles Boehmer, “Investing in the Peace: Economic Interdependence and International Conflict,” *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (ed 2001): 391–438; Patrick J McDonald, *The Invisible Hand of Peace: Capitalism, the War Machine, and International Relations Theory* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹²⁴ On the limits of “globalization theory”, see, Justin Rosenberg, *The Follies of Globalisation Theory: Polemical Essays* (London: Verso, 2000); Justin Rosenberg, “Globalization Theory: A Post Mortem,” *International Politics* 42, no. 1 (2005): 2–74; Tarak Barkawi, *Globalization and War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

The argument of this thesis is developed over the course of five chapters. In the next chapter, I seek to clear the ground for an internationally-oriented historical sociology by addressing some of the theoretical problems and explanatory pitfalls that characterize prominent IR attempts to understand the development of international power relations over time. This discussion highlights the advantages of explanatory power and historical specificity that are to be gained by conceiving international relations in terms of changing structures of intersocietal interaction. On this basis, *Chapter 3* develops a historical-sociological approach to international change that is grounded in a dynamic, historical understanding of modern forms of social structure. Against the background of the United States' entry in Spanish-American War (1898), I provide a theoretical conception of the interplay between structural change and political agency that highlights key features of the global condition as a medium and object of international relations. In these terms, the chapter illustrates some of the key nineteenth century sources of global power politics: how state power came to operate through the long-distance interconnections of an imperial world economy; the uneven transformation of societies generated amid this process; and the emergence of the national-imperial state as a key political locus of industrial societies and competitive ideologies of social modernization.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how the dynamics of uneven and combined development triggered by the take-off of American industrial capitalism in the 1870s shaped the escalating geopolitical rivalries of the New Imperialism. Specifically, this chapter describes the socioeconomic transformations and geopolitical pressures that pulled industrial societies into an encompassing dynamic of imperial competition; shows how imperial elites in the United States confronted the reality of increasing interdependence both politically and ideologically; and explains the foregoing consequences of these structural transformations for the development of imperialist geopolitical strategies in both Meiji Japan and Wilhelmine Germany. To continue this analysis of American expansionism, *Chapter 5* examines the development of "the West" as a key ideological framework of US grand strategy and political culture. This illustrates the ways in which the uneven and hierarchical character of the modern global condition developed in tandem with forms of symbolic competition over the right to claim civilized, modern status. Together, these two chapters provide an internationally-oriented interpretation of the logics of strategic power-projection and ideological calculus that informed American global expansion in the age of imperialism before 1914. They demonstrate the forms of competitive coexistence generated by the power hierarchies of an Anglo-American dominated world economy, and interpret the implications of this international setting for the visions of "world power" and "western civilization" that shaped US attempts to reconstruct the prevailing international order. In conclusion, *Chapter 6* discusses some implications of the argument for understanding the development of American hegemony after World War One, and for intervening in debates about the return of great power politics to the contemporary world scene.

2. POWER AND MODERNITY IN INTERNATIONAL THEORY

I. Introduction

The previous chapter examined the sociohistorical transformations and political and ideological shifts which shaped the nineteenth-century emergence of the global condition. This historical-theoretical framing — figuring the international as a historically evolving sphere of societal multiplicity organized around emergent power sources — represents a significant challenge to the universal political-science theories conventionally associated with the study of power politics. For the transhistorical character of many IR-theoretical vocabularies — whether the language of norms and identity-formation we find in much constructivist theorizing or the notions of anarchy, *Realpolitik*, and national security conventionally employed by realists — tends to bracket rather than confront the reality of qualitative structural change. These over-generalized abstractions lack purchase on the possibility of meaningful transformations of political life that is associated with the concept of modernity as a developmental process and historical condition.¹

This chapter takes up this critique in more detail by examining prominent IR-theoretic attempts to analyze the development and character of “international power” over time. In particular, I address the limits of prominent IR attempts to map the development of interstate power politics on to narratives of “Westphalia” and “globalization;”(Section II); the explanatory pitfalls internal to neorealist efforts to theorize international power in nomothetic and transhistorical terms (Section III); the possibility of a post-realist agenda for the study of power politics grounded in constructivist premises (Section IV); and finally, the promise of a global historical sociology of international relations (Section V).

¹ For an overview of IR’s limited engagement with the nineteenth-century dynamic of qualitative — epoch-making — structural change, see Barry Buzan and George Lawson, “The Global Transformation: The Nineteenth Century and the Making of Modern International Relations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2013): 620–634; Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), chapter 2. This suggestion about IR theory’s limited engagement with the reality of qualitative transformations in the structure of political and social life is also at centre of Buzan and Little’s auto-critique of the discipline: “Why International Relations Has Failed as an Intellectual Project and What to Do About It,” *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 30, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 19–39. For the argument that much IR constructivism fails to come to terms with the historically distinct sociocultural and normative character of the modern international order see Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 15–17, 37–61. On the realist tradition’s failure to develop a serious consideration of modernity as a social condition and process of historical change see Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London: Verso, 1994), here at 20, 46; cf. Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso, 2003), 14–27.

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The guiding theme of the following discussion of IR theory mirrors classical historical sociology's interest in the genesis of modernity's constituting social forms: specifically, its focus is the sociohistorical problematic of how to conceptualize the sources and character of "international power" in relation to the qualitative transfigurations of social life which constitute different periods and formations of modernity.² In addition to its critical component, the chapter thus establishes the conceptual and analytic foundations for an approach to the study of power politics based on the emergence and dynamic of modern social structures, their global or intersocietal dimensions, and the kinds of pathways for strategic and symbolic action which they constitute. Centrally, it highlights the variety of analytical problems and explanatory pitfalls that arise when international-security theories adopt ahistorical models of interstate competition; models which elide the long-term transformations of societal organization, cultural expression, and political economy which have shaped the texture of international politics since the nineteenth-century development of the modern global condition.

As an initial point of orientation, it is worth considering the ongoing debate over the range of crises and disorders afflicting the contemporary world scene.³ In a body of work divided between competing theoretical traditions, one of the main axes of recent IR debates remains that between those who conceive international politics as a near-timeless struggle for wealth and power and those who emphasize the reality of international change by casting the geopolitical-military concerns of classical *Realpolitik* as fundamentally outmoded.⁴ While the representatives of the contemporary neorealist tradition insist on the enduring primacy of conventional power politics, a trans-historical system of strategic rivalries revolving around the universal imperatives of interstate anarchy, a vast body of scholarship now views this image of interstate relations as outdated and analytically unsustainable.⁵

² Historical sociology's interest in the genesis of social forms is discussed in Craig Calhoun, "The Rise and Domestication of Historical Sociology," in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J McDonald (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 320ff; Julia Adams, Elisabeth Stephanie Clemens, and Ann Shola Orloff, *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 56; Gurminder K. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Palgrave Macmillan Basingstoke, 2007), 78.

³ The concluding chapter of the thesis returns to this context in more detail. For recent accounts of the apparent crises of liberal internationalism, consult especially: Barry Buzan and George Lawson, "Capitalism and the Emergent World Order," *International Affairs* 90, no. 1 (2014): 71–91; Susan Watkins, "America vs China," *New Left Review*, no. 115 (2019): 5–14; Justin Rosenberg and Chris Boyle, "Understanding 2016: China, Brexit and Trump in the History of Uneven and Combined Development," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 2019; Beate Jahn, "Liberal Internationalism: Historical Trajectory and Current Prospects," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 43–61.

⁴ For a particularly clear illustration of this opposition see the debate between Walter Russell Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2014): 69–79; and G. John Ikenberry, "The Illusion of Geopolitics," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2014).

⁵ In part, the increasingly widespread view of power politics as a purely atavistic feature of international affairs was a product of the intellectual decline of realism which set in after the end of Cold War, an event it had famously failed to account for. In a widely-read article of the time, Friedrich Kratochwil argued that the collapse of the USSR, by failing to conform to neorealist assumptions about the primacy of military power distributions and hegemonic wars in processes of geopolitical change, had revealed the limits of the putatively "scientific method"

For many advocates of this second outlook, the old power-political logic of security has been displaced by the forms of global economic integration, multilateral governance, and legal-normative principles of cooperative-cum-pacific international organization associated with the post-war liberal order.⁶ On this view, the rising levels of economic and political interdependence generated by advanced capitalism entail the decline of power-political models of international statecraft as such.⁷ Globalization under the aegis of a world-wide “empire of capitalist democracy” has generated a structural transformation in the basic rules of international conduct, modifying the underlying purposes of state-power, and promoting a long-term pacification of interstate relations that makes categories like power politics and *Realpolitik* largely irrelevant as descriptors for an emergent liberal order.⁸ Outside the formal context of IR theory proper, Jürgen Habermas has given one of the most expansive versions of this argument. Within the “post-national constellation” of the contemporary world order, the trend lines of political modernity are marked by a turn away from “classical power politics” toward “a politics that can catch up with global markets.”⁹ This telos, together with the emphasis on the pacifying impact of global marketization which underpins it, is paradigmatic of much of what counts as liberal internationalism today.

Increasing evidence of new great-power antagonisms, especially in the triangle of geopolitical relations between the USA, China, and Russia, provides a direct counterpoint to such cosmopolitan forecasts. Now the seeming crisis of Western liberalism, as an either legitimate or effective mode of international-ordering, makes it possible to re-assert the predominance of power-political competition as the modal condition of world politics. The forms of systemic crisis emanating from the decline of American hegemony and the rise of revisionist powers are

valorized by neo-positivists. Friedrich Kratochwil, “The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-Realism as the Science of Realpolitik without Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): here at 64, 80.

⁶ Among various versions of this claim are the “democratic peace theory,” the “capitalist peace theory,” and “liberal internationalism.” See, respectively, Michael E Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001); Erik Gartzke, “The Capitalist Peace,” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 1 (2007): 166–91; Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The Myth of the Autocratic Revival: Why Liberal Democracy Will Prevail,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): 77–93; Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, *Democratic Internationalism: An American Grand Strategy for a Post-Exceptionalist Era* (New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 2012).

⁷ For various statements along these lines, see Samuel P. Huntington, “Why International Primacy Matters,” *International Security* 17, no. 4 (1993): 73; Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 497; G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 103; G. John Ikenberry, “The End of Liberal International Order?,” *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 21; T. V. Paul, “Recasting Statecraft: International Relations and Strategies of Peaceful Change,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 2.

⁸ G. John Ikenberry, “American Power and the Empire of Capitalist Democracy,” *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 5 (December 2001): 192.

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), here, at 109. For a powerful critique of this brand cosmopolitanism, rooting it in the realities of Western military intervention that emerged with the end of the Cold War, see Perry Perry Anderson, “Arms and Rights,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 31 (February 2005): 5–40, on Habermas, John Rawls and Norberto Bobbio.

thus upheld by contemporary realists as the “return of geopolitics.”¹⁰ As with the development of Anglo-American realism in the early decades of the Cold War, such developments are thought to represent something more than a resurgence of strategic rivalries. They also serve to undermine the kind of progressive conception of modernity which realists associate with the failed project of liberal statecraft.¹¹

Beneath its surface, this pattern of theoretical polarizations seems to attest less to the difficulties of establishing the core dynamics of contemporary international change than to the narrow set of categorical oppositions through which many international theorists address the power dynamics of modern interstate politics. Indeed, the tension between these two views — essentially between a static and a-historical geopolitical analysis and a dynamic but depoliticized conception of globalization — exemplifies the extent to which issues of power politics are still conceived in narrowly binary terms: *either* as a more-or-less timeless feature of international affairs, or *otherwise* as a form of “old-fashioned domination” incompatible with the “forces of modernity.”¹² The persistent appearance of such dichotomies points to the lack of a sustained analysis of the relations between power politics and the global social forms which characterize modernity as a dynamic historical condition.

Despite the progress that has been made toward heterodox “post-realist” conceptions of international-security theory, this literature is yet to really examine the place of power politics within the evolution of modern international order.¹³ For all its achievements, such scholarship has tended to re-value the realist vocabulary in order to expand its objects of analysis — to encompass, for example, the power-political dynamics of status-seeking or international institutions — rather than assessing the wider historical formations which actually produce and mediate such international power dynamics. So conceived, the study of power politics lacks historical depth. It is as though the classical status of the term — denoting, generically, the realm of struggle among political communities — has shielded it from close historical

¹⁰ Mead, “The Return of Geopolitics”; see also, John J. Mearsheimer, “The Rise of China Will Not Be Peaceful At All,” *The Australian*, November 18, 2005; Christopher Layne, “This Time It’s Real: The End of Unipolarity and the Pax Americana,” *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2012): 203–13.

¹¹ More generally, this is emphasized by Robert Gilpin’s outline of the realist tradition: “realism is founded on a pessimism regarding moral progress and human possibilities” in contrast to the tradition of “idealism” associated with liberal theory. Robert Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (1984): 290. On this theme, see also, Barry Buzan, “The Timeless Wisdom of Realism,” in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 47–65.

¹² In the words of John Ikenberry, “The Illusion of Geopolitics.”

¹³ On post-realism see J. Samuel Barkin, “Realist Constructivism,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (2003): 325–42; J. Samuel Barkin, *Realist Constructivism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Stacie E. Goddard and Daniel Nexon, “The Dynamics of Global Power Politics: A Framework for Analysis,” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 4–18; Stacie E. Goddard, Paul K. MacDonald, and Daniel H. Nexon, “Repertoires of Statecraft: Instruments and Logics of Power Politics,” *International Relations*, March 17, 2019; Dani K. Nedal and Daniel H. Nexon, “Anarchy and Authority: International Structure, the Balance of Power, and Hierarchy,” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4, no. 2 (April 1, 2019): 169–89; Alexander Cooley, Daniel Nexon, and Steven Ward, “Revising Order or Challenging the Balance of Military Power? An Alternative Typology of Revisionist and Status-Quo States,” *Review of International Studies*, 2019, 1–20.

examination.¹⁴ Identified with a taken-for-granted constellation of international concepts and practices, discussions of power politics can easily resolve into generic statements to the effect that “the struggle for power constitutes an immutable feature of international relations.”¹⁵

In perhaps the most concentrated version of this argument, Martin Wight famously claimed that, in contrast to domestic political theory, international thought was the theory of “survival” and therefore properly focused on “the system of the balance of power” rather than “man’s control of his social life.”¹⁶ Lacking any overarching system of government or social order, the interstate domain was necessarily characterized by a highly-limited range of political experience. For its central dynamic of the struggle between “national existence and national extinction” imposed imperatives which made the realm of international politics fundamentally autonomous from the progressive dimension of historical change associated with modern society.¹⁷ Essentially, Wight concluded, “so long as the absence of international government means that Powers are primarily preoccupied with their survival, so long will they seek to maintain some kind of balance between them.”¹⁸ For this “even distribution of power” was, ultimately, the “only principle of order” which international politics could produce in the face of a choice between “universal anarchy” and “universal dominion.”¹⁹ On this view, *machtspolitik* — “the conduct of international relations by force or the threat of force, without consideration of right of justice”²⁰ — is reduced to the imperatives of an immutable system of interstate competition, removing the study of power politics from any meaningful sense of human history — understood not as a repetitive law of power-balancing, but as the active making of the social world.²¹ While many scholars of IR would now view Wight’s conception of *machtspolitik* as a purely atavistic vision of modern international relations, realists and non-realists are united in adopting such formally a-historical categories as the benchmark for assessing changes to the contemporary structure of international-security relations.²²

¹⁴ Michael C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

¹⁵ Goddard and Nexon, “The Dynamics of Global Power Politics,” 15.

¹⁶ Martin Wight, “Why Is There No International Theory?,” *International Relations* 2, no. 1 (1960): 48, 38 respectively.

¹⁷ Wight, 48.

¹⁸ Martin Wight, “The Balance of Power,” in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, ed. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), 174.

¹⁹ Wight, 174–75.

²⁰ Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (1946; repr., New York, NY: Leicester University Press, 1978), 29.

²¹ For this critique of Wight see Justin Rosenberg, “Isaac Deutscher and the Lost History of International Relations,” *New Left Review* 215 (1996): 5ff. Notably, Wight’s theoretical commitment to the idea of the balance of power as a perpetual law of international life is sometimes at odds with his own statements about changing character of idea of “balancing.” After the Second World War, he suggests at one point, the idea of a balance of power ceases to be about “equilibrium” and becomes invested with a sense of “perpetual change,” in line with the prevailing experience of global chaos. Wight, “The Balance of Power,” 155. Among the wider English School, Herbert Butterfield offered a deeper kind of scepticism about the universality of the balance of power concept, arguing that “the international order is not a thing bestowed upon by nature, but is a matter of refined thought, careful contrivance and elaborate artifice.” Herbert Butterfield, “The Balance of Power,” in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in The Theory of International Politics*, ed. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), 147.

²² Goddard and Nexon also argue that IR scholars tend to conflate power politics *per se* with the theoretical architecture of neorealism: “The Dynamics of Global Power Politics,” here 5.

The theoretical perspective elaborated in this chapter, by contrast, seeks to historicize power politics as a concept and practice of the modern international order. It does so by examining the IR-theory debate about the development and nature of modern international-security relations in light of what might be described as an alternative, sociohistorical problematic: that is, the task of identifying the constituting social forms of the modern international order and of integrating the conflictual constitution of international life with an analysis of the multiple structural transformations — such as forging of a universal nation-state order and the uneven and combined development of a global intersocietal political-economic hierarchy — that characterize modernity as an emergent world-historical condition.²³ To elaborate this analytical framework it will first be necessary to assess the limits and insights of existing IR-theory traditions.

More fundamentally, however, running through the following discussion is a rising claim about the late-nineteenth century emergence of global power politics itself. As will emerge, the generalized vocabulary of “security” and “power,” “states” and “norms” that characterizes much IR-theory lacks purchase on the transformations in the sources and orientation of interstate rivalry which marked the advent of global power politics during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperial era. As argued in the previous chapter, the emergent global condition of societal and international relations brought into being toward the end of the nineteenth century carried with it a number of distinctive power transformations — such as the uneven spread of industrial capitalism and the constitution of the national-imperial state — that can only be fully grasped in terms of the intersocietal context of their emergence. By using this argument as vantage point from which to assess contemporary IR theory traditions, I seek to underscore the co-constitution of “history” and “theory” and emphasize the sociohistorical specificities of global power politics as such.²⁴

II. The Historical Assumptions of International Theory

The theory-history relationship elaborated in this thesis implies that theoretical categories implicate broader processes of historical change. This section therefore considers two macro-historical contexts in relation to which prominent international-security theories have developed: the “Westphalian states-system” identified with the development of early modern Europe; and the “globalization” narrative associated with the making of the so-called liberal international order of modernity. These narratives of international politics not only suggest radically different historical trajectories, but also ground the opposing theoretical discourses of

²³ This emphasis on the “problematic of modernity” echoes, Rosenberg, *Empire of Civil Society*, 46 although in this early attempt to reformulate the international in sociohistorical terms Rosenberg did not thematize “societal multiplicity” as a core feature of the modern international system.

²⁴ On “history” and “theory” as mutually constitutive areas of IR theory, see George Lawson, “The Eternal Divide? History and International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 203–26; Tarak Barkawi and George Lawson, “The International Origins of Social and Political Theory,” in *International Origins of Social and Political Theory*, vol. 32, Political Power and Social Theory (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2017), 1–7.

realism and liberalism. Examining their limits illuminates the wider pitfalls of universal political-science theories.

WESTPHALIAN ANARCHY?

As discussed in *Chapter 1*, the historical development of power politics has conventionally been associated with such early modern, “Westphalian” institutions as the balance of power, great power diplomacy, and sovereign independence.²⁵ In consequence, the nineteenth-century age of “industry and empire”²⁶ has played relatively little role in the construction of IR’s core theoretic vocabulary. Indeed, within the English School, traditionally the most historically sensitive of IR traditions, an emphasis on the Westphalian origins of political modernity has tended to obscure the centrality of the New Imperialism to making of modern world politics. The originating age of a conscious discourse of global power politics — the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century era of worldwide imperialisms — has been elided as an object of theoretical reflection.²⁷ Where it figures at all, the nineteenth-century dynamic of world power rivalries appears as an era of “duels and triangles” resembling the balance-of-power-politics of both ancient and early modern states-systems,²⁸ or otherwise as the culmination of a Western international society originating in the sixteenth century.²⁹ These readings of the modern interstate system downplay the forms of imperialism and economic interdependence which bound the putatively Westphalian order to the “extra-European” world.³⁰

By privileging the diplomatic institutions of early-modern Europe, the pattern of interstate norms forged in the context of dynastic struggles over the leadership of Christendom, they also elide the impact of such archetypally modern institutions as global capitalism and the national state form upon the actual textures of great power politics.³¹ They leave the relation between the structural transformations of modernity and the character of interstate politics

²⁵ For such an interpretation of the Westphalian origins of balance-of-power-politics see, Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 101–7; for a related account of the evolution the modern great power system between Council of Constance (1414-18) and the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) see Martin Wight, *Systems of States* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977), 114, 129, 151. Both accounts emphasize the centrality of early modern European developments to the origins a modern states-system.

²⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day*, Revised Edition (1968; repr., Penguin Books, 1999).

²⁷ For a convincing argument that the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, a diplomatic arrangement among dynastic empires, represents the continuation feudal property and authority relations, rather than the advance of modernity, see Benno Teschke, “Theorizing the Westphalian System of States: International Relations from Absolutism to Capitalism,” *European Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 1 (January 3, 2002): 5–48.

²⁸ Wight, *Systems of States*, 180–91.

²⁹ Hedley Bull, “The Emergence of a Universal International Society,” in *The Expansion of International Society*, ed. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 122–24.

³⁰ On the Eurocentrism of the English School see, Sanjay Seth, “Postcolonial Theory and the Critique of International Relations,” *Millennium* 40, no. 1 (September 1, 2011): 169–73; John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 222ff.

³¹ For a critique of the early English School along these lines see Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 2015, 58. The third section of the following chapter provides a more substantive critique of the idea of the balance of power as modern.

undertheorized.³² As a consequence, even historically-grounded IR scholarship says relatively little about the historical transitions and political imaginaries that galvanized the emergence of global power politics. For while the literature on Westphalia and its alleged legacies is vast, that on the world-power imaginings of the New Imperialism, and the strategies of great power coercion they elaborated, is comparatively underdeveloped.³³

This tacit historical framing — conceptualizing modern power politics as an enduring feature of Westphalian international relations — encodes several analytic problems. The first and most general of these is the persistent continuity bias which characterizes realist conceptions of interstate politics. Figuring power politics in relation to the received image of Westphalian anarchy tends to naturalize realist assumptions about the enduring character of international politics over time. In an almost exact echo of Wight’s earlier claim, Kenneth Waltz formalized this sense of transhistorical stasis with a structural-functionalist model of systemic anarchy as the supreme ordering principle of international life.³⁴ Viewing self-help and power-balancing as the necessary features of an anarchical states-system — an international structure comprising functionally undifferentiated actors in the absence of any state-like authority — Waltz concluded that continuity rather than change was the dominant condition of international politics as such: “Balance-of-power politics in much the form that we know it has been practiced over the millennia by many different types of political units, from ancient China and India, to the Greek and Italian city states, and unto our own day.”³⁵

This emphasis on transhistorical similarities reflects a broader struggle to meaningfully analyze international change itself. For while Waltz’s blunt conception of structural continuity under anarchy can be said to make the issue of historical change into a “nonproblem,”³⁶ it is not clear that the numerous attempts to incorporate developments in violence capacity, state-institutions,

³² Against the conception of Westphalia as a watershed to modernity, several more recent works have emphasized the extent to which the sixteenth-eighteenth century European order remained bound to conflicts over universal monarchy, monarchical imperialism, and patrimonial role specific to European absolutism. See especially, Andreas Osiander, *The States System of Europe, 1640-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 90–91; Andreas Osiander, “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth,” *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001): 271–74; Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 242–43; Daniel Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 278–80.

³³ For a notable exception see Daniel Deudney, “Greater Britain or Greater Synthesis? Seeley, Mackinder, and Wells on Britain in the Global Industrial Era,” *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 2 (2001): 187–208; Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).

³⁴ For Waltz’s account of the enduring nature, self-help dynamics, and systemic structure of anarchy consult especially Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 70–71, 93 114–116.

³⁵ Kenneth Waltz, “Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 341. For a similar claim about the priority of continuity see Gilpin’s argument about the consistency of “international anarchy” from the time of Thucydides Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 211–13, 229–30. From a different philosophical standpoint, an equally seminal statement of the realist theme of timeless conflict is Morgenthau’s argument about the “aggressive instincts” of human nature: *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, Fifth Edition (1946; repr., London: Phoenix Books: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 216; similarly see the third, human-motivation assumption of Gilpin’s composite formulation of the realist tradition “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” 290.

³⁶ According to Benno Teschke, “Geopolitical Relations in the European Middle Ages: History and Theory,” *International Organization* 52, no. 02 (March 1998): 329.

and material contexts into the theoretical architecture of neorealism actually succeed in recognizing the reality of qualitative structural change. Although Robert Gilpin's hegemonic stability theory acknowledges the systems-transforming impact of the rise of the nation-state and world market economy, this development is analyzed almost exclusively in terms of quantitative changes in the distribution of power within an enduring Westphalian system, rather than as transforming the prevailing "rules of the game" of national security politics.³⁷ Alternatively, where the Westphalian starting-point is explicitly rejected, the assumption of continuity-within-anarchy means that even accounts of ostensible macro-political change struggle to confront the qualitative character of international politics. For example: while Daniel Deudney emphasizes the distinction between Westphalian Europe and the "Philadelphian System" pioneered by the early American Republic, it is not clear how the theoretical context in which such developments are conceptualized — changes in "violence interaction capacity" and the geopolitical scale of "anarchy" — can actually visualize historically distinct modalities of international power.³⁸ Linking security strategies to the variable "material contexts" (technological change and geography) of an enduring "anarchy-independence problematique" might gesture toward a historical analysis; but it elides the socio-structural transformations — global capitalism, uneven development, cultural modernism, rationalization and so on — which make world-scale revolutions in technical capacity a feature of modernity rather than other historical periods.³⁹

The perennial focus of much IR theory on the enduring character of anarchical systems and Westphalian-type institutions therefore encourages a reified form of geopolitical analysis; one in which the problematic of qualitative historical change is reduced to an analysis of changes in the material distribution of power. As a result, analyses of power politics have rarely been formulated in relation to the problem of analyzing qualitative international change: how the pathways and opportunities for external power-projection, conflict, and competition are constituted at particular historical junctures by a specific patterning of historically constituted symbolic and material resources linked to a particular configuration of social structures.⁴⁰ If we abandon the strictures of neorealist theorizing, however, examples of the structured ties between systemic transformation and international-political change are commonplace. In the late-nineteenth century, for example, the staggered spread of nation-centred industrial-capitalist societies generated a novel international hierarchy, of Western colonialism, and a

³⁷ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 62–66, 111, 116ff; Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations* (New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University, 1987), 10–11; Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 16, 19. For a critique of Gilpin along these lines see Barry Buzan, "Brilliant But Now Wrong: A Sociological and Historical Assessment of Gilpin's War and Change in World Politics," in *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*, ed. G. John Ikenberry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 233–362.

³⁸ Daniel H. Deudney, "Regrounding Realism: Anarchy, Security, and Changing Material Contexts," *Security Studies* 10, no. 1 (September 1, 2000): 16, 37; Deudney, *Bounding Power*, chapter 6.

³⁹ Pace Deudney, *Bounding Power*, 267.

⁴⁰ On the importance of the relationship between power politics, international change, and structural transformation see especially, Nedal and Nexon, "Anarchy and Authority," 170–73; Daniel Nexon, "The Balance of Power in the Balance," *World Politics* 61, no. 2 (April 2009): 355; Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, chapter 2. Although liberal and constructivist scholarship does draw attention to evolving security dynamics of particular international orders, such scholarship regularly downplays the significance of power politics by positing the cooperative dynamic of economic and normative change under globalization, as we shall see below.

distinct “security dynamic,” of transnational inter-imperial rivalries over access to informal spheres of global influence, which differed markedly from the kinds inter-dynastic struggles over land and titles seen in early modern Europe.⁴¹ Likewise, it might be said that the late-twentieth German state, by pursuing a foreign economic policy strategy of institutionalizing regional hegemony within multilateral institutions has transformed the relationship between state power and political economy with far reaching implications for the manner in which international competition operates among European states. Contrary to the expectations of historical continuity built in to realist theorizing, such forms of meaningful international change cannot be captured by a generic conception of international military competition among homogenous like units.

This serves to highlight the limits of the Westphalian narrative which has conventionally structured realist conceptions of power politics. The kind of continuous balance-of-power order authorized by the notion of a Westphalian states-system is too static to address the possibility and reality of qualitative change, still less the global condition of intersocietal conflict forged during the nineteenth century. In contrast, liberal and constructivist accounts of international order make room for considering the changing security dynamics of differing interstate systems.⁴² For this reason, it is worth exploring the tensions that arise when these various approaches are situated in the context of the globalization dynamics associated with much twentieth-century international change.

GLOBALIZATION — FROM REALPOLITIK TO THE LIBERAL PEACE?

Central to the IR discourse of *Realpolitik* and power politics is the early-twentieth opposition between liberal-progressive narratives of peaceful change and pessimistic depictions of permanent political violence. Against the tendency to imagine an unbroken realist tradition directly rooted in the thought of Thucydides,⁴³ recent accounts of IR’s disciplinary formation situate this binary in the early Cold War era, when Morgenthau’s *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (1948) provided the leading statement of the new political realism.⁴⁴ As Guillhot has shown, such conceptions of power politics carried quite specific connotations, firmly opposed to the empiricist and rationalist presuppositions which underpinned the coeval discourse of

⁴¹ For a further elaboration of this point, see *Chapter 3*, Section IV.

⁴² Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Little, Brown Boston, 1977); John Gerard Ruggie, “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982): 379–415; Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (April 1999): 179–96; Kevin Narizny, *The Political Economy of Grand Strategy* (Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁴³ For example, Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 357.

⁴⁴ Brian C. Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998); Duncan Bell, “Writing the World: Disciplinary History and Beyond,” *International Affairs* 85, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 3–22; Nicholas Guillhot, ed., *The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the 1954 Conference on Theory* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011); Michael C. Williams, “In the Beginning: The International Relations Enlightenment and the Ends of International Relations Theory,” *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 647–65.

“policy science.”⁴⁵ Whereas this latter project, an early forerunner of the “behavioural revolution” in the social sciences, assumed the conformity of political action to rational, scientifically observable rules and mechanisms, the first postwar realists believed, in the words of a 1947 report by the Rockefeller Foundation, “the study of power politics to be premised on ‘the possibility that force and not social science will be employed to solve disputes.’”⁴⁶

In these terms, the opposition between *Realpolitik* and liberal modernity was made basic to the concept of power politics itself: early postwar realists conceived the study of interstate conflict as a necessary corrective to the emergence of liberal policy science, which had sought to reduce political analysis to a value-free empiricism that was not capable of grasping the conflict tendencies of political life. Indeed, while thinkers such as Morgenthau, Niebuhr and Herz believed this intellectual project vital for the defense of liberal democracy during the Cold War,⁴⁷ the internal make-up of Western society played no role in their attempts to model the state system on the image of a *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Adopting the anomic view of modernity that Morgenthau derived from Weber and Carl Schmitt,⁴⁸ they saw the arena of power politics as one of virtually pre-rational struggles over prestige and material resources, structurally divorced from the rationalized social system of democratic capitalism. As Morgenthau describes in *Politics Among Nations*

The tendency to dominate, in particular, is an element of all human associations, from the family through fraternal and professional associations and local political organizations, to the state. On the family level, the typical conflict between the mother-in-law and her child’s spouse is in its essence a struggle for power, the defence of an established power position against an attempt to establish a new one. As such it foreshadows the conflict on the international scene between the policies of the status quo and the policies of imperialism.⁴⁹

By the 1970s, this crude conception of *Realpolitik* appeared increasingly outmoded. Invoking the authority of Kissinger, Keohane and Nye signaled the direction of this shift in 1977: “the traditional agenda of international affairs — the balance among powers, the security of nations — no longer defines our perils or our possibilities.”⁵⁰ This followed the agenda for international theory outlined by Stanley Hoffman, who argued that the terrain of world politics was now a post-realist transnational society, comprising economic integration and international

⁴⁵ Nicolas Guilhot, “The Realist Gambit: Postwar American Political Science and the Birth of IR Theory,” *International Political Sociology* 2, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 282–83.

⁴⁶ Guilhot, 282, 292.

⁴⁷ Williams, “In the Beginning,” 652–54.

⁴⁸ Hans-Karl Pichler, “The Godfathers of ‘Truth’: Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morgenthau’s Theory of Power Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (April 1998): 185–200; Michael C. Williams, “Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 58, no. 4 (2004): 633–665.

⁴⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 4th ed. (1948; repr., New York, NY: Alfred A Knopf, 1967), 31.

⁵⁰ Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, 4; Henry Kissinger, “A New National Partnership,” *Department of State Bulletin*, 1975.

institutions.⁵¹ The result was a new order of complex interdependency, producing systemic forms of cooperation and institutionalization that “circumscribe and dampen the “state of war” envisaged by traditional realists.⁵² The “classical” age of *Realpolitik*” was fading into history as a “modernist” horizon of global economic exchange and global bureaucratic governance gradually emerged.⁵³ Force, then, would no longer be the primary mediator of interstate relations. International politics had acquired an increasingly economic set of characteristics and meanings.⁵⁴ On reflection, Keohane attempted to recast Kissinger’s response to the OPEC crisis of 1973 — the creation of the International Energy Agency — as a turning point, inaugurating a new era of international co-operation — “to enable Western countries to deal cooperatively with the threat of future oil embargoes.”⁵⁵

The centrality of American military power, later illustrated by the First Gulf War (1990-1991), to the maintenance of the oil economy was elided in this formulation. Here, the basic presuppositions of neoclassical economics were at work. For this tradition has conventionally viewed market and society as a kind of natural equilibrium, where conflict and crises are externally produced deviations from an otherwise functional system.⁵⁶ Unsurprisingly, then, neoliberal institutionalism fostered a wider skepticism about the analytical significance of power for explaining the dynamics of international systems.⁵⁷ For Keohane, on the contrary, the more neutral language of leadership could better describe the hegemony of the United States, defined in terms of its “willingness” and “ability” to provide international public goods.⁵⁸ In this trajectory, the proponents of regime theory and rational choice liberalism came to argue that the economic and institutional organization of the US world order now precluded the workings of *Realpolitik* as the “national interest” diminished in the context of globalization and international governance.⁵⁹

Also citing the influence of neoclassical economics, Kenneth Waltz provided the major counterpoint to this formulation.⁶⁰ This recast Morgenthau’s emphasis on the international struggle for survival in terms of a microeconomic theory of rational-choice calculations oriented

⁵¹ Stanley Hoffmann, “International Organization and the International System,” *International Organization* 24, no. 3 (ed 1970): 389–413; cf. Perry Anderson, *The H-Word: The Peripeteia of Hegemony* (London: Verso, 2017), 62–71.

⁵² Stanley Hoffmann, “Notes on the Elusiveness of Modern Power,” *International Journal* 30, no. 2 (1975): 191.

⁵³ Stanley Hoffmann, “Choices,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 12 (1973): 6–7.

⁵⁴ Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, 27.

⁵⁵ Robert Keohane, “International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work?,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 110 (1998): 84–85.

⁵⁶ Wolfgang Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End? Essays on a Failing System* (London: Verso Books, 2016), 76.

⁵⁷ Stefano Guzzini, “The Use and Misuse of Power Analysis in International Theory,” in *Global Political Economy: Contemporary Theories*, ed. Ronen Palan (London: Routledge, 2000), 58.

⁵⁸ Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 39.

⁵⁹ Stephen D. Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (April 1982): 185–205; Ruggie, “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change”; John R. Oneal and Bruce M. Russett, “The Classical Liberals Were Right: Democracy, Interdependence, and Conflict, 1950–1985,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (June 1, 1997): 267–93; Erik Gartzke, “War Is in the Error Term,” *International Organization* 53, no. 3 (July 1999): 567–87; Gartzke, “The Capitalist Peace.”

⁶⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, “Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory,” *Journal of International Affairs* 44, no. 1 (1990): 21–37.

to the permanent imperatives of anarchy.⁶¹ Waltz's neorealism thereby fostered an increasingly narrow understanding of international-political ends — survival — which excluded any meaningful sense of politics as a contested space of competing strategic projects and rival value-orientations.⁶² The price of theoretical parsimony was a corresponding decline in explanatory purchase. As John Ruggie recognized, Waltz's systems theory lacked the ability to analyze the process and determinants of change at the international (*i.e.* interstate) level. It therefore failed to provide any substantive specification of the emergence of anarchy as a property of international orders, generating a flat, trans-historical reading of the states-system.⁶³ Expanded into a general covering law, the logic of anarchy was reduced to a taxonomy of geopolitical dynamics, only capable of identifying the most general, permissive dimension of international causality.

Waltz's attempt to systematize realism was thus recognized as increasingly unsustainable: neorealists addressed a series of empirical anomalies through the more-or-less *ad hoc* adoption of auxiliary assumptions and causal factors that were formally unconnected to the functional logic of systemic anarchy.⁶⁴ This pattern of intellectual drift is still in evidence today. Neorealists acknowledge that “states usually do not fight wars for security reasons alone”, while maintaining the analytic primacy of anarchy at the systemic level.⁶⁵ The conflict between these two views is obvious. In the work of Christopher Layne, for example, an insightful realist-inspired critique of contemporary liberal internationalism rests fundamentally on the analysis of secular tendencies within US and Chinese economies, rather than any distinctive conception of interstate anarchy. While such arguments can convince readers of the continuing significance of power politics, especially in the context of a declining *Pax Americana*, their explanatory force lies outside the formal remit of Waltzian systems theory.⁶⁶

Given this intellectual background, it is not surprising that power politics has become an increasingly marginal element of IR theorizing. Whether couched in terms of a shift to a multilateralist security system with inbuilt incentives for cooperation,⁶⁷ or as the transition from a Hobbesian to a Kantian “culture of anarchy,”⁶⁸ late-twentieth century American IR theory came to downplay the centrality of *Realpolitik* to the developmental trajectories of modern world

⁶¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 91.

⁶² Murielle Cozette, “Realistic Realism? American Political Realism, Clausewitz and Raymond Aron on the Problem of Means and Ends in International Politics,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27, no. 3 (September 1, 2004): 438; cf. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*, 5.

⁶³ John Gerard Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Towards a Neorealist Synthesis,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), 141.

⁶⁴ “Is Anybody Still a Realist?,” *International Security* 24, no. 2 (October 1, 1999): 6–9; also John A. Vasquez, “The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz’s Balancing Proposition,” *The American Political Science Review* 91, no. 4 (1997): 899–912.

⁶⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, NY: WW Norton & Company, 2001), 335.

⁶⁶ Christopher Layne, “The US–Chinese Power Shift and the End of the Pax Americana,” *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 89–111.

⁶⁷ Deudney and Ikenberry, “The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order,” 191; Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 162.

⁶⁸ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 297–300, 361–62; also, Alexander Wendt, “Why a World State Is Inevitable,” *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003): 491–542.

politics.⁶⁹ While such accounts point to the systems-transforming impact of economic globalization, they rest on a deeply one-sided reading of the relation between power politics and global interdependence. Against the thesis of a structural and continuous relation between “liberal modernity” and interstate peace, the historical record suggests that the advent of an international order oriented to capitalism and national sovereignty has been characterized by a series of geopolitical conflagrations and deeply contested episodes of power politics: from the late-nineteenth century dynamics of inter-capitalist and inter-imperial rivalry, via the era of total-mobilization warfare, down to the onset of the Cold War and the rise of a new great power hierarchy, dominated by an American hegemon that oscillates between liberal order-building and unilateralist power-projection.⁷⁰ Throughout this history, capitalist development and great power coercion have evolved together in a dynamic which Alexander Anievas describes as a “contradictory unity of universalizing and differentiated imperatives driven by the exigencies of competitive accumulation.”⁷¹ Viewed in a long-term perspective, liberal projects of economic development and international order-building likely depend on strategies of hegemonic coercion and national-security competition, as numerous accounts of American-style liberal internationalism demonstrate.⁷²

In fact, the emergence of a new era of financial globalization during the 1970s — the material base of Hoffman’s transnational society — arose not from any natural or inexorable logic of market development, but rather from the clashing force of national capitalisms and the unilateral intervention of the United States. After German state-managers had sought to constrain the monetary leverage of the US and prevent European social democrats from pursuing Keynesian responses to the emerging crisis of the world economy, successive American administrations elected to break with the financial strictures of the Bretton Woods system, Reagan forcing German and Japanese governments to accept substantial increases in

⁶⁹ Lying behind this preconception, it would appear, is a somewhat unreflective conception of American political culture. In an account of the advent of multilateralism after 1945, for example, we read: “In making strategic choices about how to build order Washington policy makers drew upon American values and political culture to emphasize the organizing principles of liberal rule-based relations—openness, nondiscrimination, and reciprocity.” Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 182. Absent from this construction is any reflection on state of emergency and crisis provoked in US official culture by the experience of the ‘Soviet rise’. Less a culture of open reciprocity than an increasingly militarized discourse of assertive world power, the climate of Cold War liberalism was more aptly summarized by its major architect, Dean Acheson, when he announced: “We are faced with a challenge and a threat to the very basis of our civilization and to the very safety of the free world, the only kind of world in which that civilization can exist.” Cited in Dean Acheson, *The Pattern of Responsibility*, ed. McGeorge Bundy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 19. For an alternative reading of American national culture in this moment, see Anders Stephanson, “Liberty or Death: The Cold War as US Ideology,” in *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*, ed. Odd Arne Westad (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 82–99.

⁷⁰ For the argument that the so-called “democratic peace” is the effect of a US-led hierarchy of great powers, see Patrick J. McDonald, “Great Powers, Hierarchy, and Endogenous Regimes: Rethinking the Domestic Causes of Peace,” *International Organization* 69, no. 3 (July 2015): 557–88.

⁷¹ Alexander Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War: Class Conflict and Geopolitics in the Thirty Years’ Crisis 1914-1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 5.

⁷² Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington’s Faustian Bid for World Dominance* (London: Blackwell Verso, 1999); Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, “The Imperial Peace: Democracy, Force and Globalization,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 4 (1999): 403–434; Julian Germann, “German ‘Grand Strategy’ and the Rise of Neoliberalism,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 706–16; McDonald, “Great Powers, Hierarchy, and Endogenous Regimes.”

the value of the mark and the yen to restore the competitiveness of US manufacturing.⁷³ American grand strategy was thus to wreck all those “institutionalized arrangements which limited US dominance in international monetary politics in order to establish a new regime which would give it monocratic power over international monetary affairs.”⁷⁴ *Pace* Keohane and Nye, rather than a neutral exercise of economic leadership this was a strategic attempt to increase the geo-economic power of the United States at the expense of organized labor and rival capitalist states.

The background to these transitions was the wrenching experience of military failure in Vietnam. In this context, the Nixon Doctrine announced a reduced role for American hegemony in the provision of collective military and economic security.⁷⁵ Only on a very narrow conception of *Realpolitik* can these dynamics be excluded from the analysis of power politics. Seen in a wider perspective, the transition from embedded liberalism to a new era of neoliberal capitalism indicates the extent to which the uneven and combined character of the modern international order serves to interrupt the universalizing claims of liberal internationalism.⁷⁶ From the Cold War to the “Long 1970s,” the recurrent dynamic of great power competition emerging in the context of a highly interdependent world economy highlights the antagonistic constitution of an international system where the persistence of nation-centred strategies of political and economic development continually undermines projects of global governance.⁷⁷

III. International Systems: Realist Versus Sociohistorical Approaches

Contextualizing the twentieth-century discourse of Anglo-American IR against the background of these global power shifts indicates the extent to which the modern international order contains, as part of its inner developmental dynamics, a tendency to destabilize prevailing institutional arrangements and intellectual paradigms. Stated in somewhat different terms, this emphasis on the contested fragmentation of international life is, perhaps ironically, the core premise of political realism.⁷⁸ It therefore becomes necessary to address the problematic of internationality, the multiplicity of social life, head on.⁷⁹ What, ultimately, is the problem with

⁷³ Perry Anderson, “Imperium,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 83 (October 2013): 71.

⁷⁴ Gowan, *The Global Gamble*, 19.

⁷⁵ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 154, 197.

⁷⁶ On this point see, Alexander Anievas and Richard Saull, “Reassessing the Cold War and the Far-Right: Fascist Legacies and the Making of the Liberal International Order after 1945,” *International Studies Review*, 2019, 1–26.

⁷⁷ Cf. Rosenberg, “Isaac Deutscher and the Lost History of International Relations,” 12; Justin Rosenberg, “Globalization Theory: A Post Mortem,” *International Politics* 42, no. 1 (2005): 53–54.

⁷⁸ Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” 290; R. N. Berki, “On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations,” *World Politics* 24, no. 1 (1971): 94; cf. Alex Callinicos and Justin Rosenberg, “Uneven and Combined Development: The Social-Relational Substratum of ‘The International’? An Exchange of Letters,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 21, no. 1 (2008): 79–80.

⁷⁹ As discussed, this emphasis on multiplicity echoes: Justin Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science,” *International Relations* 30, no. 2 (2016): 127–53.

the realist conception of geopolitical anarchy, and what alternative theoretical resources are available for analyzing international politics on this scale?

THE TRAGEDY OF GREAT POWER POLITICS

Realist theory rests on a strong claim about the enduring character of geopolitics throughout the ages.⁸⁰ The international system is a sphere of perpetual geopolitical rivalries arising from the structural necessity of “self-help” strategies of state survival in an anarchical system.⁸¹ Given their anarchic character, the struggle for survival (through power maximizing or security seeking behavior) constitutes the structuring logic of geopolitical systems as such, compelling states to socialize as functionally equivalent political-military power containers.⁸² While Waltz never subjected these claims to any sustained historical analysis, the work of John Mearsheimer situates neorealism’s security problematic within a long-term account of great power politics.⁸³ In this “offensive-realist” version of the theory, “anarchy and uncertainty about other states’ intentions create an irreducible level of fear among states that leads to power-maximizing behavior.”⁸⁴ Given the security dilemmas generated by the overarching condition of anarchy, power-maximizing strategies of geopolitical-military expansionism — hard power politics — can be expected to define an interstate system dominated by major powers: “A great power that has a marked power advantage over its rivals is likely to behave more aggressively, because it has the capability as well as the incentive to do so.”⁸⁵ Great power politics is thus centrally driven by an existential struggle for state-survival among the dominant actors of the international system.⁸⁶ As Mearsheimer claims, “states seek to maintain their territorial integrity and the autonomy of their domestic political order. Survival dominates other motives because, once a state is conquered, it is unlikely to be in a position to pursue other aims.”⁸⁷ However, that survival is, in fact, the main goal of modern states, is a historical claim that can be opened up to empirical scrutiny. Is it in fact the case that at stake in modern great power politics is the existential struggle for territorial integrity and outright survival?⁸⁸

Surveying the epoch of modern interstate politics from the French Revolutionary Wars to the end of the Cold War, Mearsheimer concludes that the rationality of self-preservation underlies the entire dynamics of great power politics. As Peter Gowan highlights in an incisive critique, however, the historical record provides little evidence to support the idea that the strategic

⁸⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 66–67.

⁸¹ Stacie Goddard and Daniel Nexon, “Paradigm Lost? Reassessing Theory of International Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2005): 24.

⁸² Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 66, 97.

⁸³ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

⁸⁴ Mearsheimer, 5, 37.

⁸⁵ Mearsheimer, 37.

⁸⁶ Mearsheimer, 5.

⁸⁷ Mearsheimer, 31.

⁸⁸ Similarly for Waltz, “the survival motive is taken as the ground of action in a world where the security of states is not assured” and, while this assumption is qualified — allowing “for the fact that no state always acts exclusively to ensure its survival” — the pursuit of the national interest in order to ensure state-survival is a basic tenet of realism. *Theory of International Politics*, 91–92.

stakes of such conflicts actually entail a zero-sum game of security competition.⁸⁹ In the period after c.1792, great power war has never resulted in the complete destruction of any state — with the sole exception of Nazi Germany whose territorial dismemberment resulted not from any systemic logic of interstate rivalry, but rather from the social and ideological cleavages of the emerging Cold War, which left the German state divided between communism to the East and capitalism to the West. After 1815, the British State under the leadership of Castlereagh sought to reincorporate France into a European order of trade and diplomacy, failing to observe the realist priorities of territorial aggrandizement. Likewise, while Bismarck did annex Alsace-Lorraine, he left the wider structures of the French and Austro-Hungarian empires intact. Following victory in the First World War, the Entente then left German territory largely untouched, restoring sovereignty to Poland, while imposing crippling reparations payments which undermined the effective sovereignty of the Weimar Republic without abolishing its formal statehood. After 1945, subsequently, the United States sought to re-establish the sovereign states-system by refashioning the policy agendas and international allegiances of European and East Asian states through the Marshall Plan, the San Francisco System, and the NATO alliance.⁹⁰ Indeed, the pre-eminent form of international-ordering projected by the American State for much of the twentieth century consisted not in the elimination of great-power rivals, but the construction of liberal-capitalist zones of interstate peace, the incorporation of potential rivals into this orbit, and the exercise of military intervention within an exterior politico-economic field associated with the “non-Western” world.⁹¹ This was what Theodore Roosevelt, in the late-nineteenth century, described as the strategy of international “police power.”⁹²

In contrast to neorealist expectations, what stands out from this history is the increasingly deterritorialized character of great-power antagonisms and rivalries during the nineteenth and twentieth century era of modernity.⁹³ This *longue durée* transformation of geostrategic priorities serves to seriously question Mearsheimer’s judgement that the tragedy of great power politics can be adequately represented in terms of balance-of-power conflicts driven by the existential-survival imperatives of an anarchical states-system.⁹⁴ For while the age of industrial capitalism and national sovereignty that emerged after c.1780 was marked by an increasingly bellicose interstate politics, there is little evidence that major players of these conflicts ever envisaged the territorial destruction of rival great powers as a realistic possibility. In fact, the historical evidence provides greater support for the argument that the underlying cause of state collapse in this period was less great power politics *per se*, than the threat of social revolution and national

⁸⁹ Peter Gowan, *A Calculus of Power: Grand Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2010), 117–32.

⁹⁰ Gowan, 116–17; cf. Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, “Superintending Global Capital,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 35 (2005): 101–23.

⁹¹ Barkawi and Laffey, “Imperial Peace,” 407, 419ff.

⁹² Theodore Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 23, no. 3 (1897): 457; cf. James R. Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and World Order: Police Power in International Relations* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007), 3.

⁹³ The deterritorialized focus of American grand strategy — fixated more on the control of markets and strategic enclaves than direct colonialism — is examined in detail in chapter 4, below.

⁹⁴ *Pace* Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 21.

separatism which broke apart the dynastic empires of Ottoman Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and Tsarist Russia in the period 1917-1923.⁹⁵

What these cases have in common, *pace* Mearsheimer, is not the mere fact of great power warfare. More specifically, what unites them is the fact that such dynastic monarchies — originally forged in an era of composite feudal states centuries prior to the advent of nationalist sovereignty regimes — were unable to maintain a legitimate monopoly on the institutions of public rule once military conflict against stronger capitalist empires weakened the domestic apparatus of internal repression. Indeed, for much of the nineteenth-century such polities experienced a long period of destabilization triggered by the dual crisis of a rising nationalist opposition to dynasticism and an increasingly self-evident process of decline *vis-à-vis* the industrial powerhouses of Western Europe and North America. Over the same period, while great-power strategies of external expansionism increasingly withdrew from a policy of direct territorial annexation against European rivals — defeated powers were not incorporated as colonies after WWI — the dominant European states increased their control of world territory from 37 to some 84 per cent of the global total (1880-1914).⁹⁶ This was the real tragedy of global power politics: the differential strategies of geopolitical expansion and domination which accompanied the rise of Western imperialism on a world-scale. A reading of nineteenth and twentieth century geostrategic rivalries as generic survival struggles between identical state-forms runs counter to the weight of historical evidence.

For the inter-imperial international order forged over the course of the nineteenth century was marked by struggles over informal spheres of influence and the control of strategic enclaves rather than any systematic contest for survival between territorial states. To the extent that states like the British Empire or Imperial Germany sought territorial expansion, their geopolitical orientations were toward the forging of greater spaces of national-colonial economic and political control rather than the outright dissolution of rival powers. As capitalist states socialized into the logic of market competition, it was not territorial sovereignty *per se* but the potential sources of commercial profit housed by foreign lands which gave these struggles for expansion an effective rationality. The structural separation of public-political coercion from the private sphere of economic exchange, which characterizes capitalism as a mode of production, entails exactly this restructuring of geopolitical priorities: no longer forced to accumulate wealth by means of direct physical coercion — exploitation of serfs or physical appropriation of lands and titles — the ideal-typical capitalist states operates with a much more flexible strategic horizon than its feudal or absolutist predecessors. Rather than establish a uniform geopolitical logic, this structural transformation might be best described as generating a fluctuating pattern of conflict and co-operation whose complexity requires case-specific reconstruction rather than generic concepts of “security competition.”⁹⁷ While a kind of survival imperative was built-in to the structure of the typical feudal state, where the

⁹⁵ Cf. Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 2015, 265.

⁹⁶ Ronald Findlay and Kevin H O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 388.

⁹⁷ For an argument along these lines see, Benno Teschke and Hannes Lacher, “The Changing ‘Logics’ of Capitalist Competition,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 565–80.

accumulation of serf labor and landed property made the destruction of rival houses a standard strategy of wealth accumulation, the capitalist social order contains no such systematic incentive toward state-destruction.⁹⁸ Dependent on a neorealist framework of geopolitical analysis, Mearsheimer is unable to access this historical sociology of modern-era international transformation. His entire account depends on a presupposition about the survival-needs of modern states which lacks purchase on the nineteenth-to-twentieth century dynamic of imperial rivalries culminating in great power conflicts. These were power struggles within the evolving world space of the capitalist global economy — rivalries which seem to push power politics beyond its conventional realist meaning.

FROM ANARCHY TO THE INTERSOCIETAL: ANALYTICAL PREMISES

This critique of Mearsheimer highlights the necessity of an alternative conception of the international.⁹⁹ The assumption of permanent state-goals (security/survival) around which realist conceptions of power politics revolve derives from the broader presuppositions of the states-under-anarchy framework formalized by Waltz. Its starting point is an account of internationality — or, more precisely, geopolitical fragmentation — defined in purely negative terms: through the *absence* of any sovereign-like authority above the political multiplicity of states.¹⁰⁰ The effect of this negative starting point, it has now been seen, is to promote a strangely thin and ahistorical understanding of interstate politics reduced, under the sign of anarchy, to a timeless security struggle between states defined as homogenous conflict units. The basis of an alternative perspective begins to emerge if the negative image of anarchy is substituted for a positive sociohistorical premise: the *co-presence* of a generative multiplicity of interacting societies.¹⁰¹ This move, as Justin Rosenberg has argued in a series of agenda-setting articles, represents the critical first step toward a conception of international theory capable of moving beyond the realist problematic of universal anarchy.¹⁰² It thereby implies a number of critical revisions to the realist conception of power politics discussed so far. At this stage of the argument, three of these require especial emphasis.

⁹⁸ For characterizations of the distinction between feudal and capitalist states along these lines, see Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: NLB, 1974), 31, 32, 37, 41, 403–4; Robert Brenner, “The Social Basis of Economic Development,” in *Analytical Marxism*, ed. John Roemer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 31; Robert Brenner, “What Is, and What Is Not, Imperialism?,” *Historical Materialism* 14, no. 4 (2006): 84; Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 57ff, 267; Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War*, 198; cf. Ellen Meiksins Wood, “The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism,” *New Left Review*, I, no. 127 (June 1981): 66–95.

⁹⁹ The following paragraphs anticipate the theoretical conception of international change outlined in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁰ Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science,” 7, 10, 14.

¹⁰¹ Rosenberg, 11.

¹⁰² Rosenberg, “Isaac Deutscher and the Lost History of International Relations”; Justin Rosenberg, “Why Is There No International Historical Sociology?,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 307–40; Justin Rosenberg, “The ‘Philosophical Premises’ of Uneven and Combined Development,” *Review of International Studies* 39, no. 03 (2013): 569–97; Justin Rosenberg, “Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky: Anarchy in the Mirror of Uneven and Combined Development,” *International Politics* 50, no. 2 (2013): 183–230; Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science”; Justin Rosenberg, “Confessions of a Sociolator,” *Millennium* 44, no. 2 (January 1, 2016): 292–99.

First, a conception of societal multiplicity as the “deepest code of the international” implies a reformulation of international relations as an object of social analysis.¹⁰³ Conceived as an emergent domain of intersocietal interactions,¹⁰⁴ the problem of internationality undergoes a conceptual transformation. Rather than the universal political-science problematic envisaged by realists, it becomes subject to the sociohistorical problematic of identifying the structural and conjunctural transformations which constitute the modern international order as a distinctive historical formation. The turn *away* from a negative conception of geopolitical fragmentation, and *toward* a positive understanding of societal multiplicity introduces a principle of “historical specificity” that is excluded from the realist definition of the international.¹⁰⁵ On the one hand, the premise of societal multiplicity historicizes the subject matter of IR by foregrounding the developmental dynamics of modern social forms: how a particular conjunction of sociohistorical structures, such as the late-nineteenth century configuration of national-imperial states, liberal imperialism, and industrial capitalism, combines to produce mechanisms of an international change. On the other, it draws attention to the consequences of intersocietal interaction as a shaping and controlling influence on the development of modern political, economic, and cultural structures: how the coexistence of societies may generate mechanisms of social mutation and cultural creativity, like the anxieties about historical backwardness which shaped the nineteenth-century pursuit of colonial expansion, which subtend on the fact of multiplicity as such. The premise of societal multiplicity thus grounds IR theory on a sociohistorical basis. It reintegrates the reality of the international, the existence of multiple social formations, with the basic task of the historical social sciences: the study of the development of socially and relationally embedded human practices.

Second, from this reframing of the international follows a distinct conception of power politics. Located within an understanding of the international as of societal multiplicity, the phenomena conventionally studied under the title of power politics — war, interstate competition, geopolitical rivalries and so on — cannot be adequately conceived as a brute political force or reduced to a function of the security/survival needs of so-called “conflict groups.”¹⁰⁶ Instead, they open out on to broader terrain of societal interactions forged by multiplicity of social, cultural, political forces co-existing at an international level. From this perspective, the conflict relations figured by the notion of power politics are grounded socially in a historical configuration of dynamics that generate specific modes, pathways, and orientations of intersocietal conflict. What realism conceives as an external geopolitical force thus becomes an internal feature of the social processes and cultural lifeworlds which constitute societies as meaningful historical formations. What the idea of *Realpolitik* frames as an unmediated expression of “national security” concerns instead represents a historically specific configuration of resources and orientations that shape the expression of power at an international level. This intersocietal conception of power politics, by departing from the survival/security analytics of the anarchy *problematique*, suggests a broader understanding of

¹⁰³ Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science,” 10.

¹⁰⁴ Rosenberg, “Why Is There No International Historical Sociology?,” 308.

¹⁰⁵ Rosenberg, “Confessions of a Sociolator,” 294.

¹⁰⁶ Pace Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism.”

international power-projection as the medium and object of creative attempts to restructure both “internal” social orders and “external” geopolitical systems. This dynamic of socially-transformative yet strategic-coercive historical praxis entails the *strategic mediation* and *symbolic restructuring* of intersocietal conditions — the reconstitution of international orders through specific conjunctions of political action. For much of the nineteenth-century geopolitical era analyzed by Mearsheimer, for example, the existence of great-power antagonisms was inseparable from the political attempts by prevailing social elites to constitute fragmentary industrial societies as cohesive national states with legitimate claims to world power status.¹⁰⁷ The strategies of social order-building and legitimization entailed by such processes indicate the extent to which power politics is a “thick” social process, and not an isolated outcome of *Realpolitik* calculations.

Finally, this intersocietal perspective yields a distinct historical sociology of the development of modern international power relations. Where neorealist approaches privilege changes in the *distribution* of power-capacities, a focus on the intersocietal illuminates the multi-scalar forms of social structure and historical process which generate both the agents and orientations of interstate power politics.¹⁰⁸ Such an approach resituates the classical IR study of interstate politics within a broader analysis of the ways in which particular intersocietal contexts endow agents with specific goals, capacities, opportunities for international power-projection. More particularly, it draws attention to the uneven and combined character of the modern international orders within and against which the national-security states visualized by realists emerge and operate. Where Mearsheimer’s understanding of great power politics rests on a conception of states-systems as homogenous political structures, this emphasis on the uneven and combined construction of modern international orders foregrounds the structured dynamics between intersocietal unevenness and international power.

The specific long-nineteenth-century manifestation of interstate-cum-inter-imperial rivalries traced above can be parsed, in these terms, as a distinct sociohistorical phenomenon structured by the logics of intersocietal unevenness that accompanied the formation of global social hierarchy of capitalist states and colonial empires. The hierarchical structure of the inter-imperial international system closely resembles what Trotsky conceptualized as an evolving “whip of external necessity,” transforming the sociological differences between an industrializing “West” and a late-developing “East” into a unique conjunction of geopolitical pressures and social crises. This process was powerfully manifested within societies, such as Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire, where the dominant character of the putative security problematic emerged from perceptions of historical backwardness that were internal to the making of a Western-imperial international order, together with the deeply uneven regional distribution of the industrial revolution. Equally, the United States’ long-term preference for “informal empire” emerged within a late-nineteenth century international order where the

¹⁰⁷ For a widely-read discussion of nationalism in this context, see Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “The Varieties of the Nation State in Modern History: Liberal, Imperialist, Fascist, and Contemporary Notions of Nation and Nationality,” in *The Rise and Decline of the Nation-State*, ed. Michael Mann (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 210–26.

¹⁰⁸ A central theme of Buzan and Lawson’s idea of the “mode of power.” *The Global Transformation*, 2015.

emergence of a British-American centered hierarchy of industrial prosperity was generating rival bids for world power which threatened to destabilize the political organization of the world market. In this context, the meaning of US grand strategy was shaped less by any isolated calculus of *Realpolitik*, than the struggle to manage the patterns of uneven and combined development being generated by the expansionist aims of continental European states seeking to mediate the pressures of Anglo-American industrial supremacy through their own territorial imperialisms. This clashing dynamic of strategic mediations will be analyzed in detail in chapter four.

The critique of realist international theory developed above demonstrates some of the key differences between universal political-science theories and sociohistorical approaches. In contrast to the assumption of transhistorical stasis intrinsic to a theorization of international systems as anarchic, a sociohistorical conception of international orders as emergent intersocietal formations would emphasize the possibility of geopolitical transformation as a result of historically constituted conjunctions of social structures, strategic mediations, and the uneven and combined dynamics to which they give rise. At the same time, rather than seeing the forms of transnational economic interdependence associated with globalization as inherently pacifying, a sociohistorical emphasis on the constitutive unevenness and historically constituted power politics of the global condition order roots the possibility of interstate conflict in the contradictory tendencies of the modern international order itself, thereby challenging the persistent representation of power politics as a kind of pre-modern atavism. In the next section, I expand this sociohistorical perspective in dialogue with the idea for a post-realist understanding of power politics developed in the context of IR constructivism.

IV. The Post-Realist Agenda and the Constructivist Challenge

An intersocietal conception of international relations, as this thesis elaborates, should not be taken as a kind of unmediated materialism. The existence of historically constituted ideological-cultural schema is essential to very possibility of global power politics, shaping the forms of societal mobilization which enabled the formation of national-imperial states, and conditioning the orientations to world power that made up its strategic horizons. To position this claim within a sociohistorical conception of international theory, it is necessary to address some basic features of the constructivist tradition. For it is here that the role of “ideas” in international politics has been conceived with greatest theoretical force. Far from attempting a full discussion of constructivist insights, I focus on two central claims: first, the argument that power-political trajectories — patterns of international conflicts and domination — depend on intersubjective normative structures; and second, the argument that strategies of great-power coercion can be explained with reference to status-seeking behavior. The bottom-line argument which follows is that constructivist accounts of the sociocultural construction of international politics can be usefully reframed in intersocietal terms, in order to provide a stronger historical basis for arguments about the status-oriented character of much great power politics. Although there is a wealth of historical evidence to support the descriptive form of this claim, explaining why

status anxieties sometimes emerge as coercive geopolitical strategies demands an account of the production of the actual intersocietal hierarchies from which socio-normative conflicts arise historically.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF POWER POLITICS

While the first formulations of IR constructivism tended to be couched in the liberal-cosmopolitan terms, more recent constructivist scholarship provides what might be described as a post-realist theoretical agenda.¹⁰⁹ This agenda departs from Wendt's 1992 claim about "constructivism's potential contribution to a strong liberalism"¹¹⁰ by foregrounding the relations of power politics, conflict and domination, said to be generated by particular intersubjective social structures. It goes beyond the accounts of interstate pacification and normative socialization offered by earlier constructivist work, and highlights the cultural-discursive construction of force, hierarchy, and dominance as a central constituent of modern world politics.¹¹¹

Many such works have contributed to an enhanced understanding of the range of legitimation strategies involved in contemporary power-political relations; the sociocultural hierarchies which refract modern conflicts over the organization of international order, especially the fraught divisions between "East" and "West" as an ongoing object of normative conflict; and the variety of identity-constructions — nation, race, civilization, and gender — that shape the texture of world politics, and the condition mobilization strategies of international actors. Critical of the "asociality" and "ahistoricity" of neorealism,¹¹² a key strand of this scholarship seeks to reconceptualize power politics as a social phenomenon by recovering classical realism's ostensibly broader understanding of *Realpolitik* as a complex set of normatively-structured calculations about foreign-policy strategy in a competitive international environment.¹¹³ In this view, power politics tends to be viewed as a foreign-policy sensibility linked to decisions about when power-maximization represents an optimal or justified strategy of external statecraft — rather than as a functional requirement of interstate structure *per se*.¹¹⁴ More broadly, recent constructivist engagements with competitive interstate politics tend to stress the impact of

¹⁰⁹ Barkin, "Realist Constructivism," 2003; Goddard and Nexon, "The Dynamics of Global Power Politics."

¹¹⁰ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 02 (March 1992): 393; also, Wendt, *Social Theory*, 297–300, 361–62.

¹¹¹ See, also, Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics," *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (June 1, 2005): 583–612; Janice Bially Mattern and Ayşe Zarakol, "Hierarchies in World Politics," *International Organization* 70, no. 03 (2016): 623–54.

¹¹² Barkin, *Realist Constructivism*, 2010, 166–67.

¹¹³ For example, Williams, "Why Ideas Matter in International Relations"; Vibeke Schou Tjalve and Michael C. Williams, "Rethinking the Logic of Security: Liberal Realism and the Recovery of American Political Thought," *Telos* 2015, no. 170 (March 20, 2015): 46–66; Iver B Neumann and Ole Jacob Sending, "The International' as Governmentality," *Millennium* 35, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 677–701; Barkin, *Realist Constructivism*, 2010, 7–10, 17–24, 51.

¹¹⁴ Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations*, 6, 115; Barkin, *Realist Constructivism*, 2010, 158–59.

identity crises and conflicts on the militarization of foreign-policy strategies.¹¹⁵ For such works international politics is not structured by any predictable logic of geopolitical outcomes. Rather, interstate relations are “socially and historically contingent” on the patterns of identities, norms, and institutions which shape the collective mobilization of political actors.¹¹⁶ Anarchy remains “what states make of it.”¹¹⁷ On this basis, recent work on geopolitics and great-power competition indicate a shift away from the neorealist emphasis on material power-capacities toward a sometimes almost exclusive privileging of the kinds of identity dilemmas, discourses, and ideologies associated with aggressive power-political strategies. The ideological pathologies of putatively illiberal forms of geopolitics and imperialism, notably those associated with the Axis powers of the early-twentieth century, figure prominently in this scholarship.¹¹⁸

Contained in this shift from an ahistorical and asocial realism to the view of power-political strategies as inter-subjective, ideational constructions is a problematic elision of the historically constituted intersocietal conditions that mediate specific power-political conflicts. Subjectivist frameworks of analysis threaten to obscure the broader structural and historical forces — such as the long-term transformation of aristocratic sociopolitical orders into legal-bureaucratic state forms — which shape the proclivities of modern statecraft and interpolate political elites as normative national-security managers. At issue here is not the descriptive emphasis on the centrality of status or ideology to conduct of international politics, but rather the failure to fully interrogate the conditions in which specific status hierarchies or ideological systems acquire their collective social force. Indeed, while recent accounts of great-power status competition pay attention to the proliferation of expansionist world-power agendas during the late-nineteenth century, they do not offer a historically grounded explanation for the development of this distinctive politico-ideological pattern, which emerged within the highly specific historical conjuncture and international field of the New Imperialism, and not just from the generic requirements of identity recognition.¹¹⁹ The counterpoint to this broadly a-historical version of constructivism is offered by the work of Ayşe Zarakol.¹²⁰ By illustrating the sociocultural dynamics which ensued from core features of modernity — especially the desires for progress, positive freedom, and social equality built into modern norms of state sovereignty — Zarakol demonstrates the patterning of sociohistorical transformations which, in conjunction with the differential outcomes of industrialization and national state-building after c.1780, laid the foundations for the “standard of civilization” hierarchy established during the nineteenth century.¹²¹ This analysis seems to indicate a shift away from ideational models of constructivism toward a more substantive historical-sociological agenda focused on the

¹¹⁵ For an illustration of this logic, see Stefano Guzzini, *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 253, Figure 11.1.

¹¹⁶ Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 24, 34.

¹¹⁷ Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It.”

¹¹⁸ See especially, Guzzini, *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe?*; Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹¹⁹ Pace Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*; Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations*. I expand this point below.

¹²⁰ Zarakol, *After Defeat*.

¹²¹ Zarakol, 38–53, 71–82.

historically constituted modes of symbolic power-projection underlying specific international orders. An exclusive focus on the dynamics of identity-formation and discourse cannot capture these structured linkages between symbolic forms and social power structures.

Thus, while I concur with the spirit of recent efforts to pluralize the study of power-political dynamics in “post-realist” terms, an emphasis on the sociohistorical formation of international relations goes beyond conceptions of power politics as “an essential feature of international security” or an “object of analysis in its own right.”¹²² A stress on the inherent historicity of international power demands a deeper conception of the ways in which the pathways and orientations of interstate competition are produced at particular spatio-temporal junctures: one that pays simultaneous attention to the lived meanings and structuring historical dynamics of particular international orders, and locates practices of statecraft and geopolitical strategy within the historically constituted pathways for collective political action which constitute them. This analysis cannot be confined to the development of “social technologies” and mobilization strategies.¹²³ More fundamentally, it demands a sustained analysis of the ways in which modern socio-structural transformations — such as the universalizing dynamic of global capitalism, the enduring socio-symbolic ties between nationhood and statehood, and the competitive dynamic of the political-economic and cultural hierarchies generated by colonial expansion and industrialization — shape the texture of international relations and constitute novel opportunities for power-projection at a global level.

THE STRUGGLE FOR STATUS

The pattern of analytical problems associated with contemporary constructivism is manifest in the substantive accounts of great-power status competition elaborated in recent work on status competition. For Steven Ward, perceptions of “status immobility” are a central factor in the kinds of aggressively revisionist geopolitical strategies adopted by states like Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan during the late-nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century era of world power rivalries.¹²⁴ When such “rising powers” seek to transform the institutional-normative foundations of the international status quo, rather than merely seeking to alter the distribution of power among states, the opposition they face from established powers can engender the perception of an international status “glass ceiling” which in turn fosters increasingly aggressive, nationalist foreign policies, with the aiming of overturning an international order deemed incompatible with great-power ambitions.¹²⁵ Underlying this process is a struggle for the social recognition of great-power identity on the international stage. Since status claims depend on recognition by others, they are prone to elicit rejections from others, the effect of which is to generate “pessimism” about the possibility of securing future identity claims.¹²⁶ This account is rooted in the highly generalized vocabulary of social-psychological theory: “people (especially those who identify most strongly with the state) care

¹²² Pace Goddard and Nexon, “The Dynamics of Global Power Politics” here at p.15, 5.

¹²³ This cuts against Goddard, MacDonald, and Nexon, “Repertoires of Statecraft,” 309.

¹²⁴ Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*, 3.

¹²⁵ Ward, 34, 48, 205–7.

¹²⁶ Ward, 42.

about being able to make positive social comparisons between their state and other states, and they want to these positive comparisons to be acknowledged by relevant others.”¹²⁷ The sociocultural pessimism engendered by failures to achieve this desired acknowledgment, Ward argues, tends to foster the preconditions for, and increase the support of, the kinds of “radical nationalists” conventionally associated with the rise geopolitically competitive revisionist states.¹²⁸ Rejectionist foreign-policy stances — in the form of “violent conflict, a withdrawal from an institution, or a policy that explicitly ignores and invalidates international rules and norms” — therefore proliferate as a way of “lashing out against the status quo order.”¹²⁹ Although the precise balance of causal factors are never explicitly drawn, these policies are pursued less for instrumental (economic/security) reasons than because they are “emotionally satisfying” from the perspective of a “frustrated nationalist.”¹³⁰ For such actors, revisionism serves both as an emotional outlet for the experience of international humiliation and a way of managing the domestic social problems associated with the diminution of national elites. The proliferation of foreign-policy statements referencing the struggle between national greatness and national decline provide the empirical grounding for these claims in both the German and Japanese cases.¹³¹

In a similar account of geopolitically competitive recognition struggles, Michelle Murray argues from equivalent socio-psychological premises to theorize revisionism as a social construct rooted in the ontological security needs of states-as-persons.¹³² The core argument posits a functional relationship between identity-construction and security-policy formation whereby the latter operates as the means toward stabilizing the recognition requirements of the former: “To alleviate social insecurity as they attempt to gain recognition from the established powers, all rising powers take up the recognitive practices constitutive of major power status. Because of the way major power identity is constructed and reproduced, these recognitive practices encourage risk-taking and steer a rising power’s foreign policy in aggressive directions that challenge the established powers.”¹³³ Echoing Wendt’s emphasis on the identity-anarchy nexus, Murray situates this dynamic in an account of the “motivational structure of anarchy.”¹³⁴ The insecurity inherent in this international political structure means that identity-formation plays in a context in which the “logic of securitization” leads both rising and established powers to identify status competition in oppositional geopolitical terms.¹³⁵ On this view, the pursuit of battleship fleets and colonial possessions by a rising power like late-nineteenth century Germany is the function of the manner in which ontological security needs

¹²⁷ Ward, 208.

¹²⁸ Ward, 8.

¹²⁹ Ward, 54.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 98–99, 128

¹³² Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations*, 11–12, 29–30, 39, 80–86; cf. the seminal article by Murray’s key academic mentor: Alexander Wendt, “The State as Person in International Theory,” *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004): 289–316.

¹³³ Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations*, 65.

¹³⁴ Murray, 40.

¹³⁵ Murray, 78.

are misrecognized by rival powers, generating a series of geopolitically competitive bids for world-power status with the aim of stabilizing a threatened social identity.¹³⁶

Given the prevalence of well-documented nationalist foreign-policy agendas in the cases German and Japanese expansionism, it is not difficult to accumulate evidence in support of arguments about the centrality of identity recognition to the era of world power rivalries that emerged between c.1880 and 1945. For the kinds of great-power nationalism that proliferated in this era were centrally ideologies of geopolitically competitive social progress forged in a world where the nationalization of states and armies made problems of cultural identity essential to language of external statecraft. The highly generalized and ahistorical vocabulary of social psychology lacks purchase on this process of sociocultural transformation. The emergence of an aggressive nationalism at the heart of elite political cultures during the late-nineteenth century was shaped by a range of interlocking historical ruptures — such as the democratization of domestic social orders and the onset of intensive global economic competition with the Great Depression of 1873-1896 — which helped convert appeals to the symbolisms of nationhood into an authoritarian politics of international rivalry. This was a profound historical rupture rooted in the conjuncture of societal and geopolitical restructuring that marked the age of global imperialism before 1914. For between the French Revolution and the uprisings of 1848, the language of nationhood represented a predominantly anti-status quo sociopolitical position associated with bourgeois opposition to aristocratic rule, and not the kind of geopolitically aggressive national chauvinisms which marked the age of empire from the 1870s on. With the onset of a hyper-competitive imperialism in the 1880s and 1890s, the increasing nationalization and militarization of elite political cultures was not confined to revisionist states like Imperial Germany or Meiji Japan, but also shaped the imperialist politics of the Western-liberal heartland. Roosevelt in the US, and Disraeli in England, were central figures in the rising chauvinism of late-nineteenth-century world politics.¹³⁷ By equating the nationalist agendas of this era with the status anxieties of “rising powers”, socio-psychological approaches risk obscuring the actual pattern of national-imperialisms, which was a general feature of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, rather than a unique pathology of the German or Japanese political class.

This criticism raises a wider issue with psychological approaches to international status competition. Grounding the linkages between culture, identity, and national security in a psychological conception of states-as-persons tends to produce an a-historical understanding of status competition as a timeless social process. From this angle, it is difficult to assess several of the most central features of the world-power rivalries thematized in recent work on status. Why, for example, were perceptions of international inferiority initially channeled into the pursuit of colonial empires and global markets rather than a direct military confrontation with the British or American Empires? What accounts for the unprecedented historical clustering of geopolitically competitive nationalisms and international status rivalries during the late-

¹³⁶ Murray, 65–66, 80–82.

¹³⁷ Perry Anderson, “Internationalism: A Breviary,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 14 (2002): 12; C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 271–83, 462–67.

nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries? What conditions shaped the openness of political actors to the pursuit of imperialism as a promising source of international prestige? These questions cannot be addressed through ahistorical models of collective psychology, much as they cannot be adequately conceived in terms of rational-choice calculus toward economic benefits. On the contrary: the reality is that *both* status anxieties *and* economic conflicts were deeply entwined within the perceptions of historical backwardness generated by a world economy dominated by Anglo-American capitalism. As discussed in *Chapter 4* this pair of expansive modern empires, the one a vast network structure of colonial enclaves and informal spheres of interest, the other a continent-spanning national-colonial formation with an unprecedented abundance of natural-resource endowments, were central to the perceptions of international hierarchy and social backwardness from which rival strategies of geopolitical expansionism flourished. Yet the theoretical vocabulary of social psychology has no way of accounting for the familiar fact that the expansionary grand strategies pursued by both Germany and Japan, for much of the first half of the twentieth century, were consciously efforts to revise a specific inter-imperial world order — one in which the distribution of territorial possessions, external spheres of influence, and industrial growth that massively favored the British and American Empires.¹³⁸ In this context, aggressively competitive bids for world power had a kind of historical rationality that cannot be accounted for in exclusively psychological terms. The cultural construction of national imperialism as a high-status, prestige project was an internal feature of a specific intersocietal formation and historical conjuncture.

V. For a Global Historical Sociology

The preceding discussion highlights the explanatory and conceptual problems that arise when scholars of international-relations theory employ over-generalized theoretical vocabularies rather than historically situated analytical perspectives. Against the background of this critique, I now seek to outline the basis of an alternative global historical sociology.¹³⁹ While the following chapter establishes the substantive theoretical conception of modern international change around which this approach revolves, this section of the argument clarifies two major historical-theoretical issues: (a) the intersocietal constitution and systemic historical character of the modern international order; and (b) the sociohistorical constitution of “the global” as a modern social form. The first part of this discussion proceeds in dialogue with two major contributions to contemporary historical sociology: the work of Michael Mann and Alexander Anievas. The second draws on the writings of Antonio Gramsci to elaborate the historicist conception of the modern global condition that frames the argument of this thesis as a whole.

INTERSOCIETAL STRUCTURES AND GEOPOLITICAL SYSTEMS

¹³⁸ This is the core argument of Adam Tooze’s account of the trajectory of Nazi grand strategy: *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2006).

¹³⁹ Although it builds on a broad range of earlier approaches, such as World Systems Theory, the idea for a global historical sociology was coined by Julian Go and George Lawson, eds., *Global Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

The a-historical set up of universal political-science theories leads many accounts of interstate politics to posit highly generalized mechanisms of international conflict — anarchy and self-help, ontological security and status-seeking. What is needed to refute such conceptions is a controlled understanding of multiplicity of historically embedded causal structures which shape the pursuit of power at an “interstate” or “global” level, as well an adequately contextualized understanding of the complex, overdetermined character of the actual historical conjunctures in which “international politics” plays out. An obvious reference point for such an approach is the work of Michael Mann, whose four-volume account of the *Sources of Social Power* consistently theorizes even the most macro-scale of historical questions, from the origins of human civilization to the making of national states, as contingently emerging social processes rooted in multiple, irreducible power networks.¹⁴⁰ Unlike the dehistoricized and often monocausal theoretic perspectives reviewed above, Mann’s approach revolves around a more flexible understanding of the real-historical complexities of social power relations:¹⁴¹ the existence of “multiple overlapping” of “socio-spatial networks of power” organized around four distinct network structures without any necessary causal primacy: “ideological, economic, military, and political (IEMP) relationships.”¹⁴² Focusing on the capacities for logistical, territorial, material and social “organization” generated by particular historical configurations of these broad networks, Mann’s historical analysis demonstrates the overdetermined character of historical change, illustrating the “polymorphous crystallization” of modern bureaucratic states and capitalist classes through the intersecting economic, military, and ideological conflicts that constituted them.¹⁴³ The analytical power of this approach is especially clear in Mann’s second volume, which provides a subtle analysis of the historical ties between geopolitics and international capitalism. Arguing that “capitalism, states, military power, and ideologies contained contradictory, entwined principles of social organization” Mann illustrates the shifting patterns of industrial change and national state-building which brought the geopolitical dynamic of military competition between states into an increasingly chaotic alignment with the transnational economic dynamic of commercial competition.¹⁴⁴ Instead of a general theory of the political economy or geopolitics of interstate rivalries, it appears one can speak of a contingent pattern of entwinement between capitalism and militarism, unevenly emerging across states, classes, and national-representative institutions.¹⁴⁵ This explanatory strategy provides a historical sociology of international change better attuned to the complex conjunction of sociohistorical causations which make up modern intersocietal formations.

¹⁴⁰ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 2, The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 3, Global Empires and Revolution, 1890-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 4 Globalizations, 1945-2011* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁴¹ In the context of debates in sociology and social theory, William Sewell makes a similar point about the importance of Mann’s emphasis on the contingency of macro-social dynamics: *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 114–15.

¹⁴² Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 1986, chapter 1, here at 1, 2. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁴³ Mann, 2–3; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 1993, 3, 6–10, 75.

¹⁴⁴ Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 1993, 258, 291ff.

¹⁴⁵ See, Mann, chapter 8, and 33, 86, 137, 227ff.

Despite these achievements, Mann's vision of social power as multiple, highly autonomous socio-spatial networks — or, in conventional Weberian terms, separate ideological, economic, military, and political spheres — lacks purchase on the systemic character of such modern social forms as capitalism and the global nation-state system. Committed to an *a priori* model of irreducible social power sources, Mann's welcome emphasis on the typically multifactorial, overdetermined character of sociohistorical change sometimes fails to adequately illuminate the structures of interconnection that both make such social structures into globalizing frameworks for social action and bring contingent historical processes into a larger causal dynamic. Given that the central purpose of Mann's third volume is to examine the relations between imperialism, war, capitalism and revolution in the period c.1890-1945, this rejection of any systemic understanding of either societies or international relations becomes a major analytical obstacle. As Julian Go highlights, Mann's reliance on the IEMP presents as separate historical processes that formed part of the same historical series: the New Imperialism of the 1890s and the proletarian revolutions of 1917-1923 were not discrete crystallizations of social power, but linked responses to the same pattern of global economic crises and interstate rivalries.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, because Mann's analytic of "nonsystemic, nondialectical process" refutes *any* notion of "system" or "totality,"¹⁴⁷ he is unable to visualize the extent to which the competitive expansion of global empires during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was conditioned by the same historical dynamics that fostered the coeval development of nation-centered industrial societies: how the dislocation of social orders experiencing the intensifying pressures of uneven and combined development led both state elites and revolutionary political movements to seek powerful central states capable of managing the global economic conflicts unlocked by internationalization of industrial capitalism. At a deeper sociological level, the elision of this sociohistorical process reflects Mann's longstanding view of capitalism and the international system as inherently independent spheres of social power.¹⁴⁸ While it may be true that there is neither any necessary or functional relationship between economic and geopolitical competition,¹⁴⁹ this does not mean that there is no higher order of systemic process linking the political economy of global capitalism to the conflict dynamics of the interstate field. The modern security problematic of military-strategic innovation under conditions of constant technological-economic competition exemplifies how far the capitalist nature of the modern economy penetrates the rationality of statecraft.¹⁵⁰

A direct counterpoint to Mann's view of the 1890-1945 conjuncture is provided by the work of Alexander Anievas. Where Mann argues the priority of irreducible, nonsystemic power networks, Anievas casts "the international" as systematic product of "historically unique social

¹⁴⁶ Julian Go, "A Global-Historical Sociology of Power: On Mann's Concluding Volumes to *The Sources of Social Power*," *International Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2013): 1145-46; Dylan Riley, "Routes or Rivals? Social Citizenship, Capitalism, and War in the Twentieth Century," *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* 42, no. 4 (2013): 492.

¹⁴⁷ For example, Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 1986, 1, 2, 12, 14; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 1993, 10-12, 17, 21, 32, 77, 359; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 3, Global Empires and Revolution, 1890-1945*, 15-16, 462.

¹⁴⁸ See especially, Michael Mann, *States, War and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 137, 139, 152. For the opposite side of this argument see, Alex Callinicos, "Does Capitalism Need the State System?," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 533-49.

¹⁴⁹ See also, Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 145.

¹⁵⁰ Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 2015, 265.

structures.” In a powerful account of the geopolitical rivalries which marked the 1914-1945 era, Anievas describes the two world wars as “an organic crisis of the totality of structures constituting capitalist modernity in its spatiotemporally uneven and combined development as a global, internally differentiated, sociohistorical whole.”¹⁵¹ This socio-structural perspective builds on Trotsky’s idea of uneven and combined development to characterize the geopolitical rivalries that culminated in the great-power wars of 1914-1945 as a product of the differentially distributed pressures created by the national unevenness of industrial capitalist expansion over the course of the long nineteenth century.¹⁵² On this view, German policymakers decision for war in July 1914 can be explained by the Prussia-Germany’s unique struggle to overcome the conditions of historical backwardness mediated by its spatio-temporal location within the staggered pattern of European industrialization processes. Stressing the competitive pressures generated by German industrialization’s juxtaposition with an early-developing Britain and France and a late-developing Russia, Anievas argues that the military-authoritarian turn in German foreign-policy after c.1880 reflects the socioeconomic pressures of uneven development. As a consequence of these overarching material conditions, national state-building and capitalist industrialization — which occurred over a much longer historical period in Britain — formed a peculiarly rapid process of combined development. The internal crisis-tendencies generated by this process led political elites and business leaders to seek outlets for domestic social problems in aggressive foreign-policy strategies designed to enhance Germany’s access to global markets saturated by industrial competitors.¹⁵³ An almost diametrical opposite to Mann’s perspective, the vision of international historical sociology suggested by this account roots international politics in the universalizing pressures of a single social system — capitalism — and its inner conflict dynamics.

Although the argument of this thesis also builds on the idea of uneven and combined development, its social-theoretical foundations are intended to encompass a broader conception of international power than the one that seems to underpin Anievas’ incisive form of historical materialism. Like Mann’s multi-source conception of social power organization, the kind of historical sociology I develop in the following chapters revolves around an emphasis on the multiplicity of forms of power transformation which shaped the conjuncture of the New Imperialism and the trajectories of American expansionism therein. This, as will become apparent, is not to deny the centrality of capitalism’s uneven and combined development to dynamics of interstate rivalry. Rather, it is part of an effort to locate the strategic and ideological logics of imperial rivalry within a historical sociology of the multiple economic, cultural and international social structures that made up the global condition of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century power politics. For the conflict dynamics of this escalating imperialism were not reducible to the socioeconomic positions of states within the emergent capitalist order. They involved variable rationalizations of the kind of socioeconomic, symbolic, and coercive pressures faced by particular states confronting the pressures of capitalist and colonial unevenness on a world scale. These rationalizations, as much ideological as strategic in their

¹⁵¹ Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War*, 7, 216–216.

¹⁵² Anievas, 59–62.

¹⁵³ Anievas, 71–84, 100–104.

overall calculus of power and interest, generated projects of society-building and world order that yoked anxieties about economic rivalry to the larger political-cultural problems of integrating national social orders against the background of an encompassing global condition. These struggles to constitute political order in the context of a rivalrous and uneven world economy and international order were not confined to the capitalist logic of economic expansion, but also involved such common features of the national-imperial state as the flourishing of domestic militarism and the proliferation of state-centered ideologies of imperial prestige and civilizational expansion. In this context, American conceptions of world power in the form of an expansive “Open Door” opened out onto a wider “civilizing mission” that reflected the status hierarchies of an empire-centered international order. This project of global power-projection yoked US grand strategy to the organization of capitalism on a world scale, but as underlying ideologies of nationhood and civilizationism demonstrate, its logic was as much the constitution of a desired political order as the interests of any sector of American capital.¹⁵⁴

Capturing these kinds of political rationalization and ideological calculus in historical-sociological terms calls for a sustained attempt to mediate between subjective and objective conceptions of social structure. For when processes of socio-structural development are framed in terms of “natural-historical conditions” or “natural-economy conditions,” as for Anievas Trotsky framed his conception of uneven and combined development, even a historicized understanding of social structure risks subsuming active processes of political and cultural practice to a rigid logic of causal necessity.¹⁵⁵ The social phenomena usually designated as structures in this context — notably class relations, capitalism, the state, geopolitics and international system — thus tend to be envisaged as objective material entities that impose necessary constraints on political action. Although this conception of social structure captures the cage-like quality of modern social and economic forms, it fails to fully acknowledge the ways in which such socio-structural formations are made and transformed by the projects, actions and desires of “intelligent and suffering human persons.”¹⁵⁶ Mechanistic conceptions of the “whip of external necessity” and the “privilege of historic backwardness” then become rigid metaphors of inevitable structural determinism, rather than ways of locating the particular action contexts from which agentive international practices arise. Missing from such depictions of the social as a determining macro-structure is not just the reality of historically constitutive human action, but also its meaningful political, cultural, and psychological content. A historical sociology trapped in structuralist conceptions of the social threatens to elide the historically

¹⁵⁴ This cuts against Anievas’s presentation of Wilsonian foreign policy as “the *effect* and *pragmatic response* to the social-strategic dilemmas arising from the nature of U.S. development and world capitalism as a whole.” Anievas, 109. My emphasis on the pursuit of political order is not intended to deny the well-documented centrality of capitalist interests to American foreign policy. Rather it is intended to avoid reducing the dynamics of strategy-formation to an unmediated reflection of economic interest. The chaos of uneven and combined development confronted by American state-managers during the early-twentieth century demanded the imposition of stabilizing and ideologically sanctioned national and international order, not just the pragmatic calculus of interests. I discuss Wilsonianism in more detail in *Chapter 6, Section II*.

¹⁵⁵ Jamie C. Allinson and Alexander Anievas, “The Uses and Misuses of Uneven and Combined Development: An Anatomy of a Concept,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009): 50, 51.

¹⁵⁶ Sewell, *Logics of History*, 206.

constituted forms of political agency and meaningful social action which mark the pursuit of power and influence at an international level, where agents are best understood not as the passive bearers of structural necessity, but as the makers of specific strategic and ideological projects within particular inter-societal action contexts.¹⁵⁷

Consider, for example, the concept of the state which lies at the heart of Anievas's conception of "capitalist geopolitics." Here, a conception of historical sociology which conceives social and geopolitical structures only in objective material terms tends to translate into a limited account of the state as a military and economic power-container, co-determined by class and interstate conflicts. This conception of state-power brackets the relations of political authority and domination through which the state order is reproduced as a political institution and locus of elite rule — the construction of political hegemony, for Gramsci, or the organization of *legitime Herrschaft*, for Weber.¹⁵⁸ This circumscribed conception of the state is not an adequate basis for historicizing relations of global power politics. For as discussed in the previous chapter, the visions of world power rivalry associated with the coming of the New Imperialism were partly structured around the modernizing social ethos and claims to civilizational superiority which underpinned the social authority — legitimate domination — of the modern imperial state. The point here is not to say that Marxist conceptions of capitalist development cannot illuminate such political and symbolic dynamics. Rather, it is to open this focus up to a greater appreciation of the multiplicity of forms and kinds of social power within and through which specific logics of international relations emerge historically. It is to suggest that the basic *desideratum* of many IR historical-sociological literatures — a socio-historical as opposed to a reified conception of international power relations — demands a more integrated conception of the conjunction of coercive, economic, and ideological power transformations that characterize modern transformations of internationality. To frame this suggestion, I now turn to the writings of Antonio Gramsci.

THE GLOBAL IN HISTORICIST TERMS

To understand exactly what might be meant by the problem of the reality of the external world it might be worth taking up the example of the notions of "East" and "West" which do not cease to be "objectively real" even though analysis shows them to be no more than a conventional, that is "historico-cultural" construction...What would North-South or East-West mean without man? They are real relationships and yet they would not exist without man and without the development of civilisation.

¹⁵⁷ A central theme of Jessop's "strategic-relational" conception of state theory. See, Bob Jessop, *State Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008) here at 42.

¹⁵⁸ On this point see especially Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics," *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 133–48; Stefano Guzzini, "Max Weber's Power," in *Max Weber and International Relations*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 97–118. For Weber's discussion of the centrality of legitimate domination, or domination by authority, to the existence of the modern state see, Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, vol. 1–2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 946, 952–54. For Gramsci's idea of hegemony as an active political cultural process see, for example, Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 165–70.

Obviously East and West are arbitrary and conventional, that is historical, constructions, since outside of real history every point on the earth is East and West at the same time. This can be seen more clearly from the fact that these terms have crystallised not from the point of view of a hypothetical melancholic man in general but from the point of view of the European cultured classes who, as a result of their world-wide hegemony, have caused them to be accepted everywhere. Japan is the Far East not only for Europe but also perhaps for the American from California and even for the Japanese himself, who, through English political culture, may then call Egypt the Near East.¹⁵⁹

— Antonio Gramsci, *The “Reality” of the External World*¹⁶⁰

In order to ensure an analytical focus on the patterns of social transformation and cultural restructuring implicated in the formation of the global condition, this thesis is grounded in a historicist epistemology of, and approach to, the modern global condition. In a passage examining the spatial and epistemological coordinates of modern intellectual culture, Antonio Gramsci anticipated such an approach by casting notions of “North-South” and “East-West” as historical-cultural constructions rooted in the hegemony of the European cultured class. Against understandings of space as natural, ontological, or transhistorical, Gramsci conceives the spatial ordering of modern social life as a historically embedded power relationship. The categories East and West, in this view, express a condition of cultural, political, and economic domination essential to the dynamics of Western hegemony; the organization of space and scale is less the objective manifestation of a pre-given physical location than the object and realization of a historical power struggle.¹⁶¹ This historicist understanding of space not only rejects prevailing forms of philosophical idealism and rationalism, but also opens out onto a broader understanding of the evolving sociopolitical and sociocultural processes by which social agents come to “objectivise reality” in particular sociocultural forms.¹⁶² In this conception, the phenomenal appearance of categories like East and West is something more than a representational or discursive sign. For much as philosophical thought-systems are to be rooted in the “intimate contradictions” by which a particular society is “lacerated,”¹⁶³ representations of space implicate a whole ensemble of social and political dynamics, which allow certain categories to become naturalized as quasi-objective forms of historical consciousness. In this respect, forms of spatiality are best understood neither as ontological absolutes nor as purely discursive constructions, but rather as historically constituted social forms — “real facts” which “allow one to travel by land and by sea where one has decided to arrive, to foresee the future...and understand the objectivity of the external world.”¹⁶⁴ By emphasizing the historically specific forms of power and domination implicated in the very possibility of a

¹⁵⁹ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 447.

¹⁶⁰ This phrase is the subtitle of the section of the *Prison Notebooks* from which the above quotation derives. Gramsci, 441–48.

¹⁶¹ Esteve Morera, *Gramsci’s Historicism: A Realist Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1990), 89; cf. Bob Jessop, “Gramsci As a Spatial Theorist,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8 (December 1, 2005): 421–37.

¹⁶² In the passages I am referring to this position was primarily a critique of the idealism of Benedetto Croce and the analytical philosophy of Bertrand Russell. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 447.

¹⁶³ Gramsci, 404.

¹⁶⁴ Gramsci, 447.

dichotomy like East and West, Gramsci opens up a conception of sociopolitical analysis — a historical sociology — which foregrounds the historical specificity and constitution of particular spatial forms.¹⁶⁵

A conception of the real or the objective as a socially mediated form of historical consciousness differs markedly from the dichotomy between “subjectivist” and “empiricist” epistemologies characteristic of many debates in political science.¹⁶⁶ Gramsci emphasizes that “the idea of the ‘objective’” refers not to any “metaphysical materialism” but to the processes of “historical becoming” through which particular ensembles of human practice come to be realized in the form of specific ideological and intellectual standpoints.¹⁶⁷ This suggests a deeply historicist epistemology in which even such seemingly physically constituted categories as space and place represent temporally embedded ensembles of social and cultural practice. As Gramsci emphasized: “It might seem that there can exist an extra-historical and extra-human objectivity. But who is the judge of such objectivity? Who is able to put himself in this kind of ‘standpoint of the cosmos in itself’ and what could such a standpoint mean?”¹⁶⁸

This kind of historicism not only demands an attentiveness to issues of context. More fundamentally, it foregrounds the production of, and internal relations between, particular spatial, cultural, and political-economic forms. It therefore entails a dual critique: first, of the distinction between “history” and “theory” as mutually exclusive analytical strategies; and second, of the dichotomy between “objective” and “subjective” as discrete domains of social reality and experience.¹⁶⁹ In this respect, Gramsci’s historicism might be said to anticipate a break with the kind of materialism that Pierre Bourdieu would later charge with occluding the relational and symbolic constitution of modern social groups.¹⁷⁰ It suggests an integrated conception of historical sociology, attentive to the socio-structural underpinnings of particular historical formations, and cognizant of “the fact that the human agent is creative, generative, producing mythical representations by applying mental functions, symbolic forms.”¹⁷¹ What

¹⁶⁵ This perspective partially anticipates the interpretation of cultural imperialism developed in Said’s later work, which emphasizes the importance of Gramsci’s political sociology Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), 56–57.

¹⁶⁶ For a critique of the philosophical assumptions that often underpin this divide see, Heikki Patomäki and Colin Wight, “After Postpositivism? The Promises of Critical Realism,” *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 1, 2000): 213–37.

¹⁶⁷ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 446.

¹⁶⁸ Gramsci, 445. In their discussion of Gramsci’s historicist epistemology Bieler and Morton make a somewhat similar point but couch it in terms of a combination of “objective and “subjective elements” which seems to obscure rather than make clear the vexed and historically constructed status of the objective which my formulation emphasises. There is a textual basis for both readings, but what I want to emphasize is the possibility of a real-historical as opposed to a naturalistic or objectivist definition of categories like global or national, much as Gramsci seeks to do with the dichotomies of East-West and North-South. *Global Capitalism, Global War, Global Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 46ff.

¹⁶⁹ For example, see Gramsci’s claim that “the philosophy of praxis thinks of itself in a historicist manner, that is, as a transitory phase of philosophical thought.” Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 404.

¹⁷⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups,” *Theory and Society* 14, no. 6 (1985): 725. For a reading of Bourdieu’s contributions to history and historical sociology see George Steinmetz, “Bourdieu, Historicity, and Historical Sociology,” *Cultural Sociology* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 45–66.

¹⁷¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*, trans. David Fernbach (Polity, 2014), 170.

bears emphasis here is not just the appealing historical sensitivity of Gramsci's epistemological stance, but also its emphasis on the internal relations between historical phenomena that might otherwise be conceived in abstraction from one another. In the above-quoted passage we find that historical-cultural constructions of political space are treated as internal to the structures of social and geopolitical power generated in the course of European expansion while, in turn, such ideological representations figure as a structuring ideological force; one which shaped American, European, and Japanese perceptions of inter-societal difference and conflict.

Of particular importance, in this regard, is the way in which Gramsci's internal-relations model of social causation, in conjunction with his historicist epistemological strategy fosters a subtle analysis of the new forms of political organization and spatial ordering generated in the era of the New Imperialism. His conception of "hegemony" explored how the colonial expansion of Europe after 1870 was mirrored by the development of an increasingly integrated form of national state that sought to re-organize social and territorial resources into a unified civil and political society.¹⁷² This movement was not a unilinear national trajectory, but rather involved a complex overlapping between political projects and dynamics operating on a variety of scales: from the development of "bourgeoisie" as a "concrete world class"¹⁷³ to the opposition between urban and rural social groups that characterized the modern "city-countryside" relationship, whose significance Gramsci emphasized in the case of the Italian Risorgimento and the American transition to Fordism.¹⁷⁴ The formation of an integrated national society, in this conception, hinged on specific political and ideological struggles among a variety of historical social forces, intellectuals, elites, and political parties. This conception of national society as a contingent sociopolitical product not only serves to historicize the seemingly natural phenomenon of a bounded nation-form. Simultaneously, it specified the complex entwinement between national and global spheres engendered by, and constitutive of, the deeply interdependent historical condition associated with the emergence of the world market during the age of European imperialism. Rather than an isolated domestic process, "every relationship of 'hegemony'" is "necessarily an educational relationship" which "occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilizations."¹⁷⁵

This conception of modern national political orders as overdetermined by social, economic, and ideological processes operating on a multiplicity of spatial scales marks a significant departure from the binary of "domestic" and "international" politics around which much conventional IR theory oscillates. It presents national and global political-economic spheres as overlapping and dynamic parts of the same world-historical process. Against this background, the following chapter elaborates and concretizes some of the key processes of international change which shaped the constitution of global power politics during the era of sociopolitical restructuring witnessed by Gramsci. Beginning with an analysis of the Spanish-American War

¹⁷² Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 243–44.

¹⁷³ Gramsci, 41.

¹⁷⁴ Gramsci, 90–102, 287–89.

¹⁷⁵ Gramsci, 350.

of 1898, I set forth a historical-sociological theorization of modern international transformation which illustrates the novel pathways and orientations of strategic power-projection that marked the emergence of an inter-imperial international order and capitalist world economy.

3. THE SOURCES OF GLOBAL POWER POLITICS

THEORIZING MODERN INTERNATIONAL CHANGE

I. Conceptualizing Modern International Change: The Spanish-American War and the Dislocation of Social Order

This chapter provides a historical and theoretical account of the nineteenth-century origins of global power politics. To move away from the transhistorical modes of analysis which dominate IR theories of power-political competition, we need an analysis of international change and historical development which can better comprehend the existence of qualitatively distinct geopolitical systems, conflicts, and forms of power. Towards this end, the following discussion blends historical, conceptual, and theoretic analysis to highlight the empirical patterns of social structure and political agency, global societal change, and geopolitical transformation which marked the late-nineteenth century onset of the New Imperialism. By way of introduction, I begin with the example of an historical episode that embodies several of the historically-distinctive features of global power politics itself.

The Spanish-American War began with an unexpected catastrophe.¹ On the evening of February 15th, 1898, the USS Maine exploded in Havana Harbor, killing two hundred and sixty American sailors. That day, on receiving a cablegram informing him of the seemingly accidental sinking of the Maine, Admiral George Dewey noted the heightened emotional atmosphere of “intense excitement” which surrounded the event, and set out to prepare his vessels with coal and fuels, “ready for moving at a moment’s notice.”² This atmosphere of crisis spread quickly throughout American society. On March 27th, the White House received a telegram from the editor of the *New York Herald*, W.C. Reick, informing President McKinley that: “Big corporations here now believe we will have war. Believe all would welcome it as relief to suspense.”³ Two days later, an official declaration was issued to Spain, demanding full reparations for the Maine and a peaceful resolution to the ongoing Cuban crisis.

For it was this event, the nationalist revolution against the Spanish Empire that began in 1895, which had originally drawn the American navy to Havana, a key site of US foreign economic expansion, with the Cuban sugar and mining industries receiving some \$40 million in

¹ This paragraph is based on Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), 377–406; David J. Healy, *US Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 40–47; Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 4–7.

² George Dewey, *Autobiography of George Dewey, Admiral of the Navy* (London: Constable & Co Ltd., 1913), 178, 180.

³ Cited in: LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, 392.

American investment during the 1890s.⁴ On the same day, the *New York Tribune* reported that “what is wanted first of all is relief from suspense... Even a declaration of war would be preferred by bankers and stockbrokers to the continuance of a stagnant market...with rumours of impending hostilities.”⁵ Against this background of acutely-felt instability, McKinley’s efforts to avert a war proved futile. On April 25, Congress finally passed the war resolution which signalled the end of successive US administration’s policy of neutrality regarding the Cuban liberation struggle. Within a week, the fighting began. On May 1st, Dewey’s Asiatic Squadron destroyed the Spanish fleet at the Battle of Manila Bay, marking the end of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines. Envisioned as a sign of “Manifest Destiny,” victory figured as a conscious marker of a future American ascendancy, celebrated in increasingly jingoistic terms by the national press and military establishment alike.⁶

Yet the events of 1898 cannot be adequately represented by such national mythologies. It was the Cuban War of Independence (1895-1898), the last of three nineteenth-century liberation wars fought by Cuban nationalists against the Spanish Empire, which had originally prompted the American intervention, leading one historian to emphasize the “Spanish-Cuban-American War” as the more apt title for the conflict.⁷ Before the American intervention the Liberating Army had already taken control of the Cuban countryside, while the Spanish Empire had lost 100,000 soldiers in a financially draining cycle of revolt and military conflict.⁸ Frustrated by Spain’s failure to resolve a crisis that had begun decades earlier with the outbreak of the Ten Year’s War (1868-1877), the United States was gradually moved to intervene in order to protect a key site of overseas economic activity and investment, eventually establishing itself as the de facto military government of Cuba between 1899 and 1902.⁹ More crucially, the Cuban independence movement and the contemporary Philippine Revolution (1896-1898) revealed the fragility of traditional forms of European colonialism, fostering heightened anxieties about the United States’ ability to access the overseas markets deemed essential to economic growth.¹⁰

In the arc of American grand strategy, the year 1898 thus represents a significant departure from long-standing foreign-policy decisions. The posture of neutrality regarding European

⁴ David M. Pletcher, “Rhetoric and Results: A Pragmatic View of American Economic Expansionism, 1865–98,” *Diplomatic History* 5, no. 2 (1981): 99.

⁵ Cited in LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, 392.

⁶ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 502. On the centrality of “Manifest Destiny” to the ideological formulation to late-nineteenth century US political culture see Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996). For the close relationship between notions of manhood, progress and race in US political culture at this time see also Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*; T. J. Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York, NY: Harper, 2009), 107–8. The notions of Manifest Destiny and Social Darwinism embraced by US naval elites are amply documented in Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism*. (1972; repr., Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), esp. 204-237.

⁷ Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism: 1895-1902*, vol. II (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 377.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Alan Dye, *Cuban Sugar in the Age of Mass Production: Technology of the Economics of the Sugar Central, 1899-1929* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 51–52, 279 n.59.

¹⁰ On the centrality of these anxieties to US grand strategy in this era see also, Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 220–22.

affairs was a deeply held commitment, originally outlined in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. In just three months and twenty-two days, however, the war brought a new sense of worldwide geopolitical and economic power to the forefront of American political consciousness. Now, for the first time, the United States looked set to become “the controlling World Power, holding the sceptre of the sea, reigning with the guiding principle of a maximum of world service.”¹¹ In similar terms, Theodore Roosevelt, who acted as a key advocate of the war as Assistant Secretary of the Navy (1897-1898), viewed the conflict against Spain as “righteous” act — “the first great triumph” in the “mighty-world movement” of American expansionism.¹² For Admiral Stephen B. Luce, likewise, the war against Spain had been “a war in the interest of civilization and human progress,” demonstrating the centrality of military power to a civilized national life.¹³

This symbolic framing — figuring the war as the sign and validator of American world power — partly reflected the increasingly vast scale of American economic expansion, whose rising power could now be seen in the mirror of the contracting Spanish Empire.¹⁴ During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the United States had established an unprecedented continental economic sphere connected by the world’s first transcontinental railway system (est. 1869). Its economy now entered a century of positive trade balances, with exports exceeding imports in all but three years in the period 1876-1970, compared to the mere fourteen years of favourable import-export ratios prior to the 1870s. While the Spanish Empire entered a death spiral of trade deficits, fiscal crises, and revolt, the post-Civil War trajectory of the United States represented the inverse: ascending industrial growth and intensified political-military centralization.¹⁵ The era of the Spanish-American War was a historical watershed. In the words of the one US naval commander:

Considered as a war, the war with Spain was almost insignificant; but, considered as a source of influence on our national life, its magnitude can be hardly calculated. Just as the results of the war itself expanded from the simple intention of freeing Cuba, to the acquirement of a vast island empire, extending from the West Indies to the China Sea; just so the nation has expanded from one almost hermit in its tendencies to one of the overshadowing powers of the world. We have left our own isolated ocean-bound coasts, and have reached out across the seas, until we have put ourselves in contact with all the great world powers now struggling for control in the enormous undeveloped markets of the great

¹¹ From a 1902 article reflecting on the war that was published in the *North American Review* by US Navy Captain Richard P. Hobson cited in Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy*, 229.

¹² Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s sons, 1899), 9, 65. In this book, Roosevelt outlines a heroic account of the Rough Rider regiment of volunteer cavalry soldiers he raised and fought in during the 1898 war. In this connection, see also Roosevelt’s articles advocating US naval expansion in 1897. Theodore Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 23, no. 3 (1897): 447–61; Theodore Roosevelt, “The Naval Policy of America,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 23 (1897): 509–21.

¹³ Stephen B. Luce, “Address Delivered at the United States Naval War College,” in *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, ed. John D. Hayes and John B. Hattendorf (1903; repr., Newport RI: Naval War College Press, 1975), 43.

¹⁴ H.H. Powers, “The War as a Suggestion of Manifest Destiny,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 12, no. 2 (September 1, 1898): 1–20.

¹⁵ On the decline of the Spanish Empire in this context, see, Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7–9, 31; Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 418.

unwieldy East. And in this East lies the field of the future struggle for supremacy, both political and commercial.¹⁶

THE NEW IMPERIALISM AND THE THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL CHANGE

This vignette highlights the multiform character of international change. The outbreak of war is not an isolated happening. It typically involves a period of emergence, a process of gestation that structures its advent and trajectory. In the *fin-de-siècle* United States, the fact that a war against the Spanish Empire could not just occur, but figure as a profound transformation of prevailing structures of consciousness and political practice represents a complex development inscribed within an overdetermined conjuncture of historical causalities. As such, notwithstanding its apparently singular, almost inadvertent appearance, even a cursory survey of the origins of the Spanish-American War draws attention to a more general feature of the relation between historical events and international change: how the “dislocation of normal life” — of prevailing structures of social order — that characterizes such moments of ruptural change can rearticulate existing structures of internationality — political, symbolic, and socioeconomic.¹⁷ The sense of rupture and insecurity generated by such a complex dislocation of structures can foster a surge of practical and symbolic activities with lasting implications for the development of both social orders and international orders.¹⁸ A major historical event like the Spanish-American War highlights a variety of ways in which processes of international transformation emerge and shape the pursuit of power and influence at a global level.

On the one hand, consider how the pattern of dynamics which made the war possible involved the interaction between causal processes operating on a number of apparently distinct spatial and temporal scales, and involving the interactions between a series of differentially located and historically distinct social formations. While it was the growing dynamism of American industrial capitalism that brought the United States, so to speak, into increasingly intimate relations with Cuban society, it was the uprising of Cuban nationalists against the colonial dominion of a semi-feudal Spanish monarchy which prompted US overseas expansion to turn from an economic process into an imperial war. The advent of the war and the imaginings of US world power which it stimulated were partly rooted in a dynamic process of intersocietal unevenness: the ways in which the industrial transformation and military expansion of the United States synchronized with a set of profoundly different vectors of modernity: the involution of Spain’s imperial monarchy and the advent of a nationalist revolutionary movement within its colonies.

¹⁶ John Hood, “The Pacific Submarine Cable: Some Remarks on the Military Necessity and the Advantages of a National Cable,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 26 (1900): 480. In the same issue of *Proceedings*, the US Navy’s official journal, see also the article by Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Frank W. Hackett, which discusses the perception of collapsing distances frequently associated with fin-de-siècle notions of imperialism and geopolitics. Frank W. Hackett, “An Address Delivered Before the Naval War College,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 26 (1900) here at 453.

¹⁷ The term the dislocation of normal life is taken from William Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), chapter 8.

¹⁸ A major theme of Sewell’s theory of the event Sewell, 229.

On the other hand, consider that the unfolding crisis of 1898 and its impact on American grand strategy depended not just on economic or security calculations, but on the interaction *between* strategic decisions and symbolic structures. The sinking of the Maine was almost immediately invested with deep symbolic meaningfulness as a national crisis. Victory in the war which followed was then taken as the sign of a world-historical trajectory, portending future greatness. The emotional tone of crisis generated by an unanticipated tragedy also seemingly helped to frame the war as a normative national cause with existential significance for American society.¹⁹ After the war, the pursuit of world power thus took on new, compelling meanings for American political and military elites. In August 1898, the month victory was secured, the US Naval Board began to map out a the geopolitical strategy for US expansionism, highlighting the Pacific Ocean and Western Hemisphere as the centres of gravity of future imperial rivalries.²⁰

This brings into view two problems in theorizing the relationship between power politics and international change. First, the events surrounding the Spanish-American war resonate with the global condition of modernity forged over the course of the nineteenth century. From the rise of capitalism and imperial nation-states, to the close relations between foreign policy decisions and financial markets, battleship warfare and rapid communications technologies, national crises and national progress — there seems to be every reason to view the events of 1898 as a symptom of modernity on a global scale.²¹ But what exactly does it mean to describe such processes as *modern*? And what constitutes their *global* character? War between rival empires was, of course, a fact of international existence deep into the historical past. And the rise and fall of great powers is, according to the authors of the realist tradition, the basic dynamic of international politics as such.²² Yet to designate the Spanish-American war as a “modern historical event” implies something distinctive about its social and political character — something which cannot be collapsed back into the putatively timeless texture of international politics.²³ How then are modern processes of international transformation best identified and theorized? And how can the study of power politics be integrated with the analysis of modern historical change?

Second, the complexity of an event like the Spanish-American war brings the difficulty of theorizing historically about power-political competition fully into view. The decision to go to war clearly involved strategic calculations. But the actors involved are not best understood as

¹⁹ For Sewell, historical events are characterized by symbolic interpretation, cultural restructuring, and heightened emotion. My analysis is modelled on this methodological injunction. See, Sewell, 245, 248ff.

²⁰ As demonstrated by Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States Before World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2016), part I, here 37.

²¹ According to the German historian Reinhart Koselleck the notion of crisis as a historically progressive category is a distinctively modern development, with origins in the eighteenth century. Reinhart Koselleck, “Crisis,” trans. Michaela Richter, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 2 (May 22, 2006): 357–400.

²² For example, Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 7, 211; Kenneth Waltz, “Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 341.

²³ *Pace* Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 66; also, Robert Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (1984): 287–304; Barry Buzan, “The Timeless Wisdom of Realism,” in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 47–65.

undifferentiated “conflict groups” wielding greater and lesser coercive capacities.²⁴ The historical conditions that structured the conflict between the Spanish and American Empires involved a more complex pattern of shaping and controlling forces than the realist model of interstate anarchy allows.²⁵ Contrary to standard depictions of the binary between “domestic” and “international” politics, the events of 1898 were marked by a dislocation and remaking of a variety of political, cultural, and economic structures on a series of interlocking scales, undermining conventional levels-of-analysis models of international relations and foreign-policy making.

In this sense, an adequate appreciation for the complexity of historical episodes points to the inadequacy of several conventional analytic dichotomies and ideal-typical oppositions. For not only did the events leading up to the war combine radically differentiated yet overlapping experiences of state-formation, socioeconomic development, and ideological expression, they also involved the deeply symbolic and cultural interpretations of shifting historical circumstances. Nevertheless, while IR constructivists are surely right to stress the interpretive, normative, and symbolic component of power-political interactions, explaining why ideological discourses like world power or imperial prestige acquire the status of authoritative political rationales requires something more than attention to “ideational factors.” Like other types of historical episode, complex power-political events like the Spanish-American war blur familiar distinctions between “societal” and “international” spheres and cross the boundary between “material” and “ideational” forms. How then is the texture of international relations to be conceptualized beyond such familiar dichotomies? What, given these concerns, would a plausible conception of the relationship between international change and power politics look like?

In sharp contrast to the language of dependent and independent variables which dominates much positivist IR theory, an adequate conception of the Spanish-American war demands something like a historical sociology of the conjunctural transformations, intersecting causalities, and emergent political and symbolic practices that constituted such a complex dynamic of modern historical change. Yet the highly abstract and over-generalized vocabulary of much IR theorizing sidesteps the basic premise of a sociohistorical analysis: that social practices are historically embedded, temporally emerging, and relationally constructed forms of power.²⁶

²⁴ *Contra* Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” 290; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93.

²⁵ For a somewhat similar point, though one couched more in terms of the relationship between network-structures and social identities, see Daniel Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 22.

²⁶ This point is modelled on George Steinmetz, “The Octopus and the Hekatonkheire: On Many Armed States and Tentacular Empires,” in *The Many Hands of the State: Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control*, ed. Kimberly J. Morgan and Ann Shola Orloff (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 371; cf. Craig Calhoun, “The Rise and Domestication of Historical Sociology,” in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J McDonald (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 327–29; Derek Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytic Foundations of Historical Materialism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 130–31.

TOWARD A SOCIOHISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, I develop a way of addressing these issues in historical and analytic practice. This approach involves developing a historical-sociological conception of international change, power politics, and global modernity. As the above discussion implies, the underlying premise of this undertaking is that the task of conceptualizing international politics should proceed, not in general terms, but in relation to a meaningful — historically and conceptually specified — spatio-temporal context. That is to say, even as the concept of power politics — of conflict and domination among political communities — gestures toward a general feature of international existence, its concrete expression is always mediated in a particular conjunction of historical-cultural forms whose inner logic must be deciphered. In what follows, I concretize this proposition by examining the novel forms of intersocietal conflict and imperial rivalry forged during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperial era. In so doing, I offer a first cut at the sociohistorical transformations and situated geopolitical logics underlying the emergence of the international as worldwide social space and competitive global whole during the era of the New Imperialism.

Building on the critique of the conventional international-theory traditions and international-security scholarship outlined in the previous chapter, I aim to reconceptualize the dynamics of, and relationship between, international transformation and power politics in sociohistorical terms. This reconceptualization is centered around an account of how the development and dislocation of social and intersocietal structures that characterizes modernity makes qualitative transformations in the structure and meanings of the international, the multiplicity of social formations, an immanent feature of modern political and cultural life. This account is grounded theoretically in an attempt to build an understanding of international transformation into a conception of the multiple, historical, and mutable character of modern social structures. This theorization is intended to: (1) mediate the opposition between both structuralist vs. voluntarist and objectivist vs. subjectivist approaches; (2) recognize logics of transformation and dislocation that characterize modern social structures as mutable historical; (3) draw attention to key processes by which the structural change may articulate historically as transformations in international consciousness and practice. On this basis, I situate the analysis of power politics within a historical-sociological approach that links the logics and dynamics of intersocietal conflict to specific interplay between structure and agency produced at particular moments of structural transformation.

My argument is that the profound sense of change and insecurity generated by the characteristically modern experience of structural dislocation is a central driver of the ways in which historical actors come to grasp the international as an arena of strategic projects, political desires, and, by extension, power politics. Given that no single theory or theoretical perspective can be expected to grasp such complex historical phenomena in their entirety, my discussion tracks between a range of social and international theories in order to resituate the analysis of power politics within a historical sociology of modern international change.

The argument proceeds in four steps. In the following section, I construct a conception of the possibility, dynamic, and international dimensions of modern socio-structural change by drawing on the conception of social structure developed by William Sewell and the idea of uneven and combined development theorized by Justin Rosenberg. While both these contributions to the analysis of modern social structures rest on an understanding of the *generative multiplicity* of societal and international systems, my interest is less the relative compatibility of two quite different social theories than the ways in which their articulation helps to define the process of international transformation as a distinctive theoretical concept. On this basis, the third section turns to the problem of periodizing and identifying modernity in international relations. By contrasting the balance-of-power logic of the Utrecht international order (c.1713-1815) to the era of the New Imperialism (c.1880-1914), I illustrate the theoretical significance of the principle of historical specificity and specify some patterns of structural transformation and dislocation which engendered late-nineteenth century conceptions of global power politics. The fourth section establishes some of the key power-political logics which marked the emergent global condition of late-nineteenth century modernity.

II. International Transformation as a Theoretical Concept

What is international transformation and how is it related to the study of power politics? Theorizing modern transformations of the international, I argue, should focus on changes in the structure of intersocietal — or more broadly “inter-social” — relations: how the structure of relationships between different yet interacting social formations — societies, polities, and cultures and other types of social site — generates emergent constellations of internationality.²⁷ These transformations involve changes in the pressures for, pathways of, and orientations toward, the pursuit of power and influence in the international sphere.²⁸ They are therefore deeply related to the classical IR problematic of interstate power politics. However, defined in this way, the study of power politics undergoes a conceptual shift. For it can be seen not as an isolated geopolitical phenomenon, but rather, in fully sociohistorical terms: as deeply connected to the frameworks of strategic and symbolic action through which historical actors — state-managers, military elites, political leaders, foreign policy strategists, and so on — navigate and visualize shifting conjunctures of inter-societal relations.

²⁷ My formulation here is modelled especially on the idea of intersocietal/inter-social conceptions of social change outlined in: Justin Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science,” *International Relations* 30, no. 2 (2016): 127–53; Justin Rosenberg, “Uneven and Combined Development: ‘The International’ in Theory and History,” in *Historical Sociology and World History: Uneven and Combined Development over the Longue Durée*, ed. Alexander Anievas and Kamran Matin (London: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2016), 17–30; George Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), here at 7 and 48-72; also, George Lawson, “Revolutions and the International,” *Theory and Society* 44, no. 4 (May 17, 2015): 299–319.

²⁸ This partly echoes the attempt by Nexon and others to conceptualize power politics in terms of its constituent social mobilization dynamics. However, by emphasizing the constitutively intersocietal and inter-social dimensions of power-political dynamics, as well as the importance of developing broader analyses of long-term structural change, my approach differs somewhat from the approach outlined in Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*; Stacie E. Goddard and Daniel Nexon, “The Dynamics of Global Power Politics: A Framework for Analysis,” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 4–18. I emphasize these differences further below.

MODERN LOGICS OF STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION

The verb “to transform” refers to changes in the form or character of a given entity, to a metamorphosis in its function or nature. It is this kind of fundamental process of change that IR scholars have in mind when considering transformations in the “texture” or “generative grammar” of international relations: the structures of relationship that “shape, condition, and constrain social behavior” at an international level.²⁹ Predominant IR theories, as the previous chapter showed, offer a variety of approaches to theorizing change in this fundamental sense.³⁰ What bears emphasis here is the centrality of the concept of social structure to the problematic of international transformation: a structural conception of social action is crucial for analysing international relations and international power dynamics across virtually all IR-theoretic paradigms and traditions. Although I agree that some notion of social structure is a crucial — or, in fact, inescapable — basis for analyzing processes of international transformation, a sociohistorical conception of structural change demands a radical departure from approaches which stress the timelessness of social structures (e.g. neorealism); focus one-sidedly on a single structural domain (e.g. world systems theory); or cast social relations in terms of misleading dichotomies between “material” and “ideational” forms (e.g. systemic constructivism). In contrast, I conceive processes of international transformation in terms of the intrinsic historicity, multiplicity, and agentive mediation of social structures. I conceptualize social structures as historically constituted action contexts and draw attention to the multiple, interactive and uneven character of structural forms as such. This approach integrates three basic theoretical principles which imply, in turn, three further categories of substantive analysis.

HISTORICISM. The subject matter of all social-scientific analysis is rooted in time and place. Modern social categories like “war,” “the state,” “the market,” “the economy,” and “the individual” refer not to natural or timeless forms, but emergent and evolving patterns of relationship forged in history.³¹ The premise of historicity carries the implication that neither social nor international power structures can be adequately understood outside their forms of emergence and development: the unfolding processes which mark their origins, trajectories, and crises. Moreover, an historicist approach entails a corresponding stress on the centrality of conjunctural change, contingency, discontinuity and overdetermination — terms which foreground the complexity of human history itself. By combining an emphasis on the developmental history of modern social forms with a concern for the conjunctural effects of emergent social structures, an historicist form of international power analysis seeks to formulate accounts that link the action contexts of political praxis to a wider understanding of the historical processes which produce and delimit the possibility of historically effective agency as such.

²⁹ John Gerard Ruggie, “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982): 280; John Gerard Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis,” *World Politics* 35, no. 2 (1983): 273, 280; cf. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 66, 88ff.

³⁰ For an overview see Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe*, 23–28.

³¹ For a seminal account of historicism in IR see, Robert W. Cox, ed., “Realism, Positivism, and Historicism (1985),” in *Approaches to World Order*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 49–59.

STRUCTURE. This conception of historicism demands attention to historically constituted horizons of human practice: the fact that human life is embedded within a particular historical arrangement, or structure, of socially reproduced distributions of resources, practices, symbols and relationships.³² A sociohistorical conception of structure, more particularly, draws attention to the emergent patterning and interactive multiplicity of resources of social power within and through which agents seek to realize their ends, projects, desires and so on.³³ This conception of structure rests on three basic axioms: the structured character of social action; the interactive multiplicity of social structures; and the inseparability of their subjective and objective dimensions.

Although the terms structure and agency seem to imply a sharp dichotomy of the “levels” or “spheres” of social life, they are merely a conceptual pairing that denotes the structured character of all social action: the fact that social life is lived within “fields of practices that are formed by patterns of events and experiences.”³⁴ Social action thus takes place within a multiplicity of distinct institutional spheres; *agency* is an integral — constitutive and inescapable — part of structure, rather than its antonym.³⁵ Terms denoting some notion of structural context, like “field,” “system” or “order,” are therefore best understood in terms of a multiplicity of social action contexts, rather than a hierarchy of structural levels or institutional spheres. The structures that shape and constrain action in the labour market, for example, are distinct from those that shape aesthetic, religious, or family arrangements, meaning that agents occupy a heterogeneity of social contexts, each with distinct configurations of symbols, resources, and relationships.³⁶

This condition of structural multiplicity means that structures can interact, overlap, and interpenetrate with transformative consequences.³⁷ While symbols and resources can be transplanted from one structural context to another, conflicts over the legitimate boundaries of institutional fields, such as the distinction between “public” and “private” areas of the economy, indicate that the division of social structures are open and contested. The structure of the modern nation state, for example, is inherently open to conflicts between its bureaucratic mode of governmental organization and its nationalist mode of symbolic legitimation. Like other kinds of complex sociohistorical form, “the nation” is a simultaneously objective and subjective

³² Justin Rosenberg, “Confessions of a Sociolator,” *Millennium* 44, no. 2 (January 1, 2016): 294; cf. Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations* (London: Verso, 1994), 46–50.

³³ Sewell, *Logics of History*, 132, 140–43.

³⁴ Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution*, 62.

³⁵ A point which both Sewell and Rosenberg emphasize.

³⁶ While my interest lies with more macro-historical phenomena than the kinds of analysis usually associated with “practice theory,” this conception of structure is compatible with the way Pierre Bourdieu describes his conception of social theory *qua* theory of practice: “The theory of practice as practice insists, contrary to positivist materialism, that objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and contrary to intellectualist idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented to practical functions.” Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 52.

³⁷ Sewell, *Logics of History*, 143.

structural form, co-constituted by the intersection between material formations of land and territory with deeply symbolic relations of political community, belonging, and charismatic authority. Even the functioning of a seemingly hard material structure like the capitalist economy is closely related to the symbolic power of cultural forms of individuality, labour discipline, and taste. In different ways, the social theories of Marx, Gramsci, Weber, and Bourdieu each highlight this feature of modern social structure: the interdependence of the subjective and objective dimensions of structured social action.

INTERNATIONALITY. Much as the social world comprises a multiplicity of structures — *i.e.* societies comprise many, rather than one, set of social power resources and institutional spheres³⁸ — the international comprises a multiplicity of interacting social formations or societies.³⁹ This condition of internationality is best visualized as a space of evolving historical unevenness: the co-presence of differently structured societies undergoing different kinds, degrees, and temporalities of development; the interactions between differentially configured social formations, some with greater capacities for military, economic, and symbolic power-projection than others; the intersection between historical forms and temporalities that Ernst Bloch called the dialectic of “nonsynchronism and its heterogeneous contradictions.”⁴⁰ An emphasis on the ontological multiplicity of modern social life — on the reality of “temporally coexisting instances, levels and forms of society” — entails a corresponding stress on socio-historical unevenness as a central feature of historical development.⁴¹ In the post-1800 era, more particularly, it entails a conception of the constitutive interactions among different forms of state, society, and culture under the rising pressures of intersocietal interdependence associated with modern forms of capitalist development, colonial expansion, and novel communications and transportation technologies. On this view, the development of specific modes of international power-projection and intersocietal conflict cannot be understood apart from the structural constitution of the international as a substantive social domain constituted by the *coexistence* of multiple societies, and not merely the *absence* of a state-like governmental authority.⁴²

This definition of internationality focuses attention on the generative historical processes arising from the co-existence, interaction, and combination of locales with their own developmental temporalities, historical backgrounds, cultural forms and institutions.⁴³ Moving beyond the image of the states-system as a composite of equivalent political units, it resituates the problematic of modern power politics within a broader analysis of world development, seen in its political fragmented, culturally varied, and socially differentiated complexity. Rather than taking a generic macro-structure, such as the “logic of anarchy” or “balance of power,” as its

³⁸ Sewell, 140; also, Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1–32.

³⁹ Justin Rosenberg, “Why Is There No International Historical Sociology?,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 308.

⁴⁰ Ernst Bloch, “Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics (1935),” trans. Mark Ritter, *New German Critique*, no. 11 (1977): 36.

⁴¹ Rosenberg, “Why Is There No International Historical Sociology?,” 314.

⁴² Pace Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93.

⁴³ Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science,” 13.

starting point, such an analytical perspective demands attention to the historical processes by which particular configurations of social multiplicity come to organize and represent the international as a lived historical arena. In this respect, it is necessary to ask how and why — *i.e.* as a result of which conjunction of social processes and historical dynamics — competition logics like “balance of power” or “*Machtpolitik*,” “imperialism,” “world power” or “hegemony,” emerge historically as a cognitive conceptualization of specific formations of internationality, rather than assuming that such terms refer to an already constituted geopolitical structure. A socio-historical conception of the international thus implies a processual understanding of ongoing transformations in the practices and construction of external power relations rather than the static replication of given geopolitical structures. At this general level of abstraction, the shift from universal international-security theories towards a sociohistorical approach implies both (i) a redefinition of the international as a general object domain and (ii) a turn away from the kinds of neo-positivism and structural-functionalism which informed much postwar IR theory.

UNEVEN AND COMBINED DEVELOPMENT. From this emphasis on interactive multiplicity and unevenness of modern social structures, it follows that processes of international transformation must partly concern the dynamics which arise from the interaction between differently structured social formations, cultures, states and so on. The concept of uneven and combined development captures this dynamic historical process. In particular, it encapsulates a distinctive feature of modernity alluded to in the discussion of the Spanish-American War above: how the emergence of a universalizing historical dynamic — the increasingly interdependent international order and capitalist world economy of the late-nineteenth century — generates differentially distributed pressures and opportunities for political, cultural and ideological action. Patterns of uneven and combined development produce historical conjunctures with varying structural constraints and pathways for international power-projection: the American, Spanish, and Cuban political actors discussed above were situated within an evolving conjuncture of deeply uneven intersocietal interactions, their pathways and capacities for collective political action overdetermined by a range of transnational processes and inter-social dynamics. These processes can help to generate new articulations and modalities of international power and coercion, such as the possibilities for economic expansion opened up by the division between “rich” and “poor” societies under capitalism, or the symbolic projection of the United States as a defender of righteous, civilized, modern values which emerged from the fateful synchronicity of Spanish imperial decline, Cuban national revolution, and American military-industrial expansion. In this light, the interactive multiplicity of social and international life represents a generative sociological condition manifested in a range of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth instances of combined development: the pursuit of capitalist industrialization within semi-feudal and predominantly agrarian regions of Eurasia (Czarist Russia, Prussia, Italy);⁴⁴ the colonial incorporation of “non-Western” states into a global political-economic hierarchy dominated by industrializing economies and the

⁴⁴ As theorized in Trotsky’s Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (1932; repr., London: Penguin, 2017).

corresponding de-industrialization of many Asian and African societies;⁴⁵ the proliferation of anxieties about national competitiveness, transnational competition, and competitive modernization that the marked *fin-de-siècle* discourses of economic nationalism, geopolitics, and Social Darwinism.⁴⁶

STRATEGIC MEDIATION. Structures were defined above as historical configurations of human practices, involving a distinctive patterning of social resources, practices, and symbols. This implies that even historical macro-structures that are associated with especially powerful impersonal constraints, such as the “capitalist economy” or the “international system,” can be understood as the realization, object, and medium of sociopolitical action.⁴⁷ The term strategic mediation provides an apt description of the structured yet constitutive, situated yet creative, notion of agency which such a conception of structure implies. More particularly, it draws attention to a range of ways that the international, the multiplicity of interacting societies, might be conditioned and transformed by the strategic political projects of situated historical actors. Structural change is possible because agents are not just passive bearers of pre-existing social structures, but creative actors whose actions have ramified and unintended consequences. Examining the actual thought and practice of living historical subjects is therefore a crucial component of structural analysis. In 1898, the decision to send the USS Maine to Havana was a fateful act with unforeseen consequences for the subsequent expansion of American power, which thereafter acquired the very overseas colonial empire whose acquisition it had traditionally abjured. Of course, this process had deep roots in the earlier experience of Westward expansion, another form of colonialization, and the processes of industrial expansion and national state-formation that proceeded after 1865. Yet at the same time, the dynamics which ensued from the war against Spain acquired their own historical effectivity. They encouraged, among other things, an increasingly globalist geopolitical outlook that reflected the United States’ somewhat haphazard entry into the dynamics of imperial rivalry in East Asia and the Pacific.

MODERNITY. The preceding emphasis on the dynamism, mutability, and multiplicity of social structures resonates with a sociohistorical conception of modernity as a structural condition and historical epoch. The idea that social and political life revolves around the contestation and organization of structural complexes with a universal scope is implicit in the notion of modern societies as *Gesellschaft* communities with multiple institutional fields. Over the course of the nineteenth century, in particular, the emergence of structural formations with a universalizing global reach, such as industrial capitalism, the world market, and the nation-state international order, can be understood as generating increasingly expansive and encompassing fields of social action. Indeed, the transition from agrarian land-based political economies to industrial-

⁴⁵ Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 26.

⁴⁶ For an analysis of economic nationalism in this context see, Sven Beckert, “American Danger: United States Empire, Eurafica, and the Territorialization of Industrial Capitalism, 1870–1950,” *The American Historical Review* 122, no. 4 (2017): 1137–70 and chapter 5 below.

⁴⁷ For a recent attempt to conceive capitalism as contested political-institutional arena rather than an invariant macrostructure see, Nancy Fraser, “Legitimation Crisis? On the Political Contradictions of Financialized Capitalism,” *Critical Historical Studies* 2, no. 2 (September 1, 2015): 157–89.

capitalist modes of production helped generate an increasingly interdependent economic system based on systematic incentives for technological transformation and productive efficiency. In contrast to earlier socioeconomic formations, the capitalist economy is primarily organized in terms of market-mediated, profit-seeking economic competition among private actors; it entails the development of an encompassing world market. This process of world market expansion contributes to and intensifies the dynamics of uneven and combined development — revealed in the differential competitive performance of firms, national economies, regions, and other centres of production; the articulation between “traditional” and “capitalist” socioeconomic forms within industrializing social formations; and the emergence of the “development gap” as a major concern of states, political parties, and other actors.

At the same time, the proliferation of secular notions of progress and rationality imbues modern cultural systems with expectations of order and development that contribute to a desire for structural change. During the nineteenth century, novel expectations of historical progress imbued a spectrum of political imaginaries, ranging from highly bellicose forms of nationalism and imperialism, to scientific ideologies of societal, cultural, and racial development. In particular, the dynamics of inter-imperial rivalry and expansion were frequently couched in a framework of “civilizational imperialism” that depended on the application of quasi-scientific status distinctions — such as the opposition between backward and superior races, or the widely-drawn dichotomy between savage, barbarian, and civilized cultures — to peoples and societies organized within an evolving global hierarchy. The proliferation of such forms of ideological modernity indicates a shift in the social and symbolic foundations of state-power — away from the systems of religious and aristocratic authority which sustained earlier state-forms, and toward a quasi-rational order of legitimate domination grounded in the prestige of secular ideals of historical progress.

SYMBOLIC ACTION AND SYMBOLIC RESTRUCTURING. All this implies that symbolic action and interpretation is an important part of socio-structural change. It would be misleading to conceptualize the restructuring and mediation of historical configurations and intersocietal dynamics in exclusively material terms. The actions of American political elites like Roosevelt and Dewey were overdetermined by a surplus of symbolic motivations that already formed a constituent part of the cultural structures which constituted them as normative national subjects. Likewise, the way that the spirit of national revolt emanating from the Cuban independence struggle impacted the crisis of 1898 is only intelligible if we allow for the fact that historical conjunctures are marked and made by the symbolic restructuring of prevailing cultural orders.

This last point is well captured in Pierre Bourdieu’s critique of objectivism.⁴⁸ In these terms, symbolic action figures not as an internal mental activity, but a deeply social process:

⁴⁸ Rogers Brubaker, “Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision of Pierre Bourdieu,” *Theory and Society* 14, no. 6 (November 1, 1985): 747–48.

The most resolutely objectivist theory has to integrate the agents' representation of the social world; more precisely, it must take account of the contribution that agents make towards constructing the view of the social world, and through this, towards constructing this world, by means of the *work of representation* (in all senses of the word) that they constantly perform in order to impose their view of the world or the view of their own position in this world — their social identity. Perception of the social world is the product of a double social structuration: on the “objective” side, it is socially structured because the properties attached to agents or institutions do not offer themselves independently to perception... on the “subjective” side, it is structured because the schemes of perception and appreciation available for use at the moment in question, especially those that are deposited in language, are the product of previous symbolic struggles and express the state of the symbolic power relations, in a more or less transformed form.⁴⁹

This framework of epistemological and methodological suppositions suggests an initial way to cut into the problem of theorizing international transformation. An emphasis on the historical constitution, multiplicity and unevenness of social structures provides a way to think about the international as a lived dimension of political and symbolic action. Not only does this perspective capture the co-constitutive nature of the relationship between structures and agents. More fundamentally, it draws attention to the variety of ways in which the dislocation of social structures articulate historically as transformations in international consciousness and practice. The multiplicity of societies and social structures suggests that even seemingly hard, objective structural configurations like “the economy” and the “states-system” are far more open to meaningful historical transformation than conventional IR theories imply. The profound unevenness of societies, cultures, other socio-structural forms across time and space indicates the variety of “conjunctions of structures” and agentive constructions of social life that historical change entails.⁵⁰ Structural dislocations and generative restructurings of the international are an immanent feature of the social world because of the multiplicity, unevenness, and agentive and symbolic mediation of modern social structures.

More concretely, the sociohistorical conception of international change I am outlining here serves to foreground the changing horizons of international consciousness and practice made possible at moments of historical structural dislocation, such as the Spanish-American War. In this episode, there was an intersocietal combination of forms and types of historical development marked by profound historical unevenness. The manner of the appropriation and experience of this unevenness was figured partly in the terms of prevailing socio-symbolic orders, and partly through the supercharged atmosphere of crisis generated by a rapid sequence of eventful ruptures. American political and military elites were able to seize upon this moment as a sign and opening of future global expansion because the Spanish-American War and Cuban War of Independence were bound up with the dislocation of a range of historically significant structures — from macro-level political structures like colonialism, European absolutism, and the idea of Spanish America, to more local ruptures such as the perceived threat to US investments in the Cuban economy and the unprecedented image of national

⁴⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups,” *Theory and Society* 14, no. 6 (1985): 727.

⁵⁰ Sewell, *Logics of History*, 224.

tragedy generated by the sinking of the USS Maine. Subsequent framings of American grand strategy as a struggle for world power and the defence of Western civilization integrated such experiences into a compelling language of geopolitical priorities and decision-making. This is not to overstate the importance of a single historical event. For an event of structural dislocation *like* the Spanish-American War was an immanent possibility of the rising dynamics of intersocietal conflict and interdependence which accompanied such features of late-nineteenth century modernity as the growing ties between nationhood and statehood and the rapid industrialization of production relations. Rather, what requires emphasis here are the ways in which a sociohistorical conception of structural change and social dislocation provides a distinctive way to think about modern transformations in the consciousness and organization of internationality.

III. The Historical Constitution of Power Politics: From the Balance of Power to the *Machtstaat*

In the conventional language of international theory, the expression “the historical constitution of power politics” is a paradox. The term is commonly used to signify a domain of international relations that is somehow permanent and essential — one that is widely identified with the universal conflict dynamics of anarchical geopolitical systems as such. As discussed, in a strange reworking of the historical record, the meaning of power politics has been constructed more with reference to the regional conditions of early modern Europe than with reference to the specific spatial and temporal referents of nineteenth-century *Machtpolitik* — a term which, in its own time, belonged to a wider panorama of discourses about the globalizing dynamic of contemporary international change, imperial rivalry, and industrial competition.⁵¹ This conflation of modern power politics with the geopolitical pluriverse of Westphalia is not only a Eurocentric theoretical maneuver. It also orients historical and conceptual analysis of modern geopolitical systems to the institution of the balance of power constructed in the late-feudal age of European absolutism.⁵²

Correlatively, a more systematic understanding of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century era of international transformation and imperial rivalries can bolster an alternative framework of analysis; one more adequately attuned to the emergent global condition within and against which modern conceptions of interstate power politics were forged historically. My strategy for building this historical and analytic framework is to begin by distinguishing *fin-de-siècle* conceptions of *Machtpolitik* and *world power* from the early modern notions of *balance* and *equilibrium* which preceded them. This necessarily cursory comparison yields a sense of the repressed historicity of modern geopolitical categories, paving the way for a theoretical perspective more closely aligned to the originating era of global power politics. More than this,

⁵¹ See Chapter 1, section II, above.

⁵² For a fundamental critique of the putative modernity of the Westphalian order see Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso, 2003); also, Andreas Osiander, “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth,” *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001): 251–87.

it illustrates and concretizes a general feature of the relationship between power politics and historical change: how the dislocation of structures can produce new pathways and pressures for socio-political and symbolic action, which reflect the deep sense of insecurity engendered in historical actors by transformative structural change.⁵³ In this conception, the progressively global scale and distinctive national-imperial imaginary figured by such geopolitical discourses as *Machtpolitik* and world power are best understood as efforts to strategically mediate and symbolically restructure a rapidly transforming international order in ways that spoke to the perceived needs of the imperial elites who articulated them.

Against the dislocations of ordinary life rendered by the *fin-de-siècle* dynamic of rapid spatial, temporal, and socioeconomic restructuring, the pursuit of imperial expansion appeared as an appealing strategic and symbolic mediation between the universalizing dynamic of global social change and the local experience of social and cultural unevenness. Against the perceived dangers of industrial competition, mass politics, and cultural difference, geopolitical discourses like *Machtpolitik* and world power presented the national-imperial state as an organic locus of authority and prestige, through which to manage the pressures of an increasingly compressed world economy and interstate system. It was against this background that Max Weber came to coin the idea the state as an expansionist national-imperial *Machtstaat*.

The first step in elaborating this argument is to establish some sense of the New Imperialism as a distinctive historical period. To establish both the contextual specificity and underlying mechanisms of the modern power-political forms, it is necessary to locate them in an intelligible historical trajectory — “we cannot not periodize.”⁵⁴ As Justin Rosenberg has written, “IR as a discipline *begins*, it may be suggested, when we move beyond the ahistorical generalizations of realism, and start to map out something like a periodization of the successive institutional forms, agents and scope of ‘international power’ which have accompanied the precursors of today’s global nation-state system.”⁵⁵

PROBLEMS OF PERIODIZATION

The Treaty of Utrecht marked the conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). This was a conflict triggered by the death of the heirless King Charles II in 1700, and driven by the ensuing struggle between the Austrian Habsburg and French Bourbon dynasties over the inheritance of the Spanish monarchy.⁵⁶ It may seem incongruous that the putatively modern institution of the balance of power should have been prompted by the biological coincidence of a disabled monarch — a king likely rendered infertile by generations of dynastic inbreeding — yet the war which followed the death of Charles II belonged to an enduring pattern of succession wars, which continued in the century after the Peace of Westphalia. Typically resulting from the death of a sonless monarch, disputes over dynastic rights and the

⁵³ Here, I am echoing Sewell, *Logics of History*, 250–51.

⁵⁴ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London: Verso, 2002), 29.

⁵⁵ Rosenberg, *Empire of Civil Society*, 42–43.

⁵⁶ Andreas Osiander, *The States System of Europe, 1640-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 90.

line of succession were a main cause of the interstate dynamics of early modern Europe, leading to such military conflicts as the Nine Years' War (1688-1697), the Jacobite Risings (1688–1746), the War of the Polish Succession (1773-38), the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), and the War of the Bavarian Succession (1778-89).⁵⁷ In the case of the War of the Spanish Succession, in particular, the potential union of the vast Spanish Empire with either the French House of Bourbon or the possessions of the German Habsburgs revived the fears of “universal monarchy” which structured the conflicts of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). The French monarch, Louis XIV, was widely held to be seeking a universal dominion comparable to that associated with the medieval Holy Roman Empire.⁵⁸ It was this concern, in part, which triggered a preemptive war against France, launched by the Grand Alliance of the Holy Roman Empire, Great Britain, Habsburg Spain and the Dutch Republic in 1701. Much as a dispute over the royal line of succession had been the precipitating cause of the war, the diplomatic arrangements that brought it to an end were bound up with questions of dynastic rights, primarily the recognition of Philip V as King of Spain and his formal renouncement of claims to the throne of France, as well as the confirmation of the Protestant Succession in Britain and Ireland, which cemented the Stuart claim to the throne against French interference.⁵⁹

This was the background against which the notion of an equilibrium or balance of powers came to be inscribed within the Treaty of Utrecht. Against the perceived universalizing ambitions of the House of Bourbon, the peace settlement reasserted the principle of the “liberty of Europe” celebrated by such eighteenth-century figures as Montesquieu, Gibbon and Vattel.⁶⁰ In the words of the new King of Spain, in the first peace treaty concluded between France and Britain:

One of the main principles of the peace treaties to be concluded between the Spanish and French Crowns on the one hand, and that of England on the other, in order to cement [peace] and make it strong and permanent, and to attain general peace, [is] to ensure forever the universal good and rest for Europe, and to establish an equilibrium between the powers (*équilibre des puissances*) so that it could never happen that several being joined into only one, the balance of equality (*balance de l'égalité*) that is to be established swings over to the benefit of one of these powers, to the risk and detriment of the others.⁶¹

Deploying the language of the “*Respublica Christiana*”, the Treaty of Utrecht cast the balance of power as a term of opposition to the universalizing ambition of an absolutist monarchy, principally that associated with the state of France. It figured the European order as a composite of monarchical powers associated in a pattern of religious and juridical norms dating back to

⁵⁷ Benno Teschke, “Theorizing the Westphalian System of States: International Relations from Absolutism to Capitalism,” *European Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 1 (January 3, 2002): 18–19. The analysis here echoes Teschke’s understanding of “inter-dynastic family relations” as key structuring driver of feudal geopolitics. See especially, Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 11, 81ff.

⁵⁸ Osiander, *The States System*, 90–91.

⁵⁹ Stella Ghervas, “Balance of Power vs. Perpetual Peace: Paradigms of European Order from Utrecht to Vienna, 1713–1815,” *The International History Review* 39, no. 3 (2017): 6.

⁶⁰ Perry Anderson, *The New Old World* (London: Verso, 2011), 477–79, 494–95.

⁶¹ Cited in Ghervas, “Balance of Power vs. Perpetual Peace,” 6.

the Medieval period.⁶² It was an attempt, in this way, “to settle and establish the peace and tranquility of Christendom by an equal balance of power,” enshrining in treaty law “the fundamental and perpetual maxim of the balance of power in Europe, which persuades and justifies the avoiding, in all cases imaginable, the union of the monarchy of France with that of Spain”⁶³ Even as it engendered an increasingly systematic understanding of the European states-system,⁶⁴ then, the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht were rooted in a pre-existing dynamic of inter-dynastic power struggles that differed quite fundamentally from the social and cultural framework of late-nineteenth century world politics. In at least two fundamental respects, in fact, the meanings of Utrecht balance of power were incommensurable with the political and social dynamics which would define the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperial era.

The first point to note is the extent to which the idea of a balance or equilibrium of power was conceived, by the architects of the Utrecht treaty, as a solution to the problem of universal monarchy inherited from the middle ages. It was in this sense a discourse and institution conceived in a world still anterior to the consolidation of national sovereignty as a regulative principle of interstate relations; it was an attempt to organize dynastic rights and confessional allegiances between states that were still fundamentally identical with the patrimony of a monarchical ruler, not national states whose institutional existence is grounded in an abstract conception of impersonal sovereignty and territorial space.⁶⁵ *Monarchia*, meaning government by one, implied a universal right of rulership the relative boundaries and legitimacy of which were central questions of early modern jurisprudence. In order to counter this expansionary monarchical imperialism, ideas of Just War and the balance of power provided a juridical framework for organizing the relations between dynastic states on a more secure basis.⁶⁶ While they helped to instantiate a conception of Europe as a multiplicity of states, rather than the terrain of a universalizing monarchical dominion,⁶⁷ they presupposed a world of competing dynastic houses rather than the nation-state international order which came into being during the nineteenth century.

Although the pressing struggle for foreign territorial possessions which accompanied this latter era of “high nationalism” bears a superficial similarity to the late-feudal dynamic of monarchical imperialism, the post-1875 era of colonial expansion was centred around nineteenth-century forms of mass politics and industrial competition, authoritarian nationalism

⁶² See the analysis of the Utrecht treaty in F. H Hinsley, *Powers and the Pursuit of Peace. Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States*. (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 170–72.

⁶³ From Article II of the “Peace and Friendship Treaty of Utrecht between Spain and Great Britain” (July 1713), Wikisource https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Peace_and_Friendship_Treaty_of_Utrecht_between_Spain_and_Great_Britain.

⁶⁴ For this argument see, Mathias Albert, *A Theory of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 108ff; Morten Skumsrud Andersen, “A Genealogy of the Balance of Power” (Unpublished PHD Thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, LSE, 2016), 98, <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/3326/>.

⁶⁵ Rosenberg, *Empire of Civil Society*, 42; cf. Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 394.

⁶⁶ See Franz Bosbach, “The European Debate on Universal Monarchy,” in *Theories of Empire, 1450-1800*, ed. David Armitage (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 83, 85.

⁶⁷ Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (New York, NYW: Routledge, 1996), 108.

and racial ideology, which did not exist prior to the nineteenth century.⁶⁸ This was a struggle to constitute a greater national space centred around a homogenous ethno-cultural core rather than expand the territorial claims of a dynastic house.⁶⁹ Indeed, it developed in tandem with the rationalization — depersonalization, bureaucratization, and centralization — of the state apparatus, providing a sharp contrast to the spread of venal officialdom which marked the expansion of dynastic empires in the Bourbon and Habsburg absolutist polities.⁷⁰ As Teschke has shown, this dynamic — the emergence of Weberian-style states with autonomous systems of national taxation and continuous bureaucracies — needs to be understood in relation to the gradual conversion of feudal social orders into capitalist societies capable of separating private economic accumulation from public political organization.⁷¹ In continental Europe, the balance of power established by the Utrecht treaty was therefore less a symptom of international modernity, than a sign of the ongoing prevalence of dynastic and absolutist sociopolitical structures. As demonstrated by the Polish Partitions of 1772-1795, it held in place the system of territorial aggrandizement and state-elimination that was the hallmark of dynastic imperialism.⁷² Any conflation of late-nineteenth century world politics with a generic balance-of-power system is a historical misnomer.⁷³

The second periodizing distinction concerns the character of the balance-of-power principle which developed in early modern Britain. Of particular significance for the issues raised in this thesis are the combination of mercantile imperialism and naval expansion characteristic of the eighteenth-century British state, the most extensive of modern empires and the first industrializing power of the capitalist epoch. The so-called “blue-water policy” of 1688-1815 British Empire revolved around a balance-of-power principle that combined informal overseas imperialism with opposition to universal monarchy on the continent. While exercising control over vast swathes of the world, early-modern British expansionism operated primarily through a two-fold strategy of indirect imperial rule and continental power-balancing. Although it rested on an exceptionally efficient and commercialized domestic political economy, this foreign policy strategy, operative between the treaties of Utrecht and Vienna (1713-1815), figured a relatively loose configuration of networks of trade, territory, and administrative control — a

⁶⁸ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “The Varieties of the Nation State in Modern History: Liberal, Imperialist, Fascist, and Contemporary Notions of Nation and Nationality,” in *The Rise and Decline of the Nation-State*, ed. Michael Mann (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 217; cf. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 107–8.

⁶⁹ For the new forms of nationalist ideology and corporate capitalism that distinguished the era of the “high imperialism” from earlier aristocratic and mercantile expansionism compare Bayly, “The First Age of Global Imperialism, c. 1760–1830,” 39–43 to Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*, 232, 455–56.

⁷⁰ On the relation between nationalism, imperialism, and state-rationalization see Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 397; Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 130–37.

⁷¹ Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 252–61; also, Benno Teschke, “Revisiting the ‘War-Makes-States’ Thesis: War, Taxation and Social Property Relations in Early Modern Europe,” in *War, the State and International Law in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, ed. Peter Schröder and Olaf Asbach (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 35–62; Benno Teschke, “After the Tilly Thesis,” in *Does War Make States?: Investigations of Charles Tilly’s Historical Sociology*, ed. Jeppe Strandsbjerg and Lars Bo Kaspersen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 25–51.

⁷² Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 234–38.

⁷³ This cuts against Albert’s argument about the contribution of the balance of power to the invention of world politics. Albert, *A Theory of World Politics*, 11, 77, 86–88.

pattern of strategic arrangements built on the maritime supremacy of the Royal Navy.⁷⁴ In this respect, the balance-of-power principle forged post-1688 differed markedly from the rising consciousness of a global geopolitical system that characterized the development of the late-Victorian Empire.

THE SPECIFICITY OF MACHTPOLITIK

The importance of this periodization can be made clear by returning to the dynamics of structural change and dislocation with which this chapter began: the coming of the New Imperialism. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, states such as Germany, Italy, and Russia followed the example of the United States in adopting roughly coeval strategies of top-down industrialization and territorial expansion. Mirroring the westward expansion of the American polity, the boundaries of these states expanded outwards to acquire new colonial possessions, typically conceived as “greater spaces” of regional domination anchored in the prevailing national.⁷⁵ From the 1870s on, the national-imperialist orientation of these states developed in tandem with their commitments to state-led programmes of industrialization, nation-building, and military expansion. These power struggles sought to carve out spaces of autonomy within an increasingly compressed political-economic order. In Japan, likewise, the years between the Meiji Restoration and WWI were marked by an intensification of efforts at nation-building and military mobilization, after the “Samurai Revolution” laid the foundations for an industrial “powerhouse” in East Asia.⁷⁶ Striving for independence from the widely-felt incursions of Western imperialism, Japanese elites supported the annexations of Taiwan (1895) and Korea (1910) as part of an ongoing effort to dominate East Asia. Much like the empires of the Europe and America, such colonies formed a regionally bounded “Greater Japan” in which Korea and Taiwan supplied raw materials in exchange for the products of Japanese industry.⁷⁷ These near-simultaneous projects of nation-building colonialism, across the Americas, Europe, and East Asia, were frequently animated by the anxieties about the “closing of the frontier” which drove US visions of expansionism. Throughout the period, this fixation on the national mastery of space, both in terms of direct territorial possession and long-range economic control, was enshrined in such formally similar geopolitical-imperial doctrines as German *Lebensraum* and *Weltpolitik*; French-imperial visions of a Euro-African “civilizing mission;” and Japan’s pressing search for pan-Asian integration, followed later by the so-called East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere. In both Britain and the United States, ideologies of the “White Man’s Burden” and “Manifest Destiny” expressed similar fixations on the state’s capacity to render an expansive political and economic order within an encompassing global order.

⁷⁴ Alejandro Colás, “Open Doors and Closed Frontiers: The Limits of American Empire,” *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 627.

⁷⁵ Manu Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 4 (2002): 788.

⁷⁶ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 93; Frederick R. Dickinson, “Toward a Global Perspective of the Great War: Japan and the Foundations of a Twentieth-Century World,” *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 4 (2014): 1164.

⁷⁷ Edward Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers: How Economies Have Developed Through Natural Resource Exploitation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 424.

This pattern of concerns came together in Weber's discussion of the *Machtstaat*. Here great power rivalries were reimagined as world-wide confrontations between territorially-anchored national communities organized into physically outsized political-economic units. This state-form was both a national-territorial totality and a community of national culture, presided over by an elite class of political officialdom. In this conception, the pursuit of *Machtpolitik* was not confined to a material struggle for power or survival, but rather entailed a contest to "define the future character of culture" in the coming order of human civilization; a struggle for the dignity of great power prestige driven by a combination of the political desire for international standing and the economic needs of domestic social interests.⁷⁸ The power-political dynamics thus envisaged by Weber were not limited to rational calculations about coercive foreign-policy strategies, *contra* subsequent constructions of political realism,⁷⁹ but opened out onto a wider engagement with the conditions of late-nineteenth century modernity — the structured dynamic between global capitalism and national statehood, class conflict and inter-imperial warfare.⁸⁰ Always sensitive to the pathological and cultural dimensions of ostensibly strategic practices, the model of the nation-state Weber formulated in this context is virtually unrecognizable in a positivist register:

The political community is one of those communities whose action includes, at least under normal circumstances, coercion through jeopardy of life and freedom of movement. The individual is expected ultimately to face death in the group interest. This gives to the political community its particular pathos and raises its enduring emotional foundations. The community of political destiny, i.e. above all of common political struggle of life and death, has given rise to groups with joint memories which have often had a deeper impact than the ties of merely cultural, linguistic, or ethnic community. It is this 'community of memories' which constitutes the ultimately decisive element of national consciousness.⁸¹

This searching examination of the new conditions of great power politics situated the instrumental rationality of modern government into a new ideological and strategic context; the state was becoming a "mass phenomenon" embodying the collective responsibility of sacrifice in wartime.⁸² This meant a qualitative shift in the orientations of state-power, from *Rechtstaat* to *Machtstaat*, which mirrored the wider transition from Classical Liberalism to the

⁷⁸ Max Weber, "Between Two Laws," in *Political Writings*, by Max Weber, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (1916; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 76.

⁷⁹ For a critique of realist engagements with Weber that emphasizes the cultural breadth of his thought, in sharp contrast to post-war American realism, see Tarak Barkawi, "Strategy as a Vocation: Weber, Morgenthau and Modern Strategic Studies," *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 02 (1998): 159–184.

⁸⁰ See the discussion of the relation between warfare, capitalist economic conflicts, imperialism and national prestige in Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, vol. 1–2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 913–21, 925–26.

⁸¹ Weber, 1–2:903.

⁸² For the general argument about the transformation of the state into a mass source of pathos and community in Weber's state theory, see Lawrence Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 169; also, Lawrence A. Scaff, "Weber before Weberian Sociology," *The British Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 2 (1984): 194.

New Imperialism evidenced by the expansionist national chauvinism of elite cultures in both Europe and the United States.⁸³

This historical clustering of such projects of national imperialism at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century indicates the extent to which the global-scope international system and world economy of the *fin-de-siècle* altered the basic strategic and ideological coordinates of interstate power politics. In a world where space and time were being absorbed by the universal institutions of money and commodity exchange, development of all kinds — economic, military, cultural, and political — became increasingly combined across the international system, as societies were inserted within a more systematic framework of interdependence.⁸⁴ In those polities which dominated this transition, the desire to impose order on this integrated global space was central to demands for colonial expansionism which the new discourses of world power and *Machtpolitik* elaborated, often on the basis of differentially-applied standards of civilization.⁸⁵ Moreover, the experience of increasing proximity fostered heightened anxieties about national economic and military competitiveness. This sense of exposure to the pressures of global competition often revolved around anxieties about access to foreign markets, or the concerns about overproduction which emanated from the United States after 1873. This precipitated reformist efforts to rationalize state institutions, expand war-making capacities, and develop stronger systems of national political economy. As in Weber's discussion of the *Machtstaat*, earlier traditions of laissez-faire and cosmopolitanism were being superseded by militaristic, expansionist, and authoritarian political cultures centred on elite rule within mass-based industrial societies. While the origins of these transitions were diverse across regional and local contexts, the perception of an all-encompassing competitive environment provided the common frame within and against which ideologies of *Machtpolitik* and world power, high nationalism and colonialism, were articulated historically. Quite unlike the early modern balance-of-power-principle, such ideological discourses figured a deeply interdependent global geopolitical-economic hierarchy dominated by national imperial states.

IV. Logics of the Global Condition

⁸³ On the wider culture of fin de siècle geopolitics see, Andrew Heffernan, "Fin de Siècle, Fin Du Monde? On the Origins of European Geopolitics, 1890–1920," in *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought*, ed. Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson (London: Routledge, 2000), 27–51; on the racial visions of the "non-West" which often shaped such ideas see, Christian Geulen, "The Common Grounds of Conflict: Racial Visions of World Order 1880–1940," in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s*, ed. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 69–96; on the similarities between German and American conceptions of global power politics see, Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age*.

⁸⁴ Barry Buzan and George Lawson, "The Impact of the 'Global Transformation' on Uneven and Combined Development," in *Historical Sociology and World History: Uneven and Combined Development over the Longue Durée* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd, 2016), 171–84.

⁸⁵ On the centrality of such ideals, especially racist framings of Occidentalism, to nineteenth century imperialism, see especially John M. Hobson and J. C. Sharman, "The Enduring Place of Hierarchy in World Politics: Tracing the Social Logics of Hierarchy and Political Change," *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2005): 87–89.

The argument so far can be summarized by saying that a sociohistorical conception of the discontinuity, multiplicity, and transformational dynamics of modern social structures serves to situate the analysis of interstate politics in a very different theoretical context to that offered by conventional international-security scholarship and IR theory. An emphasis on the structural dynamics and historical specificity of modern international change embeds global power politics in the emergent intersocietal conflicts, strategic political pathways, and socio-symbolic resources which marked and made the evolution of the post-1800 international order. To bring the various components of this argument together, it is necessary to more fully specify the key processes which structured late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century international relations in competitive globalizing terms. Towards this end, this section of the chapter provides a synoptic overview of some of the major structural dislocations and constitutive social processes which conditioned the international order as a worldwide geopolitical space during the nineteenth century. In historical terms, the transfer of interstate power politics to a worldwide plane in the 1870-1914 age of empire was enabled by the materialization, articulation, and intensification of several forms of modern international transformation: *inter alia*, (1) the constitution of an increasingly uneven, global-scope hierarchy of political-economic and intersocietal interactions; (2) the strategic and ideological formation of national-imperial states as the agents of competitive modernization projects; and (3) the symbolic restructuring of political communities and cultural systems in conjunction with the wider political efforts to master the emergent spaces of a universalizing world market and interstate field. The structured multiplicity, historical unevenness, and simultaneously strategic/symbolic character of this process bears out the conception of modern social structures outlined above. I summarize key aspects of these processes below in order to specify the terms and focus of the remaining chapters.

DYNAMICS OF GLOBAL CONTENTION

GLOBAL FORMS AND STRUCTURAL DISLOCATIONS. The era of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century global restructuring was characterised by a “double movement” toward the expansion of an empire-centred global capitalism, on one side, and the consolidation of a national-imperial great power hierarchy, on the other; the emergence of a supra-territorial world market developed concurrently with the competitive and relational inter-state dynamics of the geopolitical field and its military-strategic rivalries.⁸⁶ Between 1870 and 1913, a world economic boom occurred in tandem with the spread of industrialization beyond its British heartlands, generating an international economy defined by increasingly higher levels of intercontinental trade and commodity market integration.⁸⁷ In 1850, Britain was perhaps the sole industrial state, making the scope for international capital flows and world trade relatively modest; yet by 1913, the economic output of the United States, Japan, Russia, and Western

⁸⁶ Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 40ff; Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael, “Agriculture and the States-System: The Rise and Decline of National Agricultures, 1870 to the Present,” *Sociologia Ruralis* 29, no. 2 (August 1, 1989): 98.

⁸⁷ Ronald Findlay and Kevin H O’Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 411.

Europe accounted for two-thirds of world GDP.⁸⁸ Between 1800 and 1830, the total value of international trade increased by just 30 percent, rising from £300 million to around £400 million; but from 1840 to 1870 its value increased fivefold, reaching some £2,000 million.⁸⁹ Between 1500 and 1800, intercontinental trade grew by around 1 percent per year and accounted for just 1 percent of global GDP in 1820; yet by 1913, merchandise exports accounted for 7.9 percent of world output, while the share of exports counted in the average GDP of industrial economies rose from 5.9 to 8.2 percent between 1870 and 1914.⁹⁰ In the same period, an unprecedented overseas investment boom saw overseas lending jump from 7 to 20 percent of world GDP. Much of this growth was accounted for by newly formed colonial economic relationships: colonial systems: 60 percent of British and 66 per cent of European foreign investment went to areas of recent European settlement or the New World.⁹¹

Quantitative evidence therefore illustrates the extent to which *global* capitalism is a late-nineteenth century phenomenon. It is crucial to recognize that this transformation was marked by a massive restructuring of global economic power relations: 1800-1900, India's share of world output dropped from 20 percent to 2 percent, China's from 33 to 6 percent, and the modern-day "Third World" from 75 to 7 percent.⁹² This macro-economic shift was marked by profound local dislocations, typically structured by the expansion of colonialism: between 1827 and 1830, for example, Indian textiles accounted for 29 percent of the cotton products sold by British traders in West Africa; yet by 1840, that figure was 4 percent as the distribution of industrial power swung firmly in favour of the Lancashire cotton industry.⁹³

During the nineteenth century, the constitution of a global-scope hierarchy of political-economic power relationships was constitutive of and enabled by a radical expansion in the infrastructural and military capacities of the central state. On the one hand, the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were marked by a proliferation of attempts at national-state and national-economy formation which sought the increasing integration of polities into bounded territorial units and political-economic wholes.⁹⁴ All states now acquired a progressively more nationalistic and neo-mercantilist developmental cast, epitomized by the expansion of civil bureaucracies, state-infrastructure building projects, and military spending. In the period 1870-1910, total state expenditures increased by 67 percent in France, by 176 percent in Prussia-Germany, by 180 percent in Britain, and, between 1902 and 1913, by 428 percent in the United States.⁹⁵ Within this general upsurge of government spending, military expenditures

⁸⁸ Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers*, 373.

⁸⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day*, Revised Edition (1968; repr., Penguin Books, 1999), 117.

⁹⁰ Findlay and O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty*, 403-4; Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 29.

⁹¹ Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers*, 386.

⁹² Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 27.

⁹³ Findlay and O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty*, 412.

⁹⁴ For this argument, see especially Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (June 2000): 807-31; Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form."

⁹⁵ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 2, The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 363, Table 11.1.

increase dramatically: between 1870 and 1910, defence spending went from 40 percent to 52 percent of all government budgets in Prussia-Germany, from 25 percent to 37 percent in France, from 32 to 40 percent in Great Britain, and from 35 to 68 percent in the United States.⁹⁶

On the other hand, however, the strategic and ideological horizons of the emergent national-imperial state far exceeded the regional concerns which had animated early conceptions of the balance of power. The decades after 1870 were an era of world powers in a dual sense: they entailed the simultaneous unfolding of transcontinental empires and national-colonial state forms through the international system; they saw the proliferation of attempts to express the power of the state on the same global scale as the evolving world economy. These struggles involved efforts to establish long-range economic control over formally independent territories, as for instance in multiple imperial incursions into China following the Opium Wars (1839-1860) in conjunction the pursuit of such nation-building colonial projects as the British Raj (1858-1947), US colonization of the Philippines (1898-1941), French North Africa (1830-1954), German colonialism in Qingdao, Samoa and Southwest Africa (1884/1897/1900-1914), and the Japanese annexations of Taiwan and Korea (1895/1910-1945). More particularly, the last decades of the nineteenth involved a series of connected efforts to constitute national-imperial state as the locus of authority and prestige within an increasingly compressed world-political and economic order. In the United States and Germany this saw the birth of a discourse of world politics/*Weltpolitik* and world power/*Weltmacht* that modelled itself on the image of the global British Empire.⁹⁷ In the British Empire, similarly, the increasingly nationalist and territorialist character of late-Victorian imperialism emerged in tandem with the flourishing of global political consciousness articulated in the “Greater Britain” debates.⁹⁸

What is striking here is the fact that such projects of national-imperial expansion emerged not as isolated projects of domestic reform, but as part of a remarkable clustering of efforts to master a shared world-political and economic space. The structural similarity, historical synchronicity, and overlapping trajectories of such projects were deeply conditioned by the existence of a universal system of global political economy within and against which all projects of national-imperial state-formation came to be tested *en route* to modernity.⁹⁹ The emergence of an inherently universalizing model of industrial-capitalist modernization — a profoundly modular and transposable structure of socioeconomic and state-society relations — made possible new pathways and pressures for competitive expansionism whose formal similarities were structurally related to the increasingly capitalist basis of social development.¹⁰⁰ The complex of material resources (industrialization, economic surplus, technological advancement) and socio-symbolic form (national economy, developmentalism, world space) which modern capitalism helped to generate were indissoluble features of a globalizing interstate power politics.

⁹⁶ Mann, 374, Table 11.4.

⁹⁷ Albert, *A Theory of World Politics*, 129; cf. Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age*.

⁹⁸ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and The Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁹⁹ This follows Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form,” 788.

¹⁰⁰ The transposability of capitalist social structures is emphasized by Sewell, *Logics of History*, 149–50.

While this geostrategic dynamic was never subjected to direct theorization by him, Marx conceived this process of globalizing social change as perhaps *the* signal feature of capitalist modernity. Much as Weber saw the modern state as an increasingly abstracted model of legal-rational authority relations, Marx's social theory foregrounds the growing universality of such modern institutions as the individual, the market, and civil society.¹⁰¹ Central to this universalizing social dynamic is the possibility of an encompassing economic system, enveloping all human societies within the same competitive dynamic. With its pressing search for markets and raw materials, "capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier," generating the social and technical preconditions for what Marx, anticipating later discussions of globalization, memorably called "the annihilation of space by time."¹⁰² The emergence of capitalist society is, in this respect, the emergence of a new spatio-temporal condition, epitomized by the development of "free competition" as the "regulating principle of production" and the corresponding elimination of earlier political or juridical barriers to socioeconomic intercourse.¹⁰³ For, "if the progress of capitalist production and the consequent development of the means of transport and communication shortens the circulation time for a given quantity of commodities, the same progress and the opportunity provided by the development of the means of transport and communication conversely introduces the necessity of working for ever more distant markets, in a word, for the world market."¹⁰⁴ This conception explicitly historicizes the world market as a modern social product:

Thus, while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e. to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time, i.e. to reduce to a minimum the time spent in motion from one place to another. The more developed the capital, therefore, the more extensive the market over which it circulates, which forms the spatial orbit of its circulation, the more does it strive simultaneously for an even greater extension of the market and for greater annihilation of space by time...There appears here the universalizing tendency of capital, which distinguishes it from all previous stages of production.¹⁰⁵

A critical understanding of capitalism as a historically constituted form of universal space-time and impersonal social dependency helps clarify the novel processes of cultural, and socioeconomic restructuring associated with late-nineteenth century modernity. Indeed, Marx's theorization of the world market as an encompassing universal space-time provides a

¹⁰¹ According to Derek Sayer, Marx and Weber capture a similar dimension of modernity *qua* the increasing abstraction and universality of social life: "An elective affinity, then, for the modern age: between those qualities we most prize in scientific discourse—objectivity, universality, logic, consistency, simplicity, systematicity, quantifiability, precision, unambiguity and a certain aesthetic elegance—and the principles upon which Weber's (and Marx's) machines of modernity operate. In neither is there room for the concrete, the particular, and the personal. These are banished to the 'irrational' realm of 'private life'." Derek Sayer, *Capitalism and Modernity: An Excursus on Marx and Weber* (London: Routledge, 1991), 100.

¹⁰² Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 524.

¹⁰³ Karl Marx, "Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy, 1857-1858," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, vol. 29 (Lawrence and Wishart, 2010), 37–38.

¹⁰⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 2 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), 329.

¹⁰⁵ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 539–40.

powerful argument for viewing the category of the global as a distinctively modern historical formation rooted in the constellation of societal and economic transformations that accompanied the advance of modern capitalism. Indeed, the image of the world as a deeply interdependent geopolitical and economic space was delimited, in part, by the increasingly abstract form of social interdependence that characterized the evolving nineteenth-century world market; the advent of a universal space-time and economic system was deeply shaped by the expansion of modern capitalism. In sharp contrast to the early modern landscape of feudal Europe, the gradual emergence of capitalist society as the dominant form of social organization brought the forms of economic surplus, industrialization, and impersonal social dependency constitutive of the possibility of a world market and world economy as such. By generating an unprecedented upturn in trade, economic growth, and interaction capacity, it helped fashion the globalized political-economic order which the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* could envisage as an increasingly post-national constellation, a world fashioned in the very image of capital itself. As Manu Goswami explains, however, the evolving global spaces of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century modernity were constitutively uneven: “hierarchically organized and internally differentiated in the specific sense that the relations between particular places — metropole and colony, urban and rural, local and national and the like — are shot through with power inequalities and unevenness.”¹⁰⁶ Globality, in these terms, is best understood not as homogenous social formation, but through the complex interlocking between the universal and the particular: “the local does not disappear . . . it is never absorbed by the regional, national or even worldwide level. The national and regional take in innumerable “places;” national space embraces the regions; and world space does not merely subsume national space, but even precipitates the formation of national spaces through a remarkable process of fission.”¹⁰⁷

COMPETITIVE MODERNISMS. All of the above points to the conflictual geopolitical environment fostered by of the global-scope structural formations forged over the course of the nineteenth century. Most fundamentally: the post-1870 international order was marked by a structured dynamic between the globalization of political-economic competition, on the one side, and the “nationalization” and “statization” of cultural and political orders, on the other.¹⁰⁸ The archetypally modernist agenda of “progressive” and “civilized” social development thus converged around a highly competitive political ethos which valorised national military strength and overseas expansionism.

In this context, Weber’s conception of the modern state’s transition from *Rechtstaat* to *Machtstaat* aptly summarized the ways that many national military and political elites sought to reconstitute the institutions of the state for a new era of world power rivalries. In states such as Germany, Japan, Italy, anxieties about relative socioeconomic backwardness shaped the projects elite-led state-building and societal modernization which proceeded between 1870 and

¹⁰⁶ Goswami, *Producing India*, 37.

¹⁰⁷ This quotation is from Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*, cited in Goswami, 36.

¹⁰⁸ This terminology follows Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: Verso, 2014), 175; also, Bob Jessop, *State Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008) here at and p.151 and p.207.

1913. These efforts at national regeneration typically converged around the conflation of people and state with a homogenous ethno-cultural core — a nation defined against external competitors and foreign ethnic groups.¹⁰⁹ This was the process which Treitschke, paradigmatic theorist of a xenophobic *Machtpolitik*, had in mind when describing how the “exertions of the state” in military and political reform had cleared the way “for the great personalities which we call the Nation and the State to build up a national character to all.”¹¹⁰ In the United States, similarly, Alfred Thayer Mahan linked global competition to the social power struggles of the industrial age, writing in 1894 that increased geopolitical assertiveness could help strengthen the foundations of American capitalism by fostering that “reviving sense of nationality, which is the true antidote to what is bad in socialism.”¹¹¹ Envisioning an American *Machtstaat* dominated by military officials and naval elites, political reformers like Mahan sought to reconstitute the institutions and practices of the American state in geopolitically-expansionist terms.¹¹² Anxieties about military rather than economic backwardness often lay behind such concerns, especially after the Russo-Japanese War revealed the rising military industrial capacities of Imperial Japan.¹¹³ Reflecting the efforts of political and military elites like Luce and Mahan, the US gradually acquired a modern warfare state: in the period 1870 to 1910, the numbers of US military personnel rose from fifty thousand to one hundred and thirty-nine thousand employees, in line with the ongoing rationalization and bureaucratization of American state-formation.¹¹⁴

The paradigmatically modernist link between nationhood, war, and state power was a constitutive feature of the emerging condition of global power politics. Whereas dynastic and absolutist states were reliant on local notables and nobiliary elites to mobilize armed force, the nineteenth-century national state combined a national-citizenship model of society-wide legitimation with the rational-bureaucratic governmental system of an efficient war-machine.¹¹⁵ Such state-forms established a universalistic model of formal equality and male suffrage which differed markedly from the religious and aristocratic hierarchies envisaged by the makers of Treaty of Utrecht and the Congress of Vienna. The highly competitive conditions of the late-nineteenth states and global economy thus converged with the expansion of more statist forms of nationalism, engendered partly by the rise of mass electorates and mass suffrage systems seen in France (1848), the post-Civil War United States (1868), the German Reich (1871), British Empire (1884), and Italy (1871-1912).¹¹⁶ Against this background, the struggle by political and military elites to forge national-imperial states typically played out in the context of mass-society conflicts over social and economic policy. Geostategic decisions and

¹⁰⁹ Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 154, 114f; Mommsen, “The Varieties of the Nation State in Modern History: Liberal, Imperialist, Fascist, and Contemporary Notions of Nation and Nationality.”

¹¹⁰ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politics*, trans. Blanche Dugdale and Torben De Bile, vol. vol.I (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 77.

¹¹¹ Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age*, 224.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 236.

¹¹³ For the full discussion of this point see the first section of the following chapter, below.

¹¹⁴ Peter Karsten, “Militarization and Rationalization in the United States, 1870-1914,” in *The Militarization of the Western World*, ed. John R. Gillis (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 42.

¹¹⁵ Siniša Malešević, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 140–41.

¹¹⁶ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 600; also, Michael Mann, “Ruling Class Strategies and Citizenship,” *Sociology* 21, no. 3 (1987): 339–354; Perry Anderson, “Internationalism: A Breviary,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 14 (2002): 5–25.

foreign-policy strategies could no longer be formulated simply within the aristocratic social milieus associated with eighteenth-century “cabinet wars.”¹¹⁷ Rather, as in the case of the Spanish-American War, the mobilization of mass societies through highly mediatized forms of national culture now emerged as a key factor in the pursuit of overseas expansion and the development of geopolitical-military rivalries.¹¹⁸

Cognizance of this structured overlap between political-military, socioeconomic and sociocultural fields indicates the extent to which, rather than proceeding from any single institutional field, the evolving global condition of late-nineteenth power politics was shaped by strategic mediation of, and overlap between, distinct forms of social structure. Consider, for instance, the strange amalgam of modernizing socioeconomic agendas and militaristic imperialism which characterized the formation of the national-imperial state. This combination of social forms was not somehow given by the internal logic of any single structural formation, such as “global capitalism” or the “international system,” but rather entailed a complex economy of political and ideological terms whose articulation spoke to the evolving connections between the hypercompetitive logic of the world market, the modernizing ethos of state-rationalization and national development, and the strategic military relations of an increasingly compressed interstate system. The competitive modernism of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century world politics thus attests to the constitutive unevenness and structural multiplicity of the modern international order as such. The formation of a global political-economic space in conjunction with the growing “nationalization” and “statization” of cultural, political, and economic fields transformed the terrain of modern statecraft because it offered new resources, logics, symbols, and pressures for the creation of political identities and ideologies. In particular, it made possible the presentation of the national-imperial state as the locus of progress and authority in a context of rising global competitiveness. This shift — the efforts by local elites to convert the state into a nationally-oriented, war-making institution rather than a dynastic patrimony or liberal night-watchman — highlights the agentic and symbolic transformation of political structures that characterizes modern processes of international change. An adequate account of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century dynamic of world-scale power-political competitiveness must therefore consider the historically specific strategies of political development and state-transformation by which national political communities were converted into rival imperial states.

SYMBOLIC RESCALING. This was not a purely institutional or material process, but entailed the symbolic transformation of political communities through a range of novel discursive and ideological practices. The reconstitution of the state as a *Machtstaat* in conjunction with the projection of national-imperial power onto an emerging global horizon was a symbolic process of cultural-historical transformation — not just a reaction to more primary material forces. It involved the appropriation and transposition of popular cultural symbols of nationhood and

¹¹⁷ For an overview, see, Hew Strachan, “From Cabinet War to Total War: The Perspective of Military Doctrine, 1861-1918,” in *Great War, Total War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁸ A key theme of Mann’s analysis of American and Japanese imperialisms, Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 3, Global Empires and Revolution, 1890-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 84, 111.

peoplehood as legitimating principles of imperial prestige and great power status; the self-presentation of political elites, military leaders, and colonialists as *homo nationalis*; and the growing reciprocity between nationalist, racialist, and civilizational discourses of political hierarchy and inter-societal differentiation. Although the development of such symbolic resources can be traced back into the eighteenth century, their entwinement with an increasingly bellicose and state-centred conception of the national-imperial state is a predominantly late-nineteenth century phenomenon. In an important theorization of the production of the modern national community, Etienne Balibar has highlighted the centrality of the operations of classification, hierarchy, and racial distinction to the production of the modern nation-form.¹¹⁹ In these terms: “every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary, that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past.”¹²⁰ It is important to recognize that these symbolic processes not only operated through the idealization and institution of a bounded national scale, but necessarily opened out onto the emerging dimension of global political-economic space. Within the evolving imperial core, the structuration of the state as a bounded national community emerged in tandem with the symbolic rescaling of political order along global-imperialist lines.

Of particular importance, in this regard, was the elaboration and institutionalization of a civilizational ideology of world-political hierarchy and inter-imperial rivalries. During the mid to late-nineteenth century era of societal and international restructuring, the notion of a culturally distinct core of Western powers — an imagined community of states, tied to a prevailing geopolitical hierarchy, and rooted in a mythical history of European development — emerged as a key foundation of imperial power politics.¹²¹ The structure of international relations expressed by the imaginary of “the West,” in this context, was that of a European and North American core of imperial powers being rescaled and superimposed across “non-Western” spaces of political and economic control. As Hobson and Sharman, have argued, Western imperial expansion was in this sense a “moral vocation” enabled by prevailing discourses of racism and Orientalism.¹²² More than this, what needs to be recognized is that the symbolic and ideological classifications through which the modern international order came to be grasped as a worldwide space were given not just by the institutions of state and capital, but also by the framework of civilizational hierarchy and difference produced by the prevailing system of imperial hierarchy.¹²³ The hierarchical structure of the nineteenth-century international order fostered imaginings of globality that were often as much about notions of

¹¹⁹ Étienne Balibar, “Racism and Nationalism,” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein (London; New York: Verso, 2011), here at 49; Étienne Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein (London; New York: Verso, 2011), 86–106.

¹²⁰ Balibar, “The Nation Form: History and Ideology,” 93.

¹²¹ Christopher Lloyd GoGwilt, *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 14; Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 86–87; cf. Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Civilizing the Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 72–111.

¹²² Hobson and Sharman, “The Enduring Place of Hierarchy in World Politics,” 87.

¹²³ For the relation between social stratification and the Standard of Civilization see, Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 51–54.

race and civilization as they were political economy. This was significant for the dynamics of both imperial expansion and imperial rivalry because it served to naturalize and foster the representation of foreign rivals as deeply “other” politico-cultural formations or ethno-racial groups. In his multi-volume work *The Winning of the West*, Theodore Roosevelt, formulated an argument for American imperialism very much along these lines, casting the past experience of Westward expansion as the validator of future great power status. On this view, expansionism was a duty of the civilized Anglo-Saxon peoples of the British and American Empires:

The count against the British on the Northwestern frontier is, not that they insisted on their rights, but that they were guilty of treachery to both friend and foe. The success of the British was incompatible with the good of mankind in general, and of the English-speaking races in particular; for they strove to prop up savagery, and to bar the westward march of the settler-folk whose destiny it was to make ready the continent for civilization...To encourage the Indians to hold their own against the Americans, and to keep back the settlers, meant to encourage a war of savagery against the border vanguard of white civilization...¹²⁴

This kind of ideological framework, as the following chapters elaborate in more detail, was a central feature of the ways in which US political and military elites came to grasp the international as a worldwide space of geopolitical and economic competition.

V. Conclusions: Why the Modern International Order Produced Global Power Politics

It should be clear from the argument of this chapter that the relations of power politics that characterize the modern international order are not best understood in terms of generic military capacities or universal strategies of *Realpolitik* and power-balancing. For the nineteenth-century emergence of a global-scope capitalist world economy and national-imperial states-system engendered new pathways of symbolic and strategic power-projection which cannot be grasped without analyzing the forms of modern social structure which shaped and constituted them. More than this, I have tried to show that an emphasis on the intrinsically historical, multiple, uneven and symbolic character of modern socio-structural grounds a compelling way of theorizing dynamics of international change, in general, and the emergence of global power politics, in particular. On this view, transformations in the scale, dynamic, and orientations of inter-state politics are a historical and systemic feature of the multiple structural complexes which comprise the international as an intersocietal domain and lived political-cultural arena. The task of accounting for qualitative shifts in the social textures, political logics, and ideological grammar of international power politics is thus best approached in contextualized sociohistorical terms, rather than as an abstract analysis of generic state-forms or geopolitical systems. More fundamentally: an adequate account of the emerging global scale and worldwide political horizons of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperialisms must consider the

¹²⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: Part V* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 228–29.

historically specific pathways of international change which marked and made the formation of national-imperial states and highly competitive modernist political cultures in the shadow of an encompassing world market.

4. WORLD POWERS IN AN AGE OF EMPIRE

AMERICAN EXPANSION AND IMPERIAL RIVALRY, 1875-1913

England has been fertile in soldiers and administrators; in men who triumphed by sea and by land; in adventurers and explorers who won for her the world's waste spaces; and it is because of this that the English-speaking race now shares with the Slav the fate of the coming years...The enemies we may have to face will come from over sea; they may come from Europe, or they may come from Asia. Events move fast in the West; but this generation has been forced to see that they move even faster in the oldest East. Our interests are as great in the Pacific as in the Atlantic, in the Hawaiian Islands as in the West Indies. Merely for the protection of our own shores we need a great navy, and what is more, we need it to protect our interests in the islands from which it is possible to command our shores and to protect our commerce on the high seas.¹

— Theodore Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy (1897)

We have often heard of the “Chess-board of European Politics.” The game-board, now, is the globe itself; and America, by her very geographical position, between two great oceans, is not the least important of the several contestants...Civilization is ever saying to the barbarian, and to the semi-civilized, “accept the bountiful gifts of nature, or make way for those who will.” Thus there is a continual struggle for supremacy before which barbarism is constantly retreating. The stream of human progress is still sweeping on; and woe betide those who oppose its course. This means much for us, here, today.²

— Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce, US Navy (1903)

I. Introduction

The previous chapter established the nineteenth-century sources of global power politics: the ways in which state power came to reside in and operate through the long-distance interconnections of an imperial world economy; the uneven transformation of societies generated by this relational political-economic structure; and the emergence of the national-imperial state as the political locus of industrial societies. In the pages below, this discussion is extended by locating the development of American world power ambitions within the 1875-1914 age of empire. The escalation of imperial competition in this era — highlighted by the increased collaboration between national governments and private capital in the pursuit of overseas markets and the expansion of European territorial possessions by some 18 per cent³ — had far-reaching consequences for the foreign policy strategies pursued by the American state. For the New Imperialism, with its violent reordering of world territory and space, gave

¹ Theodore Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 23, no. 3 (1897): 451, 456.

² Stephen B. Luce, “Address Delivered at the United States Naval War College,” in *The Writings of Stephen B. Luce*, ed. John D. Hayes and John B. Hattendorf (1903; repr., Newport RI: Naval War College Press, 1975), 40.

³ Grover Clark, *The Balance Sheets of Imperialism: Facts and Figures on Colonies* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1936), 5–6; D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1982), 178; Heinz Gollwitzer, *Europe in the Age of Imperialism, 1880-1914*, trans. David Adam and Stanley Baron (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969), 9–13, 35–36; Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 65.

rise to a new dynamic of competitive coexistence which linked the rapid expansion of American capitalism to the geopolitical organization of a global economy divided between distinct national-imperial states. The aim of this chapter is to explain the relationship between these escalating imperial rivalries and the emergent world power ambitions of the American political and military elite.

The centrality of this inter-imperial setting, as both a medium and object of American grand strategy, is obscured by the analyses of domestic policy activism and national politics and culture that dominate much of the existing literature.⁴ In light of the historical and analytic framework developed in the chapters above, it is possible to locate the strategic and ideological coordinates of American world power advocacy in a broader historical context: the unique conjuncture of *intersocietal unevenness* generated by the emergence of American capitalism as the leading edge of the Second Industrial Revolution from 1870 on. In this conception, the shaping and controlling forces of American expansionism are to be found not in any independent national history, but rather the staggered global pattern of the industrial revolution itself: in the intersections *between* the rapid industrialization of a continent-spanning national economy in the United States *and* the corresponding experience of an arrested “late development” in the semi-industrial regions of Western Europe and East Asia. Its productive potential outstripping that of any other industrial state, American capitalism emerged as a key foundation of the international power hierarchies which drove the geopolitical pressures and status anxieties that encouraged imperial expansionism. Since this developmental sequence centered around the competitive coexistence of distinct national-imperial states, the organizing focus of this chapter will be the United States’ relationship to a pair of empires — Germany and Japan — whose own bids for world power were shaped by, as well shaping, the dynamics of American expansionism. On this basis, it will be possible to lay bare the relationship between the United States’ increasingly activist world policy — exemplified by an extensive program of naval build-up and the official declaration the “Open Door” for American commerce (1899-1900) — and the emergent global condition of intersocietal rivalries that defined the New Imperialism as a historical process.

More specifically, by exposing the international tensions triggered by the late-nineteenth century takeoff of American capitalism, the inter-imperial analytic employed in this chapter illustrates how far American conceptions of world power were framed against a pattern of international reactions provoked by the character and timing of the United States’ own industrial expansion. In this context, the strategic and ideological coordinates of American

⁴ For IR interpretations of American expansionism in the 1890s that stress the role domestic economic preferences and changes in national state capacity, see Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 94–95; Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 37–43, 179–81, 191; K. Narizny, “The New Debate: International Relations Theory and American Strategic Adjustment in the 1890s,” *Security Studies* 11, no. 1 (September 1, 2001): 162ff, 173; Benjamin O Fordham, “The Domestic Politics of World Power: Explaining Debates over the United States Battleship Fleet, 1890–91,” *International Organization* 73, no. 2 (2019): 463–64. The key historiographical reference point for much of this scholarship is the work of the Wisconsin School of Diplomatic History, which has traditionally emphasized the primacy of domestic commerce for the dynamics of American expansionism (see section I, below).

grand strategy came to hinge on the interlinked principles of economic nationalism, informal imperialism, and maritime force. These widely-supported strategies of global penetration worked to establish American world power in the form of an extensive sphere of informal economic control, entrenched by protectionist tariff walls, and backed by maritime force when necessary. While this world-imperial project was tightly bound to the perceived needs of the US economy, its trajectory was inseparable from the intersocietal conflicts through which the tensions of uneven development — the military and economic power gaps generated by the concentration of industrial capitalism within a preponderant Anglo-American core — were translated into the expansionary foreign-policy strategies of states like Wilhelmine Germany and Meiji Japan. As will emerge, the unsettling impact of the United States' territorial and economic expansion was central to the lived sense of strategic vulnerability which drove the convergence of many *fin-de-siècle* elites on the desirability of overseas expansionism. The feedback effects of this escalating imperialism were a central determinant of the US-centered, Open Door international order projected by the most prominent advocates of American world power. This unfolding dynamic illustrates much about the intersocietal foundations of global power politics as a historical condition.

The argument proceeds from the geopolitical and socioeconomic setting of American world power ambitions (Section I), to the long-term unevenness of the industrialization process itself (Section II), in order to locate the historical rationalization of American grand strategy (Section III) within a broader conception of the coercive and ideological practices specific to the era of industrial capitalism and the related expansion of the national-imperial state (Section IV). This analytical procedure locates a sociohistorical structure to the New Imperialism by tracing the linkages between the uneven development of industrial societies, considered as a geopolitical and sociocultural condition rather than a merely economic process, and the late-nineteenth descent of the *Pax Britannica* into a series of escalating naval arms races and rival forms of economic nationalism. This emphasis on the uneven and combined character of national-imperial trajectories is intended to challenge several prominent theoretical tendencies, both in the IR literature on great-power expansion and the wider study of modern imperialism. On the one hand, it goes beyond the conventional dichotomy between “geopolitical” and “domestic” explanations for great-power expansion by showing how the driving forces of American world power lay in the competitive coexistence of distinct societies: that is, in internal relations between the industrialization of US capitalism, the uneven expansion of an empire-centred world economy and international order, and the patterns of strategic competition and status anxiety generated by the United States' growing industrial ascendancy.⁵ On the other hand, therefore, it provides a multilinear conception of historical development that is missing from many existing accounts of the New Imperialism. Rather than the treating the central units

⁵ Among the most developed IR accounts of the way in which domestic coalition politics might shape the pursuit of “security through expansion” is Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1, 17, 133, 155, 190, 316–19; on the US case in particular, cf. Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power*. In the constructivist literature, accounts of international status-seeking have also privileged the domestic-level socio-psychological sources of great-power expansionism. See for example, Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3, 33, 204. In the neorealist tradition, the best example of an a primacy of geopolitics perspective is John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, NY: WW Norton & Company, 2001).

of imperial competition as homogenous state-forms, this approach foregrounds the deeply patterned international hierarchies, differentiated by both material and symbolic power structures, on which the geopolitical rivalries of the *fin-de-siècle* hinged. While a “full” explanation of the New Imperialism lies beyond its scope, the account of the historical logic of American world power goals provided in this chapter suggests that a wider conception of the intersocietal unevenness and multi-linearity of historical development is a key step toward a systematic theorization of the late-nineteenth century escalation of imperial competition.⁶

II. Explaining American World Power: Empire and Expansionism at the *Fin-de-siècle*

The quotations attached to the beginning of this chapter encapsulate the “growth of the world” envisaged by many American political and military elites during the era of the New Imperialism.⁷ At the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, American strategic planners converged on a shared conception of “world politics” revolving around the naval and commercial expansion of US power overseas.⁸ When the McKinley Tariff Act (1890) raised import duties to 50 per cent on most products, these discussions of external expansionism became increasingly inseparable from the kind of economic nationalism that dominated American foreign and economic policy.⁹ Underlying this agenda was the unique synthesis of rapid population growth, frontier land expansions, and protected national-colonial markets which helped make the United States the world’s emerging economic hegemon. By 1900, the US economy achieved levels of industrialization some 30-60 per cent above those of Western Europe, while its total industrial potential exceeded that of Britain and Germany by 25-55 per cent respectively.¹⁰ This was a historical watershed rather than a temporary rebalancing: the United States now entered a century-long era of positive trade balances and industrial expansion backed by the growing international power of the American state. By 1908, its navy was the second largest in the world behind the vast fleets of the British Empire, the original

⁶ For a critique of classical Marxist theories of imperialism along these lines, see, Alexander Anievas, *Capital, the State, and War: Class Conflict and Geopolitics in the Thirty Years’ Crisis 1914-1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 31–32. On the centrality of a multilineal conception of historical change to the theory of uneven and combined development as such, see, Justin Rosenberg, “International Relations in the Prison of Political Science,” *International Relations* 30, no. 2 (2016): 11.

⁷ John Hood, “The Monroe Doctrine: Its Meaning and Application at the Present Day,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 35, no. 3 (1909): 657.

⁸ For the most widely read discussions of “world politics” in this context, see, Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd: London, 1890), 45; *The Influence of Sea Power on the French Revolution and Empire*, vol. II (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1892), 380; “Considerations Governing the Disposition of Navies,” in *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 180.

⁹ See, Marc-William Palen, *The “Conspiracy” of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalisation, 1846-1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), chapter 7, here at 178.

¹⁰ For the figures, see P. Bairoch, “International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980,” *Journal of European Economic History*; Rome 11, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 283, 292–94, tables 8-9.

epicenter of industrial capitalism whose economic potential the American economy was now eclipsing.¹¹

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century, this dramatic process of economic restructuring became the locus of an expansive imperial imaginary, animated by the prospect of an interoceanic canal system and the perceived imperatives of commercial rivalry.¹² As Brooks Adams, an advisor to the Republican party and a lecturer at the US Naval War college, described in 1901, there was no “reason why the United States should not become a greater seat of wealth and power than ever was England, Rome, or Constantinople.”¹³ For such advocates of American economic nationalism and naval build-up, “material wealth” and “manifest destiny” were now united in signifying American “World Power.”¹⁴ In this context, American military commanders called for muscular strategies of global assertion to advance US interests across the Americas, the Caribbean, China and East Asia.¹⁵ This world-imperial stance looked beyond the hemispheric framework of the original Monroe Doctrine toward a global future of naval arms racing revolving around the struggle for external spheres of strategic influence and economic control.¹⁶

Shaped by the perceived threat of rising industrial power-centers like Wilhelmine Germany and Meiji Japan, such world power ambitions provide a concrete illustration of the competitive ties which marked the emergence of global power politics during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.¹⁷ Impelled by an escalating “race for the world’s markets,” American

¹¹ On the changing the military and economic bases of British-American relations in this context, see, Phillips Payson O’Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936* (London: Praeger, 1998), 122; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 273.

¹² Among many discussions of the growing importance of ocean highways and inter-oceanic canal networks to US grand strategy, see Ensign Charles C. Rogers, “Naval Intelligence,” *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* 9, no. 25 (1883): 683; Captain W.T. Sampson, “Outline of a Scheme for the Naval Defense of the Coast,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 15, no. 2 (1889): 179; Henry C. Taylor, “The Control of the Pacific,” *Forum* 3 (1887): here at 409, 412; Charles H. Stockton, “The Commercial Geography of the American Inter-Oceanic Canal,” *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* 20 (1888): 75–93; S. B. Luce, “Our Future Navy,” *The North American Review* 149, no. 392 (1889): 56.

¹³ Brooks Adams, *America’s Economic Supremacy* (1900; repr., New York: Harper, 1947), 51.

¹⁴ George W. Melville, “Our Actual Naval Strength,” *North American Review* 176 (1903): 390.

¹⁵ Among many examples of the world power theme discussed in this chapter, the following articles capture a broad spectrum of agreement among US political-military elites on the necessity of imperial, economic, geopolitical and military expansion: Stephen B. Luce, “The Dawn of Naval History,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 24, no. 3 (1898): 441–50; Lieutenant John M. Ellicott, “The Composition of the Fleet,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 22, no. 3 (1896): 537–60; Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim”; Richard Wainwright, “Our Naval Power,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, no. 24 (1898): 39–87; “The Naval Policy of America,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 23 (1897): 509–21; Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” in *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 209–54; Melville, “Our Actual Naval Strength”; George W. Melville, “The Important Elements in Naval Conflicts,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 26, no. 1 (July 1, 1905): 123–36; Bradley Fiske, “American Naval Policy,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 31 (1905): 1–80.

¹⁶ For arguments linking US economic expansion to the need to expand the purview of the Monroe Doctrine see Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Monroe Doctrine,” in *Naval Administration and Warfare* (1904; repr., London: Sampson Low, Martston, & Company Limited, 1908), 357–409; Hood, “The Monroe Doctrine.”

¹⁷ For some especially clear illustrations of this comparative, inter-imperial framing, discussed further below, see Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect Upon International Policies* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1900); Rear Admiral French Ensor Chadwick, “The Mastery of the Sea,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, March

economic expansion was widely-felt to necessitate a corresponding process of naval “upbuilding.”¹⁸ As Theodore Roosevelt wrote to the former Navy Secretary Benjamin Tracy, this policy was marker of the kind of “broad and far-sighted patriotism” demanded by the expansive needs of American society.¹⁹ Anything less than a large battleship fleet would “mean jeopardy to the nation’s interest and honor.” The defense of these values would require the “elements of force” lacked by the “little powers of Europe” and the collapsing Chinese Empire — military capacities that were now being rapidly acquired by the European and Japanese empires.²⁰

Cognizance of such transnational connections underscores the inter-imperial context of the United States’ emergence as an industrial powerhouse. Despite its historical significance, this international setting plays a remarkably limited role in what has become the traditional interpretation of American expansion in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In this view, the central drivers of US empire-building and external power-projection, from the final decades of the nineteenth century on, lie in the domestic economic interests of American commerce, whose pursuit of international markets are said to have underpinned a “liberal policy of informal empire or free trade imperialism” modelled on the *laissez-faire* political economy of the British Empire.²¹ So conceived, the drivers of American expansionism were both commercial and domestic, while the character of its political orientations were economically liberal. Notwithstanding the important elements of truth this position contains, it misstates the driving forces of American world power ambitions — the international context of their articulation, their underlying economic nationalism, and the proliferation of strategic rivalries and international tensions to which they gave rise.²² As result, the “liberal imperialism” perspective inherited from the Wisconsin School tends to obscure some of the most general dynamics of the United States’ global rise: the increasingly competitive world economy engendered by its “closed door” strategy of high-tariff national-colonial markets; the far-reaching unevenness fostered by the comparatively vast extent of its domestic markets and natural resource endowments; and the deeply politicized international economic relations

1906, 749–53; Newton A. McCully, *The McCully Report: The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05*, ed. Richard Doenhoff (1905; repr., Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 1977).

¹⁸ Chadwick, “The Mastery of the Sea,” 745. *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to John Hay*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o184764>. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

¹⁹ *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Benjamin F. Tracy. March 19, 1903*. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o40653>. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

²⁰ *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Theodore E. Burton*. February 23, 1904. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Library of Congress Manuscript Division. <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record?libID=o187493>. Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

²¹ For this interpretation, see the seminal work of the Wisconsin School: William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing, 1959), 39–40; Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1963), 60, 85–101; Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire 1893-1901* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1967), 22–27, 107–17; Marilyn Blatt Young, *The Rhetoric of Empire: American China Policy 1895-1901* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

²² For a critique of the open door, free-trade imperialism argument that stresses the centrality of economic nationalism to American imperialism see Marc-William Palen, “The Imperialism of Economic Nationalism, 1890–1913,” *Diplomatic History* 39, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 157–85.

which the economic nationalism of the late-nineteenth century Republican party helped to foster. The basic indices of this nationalist agenda are provided in table 4.1, below. This demonstrates the comparatively protective character of the US political economy, 1890-1914.

Contrary to the presumptively liberal narrative of American expansion, the Republican administrations of William McKinley (1897-1901), Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909), and William Howard Taft (1909-1913), actively undermined the free-trade imperialism of the *Pax Britannica* by entrenching a nationalist political economy that linked principles of domestic protectionism with coercive trade reciprocity. The expansive “Open Door” for American products envisaged by the advocates of this strategy was not a free-trade system, but rather an expansive imperial economy made up of American-dominated markets. By design, this project was intended to both supercharge the process of US industrial growth and forestall the competitive expansion of its major rivals.²³ The conflictual domain of “world politics” envisaged by the architects of American naval build-up and imperial expansion was directly bound to the clashing forms of economic nationalism to which this imperial economic strategy gave rise.²⁴

To understand the historical forces which channeled American grand strategy into the evolving imperial rivalries of the *fin-de-siècle*, an adequate conception of this international environment is needed. Missing from the received image of the United States as a free-trade power is any real sense of the empire-centered international order and world market that linked American capitalism to a wider geopolitical field. Beyond the imprecise categorization of “liberal imperialism,” the historical particularities of American political and economic development need to be viewed in relation to development of an international power hierarchy dominated by the Anglo-American Empires. It will then be possible to see the driving forces of American world power ambitions in their proper inter-imperial setting. In the first instance, this emergent condition of unevenness can be visualized by registering some of the basic socioeconomic coordinates of the industrialization process: the coexistence of societies undergoing the transition to sustained capitalist growth at very different rates and speeds. After examining these overarching trends, the key drivers of American expansionism come more fully into view: the perceived geopolitical requirements of industrial development, their interaction with the status hierarchies of an empire-centered international order, and the international pattern of economic competition and status anxiety triggered by the American takeoff.

²³ Richard Franklin Bense, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 8, 488, 490; Marc-William Palen, “Protection, Federation and Union: The Global Impact of the McKinley Tariff upon the British Empire, 1890–94,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 38, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 399.

²⁴ As well as the works cited in n.8, above, see Stephen B. Luce, “The Benefits of War,” *The North American Review* 153, no. 421 (1891): 672–83; Brooks Adams, “War as the Ultimate Form of Economic Competition,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 29 (1903): 829–81.

Table 4.1. *Indices of Economic Nationalism: Average Tariffs, 1890-1914 (percentages).*

	1890-1894	1895-1899	1900-1904	1905-1909	1910-1914	AVERAGE
USA	23.5	22.7	26.8	23.0	18.3	22.86
France	9.7	10.4	8.6	8.6	8.5	9.22
Germany	8.9	9.3	8.4	7.6	7.0	8.24
UK	4.8	4.8	6.1	5.3	4.8	5.16

Data: Kevin H. O'Rourke, "Tariffs and Growth in the Late 19th Century," *The Economic Journal* 110, no. 463 (2000): 463, Table 1.

STRUCTURES OF UNEVENNESS

The broad features of the international economic hierarchy forged during the age of empire provide an initial context in which to situate the world power logic of American imperialism. In form, the hierarchical political-economic structures of the nineteenth century were deeply shaped by the highly coercive processes territorial expansion summarized in tables 4.2 and 4.3. The dramatic take-off of US industrial capitalism in the period c.1880-1900, when the United States began to surpass the industrial potential of the British Empire, took place in the context of a wider scramble for global territory. In the period 1830-1880, Europe's colonial domain grew by 16 million square kilometers, before the rate of annual expansion rose sharply in 1878-1913. In these years, the major Western empires seized some 83,000 square kilometers of territory per year — an area roughly the size of modern France — and the Japanese Empire took control of a further 115,000 square kilometers of colonial holdings. The process of colonial settlement entailed by American westward expansion belonged to this overarching pattern, more than tripling the size of the United States in the period 1800-1850, and increasing the overall cropland of the United States by between 678.99 and 2,879.30 hectares per annum (1800-1870/1870-1910). In a time when economic growth tended to be heavily linked to agricultural and mineral production, the resource abundance generated through this process of colonial settlement was a driving force of the US economy, its emergent industries typically concentrated within national commodity chains dependent on the primary products of

American lands.²⁵ This gave American industry a significant comparative advantage compared to much smaller territorial empires like Germany and Japan.

Table 4.2. Additions to the Territory of the United States, 1800-1900

Year	Territorial Division	Area Added (KM sq.)
1808	Louisiana Purchase	2,266,304
1819	Florida	181,576
1845	Texas	880,065
1846	Oregon Territory	747,701
1848	Mexican Cession	1,356,640
1853	Gadsden Purchase	93,786
1867	Alaska	599,446
1897	Hawaiian Islands	174,5652
1898	Puerto Rico	93,23
1898	Guam	453
1899	Philippine Islands	370,368
1899	Samoa Islands	189,069
1901	Additional Philippines	176
<i>Total</i>		84,312,36

Data: Oscar P. Austin, *Steps in the Expansion of Our Territory* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1903), Appendix, 252.

²⁵ Clark, *Balance Sheets*, 3–6; Gavin Wright and Jesse Czelusta, “Why Economies Slow: The Myth of the Resource Curse,” *Challenge* 47 (February 1, 2004): 9–10; Bouda Etemad, *Possessing the World: Taking the Measurements of Colonisation from the 18th to the 20th Century* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 131; Sven Beckert, “American Danger: United States Empire, Eurafica, and the Territorialization of Industrial Capitalism, 1870–1950,” *The American Historical Review* 122, no. 4 (2017): 1148; Edward Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers: How Economies Have Developed Through Natural Resource Exploitation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 382.

Figure 4.3. The Growth of Empires, 1878-1913

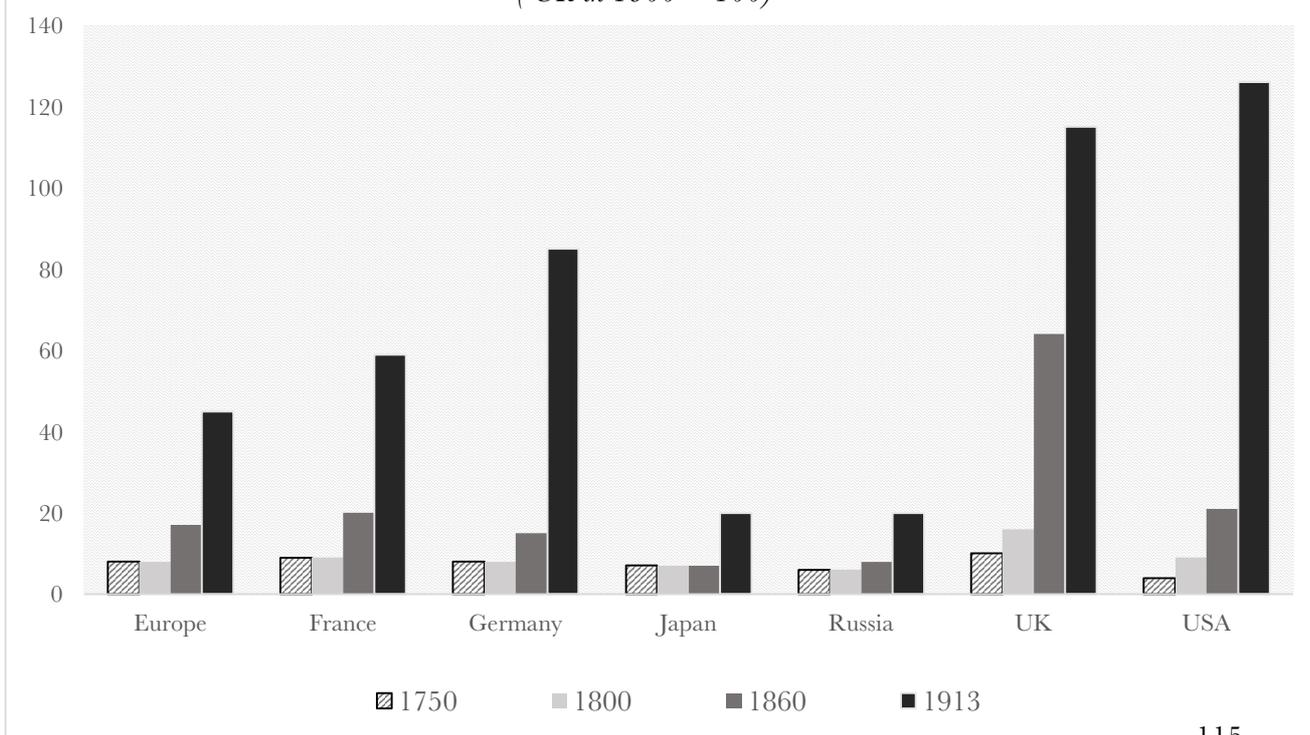
Empire	1878		1913		Total Increase in Territorial Holdings, 1878-1913 (1,000 KM sq.)
	Territorial Holdings (1,000 KM sq.)	Percentage of World Total	Territorial Holdings (1,000 KM sq.)	Percentage of World Total	
Britain					4516
<i>Total Area (inc. India)</i>	24,968	18.86	29,484	22.27	
<i>Dependencies</i>	6,719	5.08	10,013	7.56	
France					6559
<i>Total Area</i>	4934	3.73	11,493	8.68	
<i>Dependencies</i>	4383	3.31	10,942	8.26	
Germany					2982
<i>Total Area</i>	471	0.36	3453	2.61	
<i>Dependencies</i>	—	—	2982	2.25	
Japan					297
<i>Total Area</i>	382	0.29	679	0.51	
<i>Dependencies</i>	—	—	297	0.22	
United States					325
<i>Total Area</i>	9358	7.07	9683	7.31	
<i>Dependencies</i>	1519	1.15	1844	1.39	

Source: Clark, Grover. *The Balance Sheets of Imperialism: Facts and Figures on Colonies*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1936, 23-24, Table I. This table shows the division of world territory between five of the major industrial states of the 1873-1913 era. The figures for total area includes the “mother country” plus dependencies, which, as defined by Clark also includes mandates. The total area of the British Empire also includes self-governing territories.

Table 4.4. Relative Shares of World Industrial Output by Country (percentages)

	1830	1860	1880	1900	1913	INCREASE
USA	2.4	7.2	14.7	23.6	32	+29.6
UK	9.5	19.9	22.9	18.5	13.6	+4.1
Germany	3.5	4.9	8.5	13.2	4.8	+1.8
France	5.2	7.9	7.8	6.8	6.1	+0.9
Japan	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.7	- 0.1
Russia	5.6	7	7.6	8.8	8.2	+ 2.6
China	29.8	19.7	12.5	6.2	3.6	- 26.2

Table 4.5 Per Capita Levels of Industrialization, 1750-1913
(UK in 1900 = 100)



Data, Tables 4.4-4.5: Bairoch, P. “International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980.”
Journal of European Economic History, 11, no. 2 (Fall 1982): tables 1 and 9, 273, 294.,

What is striking about the processes of industrial take-off visualized in the tables above is both the rising extent of US economic superiority and the profound unevenness of economic growth within the imperial core. Beneath their surface similarity, the expansionary imperialisms of the late-nineteenth century were enacted by societies in which industrial production was developing at very different speeds: 1.8 per cent per annum in France; 2.2 per cent per annum in Britain; 3.9 percent per annum in Germany; and 4.9 per cent per annum in the USA (1860-1920).²⁶ By the first decade of the twentieth century, the scale of British and American industrialization was vastly beyond that of any other major imperial power. Equally striking is the speed at which American industrialization emerged as a dominant international force. The *fin-de-siècle* period between the late 1880s and early 1900s were years of far-reaching global economic restructuring dominated by the advent of American growth. The magnitude of the United States’ industrial take-off in this period meant, for example, that in the years 1870-1914 the overall size of US economic output grew from being around one-third larger than that of Imperial Germany to roughly twice its size. By 1900, the national income of the United States was twice that of the United Kingdom, and four times the size of France or Germany.²⁷

More specifically, the broad scale comparative data contained in tables 4.1 and 4.4-4.6. provide evidence of the close historical ties between the political economy of American protectionism and the global trajectory of a broader world-economic transformation. The central storyline is clear. On the one hand, the peaks of US tariff protection were reached in the final decade of the nineteenth century, when duties reached an unprecedented 56% according to some calculations. Between 1894 and 1897, national production rose from 73 to 257 million tons, or from one-quarter to three-quarters of domestic consumption. Despite the proliferation of retaliatory tariff laws, US manufacturing thus found ready outlets within a closed domestic market. This was a paradigmatic case of industrial expansion through protectionism: tariff policy fostered a rapid process of capital accumulation in the northern manufacturing sectors by increasing the rate of profit through higher prices and rebalancing the structure of the economy from agricultural production to industrial growth.²⁸ Although the “Open Door” announced by Secretary of State John Hay in 1899 seemed to promise the extension of free-trade imperialism to China, in practice the policy simply called for the equality in the treatment of goods, rather than establishing a system of multilateral commercial treaties that might

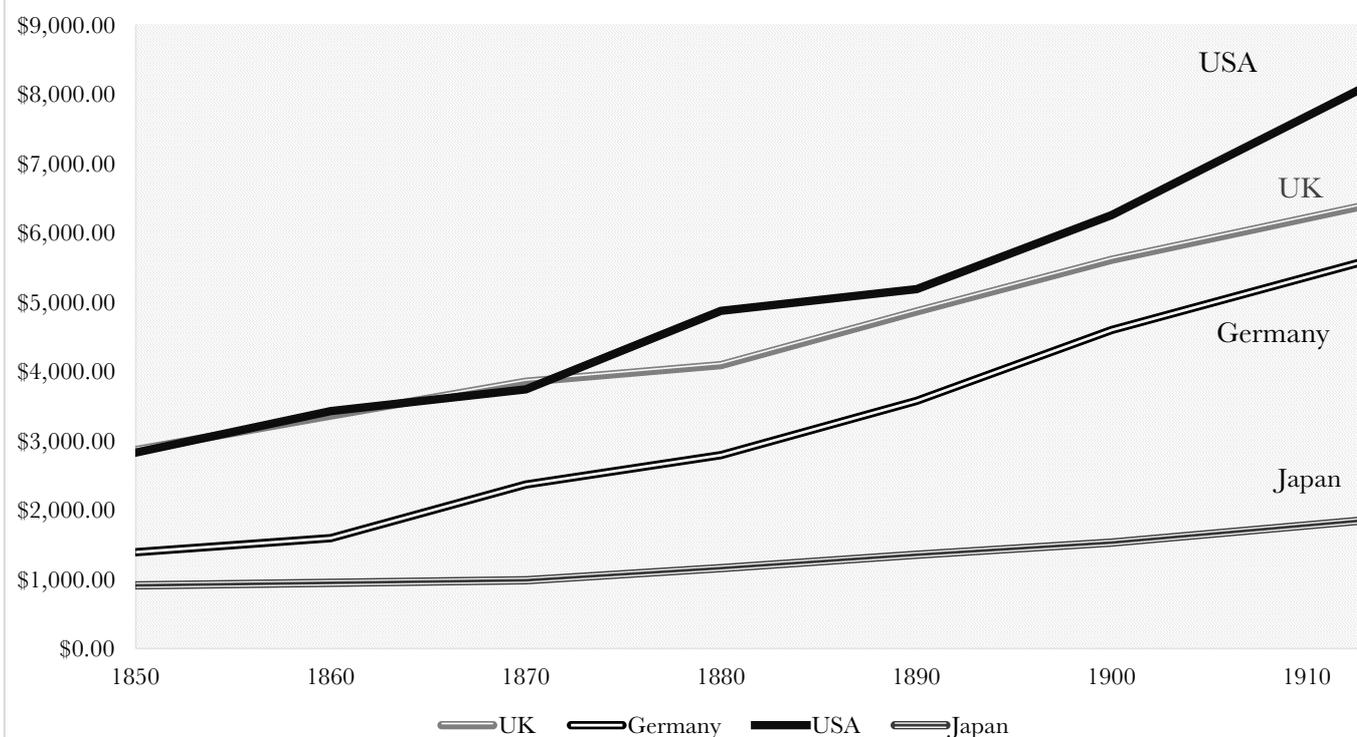
²⁶ W. Arthur Lewis, *Growth and Fluctuations, 1870-1913* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), 17–18, chart 1.

²⁷ Richard R. Nelson and Gavin Wright, “The Erosion of US Technological Leadership as a Factor in Postwar Economic Convergence,” in *Convergence of Productivity: Cross-National Studies and Historical Evidence*, ed. William J. Baumol, Richard R. Nelson, and Edward N. Wolff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 136; Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2006), xviii.

²⁸ William Letwin, “American Economic Policy, 1865–1939,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe from the Decline of the Roman Empire: Volume 8: The Industrial Economies: The Development of Economic and Social Policies*, ed. Peter Mathias and Sidney Pollard, vol. 8, *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 657; Bense, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877-1900*, 6–8.

subvert the Republican commitment to high tariffs. European imperialists soon condemned the “hypocrisy” of the United States’ expansionary aims.²⁹ On the other hand, the comparatively open economies of Europe — where tariff duties were often two or three times less than those of the US — experienced a process of relative decline that can be described as a “commercial invasion” portending a future “American Century.”³⁰ These emerging differences are best captured by the per capita data for GDP growth and industrialization levels in tables 4.4.-4.6. These trends illustrate the division of the imperial economic order between an Anglo-American industrial core and a wider semi-core comprising continental Europe and Japan. This was a constitutively uneven world economy that linked together societies acquiring the most advanced forms of industrial capitalism at very different speeds.

Table 4.6: Real GDP Per Capita of World Powers, 1870-1913



Data: Jutta Bolt et al., Maddison Project Database, version 2018. “Rebasing ‘Maddison’: new income comparisons and the shape of long-run economic development”, Maddison Project Working paper 10, issued 2018, <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2018>. The data is adjusted for purchasing power parity using 2011 dollars. * Figures for Japan’s GDP in 1860 are not available.

²⁹ Paul Wolman, *Most Favored Nation: The Republican Revisionists and U.S. Tariff Policy, 1897-1912* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), xiv–xvi; Palen, “The Imperialism of Economic Nationalism, 1890–1913,” 174; A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 435.

³⁰ Matthew Simon and David E. Novack, “Some Dimensions of the American Commercial Invasion of Europe, 1871–1914: An Introductory Essay,” *The Journal of Economic History* 24, no. 4 (December 1964): 591–605; Kevin H. O’Rourke, “The European Grain Invasion, 1870–1913,” *The Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 4 (December 1997): 775–801; Beckert, “American Danger.”

DRIVERS OF EXPANSION

The intersocietal power hierarchies of the industrial era shaped the international historical context from which American world power ambitions flourished. Against this background, the geopolitical requirements of US economic expansion lay in the Open-Door policy articulated by Roosevelt's Secretary of State, John Hay, between 1899 and 1902. The hegemonic conceptions of strategy and interest in this framework were less territorialized empire than control of world markets and specific regional positions. Like the highly protective economic policy which underpinned American industrial strategy, this international stance resonated with the comparative advantages of the United States' global economic setting: the vast domestic markets and natural resource endowments produced by the colonization of North America making formal colonialism overseas a lesser priority than the effective domination of foreign economic systems. Under the Roosevelt Taft administration, the pursuit of "Dollar Diplomacy" in Venezuela, China, and the Dominican Republic, exemplified this novel conception expansion: the Monroe Doctrine would be extended, as with the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904, in the form of an extensive sphere of informal influence, backed by maritime force, and working to ensure the stability of US investments and trading concerns abroad.³¹

To grasp the driving forces of this project, however, it is necessary to emphasize the intersocietal context in which American grand strategy was formulated; for the Open-Door model was deeply embedded in the pattern of inter-imperial rivalries that led the American military planners to seek more sustained strategies of global penetration. Already in 1890, Alfred Thayer Mahan had argued that the "growing production" of the US economy demanded an end to the policy of isolation originally enshrined in the Monroe Doctrine: "within, the home market is secured; but outside, beyond the broad seas, there are the markets of the world, that can be entered and controlled only by a vigorous contest, to which the habit of trusting to protection by statute does not conduce."³² In this view, the emergent world market was a deeply conflictual global space involving the rival projects of imperial expansion evolving across East Asia, China, and the Middle East.³³ The informal-empire project of the Open Door, therefore, cannot be separated from the fact that American economic interests were being put at risk by

³¹ According to Veese's study on "Dollar diplomacy" in Venezuela, the policy was virtually "*sui generis*" in the history of imperialism since it involved a government-directed strategy of capitalist expansion based on a "statist" form of corporate power, rather than the export of surplus capital aboard. Cyrus Veese, *A World Safe for Capitalism: Dollar Diplomacy and America's Rise to Global Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 159–60. For Gareth Stedman-Jones, this was the "maturation of the US imperial system" into its core twentieth-century form: "The Specificity of US Imperialism," *New Left Review*, I, no. 60 (1970): 79.

³² Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The United States Looking Outward," in *The Interest of America in Sea Power: Present and Future* (1890; repr., London: Sampson Low, 1897), 4.

³³ Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The Strategic Features of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea," in *The Interest of America in Sea Power: Present and Future* (London: Sampson Low, 1897), 299; also Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Hawaii and Our Future Sea Power," in *The Interest of America in Sea Power: Present and Future* (1893; repr., London: Sampson Low, 1897), 39–40; Mahan, "The Persian Gulf and International Relations."

the advent of rival centers of industry and empire.³⁴ International competition in the form of rival imperial systems placed hard military imperatives on American world power ambitions.

For now, according to an influential Navy Department report of 1890, the “comparative isolation” of the United States would “soon cease to exist.” With the expansion of the US export trade and the anticipated opening of the Panama Canal, the United States was coming into “sharp commercial competition with others in every part of the world.” In this context, American commerce was “certain to reach out and obstruct the interests of foreign nations,” generating a corresponding anxiety about the “weakness and total lack of preparation” of the US navy as a global fighting force.³⁵ Moving forward, the US Naval Policy Board demanded, “we should maintain a navy at least equal in strength to the most powerful navy in the world, on the theory that we might have to fight such a nation.”³⁶ At the same time, a wider network of island bases and coaling stations should be constructed to allow the navy to act with over a comparable range to the fleets of the British Empire.³⁷ This was how Mahan explained the necessity of American naval build-up, conceived as a direct extension of the competitive development of rival national-colonial economic systems:

The provision of markets for the production of an ever-increasing number of inhabitants is a leading political problem of the day, the solution of which is sought by methods commercial and methods political, so essentially combative, so offensive and defensive in character, that direct military action would be only a development of them, a direct consequent; not a breach of continuity in spirit, however it might be in form. As the interaction of commerce and finance shows a unity in the modern civilized world, so does the struggle for new markets, and for predominance in old, reveal the unsubdued diversity. Here every state is for itself; and in every great state the look for the desired object is outward, just as it was in the days when England and Holland fought over the Spice Islands and the other worlds newly opening before them.³⁸

In light of these perceived priorities, the American state launched an unprecedented build-up of naval force. This project departed fundamentally from the traditional pattern of peacetime demobilization, which had seen the US Navy shrink from 700 to just 45 ships within fifteen years of the Civil War. In the period 1880-1905, the share of the federal budget devoted to military spending increased from 20 percent to more than 40 percent. While the budget for the US Army tripled, the Navy budget rose almost eightfold, receiving over 20 percent of overall federal spending in 1905, compared to less than 6 percent in 1880. This investment drive, increasingly backed by the high-income Republican states of the northeast and north central United States, enabled the creation of an increasingly large and professionalized American navy. This process of naval expansion mirrored the growth of the American export trade. From 1888 to 1898, US exports increased by more than 75 percent in value, from \$695 million to \$1,231 million, and by a further 51 percent between 1898 and 1908, to \$1,861. By 1908, 40.9 percent of this exports were made up of manufactured goods, which rose from 4.1 percent of

³⁴ Rear Admiral French Ensor Chadwick, “Opening Address Delivered by the President of the War College,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 28 (1902): 251–68; Fiske, “American Naval Policy.”

³⁵ US Navy Department, “Report of Policy Board,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 16, no. 2 (1890): 204.

³⁶ US Navy Department, 206.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Mahan, “Considerations Governing the Disposition of Navies,” 146–47.

total world exports in 1886-1890 to 11.7 percent in 1899 and 13 percent by 1913. At the same time, overseas investments increased by 257 percent, from \$700 million in 1897 to \$2,500 million in 1908, with the total income earned from this outlay rising from \$38 million in 1900 to \$108 million in 1910. Even though a large domestic market made world trade a relatively minor component of American growth, the protection and extension of American commerce was one of the most cited justifications for increased military investments during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.³⁹

While the strategic policies advocated in this context were diverse, the late-nineteenth century US military elite were generally united in stressing the American economy's vulnerability to European naval power in an era of rising protectionism;⁴⁰ the importance of governmental coordination of the relationship between the navy's commercial and strategic functions;⁴¹ military practices of commercial "blockading;"⁴² and "the economical and defensive value of a prosperous merchant marine."⁴³ These analyses shared a common framework of understanding which yoked the apparent needs of the United States' "foreign commerce" to the conflicts of "imperialism" associated with the tightly integrated spaces of world politics and economy.⁴⁴ Within the US political-military establishment this orientation to imperial globalism became the locus of geopolitical outlooks and strategic decision-making — a framework of priorities that not only sought the control of overseas markets through maritime force, but also fostered a broader project of national society-building which yoked American liberalism to the highly-militarized dynamics of industrial-era power politics and battleship rivalry.⁴⁵

The appeal of such expansionary imperial projects, as noted in previous chapters, was directly bound to the existence of an empire-centered international order built on exclusionary standards of civilization.⁴⁶ In Roosevelt's terms, the extension of the American state into a kind

³⁹ The statistics in this paragraph are from Ben Baack and Edward Ray, "The Political Economy of the Origins of the Military-Industrial Complex in the United States," *The Journal of Economic History* 45, no. 2 (June 1985): 370–71, 374. This drive for commercial outlets is a well-established feature of the traditional interpretation of US expansion discussed above.

⁴⁰ Alfred Thayer Mahan and Charles Beresford, "Possibilities of an Anglo-American Reunion," *The North American Review* 159, no. 456 (1894): 558.

⁴¹ Lieutenant-Commander F.M. Barber, "A Practical Method of Arriving at the Number Size, Type, Rig and Cost of the Vessels of Which the U.S. Navy Should Consist in Time of Peace," *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* 12, no. 38 (1886): 419–21; Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Preparedness for Naval War," in *The Interest of America in Sea Power: Present and Future* (1896; repr., London: Sampson Low, 1897), 203–10.

⁴² Commander Charles D. Sigsbee, "The Reconstruction and Increase of the Navy," *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* 11, no. 1 (1885): 27.

⁴³ Lieutenant J.D.J. Kelley, "Our Merchant Marine: The Causes of Its Decline and the Means to Be Taken for Its Revival," *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* 8, no. 3 (1882): 37.

⁴⁴ Kelley, 73; Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Retrospect and Prospect," in *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 30; Alfred Thayer Mahan, "Motives to Imperial Federation," in *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 104. For a vivid illustration of the technological changes underlying such perceptions, see, Captain C.H. Stockton Stockton, "The American Inter-oceanic Canal," *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* 26 (1899): 753–98.

⁴⁵ For the full discussion of this later, societal dimension of American world power goals, see section III, below.

⁴⁶ On the nineteenth-century Standard of Civilization as a stratificatory mode of status hierarchy see, Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 5–16; Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 21, 51; cf. John M.

of international “police power” was justified by the maintenance of a “civilized society” where the “wrongdoing or incompetence” of inferior peoples would incur an adequately forceful response.⁴⁷ At the same time, the potential expansion of “uncivilized countries” provided an additional impetus toward military preparedness, especially given the possibility that the spreading of Western military techniques might equip “savages” with “highly trained and equipped” armies.⁴⁸ For the late-nineteenth century generation of American political and military elites, the seemingly natural link between American world power and the expansion of “Western civilization” — a virtual ever-present in the discourse of the time — provided a source of political legitimation and imperial prestige that made the pursuit of expansive strategic goals an appealing symbol of national status.⁴⁹ At a deeper sociocultural level, therefore, the kind of international status hierarchy within which American conceptions of world power emerged was a central driver of their ideological character. This helps to explain both the persistently civilizational framing of US geopolitical goals and the deep-rooted ideological appeal of an expansive foreign policy. The perceived threat of radically different civilizational systems — Slavic, Asiatic, or Teuton — was thus a hallmark feature of the consciously tough-minded Anglo-Saxonism which governed much American world power advocacy.⁵⁰ When war with Germany struck in 1917, the leading Republican statesman Elihu Root argued that the American role was to fight on behalf of Western civilization itself. This was a war “to preserve all the progress that the civilization of a century has made toward Christianity...It was a war between Odin and Christ” to determine whether “the world shall be free.”⁵¹

The shaping effect of these factors — strategic, economic, and cultural — on American grand strategy cannot be fully understood outside the context of intersocietal unevenness traced above. For the increasingly competitive inter-imperial conditions envisaged by American world power advocates were, in part, the product of the destabilizing impact of the United States’ rapid industrial takeoff — its highly protective political economy, unprecedented scale, and far-reaching penetration into world markets. In a letter of 1897, the Austrian foreign minister, Count Goluchowski, captured the dynamic international counter-reactions provoked by this rising “American menace:”

Europe has apparently reached a turning point in her development. The solving of the great problem of the material well-being of nations, which becomes more pressing from year to year, is no longer a distant Utopia. It is near at hand. The disastrous competition which, in all domains of human activity,

Hobson and J. C. Sharman, “The Enduring Place of Hierarchy in World Politics: Tracing the Social Logics of Hierarchy and Political Change,” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2005): 63–98.

⁴⁷ This description of the Roosevelt Corollary is cited in Veaser, *A World Safe for Capitalism*, 4; for Roosevelt’s idea of “police power” see Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim”; James R. Holmes, *Theodore Roosevelt and World Order: Police Power in International Relations* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007).

⁴⁸ Wainwright, “Our Naval Power,” 40; Fiske, “American Naval Policy,” 2.

⁴⁹ The discourse of “civilizational imperialism” is discussed in detail in the next chapter. For a clear overview, see Frank Ninkovich, “Theodore Roosevelt: Civilization as Ideology,” *Diplomatic History* 10, no. 3 (1986): 221–45.

⁵⁰ Chadwick, “Opening Address,” 265; Mahan, *The Problem of Asia*, xix, 67. See also, Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (2002): 1315–53.

⁵¹ Cited in Richard W. Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1954), 121.

we have to submit to from over the seas, and which we will have to encounter in the future, must be registered if the vital interests of Europe are not to suffer, and if Europe is not to fall into gradual decay. Shoulder to shoulder we must ward off the danger that is at our doors...the twentieth century will be a struggle for existence in the domain of economics.⁵²

This economic struggle for survival was the power transition which the German nationalist economist Friedrich List envisaged, in the 1850s, when he described how the emigration of workers to the United States was turning areas of southwestern Germany into so many “dwarf economies.”⁵³ Indeed millions of German immigrants were drawn to the United States as agricultural settlers and laborers over the course of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ The kind of territorially expansionist vision of economic development inscribed by List’s conception of *Nationalökonomie* was one solution to this condition of emerging backwardness.⁵⁵ In this context, the imperial pursuit of a German-dominated Mittelfrika and Mitteleuropa promised to place Germany on equal terms with the most expansive of contemporary world powers: the British Empire, Russia, and the United States.⁵⁶ Of this triangle of empires, however, it was the United States whose rapid industrial development had done the most to transform the textures of world economy and international order, imposing powerful competitive pressures on late-industrializing powers. “American colonization,” Frederick Jackson Turner summarized, had “become the mother of German colonial policy.”⁵⁷

For Japanese political and military leaders, equally, the rise of American world power — highlighted by the forcible opening of Japan to American commerce by means of gunboat diplomacy (1854-1858) — was an important background to the turn toward overseas expansionism. Having witnessed American encroachments into the Korean Peninsula in the 1860s, the Meiji Government eventually emulated the Western powers by imposing an “unequal treaty” over Korea in 1876.⁵⁸ In the name of a “civilized” and “modern” colonial nation-state, Imperial Japan developed a highly industrialized social system capable of sustaining the strategies of mass-mobilization warfare seen during the Russo-Japanese war over control of Manchuria in 1904-1905.⁵⁹ The hyper-competitive international conjuncture of the

⁵² Cited in David E. Novack and Matthew Simon, “Commercial Responses to the American Export Invasion, 1871-1914: An Essay in Attitudinal History,” *Explorations in Entrepreneurial History*; *New York* 3, no. 2 (Winter 1966): 134–45.

⁵³ As cited in Woodruff D. Smith, *The Ideological Origins of Nazi Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 23.

⁵⁴ Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers*, 252, table 5.4.

⁵⁵ For List’s conception of the relation between national advancement, territorial expansion, and growth, see Friedrich List, *The National System of Political Economy*, trans. Sampson S. Lloyd (1841; repr., London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1909), 113–14.

⁵⁶ For the proliferations of these views in the 1890s and 1900s, views, see Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions: German Policies From 1911 to 1914*, trans. Marian Jackson (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), 230–70, 262–67, 538–39.

⁵⁷ Jens-Uwe Guettel, *German Expansionism, Imperial Liberalism and the United States, 1776-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 76, quotation at 2.

⁵⁸ For the general point see, Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea, 1895-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 33–36, 47; also, Jamie C. Allinson and Alexander Anievas, “The Uneven and Combined Development of the Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity,” *Capital & Class* 34, no. 3 (2010): 81ff.

⁵⁹ For the links between civilizationism, militarism, and colonialism in the Meiji era, see Chushichi Tsuzuki, *The Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan 1825–1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chapter 6; Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 254–56; Duus, *The Abacus*

New Imperialism thus brought into being a struggle for greater spaces of national economic and political control that, at least for many German and Japanese elites, was framed by the “comparative light” of American development.⁶⁰ The following section of the chapter addresses these patterns of uneven and combined development by demonstrating the intersocietal forces which shaped the turn toward imperial expansionism in Imperial Germany and Meiji Japan.

III. The New Imperialism in Intersocietal Perspective

The intensification of uneven development — or, more particularly, intersocietal differentiation in the form of a sustained military and economic power gap — was perhaps the defining outcome of the long-nineteenth-century process of industrialization.⁶¹ In a highly interdependent world economy, the unevenness of industrial change was a simultaneously strategic and ideological condition expressed in a variety of historical forms: in the pressure to emulate or outmatch the technological and administrative infrastructures of more advanced societies; in the demands for political and cultural regeneration produced by the perception of national backwardness; and in the proliferation of foreign-policy strategies aiming to mediate the impact of uneven development in geopolitical terms. Accordingly, the nationally uneven patterns of industrial growth illustrated above not only transformed prevailing international economic hierarchies, but also entwined with the ideological and coercive power structures that underpinned the construction of national-imperial states. The uneven historical geography of industrial capitalism gave rise to a powerful sense of strategic vulnerability linked to the competitive relationality of the inter-imperial field and world economy.⁶²

This experience of geopolitical exposure was central to the discourse of encircling “world empires” — typically, British, American, and Russian — that characterized German *Weltpolitik* advocacy, with its fixation on the perceived centers of territorial expansion and industrial potential.⁶³ In 1891, an internal memorandum of the Japanese government was especially

and the Sword, 49, 256-257 400-413; Alexis Dudden, *Japan's Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), here at 152. For the argument that Japanese colonialism was partly modelled on US territorial expansion, see Alexis Dudden, “Japanese Colonial Control in International Terms,” *Japanese Studies* 25, no. 1 (May 1, 2005): 1–20.

⁶⁰ The term “comparative light” is from Robbie Shilliam, *German Thought and International Relations: The Rise and Fall of a Liberal Project* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17, 20. Without diminishing Shilliam’s argument about the centrality of the consciousness of relative backwardness to the development of German *Realpolitik*, it can be argued that its historical basis would be strengthened by a greater emphasis on the emergence of the United States as an essential mirror of European self-criticism from the mid to late nineteenth-century on. Indeed, the theme of the destructive impact the United States upon European states-system was central to the international thought of Carl Schmitt, one of the central figures in the German nationalist tradition associated with the origins of modern realism. See, *The Nomos of the Earth*, ed. and trans. G.L. Ulmen (1950; repr., New York, NY: Telos, 2003), Part IV.

⁶¹ For the argument that industrialization contributed to the power differentials which made up the Western-colonial international order of the late-nineteenth century, see especially Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 307, 318.

⁶² For an especially clear statement of the “consequential relationality” of capitalist development *per se*, see Fouad Makki, “Reframing Development Theory: The Significance of the Idea of Uneven and Combined Development,” *Theory and Society* 44, no. 5 (October 1, 2015): 490.

⁶³ Cf. Shilliam, *German Thought and International Relations*, 140–42.

explicit about the imperatives which underpinned such thinking: “steel is the mother of industries and the foundation of national defense.”⁶⁴ This imagery cast the process of catch-up development as an urgent duty of the national state, revolving around the dialectics of autonomy and survival. In his account of the origins of the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky concluded that the driving force of such state-led developmental strategies had to be understood not in terms of any “single-track” or “national criteria” but rather with reference to the “international conditions” specific to the capitalist epoch. The exercise of state power was now impelled by the demands of “world development,” which exist, like a whip, outside formal political boundaries.⁶⁵

In this light, the outlines of an intersocietal understanding of the New Imperialism come into view. In contrast to approaches that are based on a uniform systemic tendency — such as “monopoly capitalism” (Lenin-Bukharin) or “anarchical competition” (Neorealism) — this would begin from an understanding of the international power gaps generated by the uneven and combined character of industrialization as a historical process.⁶⁶ These power differentials were rooted, in the first instance, in the historical geography of industrial capitalism itself. As classically formulated by Alexander Gerschenkron, the global pattern of the industrial revolution was defined by a systematic unevenness: the fact that, rather than occurring either simultaneously or separately, the long-nineteenth century pattern of industrial development formed a staggered sequence of interactive regional transitions. Thus, the takeoff of British industry in 1780-1790 was followed by the industrialization of the US, France, and Germany in the period c.1820-1850, before industrial capitalism spread to Russia, Japan, and Italy in the 1880s.⁶⁷ This internationally differentiated process of industrial takeoff gave rise to both a “whip of external necessity,” through the economic and military pressures exerted by the most advanced centers of industry, and a rising economic nationalism, in form of attempts to secure the competitive autonomy of industrializing states against more powerful rivals.⁶⁸ In consequence, every rising industrial economy tended to contain, as part of its emergent

⁶⁴ Cited in, E. Sydney Cawcours, “Industrialization and Technological Change, 1885–1920,” in *The Economic Emergence of Modern Japan*, ed. Kozo Yamamura (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 91.

⁶⁵ Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (1932; repr., London: Penguin, 2017), Appendix II, vols. III, 891.

⁶⁶ On the limits of the Lenin-Bukharin thesis, which saw imperial competition as a product of the monopolization of capitalism and its integration with the national state, see also Benno Teschke and Hannes Lacher, “The Changing ‘Logics’ of Capitalist Competition,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 578. Against Lenin and Bukharin’s prediction, there was actually a relative lack of capital exports to “undeveloped” markets. The process of capital export associated with the American development, for example, operated primarily through exports to Europe rather than formal colonialism. Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey* (London: Routledge, 1990), 121–22. This, it should be acknowledged, does not invalidate the broader implication of Lenin’s conception of imperialism: that dynamics of militarism and great-power rivalry in the early-twentieth century were closely tied to the fusion of capitalist economic structures with national states. On this point, see, Norman Etherington, “Reconsidering Theories of Imperialism,” *History and Theory* 21, no. 1 (1982): 1–36.

⁶⁷ For the general point see, Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (Boston, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1962), 42–44. On the timing of these national industrial revolutions, see Sidney Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest: The Industrialization of Europe 1760-1970* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981), 136ff, 185–86; Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 62–64, 122; Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 56.

⁶⁸ Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 5.

intersocietal ties, a tendency to modify its external environment by adding new sources of external pressure to the prevailing conditions of international unevenness. Any major process of industrial restructuring — such as that generated by the colossal growth of American capitalism from 1870 on — was therefore always likely to produce rival strategies of catch-up development marked by the selective emulation of the most advanced forms of economic and military power.

There was thus a deeply patterned intersocietal context to the competitive geopolitical strategies which made up the New Imperialism. In particular, within a specifically empire-centered international hierarchy — where imperial power was the ideological standard to which “civilized” great powers should aspire — the pursuit of economic and strategic resources in form of an extensive overseas domain spoke directly to the sense of strategic vulnerability generated by an Anglo-American dominated international order. In this section, I demonstrate this intersocietal foundation of the New Imperialism by examining the manner in which the experience of American economic expansion constructed the experiences of historical backwardness that shaped the pursuit of imperial expansionism in both Wilhelmine Germany and Meiji Japan.

UNEVEN AND COMBINED DEVELOPMENT: ROOTS OF THE IMPERIAL CONJUNCTURE

To see the intersocietal forces which shaped the escalating imperial competition of the late-nineteenth century, it is first necessary to visualize the long-nineteenth century pattern of industrial development which preceded it. In this era, the international expansion of industrial capitalism from on took place in the context of an increasingly interdependent international system defined by a high degree of transnational connectivity. Linking together societies and regions undergoing socioeconomic transformation at vastly different speeds, the nineteenth century world economy formed a “mighty reality” capable of rapidly “enhancing the differences” between distinct national states.⁶⁹ As a result, the staggered international spread of industrial capitalism beyond its original British heartland tended to produce political-economic formations which differed markedly from the “first” industrial revolution.⁷⁰

Typically, the type of political economy generated by this internationally-mediated process of industrial change was marked by a three-fold series of “graduated deviations” from the British transition to industrialization.⁷¹ First, the national industrial revolutions of the mid to late-nineteenth century were comparatively rapid: the transferal of the most advanced industrial technologies and techniques into less industrialized regions powerfully accelerated the process

⁶⁹ Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*, trans. John G. Wright (1928; repr., New York, NY: Pathfinder, 1996), 27, 41.

⁷⁰ For the argument that Britain’s own economic supremacy was ultimately dependent on a wider set of intersocietal, imperial, and geopolitical forces see Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

⁷¹ As summarized in Justin Rosenberg, “Kenneth Waltz and Leon Trotsky: Anarchy in the Mirror of Uneven and Combined Development,” *International Politics* 50, no. 2 (2013): 202; and, Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, 44.

of industrial takeoff in the Americas and continental Europe. Second, this exceptionally fast-paced dynamic of socioeconomic transformation tended to proceed in tandem with more intensive developmental strategies: the competitive demands of overcoming backwardness meant that investment banks and state bureaucracies would play a correspondingly greater role in the process of late-development, generating a political economy markedly different to that of Great Britain. Third, this set of conditions meant that late-developing societies were unlikely to replicate the liberalizing, *laissez-faire* character of the first industrial revolution: the more statist industrial development became, the more likely its politico-ideological foundations were to assume collectivist, nationalist, and even virulent fascist forms.⁷² This set of departures from the original pattern of the Britain's early-developing industrial capitalism encapsulates what Trotsky conceptualized as "the law of *combined development* — by which we mean a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of the separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms."⁷³ Under pressure to rapidly acquire the foundations of industrial modernity, societies like Meiji Japan and Imperial Germany thus tended to amalgamate market institutions with ideological and geopolitical drives, toward militarism and expansionism, whose historical articulation marked the reality of development-as-combined. Great powers would now be defined by their capacity to translate a rapidly evolving collection of industrial technologies into extensive means of global-power projection, as the naval arms races of the last-quarter of the nineteenth century illustrate.⁷⁴

The global economic hierarchy which shaped this highly competitive international environment was originally defined by the privileges of industrial priority enjoyed by the British Empire and its colonial extension. From around 1870 on, however, the distinctive temporal sequencing and territorial structure of American industrialization fostered a novel dynamic of intersocietal unevenness which powerfully intensified the experience of Anglophone dominance. Located within an exceptionally favorable pattern of socioeconomic trends, the nineteenth-century pattern of American agricultural settlement coincided with the proliferation of industrial farming systems, transatlantic freight shipping, and abundant reserves of British finance capital. Thousands of British companies set up to invest in the United States, with UK-based investments in the American railroad system rising from \$486 to \$2,850 million between 1870 and 1910.⁷⁵ Receiving about one-fifth of British foreign investment by 1913, the American economy occupied a privileged position within Anglophone finance capitalism, rooted in its strong historical and cultural ties with the City of London.⁷⁶ These patterns of foreign investment and technological change helped the United States establish a continent-spanning national market integrated by the world's largest railway network. This extensive national economy was directly bound to the process of American territorial expansion, as settlers pushed westward to acquire the new frontier crops in the wheat-belt region of the Great

⁷² Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, 22–26, 44, 50–51, 86, 191, 194–96, 362–63.

⁷³ Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, 5, emphasis in original.

⁷⁴ For the general argument see, Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 261ff.

⁷⁵ Dorothy R. Adler, *British Investment in American Railways* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1970), 166–68; Mira Wilkins, *The History of Foreign Investment in the United State to 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 161, 197.

⁷⁶ Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 4.

Plains.⁷⁷ The advantages which accrued to the particular context and timing of American growth thus helped make agriculture rather than manufacturing the initial driver of the United States' transition to sustained economic growth and expansion.

As a result, the distinctive sequencing of US economic development laid the foundations for the European "grain invasion."⁷⁸ Wheat exports played a key role in this transformation, rising from 31.2 to 153.5 million bushels between 1871 and 1880, of which 94 per cent was sent to Europe.⁷⁹ This outflow of cheap US agricultural exports helped reduce the value of farm rents by between 10 and 20 percent in Britain, France and Germany (1870-1913).⁸⁰ Given the predominantly agrarian character of most late-nineteenth century European and East Asian economies, this fact hastened the rise of protectionist tariff policies and brought landowning aristocracies into permanent decline.⁸¹ Indeed, Germany (1879-1902), France (1885-1894), and Italy (1887-1894) now imposed, and later raised, duties on agricultural imports, generating the abandonment of free trade that dominated the escalation of international economic rivalries down to WWI.⁸² The external expansion of American agriculture thus played a central role in the breakdown of a *laissez-faire* world economy. It helped engender the territorialization of political economies along national or colonial lines that marked the advent of the New Imperialism.

At the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, the expansion of US manufacturing redoubled the effects of this growing power-shift. With US productivity growing faster than any other industrial power in the period 1870-1950, the American economy acquired an unprecedented international dominance.⁸³ By 1913, the United States was the world's dominant producer of mineral resources and fossil fuels, producing 36 per cent of all iron ore, 39 of all coal, 56 per cent of all copper, and 65 per cent of all petroleum. By 1914, its manufacturing output was more than that of Britain, Germany, and France combined. For many European economies, this marked a permanent subordination of economic fortunes. In Germany, for example, American imports increased by some 316 per cent between 1889 and 1913 while German exports to the United States grew by just 75 per cent, establishing a significant trade deficit. By 1900, Germany relied on US imports for 83 per cent of its petroleum, 82 per cent of its cotton, 22 per cent of its wheat, and 79 per cent of its copper. To mitigate these external pressures, European economies would have to acquire new sources of national competitiveness within global markets, not least because the United States imposed

⁷⁷ Donald W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. III (Yale University Press, 1986), 228, 293–94.

⁷⁸ O'Rourke, "The European Grain Invasion, 1870–1913."

⁷⁹ Simon and Novack, "Some Dimensions of the American Commercial Invasion of Europe, 1871–1914," 599.

⁸⁰ O'Rourke, "The European Grain Invasion, 1870–1913," 798.

⁸¹ The seminal account of the endurance of the European landowning classes through the nineteenth century is Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

⁸² Giovanni Federico, *Feeding the World: An Economic History of Agriculture, 1800-2000* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 190; Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest: The Industrialization of Europe 1760-1970*, 260ff.

⁸³ Abramovitz Moses, "Catch-up and Convergence in the Postwar Growth Boom and After," in *Convergence of Productivity: Cross-National Studies and Historical Evidence*, ed. William J. Baumol, Richard R. Nelson, and Edward N. Wolff (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994), 91.

such tight tariff restrictions on imports.⁸⁴ This high tariff policy reflected the fact that the success of American industry was largely a product of its large domestic market, which, for example, consumed around 90 per cent of American cotton production as late as 1914.⁸⁵ Yet over the course of the nineteenth century, this closed door strategy of national development combined with rapid export growth as American exports grew from 3.2 to 15 per cent of the world total by 1900. In the decade before WWI, the total size of US exports increased by some 240 per cent sparking an unprecedented Americanization of the world economy (1895-1914).⁸⁶

Contemporary European observers thus began to look anxiously upon the “American invaders” flooding European markets.⁸⁷ In his widely-read account of the “Americanization of the World,” British journalist W.T. Stead concluded that there was “something pathetic in the heroic pose of the Germany emperor resisting the American flood. It is Canute over again, but the Kaiser has not planted himself on the shore, passively to wait the rising of the tide in order to rebuke the flattery of his courtiers; he takes his stand where land and water meet, and with the drawn sword defies the advancing tide.”⁸⁸ As this depiction of American global expansionism implied, the external growth of the US economy was a supremely political process, which transformed international relations as well as the structural equilibrium of the world economy. Its supercharged industrialization, massive natural endowments, and insulated internal market, made the United States a central factor in the conceptions of comparative backwardness and economic nationalism within and against which projects of external expansionism were typically framed.⁸⁹ From the perceptions of industrial competition and territorial rivalry formed in this context, a new imperialism of world power rivalries was formed.⁹⁰ Like the “English agitation for Greater Britain, and Russian plans for world power,” wrote German economist Gustav Schmoller to German Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz in 1897, the “enormous dangers of Panamericanism” demonstrated the necessity of an assertive “export and naval policy.”⁹¹

Although the effects of the American export invasion were felt most acutely in Europe, Japan too was subject to the external pressures US expansion in both economic and geopolitical

⁸⁴ Beckert, “American Danger,” 1139–41, 1143–45, 1149.

⁸⁵ Concepción Betrán and Michael Huberman, “International Competition in the First Wave of Globalization: New Evidence on the Margins of Trade,” *The Economic History Review* 69, no. 1 (2016): 266.

⁸⁶ Robert Lipsey, “U.S. Foreign Trade and the Balance of Payments, 1800–1913,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States: Volume 2: The Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Robert E. Gallman and Stanley L. Engerman, vol. 2, Cambridge Economic History of the United States (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 688, Table 15.1; Simon and Novack, “Some Dimensions of the American Commercial Invasion of Europe, 1871–1914,” 602.

⁸⁷ Gavin Wright, “The Origins of American Industrial Success, 1879-1940,” *The American Economic Review* 80, no. 4 (1990): 652; cf. the documentation in Novack and Simon, “Commercial Responses to the American Export Invasion, 1871-1914.”

⁸⁸ W.T. Stead, *The Americanization of the World* (London: Horace Markley, 1902), 164.

⁸⁹ Beckert, “American Danger,” 1147ff.

⁹⁰ Tony Smith, *The Pattern of Imperialism since: The United States, Great Britain, and the Late-Industrializing World since 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 35–49.

⁹¹ Cited in Erik Grimmer-Solem, “A Place in the Sun: Rethinking the Political Economy of German Overseas Expansion and Navalism Before the Great War,” in *New Perspectives on the History of Political Economy*, ed. Robert Fredona and Sophus A. Reinert (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 257.

terms. After the US annexation of Hawaii in 1898, Japanese hostility to American expansion led to increasing nationalist opposition to the Open Door policy. Against the wider background of imperial encroachments into China, this sense of strategic vulnerability was central to the Meiji oligarchy's efforts to replace feudal forms of social and military organization with a modern conscription army and merchant marine. Like the German elites who oversaw the process of national-state building after 1871, perceptions of backwardness played a key role in this process, which was shaped by Japan's comparative lack of either natural resource endowments or industrial capacity.⁹² Even after the industrialization drive of the late-nineteenth century, Japan produced just 107,000 tons of crude steel in 1905, as compared to the US total of 20.3 million tons; by 1913, one Indiana steel mill produced five times as much as the entire Japanese steel industry.⁹³ It is not surprising, then, that the Japanese navy came to view its US counterpart, backed by vastly superior industrial resources, as the preeminent threat to the strategic and economic interests of Japan in Manchuria and the wider Pacific Rim.⁹⁴ As described by Barrington Moore, such threats of "foreign partition, or a repetition of the fate of India and China" combined with the "lure of markets and glory" to unite the Meiji elite around the desirability of an increasingly activist foreign policy.⁹⁵ As in Germany, external expansionism was the common direction of this strategic orientation. Thus, with the annexation of Korea and Taiwan, the Meiji state this doubled the area of arable land under Japanese control in the period 1895-1910.⁹⁶

More will be said about the actual strategic outlooks which shaped the rising tensions between the US and Japanese empires below. What bears emphasis at this stage is the constitutive impact of American territorial and economic expansion on the wider New Imperialism. In restructuring the prevailing distribution of territorial and economic resources, it can now be seen, the late-nineteenth century emergence of the United States as a world power generated a complex of *comparative* and *interactive* causal mechanisms which helped transform the organization of international politics itself.

On the one hand, the comparative example of American industrial prosperity helped impose a distinctive territorialism upon the struggle to access and control global markets.⁹⁷ Although European colonialism long precedes the nineteenth century, the emergence of the United States as a continent-spanning nation-state with tightly protected economic borders shaped wider a politics of territorial mastery and economic nationalism, not least because the resource-intensive character of late-nineteenth century capitalism was seen to demand the expansion of

⁹² Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 56, 76; Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 154, 200–202.

⁹³ S. Yonekura, *The Japanese Iron and Steel Industry, 1850-1990: Continuity and Discontinuity* (Springer, 1994), 1–2; Crawcour, "Industrialization and Technological Change, 1885–1920," 95–96.

⁹⁴ Tsuzuki, *The Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan 1825–1995*, 176.

⁹⁵ Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. (London: Allen Lane, 1967), 290.

⁹⁶ Adam D. Sheingate, *The Rise of the Agricultural Welfare State: Institutions and Interest Group Power in the United States, France, and Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 16.

⁹⁷ Beckert, "American Danger."

frontiers in order to access the raw materials of industrial takeoff.⁹⁸ On the other hand, the forms of intersocietal unevenness generated by American expansion fostered the structured dynamic between modernity and backwardness from which the desire for an expansive national-imperial state flourished. Exemplifying this trend were the state-led strategies of socioeconomic modernization pursued by states like Germany, Japan, and Russia after c.1880. While these projects were shaped by local social forces and ideologies, their temporal synchronicity, formal similarities, and common orientation toward imperial expansion indicates their shared location within an imperial world economy dominated by the British and American Empires. The dominant shapes of *fin-de-siècle* imperialism — involving a proliferation of efforts to territorialize of economies along national-colonial lines and control world markets by maritime force — were thus conditioned by the timing, character, and scale of the United States' emergence as a leading industrial power. To illustrate this point, it is worth more fully considering how the American-centred conditions of industrial unevenness were mediated by the foreign-policy strategies of the German and Japanese empires.

THE POWER POLITICS OF LATE-DEVELOPMENT: LOGICS OF EXPANSIONISM IN MEIJI JAPAN AND IMPERIAL GERMANY

Of particular importance to the concerns of this chapter are the rationales for territorial competition and imperial rivalry that brought those societies in the orbit of US industrialization into conflict with the expansive project of the Open Door. Within the general framework of analysis elaborated so far — the structured dynamic between uneven development, national-imperial state-formation, and the material and symbolic power struggles of the emerging international order — it is possible to identify at least two distinct logics of expansionism from the foreign-policy records of Meiji Japan and Imperial Germany. Enumerating these will better illustrate the pattern of international transformations which constructed world power rivalries of the *fin-de-siècle*.

First, there is the familiar fact that both German and Japanese imperialisms were part of a conscious effort to access global markets in a world widely thought to be defined by escalating economic rivalries. A 1902 memorandum to the cabinet by Japanese foreign minister Komura Jutarō illuminates some of these motivations:

Competition through commercial and industrial activity and through overseas enterprises is a phenomenon of grave importance in recent international relations. Its emergence has been most prominent in the Far East. For a number of years the Western countries...have been zealous in expanding their rights in mining, or in railroads, or in internal waterways, and in various other directions on the Asian continent, especially in China...However, when we look at the measures [taken by] our own empire, which has the most important ties of interest in the area, separated only by a thin

⁹⁸ Barbier, *Scarcity and Frontiers*, 372–402.

stretch of water, there is not much to be seen yet. Both those in government and those outside it regard this as highly regrettable.⁹⁹

For the late Meiji oligarchy, an active export trade represented an essential route to overcoming long-term balance-of-payments problems and affording the raw materials and armaments necessary for independent industrial power. By the late 1890s, there was a concern that the continued growth of food imports might undermine this political-economic strategy, making the ability to penetrate foreign markets an essential part of the strategic calculations which underpinned Japanese expansionism. Much like the US experience of naval build-up in 1890s, legislative efforts to promote a merchant marine and stimulate export growth went hand in hand with the desire for a large maritime force capable of defending economic interests overseas. This project of external penetration was focused on the markets of an Asian continent where European and American influence threatened to undermine Japanese competitiveness. Early supporters of Pan-Asianism thus emphasized the importance of a Japan-led regional order centered on the military and economic dominance of the Meiji state.¹⁰⁰ While this project anticipated the so-called “Greater East Asian Co-Prosperty Sphere” of the 1930s and 1940s, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries Japanese expansionism revolved around a series of incursions into the vaunted “China Market” — with the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and the Twenty-One Demands in 1915 the most prominent examples. By the time of the Russo-Japanese War, the Chief of the Army General Staff and future Prime Minister, General Yamagata Aritomo, considered Manchuria an economic “life line.”¹⁰¹ The penetration and later annexation of Korea was framed very much in these terms, with Japanese policy-makers seeking to “establish foreign settlement zones,” secure mining rights, and “monopolize the concessions to build telegraph lines” and railroads.¹⁰²

In Germany, the architects of *Weltpolitik* expressed similar concerns about the control of world markets in the context of rising international competitiveness. The famous “Place in the Sun” speech delivered by German Foreign Secretary Bernhard von Bülow in 1897 encapsulated the search for new spheres of external economic and strategic interest that underpinned these anxieties:

...It is unwise, from the outset, to exclude Germany from competition with other nations in lands with a rich and promising future. The days when Germans granted one of its neighbors the earth, the other the sea, and reserved from themselves the sky, where pure doctrine reigns — those times are past. We are happy to respect the interests of other great powers in China, secure in the knowledge that our own interests will also receive the recognition they deserve. In a word: we do not want to put anyone in our shadow, but we also demand our place in the sun. In East Asia as in the West Indies we will be anxious

⁹⁹ Cited in Peter Duus, “Economic Dimensions of Meiji Imperialism: The Case of Korea,” in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, ed. Ramon Hawley Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 133.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Schiltz, *The Money Doctors from Japan: Finance, Imperialism, and the Building of the Yen Bloc, 1895-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 131–32.

¹⁰¹ As cited in Mark R. Peattie, “Japanese Attitudes Toward Colonialism,” in *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, ed. Ramon Hawley Myers and Mark R. Peattie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 67.

¹⁰² Duus, “Economic Dimensions of Meiji Imperialism: The Case of Korea,” 138.

to protect our rights and our interests without harshness, but also without weakness, true to the traditions of German politics.¹⁰³

Like their Japanese contemporaries,¹⁰⁴ German advocates of *Weltpolitik* and *Flottenpolitik* confronted the escalation of imperial rivalries during the 1890s from a position of perceived weakness.¹⁰⁵ A “Place in the Sun” implied a struggle for access to world markets increasingly dominated by American and British industries, where long-range plans for naval expansion would be required to further the interests of domestic commerce, and through which political and military elites believed war against rival world-empires might rapidly emerge.¹⁰⁶ During the 1890s, powerful pressure groups like the Navy League and Pan-German League advocated the projects of colonialism and military buildup that underpinned the Naval Bills of 1898 and 1900, doubling the size of the German battle fleet. Aware of the growing “Anglo-Saxon fraternization” championed by US geopolitical strategists such as Mahan and Roosevelt, the German naval elites who supported this policy, like as Admiral Bendemann and Otto von Diederichs, were pessimistic about the Germany’s fate in an era of “industrial competition,” even looking toward an alliance with Russia as possible solution to dominance of the Anglo-American powers.¹⁰⁷ After the Spanish-American War of 1898, Tirpitz’s calculus for naval expansion was often framed against the comparative prosperity of the United States, whose “absorption” of German economic migrants and growing maritime capacities became both a mirror of national backwardness and symbol of the Reich’s obstructed path to “world-power status.”¹⁰⁸ “Without sea-power,” he lamented, “Germany’s position in the world resembled a mollusc without a shell.”¹⁰⁹

The German and Japanese elites who pushed the expansionist agenda of the 1890s and 1900s were thus responding to the ways in which the regional pattern of the industrialization process, its deeply uneven intersocietal structure, turned the experience of late-development into a pressing geopolitical dilemma. Their imperial projections and geopolitical strategies spoke directly to the external whip of competitive pressures generated by a hierarchy of industry and empire dominated by the Anglo-American Empires. This could be termed the power politics of arrested development.

Second, the expansionist dynamic of the modern, colonial era imbibed the shared ideological architecture of a stratified international order built on exclusionary standards of civilization.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Cited in Erik Grimmer-Solem, *Learning Empire: Globalization and the German Quest for World Status, 1875-1919* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 196.

¹⁰⁴ S. C. M Paine, *The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 6–9, 49, 50.

¹⁰⁵ A central theme of Fischer, *War of Illusions*.

¹⁰⁶ For these perceptions and the how they made war against the United States seem increasingly likely, consult Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States Before World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2016), 61ff.

¹⁰⁷ Bönker, 34, 62.

¹⁰⁸ Grand-Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, *My Memoirs* (London: Hurst & Blackett, Ltd, 1919), 81, 120, 124, 125, 136.

¹⁰⁹ Tirpitz, 58. For an account of German navalism emphasizing perceptions of American territorial and economic expansion, see Grimmer-Solem, “A Place in the Sun.”

¹¹⁰ On the nineteenth-century Standard of Civilization as a stratificatory mode of status hierarchy see, Gong, *The Standard of “Civilization” in International Society*, 5–16; Zarakol, *After Defeat*, 21, 51.

The widely-felt existence of a civilizational league table, divided between civilized/modern and barbarian/undeveloped states gave imperialist bids for world power status a sense of cultural meaningfulness that went beyond any purely material-economic calculus. Both German and Japanese imperialists advanced projects of expansionism with the aim of creating modern civilized states capable of dominating prevailing status hierarchies. This concern with status explains why the overseas empires of both Meiji Japan and Imperial Germany typically produced complex socio-cultural systems that aimed to transform foreign societies into civilized forms, rather than simply treating colonial possessions as a space of unmediated economic extraction. Equally, it provides a basis for understanding why such doctrines of imperial expansion were so often characterized in terms of the cultural or ethnic virtues, if not outright superiority, of the imperial core itself.

In this context, the claim by Japan that its imperialism was a civilizing mission¹¹¹ partly inverted the power hierarchies of the European standard of civilization, turning it into a pretext for external expansionism. During the build-up to the war against Russia during the 1890s and 1900s, the portrayal of Japan as a civilized power in a struggle against a barbarian Slavic enemy became increasingly commonplace.¹¹² In the words of one editorial that appeared in the newspaper *Yorozu chōhō* in 1904: “Russia is the shame of Europe, we need to defeat this nation in the name of civilisation, in the name of peace, and in the name of humanity. Europe should be pleased that there is a new nation in the Far East which will bear the torch of their civilization and is suppressing the troublemaker, Russia.”¹¹³ Given the existence of such politicized civilizational standards, the problem of international status anxieties was intrinsic to the dialectic between modernity and backwardness generated by the dynamic of uneven development. In this context, no project of imperialism could ever be a straightforward duel for global markets; they also carried the weight of claims to civilizational standing and great-power status. For German advocates of *Weltpolitik* like Tirpitz and Bülow, naval expansion in response to rise of “Anglo-Saxon” dominance thus represented a valid response to the “insecure politico-economic foundations of our whole civilization and power.”¹¹⁴ The tendency to visualize Russia as a “barbarian colossus” seeking some kind of pan-Slavic hegemony spoke directly to these perceived status anxieties, as did the familiar conception of Japan as a “yellow peril.”¹¹⁵ These civilizational claims cast the German political elite as a potential *Herrenvolk* with claims to world power that required the support of military force. This could be termed the power politics of civilizationism.

These distinct logics of expansionism — developmentalist and civilizational — came together with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, which many contemporaries looked to as the

¹¹¹ Shogo Suzuki, “Japan’s Socialization into Janus-Faced European International Society,” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2005): 155; cf. Peattie, “Japanese Attitudes Toward Colonialism,” 94–95.

¹¹² Naoko Shimazu, *Japanese Society at War: Death, Memory and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 159–95.

¹¹³ Shimazu, 161. As Shimazu illustrates, the *New York Times* in the US and the *Times* of London sometimes echoed such sentiments in the 1904–1905 period.

¹¹⁴ For this and other statements of Tirpitz’s civilizationism see Tirpitz, *My Memoirs*, 111, 80, 83.

¹¹⁵ Prince Bernhard von Bülow Bülow, *Memoirs, 1909–1919*, trans. Geoffrey Dunlop (New York, NY: Putnam, 1919), 145–46.

epitome of a new global power politics centered on the “cult of the offensive.”¹¹⁶ For Mahan, like other members of the US military establishment, it demonstrated the primacy of “diplomacy using force” to the conduct of modern interstate relations while also raising the possibility that other polities outside the imagined orbit of Western civilization might achieve similar victories, unless the European powers embarked on adequate programs of military expansion.¹¹⁷ For Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō, commander of the Imperial Navy at the Battle of Tsushima, the war was similarly a sign of the primacy of naval power and, more importantly, proof that the Empire of Japan was once more able to compete with the imperial powers of Britain and the United States.¹¹⁸ In Russia, by contrast, defeat was felt as a landmark humiliation: many of the naval commanders defeated at the Battle of Tsushima reported that they would opt for suicide after Rear-Admiral Nebogatov announced the surrender of the Baltic Fleet.¹¹⁹ More broadly, the world-historical significance of Japan’s victory became a central theme of debates about the future of imperialism. In Europe, it devastated a prevailing discourse of civilizational supremacy, generating a series of increasingly racialized lamentations on the decline of the West, which became crucial to conservative notions of geopolitics and *lebensraum*. Among anti-colonial movements and intellectuals, it offered a concrete model of state-led modernization as a possible response to Western dominance.

This combination of developments made the Russo-Japanese War a threshold to modernity: a historical breakthrough that defined and motivated an emerging imperial age. On the one hand, its diplomacy and political economy demonstrated the advent of Anglophone finance capitalism as an overarching condition of interstate rivalries. Wall Street and the City of London, which accounted for over half of Japan’s war-effort,¹²⁰ provided the framework of global finance that made Japanese victory possible, while the Tsarist state’s relative marginalization in global capital markets — an effect of the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 — provided a harsh demonstration of the geopolitical implication of economic backwardness.¹²¹ On the other, the way the war catalyzed the outbreak of the 1905 Russian Revolution¹²² demonstrated the capacity for the new conditions of mass-mobilization warfare to translate into revolutionary openings for class politics. Moreover, the war’s aftermath was in many ways a marker and precursor of future conflicts. For some Japanese nationalists, victory

¹¹⁶ John W. Steinberg, “The Operational Overview,” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero*, ed. John W. Steinberg et al., vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 106.

¹¹⁷ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Armaments and Arbitration, Or: The Place of Force in the International Relations of States* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1911), 112; also, McCully, *The McCully Report*.

¹¹⁸ Tōgō’s speech was reported in the *New York Times*, February 28, 1906. See Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Principles Involved in the War Between Japan and Russia,” in *Naval Administration and Warfare* (1904; repr., London: Sampson Low, Martston, & Company Limited, 1908), 92 for an impressed reaction.

¹¹⁹ See the eye-witness accounts in J.N. Westwood, *Witnesses of Tsushima* (Tokyo: Dipomatic Press, 1970), 262.

¹²⁰ Richard J. Smethurst, “American Capital and Japan’s Victory in the Russo-Japanese War,” in *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05: Centennial Perspectives*, ed. Rotem Kowner, vol. Volume 1 (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007), 64.

¹²¹ Dominic Lieven, “Dilemmas of Empire 1850–1918. Power, Territory, Identity,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 2 (April 1, 1999): 170.

¹²² Rotem Kowner, “The High Road to the First World War? Europe and the Outcomes of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-1914,” in *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05: Centennial Perspectives*, ed. Rotem Kowner, vol. Volume 1 (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007), 295.

over Russia was a stepping stone toward a future war against the United States.¹²³ As American financial interests penetrated South Manchuria under the sign of the Open Door, between 1907 and 1912, Imperial Japan concluded a series of diplomatic conventions with Tsarist Russia intended to carve out regional spheres influence and prepare for the possibility of war against the US empire and its British allies.¹²⁴ As would be the case in the era of the two world wars, strategic rivalries now moved within a globalized political economy dominated by Anglo-American finance capital.¹²⁵ As Aritomo put it in 1918, “before our wounds from the war with Russia had healed...we sedulously concluded the agreements with the Tsar to counter the establishment of American power.”¹²⁶

The transformative effects of American industrial growth after 1870 amount, as Sven Beckert has argued, to a “second great divergence” defined by the rebalancing of global economic power along Anglo-American lines and the forging of national and colonial territorial political economies as the dominant units of the world market.¹²⁷ Faced with the rising fact of American industrial supremacy, social elites throughout the international order sought strategies of external power-projection that would mediate or constrain what many viewed as a diminishing international status. More than any direct commitment to a realist logic of power-balancing or *Realpolitik*, what emerges from this history is the extent to which the advent of the United States as a new model of industrial power — a territorially integrated, continent-spanning national economy fundamentally different from the informal empire of British capitalism — transformed the character of power politics itself. The desire for greater spaces of national political-economic control overseas figured by the ideal of a “Place in the Sun” called not for the imposition of a balance of power, but rather a series of high-stakes bids for imperial expansion as a promising strategic mediation between the conditions of backwardness and the rising pressures of industrial competition. The uneven and combined development of industrial capitalism within the empire-centered international order and world economy of the nineteenth century therefore gave the pursuit of world power its distinct historical rationality. In the following section, I examine how the geopolitical backlash generated by American expansionism shaped the world ambitions of the US political-military itself. By encouraging the pursuit of more sustained strategies of global penetration, the intersocietal context of American political and economic development played a decisive role in the United States’ own trajectory toward imperialism.

IV. Grand Strategy and World Economy

The rationalizations of US expansionism now need to be reconstructed in further detail. For one of the decisive features of the United States’ transition to world power status in this era was

¹²³ LaFeber, *The Clash*, 75–77.

¹²⁴ Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 47ff; cf. Frederick R. Dickinson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 25.

¹²⁵ For this conception of WWI and WWII see Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*; Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (London: Penguin, 2014).

¹²⁶ As cited in Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention*, 122, note 303.

¹²⁷ Beckert, “American Danger.”

the leading influence of a political-military elite which, organized within the American state apparatus, exercised a high degree of policy autonomy and national cohesion. With exceptionally high levels of labor repression and domestic militarism, the American state crystallized around forms of elite rule that were cohesive in their support for industrial capitalism, maritime force, and progressively more centralized political institutions.¹²⁸ A detailed examination of the US political-military elites' rationalizations of external expansion and great-power rivalry is therefore essential for establishing the political drives which transformed the United States — formerly a regionally fragmented polity lacking significant military capacities — along national-imperial lines. It will then be possible to assess the ways in which the United States' own rationales for world power rendered the pressures of intersocietal unevenness in a highly particular political form — one that revolved centrally around the tensions between the territorialization of American society as a bounded national order and its imbrication within the global conflict dynamics launched by the competitive expansion of states like Germany and Japan. In this context, the pursuit of world power not only signified an expansive scale of economic and security concerns but, more fundamentally, a conservative project of political order building aimed at the creation of a nation-centered industrial society prepared for extensive engagements in global power politics. This was the strategic mediation linking the domestic to the international.

RATIONALIZATIONS FOR WORLD POWER

In 1889, a year before the US Naval Board announced its plans for a global-scope battle fleet, Admiral Stephen B. Luce, set the tone for future conceptions of American world power. In a time of increasing world trade and commercial rivalries, he argued, any state lacking an adequate “offensive navy” faced the prospect of “national disaster.”¹²⁹ Like other members of the US military establishment, Luce regarded military preparedness as a basic prerequisite of both economic and cultural development. If the “instrumentality of the sword” was a central driver of “human progress,” the creation of a naval force capable of defending and enlarging American power overseas was a pressing moral and material imperative.¹³⁰ Emphasizing the connections between military power, commercial expansion, and civilizational development, US elites viewed war preparedness as an urgent social necessity¹³¹ catalyzed by the growing technical and economic demands of battleship warfare.¹³² The predictions of future conflict which underpinned this evolving militarism were often couched in a language of necessity with direct echoes of Social Darwinism.¹³³ “In the economy of nature,” Luce stressed, “war is sent” for the “forming of national character, the shaping of a people’s destiny, and the spreading of

¹²⁸ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 2, The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 163–64, 644–46.

¹²⁹ Luce, “Our Future Navy,” 58, 65.

¹³⁰ Luce, “The Benefits of War,” 675–76.

¹³¹ Luce, 683; Roosevelt, “Washington’s Forgotten Maxim,” 448; also, Taylor, “The Control of the Pacific”; Luce, “The Dawn of Naval History,” 449.

¹³² Henry C. Taylor, “Battle Tactics: The Value of Concentration,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 12, no. 2 (1886): 142–55.

¹³³ Extensively documented in Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy: The Golden Age of Annapolis and the Emergence of Modern American Navalism*. (1972; repr., Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 204–37.

civilization.” Like the “law of evolution,” warfare was part of the “operation of the economic laws of nature for the government of the human family.”¹³⁴ As illustrated by the ongoing decline of China — an “immovable civilization” unqualified in the conduct of “war against a superior race” — the “law of the rise and fall of nations” was an impending challenge which demanded an aggressive policy of military preparedness and global penetration.¹³⁵ Such conceptions of an emerging global political-economic space thus held a distinctly intersocietal component bound to the geopolitical and geo-cultural dynamics of imperial competition.

US imperial imaginings of world power thus figured a hypercompetitive international environment centered around rival strategies of economic expansion. “For the manufacturer of the United States the export trade has become a necessity,” argued the US Minister to China, Charles Denby, “and it should be fostered with a jealous care.”¹³⁶ With the European powers struggling to annex territorial possessions and secure economic concessions in East Asia, a critical period of geopolitical and economic restructuring had emerged, exposing the United States to unprecedented international competition.¹³⁷ Whereas the “free-trade imperialism” of the 1840s and 1850s had been a relatively multilateral enterprise, the 1890s saw imperial powers struggle to secure exclusive territorial, political and economic enclaves from which rivals would be excluded.¹³⁸ US naval commanders now called for the “development and maintenance of a naval force sufficient for our future predominance,” stressing that the American military must now “assist other American nations to resist foreign territorial encroachment” and, if “driven to war” against a rival power, “be able to strike telling blows upon its nearer possessions and its commerce.”¹³⁹ This emphasis on the linkages between commerce and great power rivalry was a virtually constant feature of the discussions of “manifest destiny” and “naval strength” which proceeded in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War.¹⁴⁰

While during the 1880s US military elites hoped that the United States’ “control of the Pacific” would foster a harmonious international environment, by the early-twentieth century the perception of heightened economic and territorial rivalries meant US overseas expansion was increasingly figured as a test of “greatness.”¹⁴¹ For Rear Admiral Henry Clay Taylor, the emerging horizons of American world power would be defined by a militaristic imperialism: “Providence seems to have ordained that the world's history for many centuries shall be strongly affected by the efficiency or non-efficiency of the American Navy; by the quality of the

¹³⁴ Luce, “The Benefits of War,” quotations at 672, 674, and 673 respectively.

¹³⁵ Luce, 680. As discussed in the following chapter, the representation of Imperial China as a stagnated, ethno-cultural inferior was a key component of the ideology of civilizational imperialism. See, Mahan, *The Problem of Asia*; Fiske, “American Naval Policy”; Charles Denby, *China and Her People* (Boston, MA: L.C. Page & Co, 1906).

¹³⁶ Charles Denby, “America’s Opportunity in Asia,” *The North American Review* 166, no. 494 (1898): 33.

¹³⁷ Denby, 34.

¹³⁸ In the early “unequal treaties” with China and Japan, the insertion of the “most favored nation” clauses meant that the privileges of one power would be bestowed on all the others. Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword*, 11.

¹³⁹ Ellicott, “The Composition of the Fleet,” 537–38.

¹⁴⁰ Henry C. Taylor, “The Future of Our Navy,” *Forum* 26 (1899): 10; Melville, “Our Actual Naval Strength,” 390.

¹⁴¹ Compare Taylor, “The Control of the Pacific,” 410, 416; Henry C. Taylor, “The Fleet,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 29 (1903): 799.

weapon which the great republic wields in its imperial path of progress and development.” Now it was imperative that the US political-military establishment seek to “foster that military spirit which is indispensable to the success of our future war fleet.”¹⁴² By the mid-1890s, such calls for military and overseas expansion were colored with the anxieties about industrial development and international competition that accompanied the onset of a deep “financial depression.”¹⁴³ The widespread belief that the US economy was burdened by effects of an overproduction crisis¹⁴⁴ encouraged US naval strategists to portray the pursuit of foreign markets and larger military capacities as a solution to domestic economic problems.¹⁴⁵ Even the disastrous prospect of great power war could be envisaged as the “ultimate form of economic competition.”¹⁴⁶

Central to the conflicts of “imperialism” which animated this discourse was a shared image of the “conditions of world politics” — a consciously systemic optic for visualizing the political, military, and economic rivalries between “great world powers” operating on a global scale.¹⁴⁷ In a 1902 article for the British Tory publication, the *National Review*, Mahan highlighted the increasingly universal character of modern geopolitical conditions. There was now, as an emerging social fact, an inescapable global system: “As the phrase ‘world politics’ more and more expresses a reality of these latter days, the more necessary does it become to consider each of the several centres of interest as not separate, but having relations to the whole.”¹⁴⁸ As a result, judgements about strategy and possibility would have to contend with competitive projects of national self-strengthening epitomized by the apparent “occidentalizing of Japan,” whose victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) underscored the instability of the present imperial order.¹⁴⁹ For conservative political reformers like Mahan, the socialist and anti-imperialist movements of the time threatened to undermine the very bases of civilized modernity by exposing the Western world to a dangerous return of the repressed. Military force would be the guardian of civilization against barbarism:

In this our day, the development of the world may be said to present two principal factors: European civilization, and the civilizations, or barbarisms, as the case may be, which are not European in origin or derivation. As regards energy, especially organized energy, the European is far the most powerful; and the demonstration of that energy lies not only in the vast social and industrial progresses accomplished, but in armament, the ultimate exponent of national independence and power...In the matter before us, mass is on the side of the non-European. The equivalent velocity, energy, is on the side of Europe; the term Europe including in this respect its offshoot, America. In the future processes of adjustment, in which we doubtless shall see the superior organization of European civilization imitated as it has been successfully in Japan, it is of the first importance that the European family of states retain in full the power of national self-assertion, of which the sentiment of nationality is the spirit

¹⁴² Taylor, “The Fleet,” 801.

¹⁴³ Wainwright, “Our Naval Power,” 43.

¹⁴⁴ As discussed in Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2001), 18–26.

¹⁴⁵ As highlighted by Wainwright, “Our Naval Power,” 43ff; and, Ellicott, “The Composition of the Fleet”; Luce, “The Benefits of War”; Adams, “War as the Ultimate Form of Economic Competition.”

¹⁴⁶ Adams, “War as the Ultimate Form of Economic Competition.”

¹⁴⁷ Mahan, “Motives to Imperial Federation,” 111; Mahan, “Considerations Governing the Disposition of Navies,” 180; also, Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” 216.

¹⁴⁸ Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” 216–17.

¹⁴⁹ Mahan, “Retrospect and Prospect,” 31.

and armaments the embodiment; for so only, by the national force of the several states in active competition with one another, can the force of the whole be depended upon for maintaining itself, and thus ultimately reducing by assimilation the opposing external forces. Eliminate, if you can, the competition between the several nationalities, so as to suppress the armaments; substitute for these the artificial system of compulsory arbitration, and disarmament; and you will have realized a socialistic community of states, in which the powers of individual initiative, of nations and of men, the great achievement of our civilization so far, will gradually be atrophied. The result may be that European civilization will not survive, having lost the fighting energy which heretofore has been inherent in its composition.¹⁵⁰

The competitive imperial conditions figured by such conceptions of grand strategy mirrored the conflictual processes of socioeconomic restructuring associated with the industrial foundations of the “New Empire.”¹⁵¹ Within its long-term pattern of expansion, American industrial development was punctuated by remarkable instability: periods of economic crisis appeared almost every ten years between 1861 and 1915. While the years 1873-1879, 1882-1885, 1893-97, 1907-1908, and 1913-1915 all saw economic downturn and mass poverty, there were more than 1000 strikes per year between 1899 and 1905.¹⁵² The internal logic of world power advocacy developed symbiotically with the concerns about social instability, overproduction, and national cultural cohesion that shaped American responses to these socioeconomic crises. The geopolitical outlooks of American political and military elites thus did more than visualize the expanding scale of strategic and commercial interests. Their overt nationalism and reformist political agenda also spawned a future-oriented conception of politics as the state-led transformation of industrial society. This was a consciously modernizing project of American state-building predicated on the rationalization of military institutions and the integration of society around a centralized national state.¹⁵³ Indeed, the expansionist outlooks of the *fin-de-siècle* were closely bound to the growing social reformism of the Republican political elite, whose increasing concern for the pursuit of “moral regeneration” forged the so-called Progressive Era of American state-building (c.1890-1920).¹⁵⁴ Among other achievements, these reforms brought the gradual institutionalization of taxation on income and inheritance that enabled the further growth of military spending.

Like many “New Liberals” of the 1890s and 1900s, such key national political reformers as Theodore Roosevelt and Elihu Root believed that the *fin-de-siècle* environment of rising social and international turbulence demanded the forging of a militarized nation-state backed by a domestic society prepared for extensive global conflicts. Critical of the failure of more commercialist forms of liberal politics to forge a cohesive national society, theirs was a

¹⁵⁰ Mahan, *Armaments and Arbitration*, 8–9.

¹⁵¹ According to Brooks Adams, “the peculiarity of the present movement is its rapidity and intensity, and this appears to be due to the amount of energy developed in the United States, in proportion to the energy developed elsewhere. The shock of the impact of the new power seems overwhelming.” *The New Empire* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1902), 175.

¹⁵² Liliana Riga, “Ethnicity, Class and the Social Sources of US Exceptionalism,” in *Global Powers: Michael Mann’s Anatomy of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, ed. Ralph Schroeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 193.

¹⁵³ Stephen B. Luce, “War Schools,” *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* 9, no. 27 (1883): 633–58; Stephen B. Luce, “On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 12, no. 39 (1886): 527–45.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Gary Gerstle, “The Protean Character of American Liberalism,” *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 4 (1994): 1051.

nationalistic social politics valorizing the ideals of “hardihood and manly courage” perceived as necessary for combatting the “terrible social problems which all the civilized world is now facing.”¹⁵⁵ The sphere of social policy thus increasingly came to be defined in the same terms as that of grand strategy proper: the problem of national competitiveness forged close practical and symbolic ties between the internal and external domains of American statecraft.

As such, the kinds of social imperialism and national militarism associated with the escalation of European power politics also shaped the development of American world ambitions. “We shall be a potent factor for peace largely in proportion to the way in which we make it evident that our attitude is due, not to weakness, not inability to defend ourselves, but to a genuine repugnance to wrongdoing,” Roosevelt emphasized in 1902. “We need to keep in a condition of preparedness, especially as regards our navy, not because we want war, but because we desire to stand with those whose plea for peace is listened to with respectful attention.”¹⁵⁶ Like the German elites who came to embrace the militarized global foreign policy of early-twentieth century *Weltpolitik*, American progressives thus agitated for the expansion of American power abroad partly in order to ensure the stability of the domestic social order.¹⁵⁷ For those who endorsed this program of military preparedness, “the competition of interests” associated with power politics promised to engender “that reviving sense of nationality, which is the true antidote to what is worst in socialism.” Here lay best hope for “European civilization.”¹⁵⁸

In this sense, the kind of power politics engendered by the conflicts of imperialism signified something much more than the narrow interest-calculus associated with conventional definitions of *Realpolitik*. While the escalation of imperial competition transformed the world market into a rivalrous strategic force-field, the underlying logic of US world power advocacy was never motivated by any independent conception of economic or security concerns. On the contrary: because the economic rivalries among empires were framed by the problem of securing an autonomous and competitive national core, anxieties about the oversaturation of American markets and the pressing realities of industrial rivalry were typically of a piece with the wider socio-cultural problems that were thought to bear on the creation a cohesive social order. Arguments in favor of external expansion and military build-up therefore tended to situate the strategic problems of power politics within a broader framework of concerns about moral reform, class politics, and cultural purity. The so-called conflict between Western “civilization” and foreign “barbarism,” in conjunction with the fostering of national patriotism,

¹⁵⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, “True Americanism,” in *American Ideals* (1894; repr., New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 59; Theodore Roosevelt, “American Ideals,” in *American Ideals* (1895; repr., New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 40. Both these texts were originally published in American magazine *The Forum* in 1895. For Root’s virtually identical views, see Elihu Root, “The Army War College, Address at the Dedication, November 9, 1908,” in *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports by Elihu Root*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (1900; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 127; cf. Leopold, *Elihu Root and the Conservative Tradition*, 42–43.

¹⁵⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, “Industrial Peace,” in *The Roosevelt Policy: Speeches, Letters and State Papers, Relating to Corporate Wealth and Closely Allied Topics*, ed. William Griffith, vol. I, 3 vols. (1902; repr., New York, NY: Current Literature Publishing Company, 1919), 97–102.

¹⁵⁷ Grimmer-Solem, *Learning Empire: Globalization and the German Quest for World Status, 1875-1919*, 9–10; Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age*, 224.

¹⁵⁸ Mahan and Beresford, “Possibilities of an Anglo-American Reunion,” 558.

were the key markers of this blending of societal and geopolitical concerns. The dilemmas of power politics, in other words, were intrinsically related to the maintenance of social order itself; the formulation of external strategy demanded the strengthening of political authority within domestic society.

Exemplifying these linkages between the inner and outer spheres of statecraft were the efforts at cultural assimilation launched with Americanization Movement of the 1910s. One of the largest mass mobilization campaigns in American history, Americanization campaigns brought federal, state, and local political activism together in a society-wide effort to convert immigrant labor — the “hyphenated Americans” decried by Roosevelt — into normative national subjects. In its most coercive aspects, these efforts to instill the sociocultural discipline of official nationalism saw the withholding or withdrawal of citizenship rights for involvement in strike activity alongside a wider proliferation of industrial violence and anti-immigration riots.¹⁵⁹ In continuity with the aggressive response to Japanese expansionism advocated by American strategists, these efforts to promote a cohesive national security state saw rising opposition to East Asian immigration, which spelled, in turn, diplomatic crisis for US-Japan diplomatic relations. This inflaming of anti-Japanese sentiment help provoked war scares in both 1907 and 1913, when naval planners and political elites in both societies were convinced of the likelihood of military conflict.¹⁶⁰ Through such an event, it is possible to see both the intersocietal character of power politics and its specific cultural constructions.

This blending of societal and geopolitical conflicts was closely related to the advent of a mass-based industrial society. Emerging from a largely uncoordinated process of colonial settlement dating back to the early-sixteenth century, the American polity of the pre-Civil War era lacked the mass-cultural order of collective nationalism around which later notions of statehood and great power rivalry would cohere. Defined by a highly-localized devolution of political authority, the state-apparatus which emerged from the American Revolution operated through a system of courts and parties organized in primarily regional terms: its confederal and decentralized institutional structure remained tied to a social order in which religious divisions and local identifications mitigated against the outpourings of mass patriotism which characterized *fin-de-siècle* politics.¹⁶¹ By contrast, the rationalizations for world power forged during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperial era bore the imprint of a state-centered nationalism. In these terms, the geostrategic rationales of external expansionism translated directly into a broader society-building project closely tied to the elite politics of American society.

¹⁵⁹ Riga, “Ethnicity, Class and the Social Sources of US Exceptionalism,” 189, 197, 203–4.

¹⁶⁰ Masuda Hajimu, “Rumors of War: Immigration Disputes and the Social Construction of American-Japanese Relations, 1905–1913,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 1 (2009): 23, 30, 35; Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age*, 92, 242.

¹⁶¹ See, John Murrin, “A Roof Without Walls: The Dilemma of American National Identity,” in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 333; Colin Woodard, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* (New York, NY: Viking, 2011), 26–32, 334–52; T.H. Breen, “Interpreting New World Nationalism,” in *Nationalism in the New World*, ed. Don Harrison Doyle and Marco Antonio Vilella Pamplona (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 52.

THE WORLD ECONOMY AS A STRATEGIC FIELD

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the geopolitical stakes of American world power ambitions became progressively more concrete. Envisaging the globe as an integrated political and economic system, American political-military elites focused their attention on the perceived core of great power antagonisms: the relations between the major coal and oil producing states, notably Britain, Germany, and Russia.¹⁶² For the advent of a new system of expansionary global empires had imbued established forms of political economy and diplomacy with a spirit of militaristic *Realpolitik* that broke away from the earlier configurations of empire and international order, especially those associated with the laissez-faire liberalism of the contemporary *Pax Britannica*.¹⁶³

Typical of this geostrategic outlook was the 1911 argument of US Rear-Admiral Bradley Fiske: that the imitation of advanced industrial and military techniques by states like Imperial Japan was generating an increasingly competitive international environment — and that, with the “opening of undeveloped countries,” the expansion of world trade would likely produce “a stupendous competition involving in a vast and complicated net, every red blooded nation of the earth.”¹⁶⁴ In this conception, the diffusion of advanced industrial and military technologies was generating a volatile international environment where the advent of new industrial and imperial power centers promised to produce periodic geopolitical crises for the “civilized world.”¹⁶⁵ American geopolitical theorists and naval planners thereby figured the problem of uneven and combined development as an acute geopolitical reality and lived historical process: their imaginings of world power gave shape and meaning to a universalizing social dynamic, of competitive industrial transformations, whose local unevenness gave the evolution of global political space its distinct historical character. Societal multiplicity — in the form of rival civilization systems and competing industrial economies — was in this sense constitutive of the internal grammar of US grand strategy.

The conflictual-yet-interdependent global condition generated by these interactions was given particularly intense expression by the growing crisis in US-German relations during the first decade of the twentieth century. During the Venezuela crisis of 1902-1903, the German Army’s plan to use military intervention to collect its debts from the Venezuelan government provoked a forceful response from the Roosevelt administration, which sent a larger naval force to repel the threatened invasion, and lift the sea blockade imposed by the British, German, and Italian navies. Compelling Germany to back down from its planned intervention, the US Navy confirmed its primacy in the Americas, and illustrated the hard geopolitical realities blocking

¹⁶² Chadwick, “Opening Address”; Fiske, “American Naval Policy”; Bradley A. Fiske, “Naval Power,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, no. 37 (1911): 683–736; Mahan, *Armaments and Arbitration*.

¹⁶³ For this reading of the crises of the British imperial order and the breakdown of laissez-faire liberalism see Mahan, “Motives to Imperial Federation”; Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” 227.

¹⁶⁴ Fiske, “Naval Power,” 706, 709.

¹⁶⁵ Fiske, “American Naval Policy,” 2; Fiske, “Naval Power,” 717; Mahan, *Armaments and Arbitration*, 8–9; Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Retrospect Upon the War Between Japan and Russia,” in *Naval Administration and Warfare* (1906; repr., London: Sampson Low, Martston, & Company Limited, 1908), 131–73.

the Kaiserreich from assuming its “Place in the Sun.” In this respect, the Venezuelan crisis was not only a sign of the growing antagonism between the German and American Empires, the former refusing to recognize the Monroe Doctrine, the latter asserting its regional hegemony. More fundamentally, it illustrated the structured dynamic between intersocietal unevenness and geopolitical competition that transformed the early-twentieth world economy into a contested strategic field. In a direct continuation of the anxieties of German backwardness, the pressure groups in favor of German expansionism — the Colonial League, the Pan-German League and the Navy League — had supported the export of German capital and settlers to South America since the late-1880s. Yet the actions of the United States showed that the desired “German India” would remain a fantasy. In response, as Herwig’s study of the episode illuminates, the Wilhelmine government’s refusal to recognize the Monroe Doctrine was motivated by fears that accommodation would engender a backlash from the domestic Right who favored an aggressively expansionist colonial policy. In turn, the perception that Berlin was seeking to seize colonial possessions in the Americas exacerbated the diplomatic crisis in US-German relations on which the future division of the international order hinged. For its part, the British Empire ultimately came to endorse the US’s Monroe-Doctrine based claims to regional hegemony; the prospect of a “*pax Americana*” in the Americas was to be preferred to the dangerous advance of an “*imperium Germanicum*.” Venezuela, far from peripheral to the movements of global power politics, thus became a decisive factor in the “parting of ways” which set the Anglo-American Empires on course for conflict with the Imperial Germany.¹⁶⁶

The structured overlap between power politics and political economy illustrated by an episode like the Venezuelan crisis demonstrates the destabilizing impact on uneven and combined the trajectories of social development forged in the context of the wider global condition. In this context, commercially-oriented societies like the United States forced to pursue projects of military self-strengthening they might otherwise have lacked. Rather than the kind of “commercial reason of state” characteristic of Britain’s earlier “imperialism of free trade,”¹⁶⁷ the dynamics of competitive coexistence confronted by the American political class demanded a more sustained militarization of domestic society, in conjunction with the forging of close partnerships between state-public institutions and private-commercial actors. This statist vision of political reform bestowed a privileged status on the national military as the core institution of the desired *Machtstaat*.¹⁶⁸ It was now the duty of “naval men,” as the “students of the history of wars” to remind the “broader-minded statesman” of the permanent possibility of war, especially given that “the control of commerce” was now recognized as “the greatest war producing factor.”¹⁶⁹ This struggle to rationalize the contested unevenness of the emergent world economy was given particularly acute expression by Rear-Admiral French Ensor Chadwick in 1903 address at the US Naval War College:

¹⁶⁶ This paragraph is based on Holger H. Herwig, *Germany’s Vision of Empire in Venezuela, 1871-1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 180–81, 205–8; Raymond A. Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and the International Rivalries* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1970), 40–41.

¹⁶⁷ István Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 123.

¹⁶⁸ Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age*, 236.

¹⁶⁹ Chadwick, “Opening Address,” 267 and 266 respectively.

Along with the immense fact that the Slav, the Teuton and the Anglo-Saxon are the great increasing races of the world, is the almost more important one that they are the chief coal and oil owners. Italy no coal whatever, Spain an area of but 2800 miles, and France and Belgium but 2500; Austria-Hungary but 1800. The only coal fields which, from our present knowledge, can offer possible rivalry to the fields of the United States are those of Australia and China, and we can venture to predict that it will be over these Chinese fields and the development of their potentialities that the future struggle for supremacy in Eastern Asia will take place, unless China herself shall show an unexpected ability to control and defend these interests.¹⁷⁰

Here was an American naval commander insisting in an urgent, highly bellicose register, on the need to map US geostrategic policy according to the new political geography of resource-led economic development — as seen in the mirror of pre-existing divisions between Slavic, Anglo-Saxon, or Teutonic civilizations. This source confronts us in the most direct way possible with the strategic and symbolic mediations of intersocietal unevenness demanded by the global condition of late-nineteenth century modernity.

V. Power Politics Beyond the Rise and Fall of Great Powers

This chapter has tried to elaborate a historical-sociological interpretation of the United States' emergence as a world power during the 1875-1914 age of empire. I have sought to uncover and explain the distinct pattern of strategic and ideological calculations, geopolitical pressures, and political-economic transformations which shaped the underlying logic of American grand strategy, its emergent global imperial frame, and the basic conceptions of security and interest underpinning it. To unlock the deeper sociohistorical causalities which governed the US political-military elites' commitments to world power, the chapter located the evolution of the American Empire in the wider dynamics of uneven and combined development and interstate rivalry generated by the intersocietal power hierarchies of the New Imperialism. In contrast to the cyclical, "rise and fall of great powers," associated with contemporary realism, this approach suggests that the emergent world power status of the early-twentieth century American state was based on a qualitatively distinct conjuncture of social power structures and strategic rationales which cannot be understood outside its emergent international context. Quite the opposite: the fusion of economic nationalism, informal empire, and expansive naval power-projection that characterized US grand strategy in this era were intrinsically related to a historical conjuncture of intersocietal unevenness generated by the spatio-temporally uneven trajectory of the industrial revolution on a global scale. If this argument is convincing, it draws attention to a wider theoretical issue related to the sociohistorical perspective elaborated in the chapter above: that is, how the dynamics of international change not only track with so-called

¹⁷⁰ Chadwick, 265.

“shifts in the international distribution of power” but also entails, more fundamentally, qualitative transformations in the sources, conduct, and meanings of power politics itself.¹⁷¹

In light of the preceding analysis, the logic of the world power ambitions forged in this era can be best understood as an ideological force field structured by a combination of three decisive, yet distinct, components of the intersocietal setting of American global expansion. The first of these was a historical causality that was at least partly visible to American expansionists themselves: the decisive external effects of the US economy’s rapid post-Civil War industrialization. This process changed not only the material equilibrium but, more importantly, the political and social texture of the emerging world economy by generating a new model of capitalist development: a territorially integrated national economy combining a competitive industrial system with the control of abundant raw materials. After 1870, the increasingly self-evident success of this continental economic system became a “whip of external necessity” that impelled the very national projects of military-industrial self-strengthening against which American anxieties about international competition were typically framed. The second component was, in a sense, the logical accompaniment of these developmental contradictions: that is, the novel emergence of a nationalist agenda of consciously modernizing domestic reformism. The problem of maintaining national competitiveness underpinned a mobilization of political elites around a politics of national-imperialism that was central to pursuit of world power as such. The third constituent of this global-imperial conception of grand strategy was given by the imaginative juxtaposition of the United States to radically different foreign cultural formations. The dynamics of this experience provided a range of symbolic archetypes against which the fitness of American society could be defined and measured, and in terms of which its pursuit of external mastery could be established as a legitimate goal. Without the constituting presence of such external influences, the representation of American expansion as a civilizing mission or a struggle against foreign barbarism would have been conceptually impossible.

This conjunction of forces help explain how a highly commercialized capitalist society could spawn an expansionary *Machtstaat* so seemingly out of kilter with any formal logic of market expansion. The socioeconomic structures of modern industrial society were now being penetrated by a combination of geopolitical-military and intersocietal pressures whose articulation served to foster a series of novel political-ideological hybrids. The militaristic coloration and civilizational outlooks of American imperialism were not the products of a pristine capitalist social order, but a symptom of its relational construction within and through the dynamics of competitive coexistence generated by a deeply uneven world economy. These *fin-de-siècle* visions of global imperialism, which effectively helped invent the modern idea of world politics as a systemic field, were a product of the interaction between societies undergoing connected yet uneven processes of cultural and economic restructuring. Their elaboration was

¹⁷¹ Pace Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), here at 9, 11, 12, 181, 198 203. As I argued in *Chapter 2*, even sophisticated realist-inspired scholarship like that of Robert Gilpin struggles to fully come to terms with the reality of qualitative historical change.

a key feature of the transformations of power politics engendered by the advent of the modern global condition.

In the next chapter, I expand this argument by examining a deeper ideological driver of American world power ambitions: the emergence of the idea of “the West” at the heart of US political culture. Visions of “Western civilization” became a key factor in the kinds of sociopolitical authority possessed by the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth elites who oversaw the projection of American world power traced above.

5. VISIONS OF THE WEST

THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF THE NATIONAL-IMPERIAL STATE

As we gradually accustomed ourselves to the new and strange conditions of primitive barbarism, our recollections of a civilized life faded into the unreal imagery of a vivid dream.

— George Kennan, American explorer, on Siberia (1881).¹

Steam and electricity have mightily compressed the earth. The elbows of the nations touch. Isolation — the mother of barbarism — is becoming impossible. The mysteries of Africa are being laid open, the pulse of her commerce is beginning to beat. South America is being quickened, and the dry bones of Asia are moving; the Nineteenth Century is breathing a living soul under ribs of death. The world is to be Christianized and civilized.²

— Josiah Strong, American theologian, on the civilizing mission (1885).

I. Introduction

The idea of “the west” is today a central category of international politics. As a taken-for-granted frame of contemporary reference, appellations of “East” and “West” might properly be ranked alongside terms like “nation” and “race” as one of the fundamental identity markers of modern world politics. Yet unlike other such classifications, the metageography of the “Western world” is distinctive in anchoring a universal set of international power structures to a specific regional geo-culture: its conventional order usually confined to the most powerful states of Western Europe and North America, the term serves to distinguish those societies at the leading edge of modern power transformations since of the onset of the industrial era. In this role, notions of “Western civilization” encode a complex series of status distinctions — such as the developmental schema of backwardness-to-modernity or barbarism-to-civilization — grounded in a pattern of imperial domination and capitalist unevenness dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. Since the first sustained articulations of Occidentalism during 1890s, the of idea of “the West” has thus revolved around the opposition between a Euro-American core and its geopolitical exterior: in the nineteenth century, the “Oriental” empires of Russia and Japan, alongside the more “uncivilized” world of colonial rule; in the twentieth, the Communist Bloc and the Third World; today, primarily, the post-Soviet states and the universe of Islam.³

¹ George Kennan, *Tent-Life in Siberia* (1870; repr., New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1881), 205. Kennan was a cousin twice removed of his more famous namesake, the American diplomat whose writings on the Soviet Union made him the most widely-read advocate of the Truman Doctrine during the 1940s. The final section of this chapter returns to these connections in more detail.

² Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Present Crisis* (New York, NY: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1885), 14.

³ In conjunction with the primary sources examined below, this late-nineteenth century periodization of the origins of the modern idea of the West is based on Christopher Lloyd GoGwilt, *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 14ff; Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

To explicate the development of this geo-cultural formation, the following chapter locates some of the key origins of modern Occidentalism in the global condition of intersocietal conflict and historical unevenness forged during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century era of the New Imperialism. In this context, I describe the underlying dynamics of cultural and geopolitical change which gave rise to a distinctively “civilizational” form of imperial ideology with an exclusive conception of the West at its heart. In particular, I argue that the strategic practices and ideological dynamics of global power politics — the task of mobilizing mass-based industrial societies for imperial competition, of legitimizing military violence and expansion, and of imposing structures of social meaning an emergent international hierarchy — played a key role in the production of “the West” as a form of political subjectivity grounded by the national-imperial state. Building on the work of the previous chapter, I focus on the historical rationalizations for world power associated with the evolving American Empire.⁴ To grasp the international origins of modern Occidentalism, however, it is necessary to situate the American Empire within the vectors of competitive coexistence and cross-cultural comparison generated by the emergent global condition. This requires an assessment of the United States’ location within the international dynamics of national-imperial state-formation, its relation to a British-American Anglosphere, and its exposure to the forms of geopolitical conflict unleashed by the dynamic of catch-up development outside the imagined Western core.⁵ By situating the *fin-de-siècle* architects of American expansionism in this intersocietal context, it becomes possible to uncover some of the key sociohistorical transformations which made identification with “the West” into a core principle of “vision and division” within the US political-military elite.⁶

The argument divides into four main parts.⁷ Against the background of a wider conception of the relation between “strategic” and “symbolic” power relations, the first of these establishes the historical specificity of the modern notion of the West by examining the nineteenth-century pattern of sociocultural, institutional, and geopolitical transformations which bound American

2014), 86–87, 836–87; see also, Alastair Bonnett, “From White to Western: ‘Racial Decline’ and the Idea of the West in Britain, 1890–1930,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 16, no. 3 (2003): 320–48.

⁴ Among a variety of works discussed below see John Fiske, *American Political Ideas Viewed from the Standpoint of Universal History* (New York: Harper, 1885); Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: Part I* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1889); James Arthur Balfour, *Decadence: Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908); Valentine Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question or Some Political Problems of Indian Defence* (London: John Murray, 1903); Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Problem of Asia and Its Effect Upon International Policies* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1900); Charles Denby, *China and Her People* (Boston, MA: L.C. Page & Co, 1906); Alfred Milner Milner, *Imperial Unity, Speeches Delivered in Canada in the Autumn of 1908* (London: Hodder, 1909).

⁵ On the origins of the Anglosphere in the context of a rapprochement in British-American relations, see, Srdjan Vucetic, *The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialized Identity in International Relations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 22–54.

⁶ The analytical vocabulary of different “principles of vision and division,” denoting the symbolic categories through which authoritative meanings are imposed on the social world, is how Pierre Bourdieu describes the power of categories like ethnicity to constitute social groups: “The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups,” *Theory and Society* 14, no. 6 (1985): 726, 731.

⁷ In the interests of style, I will use the terms “Western” and “Occidental” interchangeably as ways of identifying the production of “the West” historically. Henceforth, such terms will be used without quotation to marks, in the hope that the argument of the chapter will underscore their historically and culturally constructed character. The same goes for terms like the “white race” and “Anglo-Saxon” employed below: these are contingent historical productions tied to specific systems of social and symbolic power, rather than objective markers of identity.

imperialism to the process of Western identity-formation. The openness of historical actors to a hierarchical and exclusive form of Occidentalism in this period can be explained with reference to the ways in which the late-nineteenth century proliferation of ethno-nationalist and expansionist ideologies of state power interacted with the conjunctural effects of two wider processes: specifically, how the expansion of an empire-centered international order emerged in conjunction with a wider transformation in the social foundations of political hierarchy — away from the systems of religious and aristocratic authority which sustained earlier state-forms, and toward a quasi-rational order of legitimate domination grounded in the prestige of secular cultural symbols (Section II). By connecting this pattern of geopolitical change and cultural rationalization to a more a more detailed discussion of US imperial culture, the second section demonstrates the manner in which appeals to Western civilization promised to legitimize US power-projection as a form of cultural modernity. American expansionism, its mission associated with the advancement of the civilized world itself, was framed by an ideology of social progress that resonated with the modernist expectations about the functions of political order. In an era of growing cultural essentialism, the core sociopolitical function of such ideological forms was to integrate both social elites and popular masses into the political framework of a modern nation-state predicated on legal-rational standards of political authority (Section III). The third section examines the wider intersocietal forces which grounded the shared Occidentalism of British and American imperial cultures. Facing the prospect of an uprising of “backward” states, Anglo-American appeals to Occidentalism were shaped centrally by the efforts of societies like Russia and Japan to overturn prevailing hierarchies of wealth and power. In this respect, the conditions of intersocietal unevenness and competitive modernism which shaped the emergence of the wider global condition turn out to also be a key driver of the forms of geo-cultural development underpinning the modern identity of the West (Section IV). In conclusion, the final section considers the impact of such ideological systems on the development of American power in the early to mid-twentieth century (Section V).

What is the significance of this argument for the wider conception of power politics advanced in this thesis? On the one hand, it has been widely claimed that realism, with its narrow definition of international power as military capacity operating in a context of systemic anarchy, is incapable of addressing the role of authority, status, and identity in the construction of international politics.⁸ The present chapter takes this claim in a somewhat different direction to much constructivist IR theory, suggesting that the symbolic elements of political action also possess a historical sociology that is related to the specificity of hierarchical order in modern

⁸ For various statements of this kind, see Wendt’s argument about the primacy of identity over material structure: “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46, no. 02 (March 1992): 391–425; Klein’s attempt to reinterpret the concept of strategic culture along Gramscian lines: “Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 133–48; Guzzini’s critique of the absence of authority relations and political rule from the realist conception of power: “Structural Power: The Limits of Neorealist Power Analysis,” *International Organization* 47, no. 3 (July 1993): 443–78; and Mattern’s conception of representational force as a mechanism of international coercion: “Why ‘Soft Power’ Isn’t So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics,” *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (June 1, 2005): 583–612. More recently, see the literature on status competition discussed in chapter 2: Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

political and international systems: the proliferation of the idea of the West at the heart of *fin-de-siècle* imperialism exemplifies the extent to which the cultural textures of global power politics have been shaped by the tensions between the progress-oriented ideological systems ushered in by modernity and the conflictual constitution of a stratified and uneven global condition.⁹ On the other hand, therefore, this discussion demonstrates that the conditions of global power politics — and hence the intersocietal character of modern international relations — open out onto a deeper cultural history of ideological transformations, in this case partaking in the formation of a central identity category of contemporary world politics.¹⁰ These two arguments can be better unfolded by examining the complex interlocking between geopolitical change and cultural transformation in the making of the nineteenth-century imperial order. It will then be possible to locate the generative conditions of Occidentalism within what might be described as the cultural logic of the national-imperial state: the growing pressure to anchor political orders in categories of social belonging and division that spoke directly to the competitive coexistence of societies within a deeply uneven global condition.

II. Theorizing Civilizational Imperialism: Symbolic Systems and Intersocietal Hierarchies in the Modern International Order

Few political categories are so normatively and historically bound to the rivalry of empires as the idea of Western civilization. In Edward Said's powerful conception, the climax of the "rise of the West" during the late-nineteenth century was deeply linked to the pursuit of "*imperium*" which, as an "almost metaphysical obligation to rule over subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples," operated in a sense "beyond the level of economic laws and political decisions" to become a central component of the "national culture" of empires.¹¹ While the twentieth-century era US hegemony has seen numerous attempts to broaden the concept to encompass the values of liberal democracy, the historical origins of Occidentalism lie fundamentally in the late-nineteenth century era of the New Imperialism.¹² In this time of

⁹ As discussed in *Chapter 2*, Zarakol's account of the nineteenth-century international order illustrates many of the historical conditions (of state-formation, cultural rationalization, and imperialism) which made Western dominance a key locus of status hierarchies in modern world politics. Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned to Live with the West* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 38–56.

¹⁰ An attempt to thematize the strategic dimensions of the relations between culture and imperialism is arguably at the heart of Edward W. Said's seminal postcolonial theory of cultural power. Rather than being only a source of "identity," Said's account explains how "culture is a sort of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another. Far from being a placid realm of Apollonian gentility, culture can even be a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another." Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), xiv.

¹¹ Said, 6, 10, 12.

¹² In a typical formulation of its kind, for example, John Ikenberry connects the contemporary idea of the West to the so-called "*Pax Democratica*" designed by postwar American strategists: "Implicit in this emerging American vision was the view that the West itself could serve as the foundation and starting point for a larger postwar order. The West was not just a geographical region with fixed borders. Rather it was an idea a — universal organizational form that could expand outward driven, driven by the spread of liberal democratic government and principles of conduct." G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011), 35, 189. On the ideological legacies of the colonial era within such representations of the United States, dating back to the origins of the Cold War, see William Pietz, "The 'Post-Colonialism' of Cold War Discourse," *Social Text*, no. 19/20 (1988): 55–75.

escalating international rivalries, representations of cultural and political identity came to be tied to a series of increasingly essentialist and exclusive ideological schema, centered around the categories of race, nation, and civilization. The symbolic systems through which the purposes and boundaries of political regimes were defined thus became *both* more secular in their determination of authority sources *and* more categorical in their designation of “insiders” and “outsiders.” A brief examination of the forces which controlled this fixing of identity relations will bring the historical specificity of the modern ideology of Western civilization more fully into view.¹³

LOGICS OF ESSENTIALISM IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE

The most well-documented instance of the late-nineteenth century’s growing cultural essentialism lies in the proliferation of state-centric and ethnically-exclusive nationalisms. In Manu Goswami’s incisive formulation, such emergent ideological systems “converged around an invocation of an already existent, internally homogenous, and externally distinctive nation; widely shared organic understandings of the relationship between people, history, territory, and state; and a profoundly statist orientation that reflected the progressive conjoining of the link between nationhood and statehood.”¹⁴ The underlying dynamics of this process — the homogenization and territorialization of social identities in relation to a bounded locus of sociopolitical authority — were no accident. For their generative conditions lay in the emergence of the mass forms of sociality and centralized territorial statehood that came into being over the course of the industrial era.¹⁵ Unlike agrarian societies, where political communities tended to be organized around relatively localized social ties, the industrializing societies in which modern nationalism flourished were social formations in which the growing density and expanded scale of social interactions gave cultural integration a new urgency.¹⁶ Indeed, the forms of local dislocation and economic organization brought by the advent of industrial growth tended to foster the kind of mass society figured by nineteenth-century discourses of nationhood, while externally, the competitive logic of imperial expansion helped establish the competitive international conditions in which national patriotism flourished.¹⁷ Far from being an isolated domestic process, the proliferation of such nationalist ideological forms toward the end of the nineteenth century was rooted in an emergent dynamic between global

¹³ For this transition to distinctively modern, rationalized conceptions of nation, race, ethnicity, and state power, see especially Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “The Varieties of the Nation State in Modern History: Liberal, Imperialist, Fascist, and Contemporary Notions of Nation and Nationality,” in *The Rise and Decline of the Nation-State*, ed. Michael Mann (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 210–26; Ho-Fung Hung, “Orientalist Knowledge and Social Theories: China and the European Conceptions of East-West Differences from 1600 to 1900,” *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 3 (2003): 268–74; C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 462–64; Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 118–22. On the close ties between racial and international thought in this era, see also, Musab Younis, “‘United by Blood’: Race and Transnationalism During the Belle Époque,” *Nations and Nationalism*, 2016.

¹⁴ Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 262.

¹⁵ See especially, Charles S. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era,” *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (June 2000): 807–31.

¹⁶ Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 115.

¹⁷ Perry Anderson, “Internationalism: A Breviary,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 14 (2002): 11–12.

integration and local unevenness, which is finely captured in Goswami's study of colonial India. To generalize from her argument, it may be said that within the evolving "global field" of late-nineteenth century modernity, forged out of the growing unevenness of capitalist and colonial expansion, culturally essentialist ideologies of nationhood came to represent "the embodiment of a form of universality grounded in particularity," a specific mediation of the economic and geopolitical pressures that bound societies together within a single system of world politics.¹⁸

By analogy with this process of nation-formation, the late-nineteenth century proliferation of Western-centric identity categories and political ideologies — during the same *fin-de-siècle* period, roughly 1880-1910, in which Goswami locates the rise of state-centric nationalisms — can be understood in relation to a quite similar conjunction of historical transformations. Like the process of nation-formation, an exclusivist and essentialized conception of "Western civilization" offered a range of symbolic and cultural resources — a legitimate foundation for international hierarchy, a progressive rationale for external expansionism, and a purposeful justification for elite rule — through which to integrate culturally the kinds of social and international hierarchy that came into being during the *fin-de-siècle* era of imperialism. More specifically than this, ideologies of the Occident linked domestic political orders to a global vision of the forms of societal and cultural multiplicity surrounding them, thereby establishing a spatial representation of the world that corresponded to the emergent hierarchies of colonial and capitalist expansion. Typically shaped by the kinds of ethnocentrism promoted by prevailing forms of Social Darwinism, such depictions of political order had more than an analogous connection to the development of modern nationalism. Like the kinds of militaristic and state-centered patriotism that shaped the New Imperialism, ideologies of the Occident gave the conflict dynamics of the industrial era a symbolic order and meaningfulness they would otherwise have lacked.¹⁹ This goes to the heart of the cultural logic of the national-imperial state, which, like a fixed point in a rapidly contracting world, promised to stabilize relations of cultural difference and political community within an institutional power structure capable of projecting power on a global scale.²⁰

In both Europe and North America, such processes of cultural development were marked by the proliferation of ideological discourses stressing the superiority and distinctiveness of a Western civilization.²¹ Indeed, the notion of a "Western world" now arose, for the first time, as a designation for the trans-Atlantic sphere of Western European and North American societies — world regions brought together through social and economic ties, of trade, emigration, and

¹⁸ Goswami, *Producing India*, 17, 41, 67, 279.

¹⁹ See also, Manu Goswami, "Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 4 (2002): 786ff.

²⁰ On the development of Social Darwinism and its relation to geopolitics, see, Paul Crook, *Darwinism, War and History: The Debate Over the Biology of War from the "Origin of Species" to the First World War* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Andrew Heffernan, "Fin de Siècle, Fin Du Monde? On the Origins of European Geopolitics, 1890–1920," in *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought*, ed. Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson (London: Routledge, 2000), 27–51; For an overview of this kind of Social Darwinism, see, Christian Geulen, "The Common Grounds of Conflict: Racial Visions of World Order 1880–1940," in *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s*, ed. Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 69–96.

²¹ This paragraph and the next are based on Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 87, 494, 912.

other forms of cultural exchange, defined by their increasing density and interdependence. Yet this dynamic of global interdependency meant something more than a growing integration of economies and cultures. Occidentalism, its historical geography centered on the dominant centers of military power and industrial capitalism, spoke directly to the intersocietal hierarchies and imperial conflicts which defined the emergent global condition. The international intensification of great power competition after c. 1880 demonstrated, for many advocates of Social Darwinism, a growing struggle among racial groups organized into national states. This was the strategic rationale for the emergent geo-cultural division around which notions of Western civilization ultimately revolved. Under these conditions, the industrially-preponderant Anglo-Saxon powers occupied a position of world leadership tied to the vocation and responsibility of the white race to defend civilized values against the forces of potential barbarism. There was thus typically a hard, geopolitical edge to such ideological visions. Anxieties about the “yellow peril” and the expansive “Slavic race” established a range of simultaneously cultural and geopolitical concerns that mapped on the basic hierarchies of industrial growth and imperial power in a meaningful symbolic form.

At the same time, the pattern of intersocietal connections engendered by imperialism established an asymmetrical world culture in which the West figured as both the universal standard and archetypal subject of modernity.²² By the end of the nineteenth century, this meant that the discursive articulation of the West provided a universal equivalent against which other societies and cultures were to be measured. In a way that mirrors the historical clustering of nationalist discourse in the final decades of the nineteenth century, imperial elites throughout the British and American Empires thus converged on a conception of Occidental superiority that linked states, societies, and cultures within a single totalizing schema. In this context, the identification of the West with the civilized world, and *vice versa*, reflected the apparent opposition between the rival forms of “race patriotism” associated with the conflict between the Anglo-Saxon world and its “Slavic,” “Asiatic,” and sometimes “Teutonic,” geopolitical rivals.²³ Rather than being the product of an isolated academic high culture, such ideologies of Western civilization were centrally shaped by the forms of imperial rivalry and geopolitical alliance that marked the late-nineteenth transition to a global scope international order.

These forms of competitive coexistence assumed symbolic features which reflected the kinds of cultural schema through which many *fin-de-siècle* elites approached the emergent global condition. Among the most central dimensions of these schema were the perceptions of space-time compression which accompanied the late-nineteenth century revolution in transport and

²² See, also, Robbie Shilliam, “Civilization and the Poetics of Slavery,” *Thesis Eleven* 108, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 101.

²³ The terminology of “race-types” and “race patriotism” can be found in Mahan, *The Problem of Asia*, xix, 67. Throughout this work, Mahan employs the concept of race to denote putatively essential ethnic characteristics linked to “European” and “Asiatic” civilizations, the latter seen as an largely inferior order of civilization. For Mahan’s advocacy of US-British military and diplomatic alliance on the basis of Anglo-Saxonism, see Alfred Thayer Mahan and Charles Beresford, “Possibilities of an Anglo-American Reunion,” *The North American Review* 159, no. 456 (1894): 551–73. On racialized understandings of Anglo-Saxonism within US foreign relations at this time see, Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (2002): 1315–53.

communications technology. This brought once-distant social formations into seemingly ever increasing contact. Geopolitical analysts like Mahan and Mackinder, who established the first formal theories of “world politics,” thus also wrote extensively on the putative characteristics of foreign racial and cultural formations.²⁴ Their work exemplified the kind of essentialism which linked ideologies of state power to categories of ethnic and racial differentiation. The growing dominance of Social Darwinism in the academic field provided these conceptions of world-political development with a scientific authority that helps explain their widespread social appeal.²⁵ These schema were united in stressing the ties between cultural difference, often essentialized as a racial or biological determinism, national power, and geopolitical rivalries. This was how Theodore Roosevelt, himself a keen advocate of Lamarckian conception of racial theory, characterized US relations with Imperial Japan:

The lines of development of these two civilizations, of the Orient and the Occident, have been separate and divergent since thousands of years before the Christian era...An effort to mix together, out of hand, the peoples representing the culminating points of two such lines of divergent cultural development would be fraught with peril; and this, I repeat, because the two are different, and not because either is inferior to the other.²⁶

The form of Occidentalism generated by such forms of cross-cultural analysis was thus intrinsically power-political and intersocietal. It naturalized a relationship between foreign civilizations and international rivalries that transformed the security dilemmas of world politics into a meaningful cultural reality.

As the next section of the chapter illustrates, several features of American expansionism gave such conceptions of the West an especial significance and appeal. For the political and military elites of the rising American Empire, articulations of Western civilization revolved discursively around the notion of US expansionism as the fulfilment of “manifest destiny;” the self-consciously scientific, rationalizing orientation of American state-building; and widely-held conceptions of masculine honor, which in turn reflected the progressive ideological linkages between an imagined white race and the construction of a national people primed for international conflict. These elements of American political culture fueled an especially exclusivist conception of Western civilization as a progressive historical mission. They helped to define and integrate the US political-military elite as a national ruling group with legitimate claims to world power. To establish the generative conditions and historical specificity of this ideological formation, it is first necessary to address a pair of more basic theoretical issues. These concern (1) the relations between the strategic and symbolic dimensions of power politics, and (2) the conjunctural processes which shaped the openness of a historical actors to such an exclusivist and imperialist form of Occidentalism.

²⁴ The role of perceptions of space-time compression in these construction of “world politics” was discussed in *Chapter 1*. This link between the “closing of the world” and the growth of “racist imperialism” is also given prominence by John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory, 1760-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 125.

²⁵ Hung, “Orientalist Knowledge and Social Theories,” 269ff.

²⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1914), 306. On Roosevelt’s Lamarckian notion of “race science” see especially Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 37–44.

THE INTERFACE OF STRATEGIC AND SYMBOLIC POWER

Despite Max Weber's insistence on the centrality of legitimate rule/domination (*legitime Herrschaft*) to the exercise of power in modern bureaucratic political hierarchies, conventional analyses of power politics tend to elide the construction of political authority relations as a relevant moment in the analysis of strategic power-projection.²⁷ Defining state power an essentially unmediated expression of force, standard realist approaches presuppose a Weberian ideal-type of the modern state whilst bracketing the forms of political domination that Weber saw as a defining feature of the modern state order.²⁸ Therefore, an approach that placed the interface between the strategic and symbolic components of modern statecraft — the exercise and authorization of political force — at its heart would go substantially beyond the theoretical framing of structural-realist approaches.²⁹ For it would encompass the construction of political authority relations as a central analytic and historical feature of the organization of societies for power-political competition.³⁰

This has direct relevance for an analysis of the forms of Occidentalism embraced by American political and military elites. For such actors' descriptions of the civilized West often involved fantasies of honor, prestige, and masculinity — positive terms of self-identification and self-reinforcement. Famously, this paradigm of imperial culture was given expression by Kipling's 1899 poem, the "White Man's Burden."³¹ A personal confidant of Theodore Roosevelt, himself arguably the United States' leading advocate of extra-continental expansionism, Kipling's poetic discourse of masculine heroics and the ventures of great powers overseas offered an appealing image of imperial statesmanship.³² This was the cultural universe of the American *Machtstaat*: an expansive national-imperial state would project globally the idea of the United States as a guardian of "civilization," the sign and symbol of "the freedom of the West."³³

²⁷ For Weber's definition of legitimate domination, or domination by authority, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, vol. 1–2 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 946, 952–54. This argument about the absence of authority-formation from realist definitions of power politics and the state is discussed in more detail in Chapter One, above.

²⁸ For a related argument about the importance of rule and domination in Weber see, Stefano Guzzini, "Max Weber's Power," in *Max Weber and International Relations*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 97–118; also, Guzzini, "Structural Power," 477.

²⁹ On some readings, Morgenthau's classical realism contains a conception of political legitimacy. See, Michael C. Williams, "Why Ideas Matter in International Relations: Hans Morgenthau, Classical Realism, and the Moral Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 58, no. 4 (2004): here, 637, 645. However, it would be an exaggeration to say that Morgenthau's brute conception of power politics as the expression of a struggle for survival rooted in human nature provided a strong basis for something approach a sociology of legitimation strategies.

³⁰ An argument along these lines is implicit in Goddard and Nexon's account of power politics as a process of social mobilization. Stacie E. Goddard and Daniel Nexon, "The Dynamics of Global Power Politics: A Framework for Analysis," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016): 4–18.

³¹ For the masculinist characteristics of Kipling's Occidentalism, see, Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 165.

³² Using the Digital Library of the Theodore Roosevelt centre, I have identified 21 letters in which Roosevelt refers to his positive interactions with Kipling, either in direct correspondence with Kipling himself or in his wider milieu. <https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library>.

³³ Elihu Root, "Address at a Dinner of the Lotos Club in Honour of the Secretary of War", New York, May 9, 1903," in *Miscellaneous Addresses*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (1903; repr., Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press Inc, 1966), 103. The image of the United States as a guardian of freedom and civilization was also central to Root's legal defence American expansion in the Caribbean, see Elihu Root, "The Ethics of the Panama Question: An Address before the Union League Club of Chicago, February 22, 1904." (1904), 3–7, British

Despite a large literature on the cultural and historical sources of Western identity, much of it focused on the impact of colonialism, the specific ties between such conceptions of Western civilization and the sociopolitical formation and strategic practices of imperial states has not been subject to much sustained theorization.³⁴ Within IR theory, more particularly, the West has tended to figure as a set of identity relations and cultural discourses rather than as a sociohistorical product of the specific imperial field of late-nineteenth century power politics.³⁵ These accounts are characterized by a focus on the representational dynamics, discursive strategies, and rhetorical pragmatics associated with the political uses of the West rather than the actual geopolitical and intersocietal context which constructed and enabled it.³⁶ Although such approaches make the important contribution of linking the production of the West to historical practices of cross-cultural comparison — European/Ottoman, Christian/Islamic, and so on — they tend to bypass questions relating to the kinds of social power transformations and historical conjunctures in which such articulations of identity unfold.³⁷ As a consequence, they tend to bracket rather than confront the conditions which make particular symbolic systems effective, not just as representational devices, but as internal features of the formation and projection of state power itself.

Whatever its validity as a general procedure, this method of analysis lacks purchase on specific features of the late-nineteenth century production of Western-civilizational ideologies of imperialism. Closely linked to a broader effort to legitimize the strategic exercise of external force, the existence of such schema is difficult to understand outside the context of the power hierarchies and geopolitical conflicts which confronted the agents of imperial rivalry and expansionism. Moreover, the distinctive metageography of Anglophone Occidentalism — revolving around an imperial hierarchy comprising a dominant economic and geopolitical core (the Anglosphere), a civilizing yet inferior semi-periphery (Russia, Japan, sometimes German) and a putatively barbaric mass of colonial subjects — bears an integral relationship the regional

Library, Microfilm Collection. For a detailed account of this “legalist-imperialist” discourse pioneered by Root see Benjamin Allen Coates, *Legalist Empire: International Law and American Foreign Relations in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 91–106.

³⁴ Works of cultural history that examine the history of Occidentalism but stop short of analysing its the origins in relation to the practices of the imperial state itself include: James G. Carrier, *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); GoGwilt, *The Invention of the West*; Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (London: Penguin Books, 2005); Saree Makdisi, *Making England Western: Occidentalism, Race, and Imperial Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

³⁵ For an overview of this research agenda see, Gunther Hellmann and Benjamin Herboth, *Uses of “the West”: Security and the Politics of Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); cf. David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Iver B. Neumann, “Identity and Security,” ed. William Bloom et al., *Journal of Peace Research* 29, no. 2 (1992): 221–26; Iver B. Neumann, “Russia as a Great Power, 1815–2007,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 11, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 128–51; Johanna Vuorelma, “The Ironic Western Self: Radical and Conservative Irony in the ‘Losing Turkey’ Narrative,” *Millennium* 47, no. 2 (January 1, 2019): 190–209.

³⁶ For example, Jackson’s account of the use of “rhetorical commonplace” of “Western civilization” by the architects of US Cold War national security policy focuses primarily on the (German) intellectual origins of the concept, rather than the longer history of imperial power politics and expansionism out of which US discourses of Occidentalism emerged. See, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Civilizing the Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 76–11.

³⁷ The seminal work in this regard is Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: “The East” in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

pattern of the industrial revolution, and the coercive power hierarchies it forged on a world scale. As such, a sociohistorical conception of the production of the West should embed late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century processes of symbolic restructuring within a wider conception of the forms of imperial conflict and hierarchy attached to the making of the modern international order and world economy. It should ask, as Stuart Hall has posed the question of the sources of modern racisms in general, “what are the specific conditions which make this form of distinction historically active” — which processes and institutions “give this abstract human potentiality its effectivity, as a concrete material force.”³⁸ In this respect, the form of power analysis required for an adequate theorization of modern Occidentalism might be described as a kind of pivot between two paradigms of international theory normally held at some distance from each other: on the one hand, a “strategic” perspective epitomized by Marxian and realist conceptions of power as a hard material and goal-oriented political or economic entity; on the other, a “symbolic” conception of power as a discursively or culturally grounded relationship of constitutive meanings.

In a general theoretical sense, therefore, it is necessary to reimagine the social substance of power politics to encompass the forms of symbolic and cultural domination by which elites seek to sustain a position of political rule in socially legitimate terms. This conception of international power analysis follows a hypothesis about the nature of political domination which both Antonio Gramsci and Pierre Bourdieu placed at the center of sociocultural analysis.³⁹ In these terms, the struggle to impose meaning and legitimacy is conceived as a constitutive feature of the formation of a dominant group. In Bourdieu’s programmatic terms: “no power can be satisfied with existing just as power, that is, as brute force, entirely devoid of justification — in a word, arbitrary — and must thus justify its existence, as well as the form it takes, or at least ensure that the arbitrary nature of its foundation will be misrecognized and thus that it will be recognized as legitimate.”⁴⁰ Given the self-reinforcing nature of appeals to Western civilization, Bourdieu’s emphasis on the reproductive function of symbolic power structures — what he has called “sociodicies of privilege” — has an obvious force.⁴¹ More particularly, to grasp the effective power of such symbolic systems, the discursive expressions and ideological textures of strategic action need to be figured in relation to the social processes which underpin their collective force. This recalls Gramsci’s argument, elaborated at the end of *Chapter 2*, that our basic categories of social experience are best conceived as historically constituted products of embedded human practices with inseparably “subjective” and “objective” dimensions.⁴² The symbolic and material underpinnings of Occidentalism should, in these terms, be treated as internally related features of a historical process rather than

³⁸ Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg, Black Literature and Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 52.

³⁹ Loïc J.D. Wacquant and Pierre Bourdieu, “From Ruling Class to Field of Power: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu on La Noblesse d’État,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 10, no. 3 (1993): 19.

⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. Lauretta C. Clough (Oxford: Polity, 1996), 265.

⁴¹ Bourdieu, 265–66.

⁴² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 447.

ontologically separate kinds of social reality. This requires that the “practices” and “expressions” of dominant actors be treated, as Bourdieu describes, as “two translations of the same sentence.”⁴³

Towards this end, the generative conditions of Occidentalism can be usefully situated in relation to the formation of the national-imperial state as the dominant locus of coercive and ideological power of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century industrial era. This theorization is intended to: (1) focus attention on the articulation of the West as a simultaneously symbolic and strategic power resource; (2) specify historical features of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century inter-imperial field which shaped the constitution of Occidentalism; (3) identify how the formation of the West as a dominant identity category was implicated in the wider power politics of the New Imperialism.

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE NATIONAL-IMPERIAL STATE

While the existence of some notion of civilizational difference can be dated back to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment,⁴⁴ to understand the essentialized and hierarchical conception of the West that emerged toward the end of the nineteenth century we need to focus on the specific conditions of intersocietal conflict and political rule which emerged with the formation of the national-imperial state. Like other forms of state, the highly competitive and externally expansionist states that proliferated during the modern imperial era had a strong symbolic dimension that was linked to the legitimation of coercive practices. Without access to meaningful forms of cultural legitimacy, imperial competition would have appeared arbitrary both to its architects in the political, military, and business elite, and to the domestic populations who had to shoulder much of its material and financial cost. Given the violent and costly nature of the national-imperial state’s typical forms of external power-projection — naval build up and extensive maritime force, world-market penetration in the form of gun boat diplomacy and informal imperialism, territorial expansion and colonial rule — it is not surprising that political legitimacy often took the form of an essentialist logic of cultural difference. For racialized and ethno-nationalist depictions of “foreign” entities promised to justify highly coercive strategies of global penetration.⁴⁵ Numerous historical studies illustrate the importance of such legitimization strategies to the depiction of war enemies as racial or civilizational “others,” to the ideology of the “civilizing mission,” and to the internal lifeworlds of many imperial elites.⁴⁶

The conditions which shaped the openness of historical actors to such forms of cultural essentialism were inseparable from the character of the wider global condition. During the late-

⁴³ Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J. D Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 105.

⁴⁴ Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization*, chapter 2.

⁴⁵ This is similar to how Steinmetz’s characterizes the function of the “rule of difference” in the colonial state: George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 37; George Steinmetz, “The Octopus and the Hekatonkheire: On Many Armed States and Tentacular Empires,” in *The Many Hands of the State: Theorizing Political Authority and Social Control*, ed. Kimberly J. Morgan and Ann Shola Orloff (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 379–80.

⁴⁶ USE CITES FROM FN.26

nineteenth century, the emergence of an empire-centered world economy and international order drove the integration of separate social formations into a global economic and geopolitical hierarchy that was characterized by the intensification of uneven and combined development on a global scale. This laid the foundation for a universal condition of global space-time in which perceptions of differential development became a main feature of cultural production.⁴⁷ The intensification (through capitalist industrialization) and coercive imposition (through colonial expansion) of socioeconomic unevenness on a world-scale created a novel global hierarchy of social formations that became the medium of power politics. Within an integrated yet profoundly unequal international system, there was an increasing pressure to impose meaning and legitimacy on hierarchies of wealth and power that were inherently open to contestation — from the kinds of competitive late-industrialization programmes pursued by states such as Japan, Russia and Germany, as well the struggles for political and social rights that emanated, “from below,” in form of anticolonial movements of self-determination.

The consolidation of a global political-economic hierarchy and a colonial international order thus provided a new international framework for cultural expression and ideological change. Within the conditions of an increasingly “singular modernity,”⁴⁸ categories of race and civilization were essential to the uneven yet universalizing potentialities of the world market constituted by industrial capitalism and colonial expansion.⁴⁹ Anchored in putatively salient classifications of cultural difference (phenotypical, biological, craniological etc.), concepts of race and civilization manifested the comparative light cast by the instantiation of differential development on a world scale. The universalism of modernity and the extreme particularism of racism were in this two-sides of the same of historical dynamic. As an organizing conception of world-development, ethnocentric standards of civilization offered an attractive philosophy of history, which promised to reveal the hidden causes of the wealth of nations by projecting socio-historical differences into the domain of an imaginary nature.⁵⁰

The cultural mediation of unevenness by self-reinforcing ideologies of race and civilization was not simply a distorted reflection of structural change, but also had distinct conditions of possibility in the sociopolitical character of the national-imperial state. The racial theories of the nineteenth century presupposed a cultural universe in which social hierarchies were no longer understood in divine terms; where political authority had been formally separated from the spheres of religion and aristocratic privilege.⁵¹ In this context, the representation of political elites as racial superiors or guardians of a privileged civilizational order resonated with a broader rationalization of social authority relations. The kind of political hierarchy brought

⁴⁷ For a related argument about the role of unevenness and combination in cultural development, see, Sharac Deckard et al., *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*, Warwick Research Collective (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 21–22.

⁴⁸ Deckard et al., 8.

⁴⁹ Vasant Kaiwar and Sucheta Mazumdar, “Race, Orient, Nation in the Time-Space of Modernity,” in *Antinomies of Modernity: Essays on Race, Orient, Nation*, ed. Sucheta Mazumdar and Vasant Kaiwar (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 264.

⁵⁰ Étienne Balibar, “Racism and Nationalism,” in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, ed. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein (London; New York: Verso, 2011), 54.

⁵¹ Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 858.

into being by the idea of an exclusive form of Western identity depended fundamentally on a network of discursive opposition — dichotomies of “tradition” and “modernity”, “civilized” and “savage”, “effete” and “masculine” races — whose symbolic force was built on rationalistic standards of social distinction, even as scientific forms of racism constructed deeply ideological fantasies of ethnic and civilizational development. The growing ethnocentrism of imperialism thus corresponded to social and institutional changes in the foundations of political rule itself. Drawing on the self-consciously rationalist, modernizing cultural schema generated by the emergent biological and social sciences, ideologies of the West offered the kind of “sociodicy of privilege” demanded by an increasingly secularized system of political hierarchy.

This process of Western identity formation reflected the dynamics of competitive coexistence engendered by the wider global condition. Against the pressures of rival imperial systems, Anglophone forms of Occidentalism served to locate the power imbalances of the prevailing imperial order within a self-reinforcing conception of historical development. In particular, they frequently took the form of developmental narratives revolving around the progress of “manifest destiny” or the “rise and fall” of rival civilizational systems; they cast the preponderance of the British and American Empires as the fulfilment of an inner law of historical progress (see below, Section III). In this respect, perceptions of differential development played a key role in the international conditions of Occidentalism. They were especially manifest in the obsessive focus on degeneration, miscegenation, and ethnic fitness which marked racially-inflected ideologies of civilizational imperialism. These discourses spoke directly to the problems of national competitiveness created by the intensification of imperial rivalry. In this context, ethnically essentialist definitions of East and West provided a way of defining the nature of the threat posed by rival civilizational systems, especially when the kind of catch-up development practiced by Meiji Japan resulted in such visible forms of geopolitical rivalry. By the same logic, the increasingly visible ethnocentrism of American political culture was directly articulated into the competitive international relations from which rival projects of external expansionism flourished. As Tokutomi Sohō, a prominent advocate of Japanese expansionism during the early-twentieth century, commented: “Admiral Mahan says that the Japanese must be excluded because they cannot assimilate. It all boils down to this: The only sin the Japanese have ever committed is that of being Japanese. If this is the case, we must break down the white domination [of the world].”⁵² In such highly-racialized terms, imperial-Japanese assaults on Chinese and Korean peoples as culturally inferior echoed the logic of cultural differentiation engendered over the course of the imperial era. Indeed, these Japanese attacks on their seemingly backward neighbors were partly motivated by the perception that Korea and China, militarily incapable of withstanding the incursions of Western imperialists, would weaken the relative standing of Imperial Japan by ceding territorial advantage to the European powers.⁵³

⁵² Cited in Sadao Asada, *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations: Historical Essays* (University of Missouri Press, 2007), 67.

⁵³ Michael Weiner, *Race, Ethnicity and Migration in Modern Japan*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2006), 20–22.

The development of the West as a modern form of political subjectivity and symbolic power was thus inseparable from the broader cultural logic of the national-imperial state. Its intersocietal preconditions lay, fundamentally, in the dynamics of intersocietal unevenness and competitive coexistence which define the global condition as whole: how the competitive logic, coercive enactment, and cultural mediation of differential development fostered an increasingly ethnocentric definition of legitimate domination. In the next section of the chapter, I address the specific political and intellectual contexts which shaped the gradual Westernization of American political culture during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

III. Cultures of the Machtstaat

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the linked processes of military expansion and colonial empire building served to generate a series of new challenges at the interface of grand strategy and political culture. By the time of the United States' entry into WWI in 1917, the territorial possessions acquired during westward expansion were joined by a large colonial empire: Alaska, Hawaii, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Guam, Samoa, the Virgin Islands, the Panama Canal Zone, and a set of other temporarily occupied lands in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.⁵⁴ This break with the continental isolationism proscribed by the Monroe Doctrine (1823), effectively confirmed with the defeat of the Spanish Empire in the Pacific in 1898, set in motion a new struggle to rationalize new forms of political domination. Though similar in part to the original experiences of settler colonialism and westward expansion, the process of extra-continental expansion brought the American Empire into a confrontation with rival global empires and unfamiliar cultural formations.

Like other colonial states, government officials, imperial strategists, military commanders, and members of the wider intelligentsia had the task of legitimizing costly and violent policy decisions, as well as rationalizing the hierarchical division between colony and metropole.⁵⁵ Echoing the demands of many naval reformers,⁵⁶ in his first message to Congress as president in 1901, Roosevelt announced that “the American people must either build and maintain an adequate Navy or else make up their minds definitely to accept a secondary position in international affairs, not merely in political but commercial matters.”⁵⁷ This pursuit of world power in the form of extensive overseas influence required the costly forms of naval build-up and military expansion analyzed in the previous chapter. By examining the ideological and

⁵⁴ Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 62.

⁵⁵ Walter LaFeber, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations. Volume 2, The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913*, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 122–47.

⁵⁶ For an early statement see, Commander Charles D. Sigsbee, “The Reconstruction and Increase of the Navy,” *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* 11, no. 1 (1885): 3–83; also, Alfred Thayer Mahan, “Hawaii and Our Future Sea Power,” in *The Interest of America in Sea Power: Present and Future* (1893; repr., London: Sampson Low, 1897), 31–55.

⁵⁷ Cited in Robert L. O’Connell, *Sacred Vessels: The Cult of the Battleship and the Rise of the U.S. Navy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 104.

strategic contexts in which American elites sought to rationalize and justify this project, it will be possible to better explain how the symbol of the West came to enter the categories of authority which held US expansionists together as a governing class.

RACE WARS AND IMPERIAL RIVALRIES

From the 1890s onward, prominent military and political elites conceived the “westward” expansion of the American Empire in extra-continental terms, a vision of external power-projection that linked geopolitical goals to the cause of civilizational regeneration and the “Anglo-Saxon race.” As an “imperial republic of limitless resource” the US would seek “to occupy a high place among nations.”⁵⁸ This expansive project linked the US political order to future world power rivalries of the “Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico” in conjunction with the wider scramble for colonial possessions now emerging in East Asia. Writing in 1896, Admiral Henry C. Taylor set out a paradigmatic vision of westward expansion that defined warfare as a kind of civilizing and masculinizing force: the antithesis of “race decadence.”⁵⁹

Not only do nations that practice too long the arts of peace in forgetfulness of war become enfeebled and the natural prey of neighbors grown strong through combat, but they grow corrupt internally as well. Although peaceful trade may thrive, the arts and industries flourish, and every precaution against corruption, national and municipal, be observed, decay begins, the fervor of religion cools, skepticism advances, immoralities appear unreproved, and race decadence hastens its steps, even though it may be that no strong neighbor is at hand to quicken the downfall. We may recognize that war is cruel and brutal, disposing men to a state of savagery, but let us confess that the corrupt ease, the luxurious immorality of life, toward which a total absence of war always leads nations, has in it something more degrading for the human race than simple savagery.⁶⁰

This was a prediction of imperial grandeur and model of civilized militarism that many of Taylor’s contemporaries found appealing. For Admiral Stephen B. Luce, war was itself the great civilizer of human history which had enabled the spread of “Hellenism” and “Christianity.” The “star of empire” lay in the West, “for westward set the side of conquest” and civilizational progress. “The imposing wave of barbaric triumph swept from Asia across the Aegean Sea, only to be turned back by united Greece armed in the sacred cause of liberty. The battles of Marathon, Salamis, and Plataea were only so many stepping-stones towards an ascendancy of Hellenic civilization, the influence of which on human affairs can never die. Without war Greece would have lived on aestheticism and wasted its life in idle dreams.”⁶¹ These imagined linkages between empire, war, and civilization were inspired, in part, by the writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan, who more than any other reformist intellectual of the Progressive Era sought to place the figure of enemy “Slavic” and “Asiatic” civilizations at the

⁵⁸ H. C. Taylor, “The Study of War,” *The North American Review* 162, no. 471 (1896): 182.

⁵⁹ Taylor, 183.

⁶⁰ Taylor, 183.

⁶¹ Stephen B. Luce, “The Benefits of War,” *The North American Review* 153, no. 421 (1891): 673; also, Stephen B. Luce, “Naval Administration,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, no. 28 (1902): 840ff.

heart of American grand strategy.⁶² Defense against such rival civilizational orders demanded a navy strong both in material and in the morale, “which comes from thorough mental and physical training, to make sure that no one shall venture to molest or make us afraid; so long as we follow the way we believe to be right.”⁶³ These militaristic conceptions of civilizational expansion and defense were key elements in the processes of symbolic restructuring that bound the process of national-imperial state to the ideological discourse of Occidentalism.

As a self-reinforcing discourse of imperial legitimacy, the doctrine of “manifest destiny” provided one source of the moral certitudes demanded by military elites. Indeed, there was a kind of symbolic fit between destinarian ideology and the cultural requirements of naval and other military commanders, whose frequent references to the civilizational cause served to confer meaning and prestige on the worldly activities of military conflict. The language of “duty” and “manhood” so frequently attached to idea of Western civilization invested military force with a higher spiritual meaningfulness.⁶⁴ Given this, it is not surprising to find that the late-nineteenth century ideologues of Western civilization found a natural audience in the class of military reformers and empire-builders who presided over the first era of extra-continental expansionism.⁶⁵ Josiah Strong, a protestant clergyman and influential theorist of Anglo-Saxon predominance, noted Mahan’s assistance in preparing his work on American expansion. This text set out a vision of imperial destiny which hoped to set the United States on a similar course to that of the British Empire, “the Titan of the West.”⁶⁶

Likewise Brooks Adams, an influential theorist of US economic supremacy and civilizational development, joined Mahan in the White House of Theodore Roosevelt. As a lecturer at the US Naval War College, Adams helped generate the culture of civilizational imperialism embraced by military elites like Taylor, Luce and Chadwick. The world-hierarchy of civilizations outlined in Adams’ social evolutionary conception of world history offered an appealing explanation for the colonial empire now being amassed by US military commanders. In one striking formulation, Taylor, a devotee of Adams’ work, described the American capture of the Philippines as the outgrowth of providential necessity. “It is not a question whether we like the Philippines, or need Porto Rico. They were given into our hands without consulting our wishes or our judgment. The guarding and governing of these distant territories; their improvement and the happiness of their people, is our work whether we like it or not.”⁶⁷ The

⁶² Mahan, *The Problem of Asia*; Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Armaments and Arbitration, Or: The Place of Force in the International Relations of States* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1911).

⁶³ Rear Admiral French Ensor Chadwick, “Opening Address Delivered by the President of the War College,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 28 (1902): 268.

⁶⁴ Theodore Roosevelt to Arthur Cecil Spring Rice, January 27, 1900 in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 1147. Also, Elihu Root, “The Ethics of the Panama Question”; Elihu Root, “The United States and the Philippines in 1900, Address of The Secretary of War at Canton, October 24 1900,” in *The Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Addresses and Reports by Elihu Root*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (1900; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1900), 27–63; Henry C. Taylor, “The Fleet,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 29 (1903): 709.

⁶⁵ For this connection see, Dirk Bönker, *Militarism in a Global Age: Naval Ambitions in Germany and the United States Before World War I* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2016), 44.

⁶⁶ Josiah Strong, *Expansion Under New World-Conditions* (New York, NY: The Baker and Taylor Company, 1900), 206. For Strong’s views on Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy see also, Strong, *Our Country*.

⁶⁷ Taylor, “The Fleet,” 799.

United States and its navy had established a “new empire in the West,” as Adams conceived it, the guardian of an Occidental civilization expanding across the Pacific.⁶⁸

At the center of this culture of imperial prestige were ideas of race. For Roosevelt, who presided over an unprecedented expansion of the US navy, military power was closely related to “fitness” of a “race.”⁶⁹ In particular, the distinction between “the conquering race in America” — “the European whites” — and the variety of “coolies”, “black”, “Indians”, or other “degenerate” and “mixed races” identified during the process of territorial expansion provided a quasi-scientific language of imperial policy revolving around the distinction between “civilization” and “barbarism”⁷⁰ Defined in these terms, the project of extra-continental expansion was a kind of white nativism. Imperialism offered the opportunity for imaginary status exaltations in the form of a “struggle for race supremacy.” In the United States, these vision of race struggle were catalyzed by the war of 1898 against Spain: “Unity of language is coming by education, unity of race by assimilation, or as regards the Spanish blood at least, by extermination, a process which, by the way, nature has not yet discarded.”⁷¹ Underlying this peculiar vision of geopolitical rivalry were the sentiments of Social Darwinism, Spenserian evolutionary theory, and Lamarckism.⁷² While the tenets of Social Darwinism did not generate a uniform embrace of the *homo Pugnax*,⁷³ the expansion of scientific racism offered confirmation of the experience of ethnic genocide and slavery which preceded the era of extra-continental expansion.⁷⁴

The discourse of “race war” and civilizational imperialism embraced by US military and geopolitical strategists was commonplace among the political class and intelligentsia of contemporary European empires.⁷⁵ In Germany, for example, Kaiser Wilhelm encouraged an alliance with Russia to defend European Christianity and the “White Race” against “Asian

⁶⁸ Brooks Adams, “War as the Ultimate Form of Economic Competition,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 29 (1903): 832; Henry C. Taylor, “The Future of Our Navy,” *Forum* 26 (1899): 4.

⁶⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, *Oliver Cromwell* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s sons, 1900), 100.

⁷⁰ Representative of the general tenor of his thought, these terms are from two articles by Lieutenant Commander Charles H. Stockton. In one notable passage we find, “the governments of Santo Domingo and Hayti, republics in name, are so unstable in their nature and so irregular and erratic in their administration of affairs that their nominal constitutions or political governments are not worthy of study. Of black and mixed race, their inhabitants range from an approach to civilization to but a few removes from barbarism.”

⁷¹ H.H. Powers, “The War as a Suggestion of Manifest Destiny,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 12, no. 2 (September 1, 1898): 6,12.

⁷² For Roosevelt’s embrace of scientific race see the ample documentation in Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race*.

⁷³ On Darwinism as “peace biology” see Crook, *Darwinism, War and History*, 192.

⁷⁴ For an overview see Benjamin Madley, “Patterns of Frontier Genocide 1803–1910: The Aboriginal Tasmanians, the Yuki of California, and the Herero of Namibia,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2004): here, 170, who argues that racism “provided the context in which settlers and their advocates attempted to annihilate indigenous people who rose up against them.” On the relations between race, warfare, and US continental and overseas expansion see in particular, Walter L. Williams, “United States Indian Policy and the Debate over Philippine Annexation: Implications for the Origins of American Imperialism,” *The Journal of American History* 66, no. 4 (1980): 810–31; Paul A. Kramer, “Race-Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire: The Philippine-American War as Race War,” *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 2 (2006): 169–210. The dynamic of colonial warfare itself could also encourage the racialization of enemies. For this argument see Isabel V Hull, *Absolute Destruction Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2013), 330ff.

⁷⁵ Geulen, “The Common Grounds of Conflict”; Osterhammel, *Transformation*, 855–64.

barbarism”, presenting the Japanese Empire as a “Yellow Peril” in the lineage of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane.⁷⁶ In the context of the New Imperialism, the rationalization of political authority relations opened a novel space of secular racial fantasy. Influenced by new scientific forms of racial ideology, elites throughout the imperial field converged on racialized understandings of civilizational development and hierarchy.⁷⁷ US geopolitical strategists moved within the same categorial universe as British theorists of Anglo-Saxonism, the German *völkisch* thinkers who advocated the unification of “blood and soil” within Eastern Europe, or the French colonialists pursuing *la mission civilisatrice* across an emergent Greater France.

Ideologies of racial struggle offered seemingly compelling explanations for the conflict dynamics of a hierarchical and regionally differentiated global political-economic space, in which colonial wars were imagined as wars to spread “civilization” to enemies who lacked “civilized” rules of engagement, and the emergence of new industrial powers in Russia and Japan threatened to undermine Western dominance.⁷⁸ In the eyes of many geopolitical and military strategists, these power struggles manifested a logic of cultural or biological destiny described in the emerging natural sciences: an historic clash between “Slavic” and “Germanic” races in Central Europe; the war against the rising “yellow peril” of Japanese imperialism and associated waves of “Asiatic” immigration; the struggle for “white” nations to maintain their “place in the sun.”⁷⁹ In 1897, the centrality of racial characteristics to the project of westward expansion was given particularly striking formulation by Lieutenant James Harbord, two years before he served in the Spanish-American war:

Our traditional policy of non-interference and our position with the ocean between us and any European foe, may easily lull our nation into a neglect of war like preparation, and the decadence of our military spirit. Material prosperity; devotion to the arts and industries of a long peace; conquests in the world of commerce and invention have perhaps blinded our eyes to our duty and destiny on the Western Continent. Surely the United States is fated to some day overshadow and dominate all other states on this hemisphere. The instinct of conquest is in the Anglo-Saxon blood and long before our population is as dense and the ownership of arable land, as difficult of attainment as in the best part of Europe today, our people will clamor for the extension of our borders, and the Latin-American with his indolence and improvidence will give way before the energetic and resourceful Anglo-Saxon American. The Monroe Doctrine has become a tenet of the National Creed, and at no distant day the possession

⁷⁶ Gerhard Krebs, “German Policy and the Russo-Japanese War,” in *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5: Volume 2: The Nichinan Papers*, ed. John W. Chapman and Inaba Chiharu (Folkstone: Global Oriental, 2007), 89.

⁷⁷ See, Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996), 277–324; Joseph L. Graves, *The Emperor’s New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium* (New Jersey, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 37–85.

⁷⁸ For this interpretation of colonial wars see, Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, trans. Shelley L. Frisch (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997), 44.

⁷⁹ Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 44–51; Rotem Kowner, “‘Lighter than Yellow, but Not Enough’: Western Discourse on the Japanese ‘Race’, 1854-1904,” *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 1 (2000): 126ff; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 83–103; John Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence in the British World, 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), especially chapter 5.

of Cuba and the adjacent isles will be essential to the protection of our interests in the canal across the Isthmus.⁸⁰

Subsequently, the Philippine-American War (1899-1902) that began with the defeat of the Spanish Empire became an important crucible for the emerging cultural formation of the American *Machtstaat*. Against the perceived uncivilized guerrilla tactics of Emilio Aguinaldo's nationalist forces — a military tactic likely inspired by the example of the Boer's struggle against the British Empire — US commentators and military officials castigated the Philippines as a barbaric alien culture.⁸¹ Newspaper editors and politicians called for policies of violent suppression and assimilation, while doubting the latter could ever be realized in practice.⁸² For Admiral Bradley A. Fiske, the war in Manila was a time spent among “savages” defined by their hatred of Christianity and mysterious racial animosities.⁸³

Major General Frederick Funston, a key promoter of the policy of territorial conquest after the Spanish-American War, described the Filipino forces as “an illiterate, semi-savage people, who are waging war, not against tyranny, but against Anglo-Saxon order and decency.”⁸⁴ Thus the US government's decision to annex the Philippines came to depend on the claim that, rather than a national people capable of self-government, the Philippine Republic comprised a “multiplicity of tribes” exhibiting “multifarious phases of civilization — ranging all the way from the highest to the lowest”, some more “highly civilized”, some “little better than barbarians.”⁸⁵ As US Secretary of War Elihu Root summarized: the anti-imperialist insurgency in the Philippines as a disorder of “rival chieftains,” and the Aguinaldo government a “pure and simple military domination of the Tagalogs” whose suppression was welcomed with “open arms” by “the tribes of northern Luzon.”⁸⁶

In a letter to Funston, Roosevelt praised the General's campaign as the greatest in American history since Lieutenant William B. Cushing sank the Confederate *Albatross* in 1864.⁸⁷ Defined as a war against racially and culturally alien savages, the Philippine-American War became a generative source of cultural development, where the self-exaltation of a white, masculine military elite found a series of imaginary reference points. Through their relations with the press military commanders fostered this process in self-reinforcing ways. Admiral George Dewey, in particular, encouraged a gratifying cult of personal admiration after leading

⁸⁰ Lieutenant J. G. Harbord, “The Necessity of a Well Organized and Trained Infantry at the Outbreak of War, and the Best Means to Be Adopted by the United States for Obtaining Such a Force,” *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* XXI, no. LXXXVIII (1897): 2.

⁸¹ Kramer, “Race-Making and Colonial Violence in the U.S. Empire.”

⁸² Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, 78.

⁸³ Bradley A. Fiske, *War Time in Manila* (Boston, MA: Richard G. Badger, 1913), 64–66, 255.

⁸⁴ Cited in: Andrew John Byers, “The Sexual Economy of War: Regulation of Sexuality and the U.S. Army, 1898-1940” (Duke University, 2012), 126.

⁸⁵ These quotations taken from the US government's “The Native Peoples of the Philippines” and “Preliminary Report: Capacity for Self-Government” *Philippine Commission* (1900). For a related argument about the formation of the category of the tribe in the British Empire, see Nivi Manchanda, “The Imperial Sociology of the ‘Tribe’ in Afghanistan,” *Millennium* 46, no. 2 (January 1, 2018): 165–89.

⁸⁶ Root, “The United States and the Philippines in 1900,” 46.

⁸⁷ Theodore Roosevelt to Frederick Funston, March 30, 1901 in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 35–36.

the Asiatic Squadron to victory over the Spanish Navy in May of 1898.⁸⁸ In a series of poems dedicated to the Admiral in the national press, the nationalist subtext and cultural efficacy of military expansionism were translated into a broad populist vision.

Dewey! Dewey! Dewey!
Is the hero of the Day
And the Maine has been remembered in the good old-fashioned way—
The way of Hull and Perry,
Decatur and the rest
When old Europe felt the clutches of
Of the Eagle of the West;
That's how Dewey smashed the Spaniard
In Manila's crooked bay,
And the Maine has been remembered
In the good old-fashioned way.⁸⁹

CATEGORIES OF DOMINATION

It would be misleading to view the cultural formation of American imperialism as a kind of opium of the masses: a convenient ideological mystification of more “real” social and geopolitical interests. More fundamentally, the symbols of Western civilization and the Anglo-Saxon race penetrated the categories of authority and prestige that bound US military and political elites together as a governing class. For many military commanders, the symbolic ties between the “civilized man” and the “instincts of the Anglo-Saxon race” offered appealing rationalizations of leadership and imperial power-projection, casting the US navy and armed forces as an embodiment of “manhood and self-respect” unmatched by rival powers.⁹⁰ The figure of ethnic civilizational enemies — often the Russian “Slav,” the “Asiatic” Japanese or the Qing Empire — offered an integrating symbolic resource which helped unify US military and political actors as a civilized white elite.⁹¹ Theodore Roosevelt was a particularly keen advocate of this self-image, forming the “Rough Riders” regiment in 1898, the first volunteer force to enter the Spanish-American War.⁹²

The archetypally Orientalist theme of Western masculinity versus Eastern effeminacy provided an appealing status exaltation which went hand in hand with the military's commitment to fostering a disciplined culture of martial masculinity. In a 1903 address at a Banquet in Ohio

⁸⁸ For the “Dewey Craze” see Ronald Spector, *Admiral of the New Empire: The Life and Career of George Dewey* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 65–68.

⁸⁹ Cited in Spector, 65.

⁹⁰ Elihu Root, “‘The Character and Office of the American Army.’ An Address at a Banquet at Canton, Ohio, January 27 1903, in Honor of the Birthday of the Late President McKinley,” in *Military and Colonial Policy of the United States: Collected Works*, ed. Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 17ff; Bradley A. Fiske, “Naval Power,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, no. 37 (1911): 705, 716.

⁹¹ Newton A. McCully, *The McCully Report: The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05*, ed. Richard Doenhoff (1905; repr., Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 1977), 253; Denby, *China and Her People*, 249–50.

⁹² See Sarah Lyons Watts, *Rough Rider in the White House: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Desire* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

in Honor of the late President McKinley, for example, Elihu Root praised the “character of the American Army” by drawing a contrast between it and China:

Poor China today stands helpless, seeing, piece by piece, parts of her territory peopled by her citizens cut out from her living body and subjected to the domination of foreign power — China, which has carried the arts of civilization to a high, if not the highest point, — China whose peoples are industrious, and frugal and enterprising, among the best workmen, the most honest merchants, the most successful business men of the earth — China, whose people cultivate the domestic virtues, the affections, a high type of morality, and fear not death at all — is helpless today because centuries ago she forgot that the part of manhood required that men shall be able to defend their rights.⁹³

The sense of masculine superiority that Root articulated in a high rhetorical style, could also be couched in a cruder language of violence. As one US soldier deployed to the Philippines concluded, “the people of the United States want us to kill all the men, fuck all the women, and raise up a new race in these Islands.”⁹⁴

By now, we can begin to see the problems emerging at the interface of strategy and culture that gave the idea of the West its widely-felt symbolic appeal. Two points in particular require emphasis. First, the symbol of the West had a widely-felt salience among state-builders concerned with rationalizing American statecraft and the military along scientific lines. As the architects of a military culture based on self-consciously rational administrative and technical procedures, the application of the “principles of science” to strategy had an exalted status.⁹⁵ For this reason, ethnographic and biological depictions of foreign cultures were high-status intellectual activities, especially because the characterizing traits of “savage” or “Oriental” races were deemed pertinent explanations for success and failure in armed conflict.⁹⁶ This meant the pseudoscientific definitions of white racial characteristics and Western or Anglo-Saxon civilizational traits could provide a legitimate intellectual context in which to define the Occident. This dynamic can be in the persistently close relationship between invocations of the West and arguments about racial degeneration, miscegenation, and evolution — scientific ideas that were pervasive by the 1890s. Fantasies of a civilized Occident possessed a semblance of rationality that corresponded to the forms of scientific cultural capital valorized by American imperialists. Such fantasies provide a reminder that the nineteenth and early-twentieth

⁹³ Root, “‘The Character and Office of the American Army.’ An Address at a Banquet at Canton, Ohio, January 27 1903, in Honor of the Birthday of the Late President McKinley,” 16.

⁹⁴ Robert Austill, soldier in the Philippines, cited in Byers, “The Sexual Economy of War: Regulation of Sexuality and the U.S. Army, 1898-1940,” 124.

⁹⁵ See, Stephen B. Luce, “War Schools,” *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* 9, no. 27 (1883): 633–58; Stephen B. Luce, “On the Study of Naval Warfare as a Science,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 12, no. 39 (1886): 527–45; Henry C. Taylor, “Address Delivered to the Class at the Naval War College, Upon the Closing of the Session of 1894,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, Address Delivered to the Class at the Naval War College, 20 (1894): 800; William F. Lieutenant Fulham, “The Organization, Training and Discipline of the Navy Personnel as Viewed from the Ship,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, no. 22 (1896): 94.

⁹⁶ See the account of the British Army’s efforts to civilize “the native soldier,” and the military fitness of “American Indians” by prominent US army reformer Emory Upton, *The Armies of Asia and Europe, Embracing Official Reports on the Armies of Japan, China, India, Persia, Italy, Russia, Austria, Germany, France, and England, Accompanied by Letters Descriptive of a Journey from Japan to the Caucasus* (New York, Appleton, 1878), 78–80. For the wider point about the high status character of “ethnographic capital” see George Steinmetz, “‘The Devil’s Handwriting’: Precolonial Discourse, Ethnographic Acuity, and Cross-Identification in German Colonialism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 1 (2003): 41–95.

centuries were saturated with forms of “colonial knowledge.”⁹⁷ While it looked back to a mythic past of Greco-Roman antiquity, the idealization of the West was constructively related to a scientific conception of cultural modernity.

Second, the idea of the West as an exalted, racially defined political community appealed to the virtues of masculinity and martial honor to which military and political elites aspired. The distinction between Oriental effeminacy and European masculinity described by Said have an obvious relevance here. But codes of civilized masculinity were also actively constructed by American military training policies, which placed a high priority on the ability to “handle men” in a correct fashion.⁹⁸ By offering exalted sentiments of honour, prestige, and rationality the discourse of the West appealed to some of the most basic forms of sociality practiced by American military commanders and statesmen. Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden” was in this sense paradigmatic of the emergent ideal of the West. In this context, the bizarre scene of Theodore Roosevelt’s weekly wrestling matches against a pair of Japanese wrestlers had an effective social logic, performing the codes of masculinity and race out of which the ideal Western civilization would grow.⁹⁹

Before considering this geopolitical component of Occidentalism in more detail, the social and historical specificities of the West’s American formation need to be underlined. The evolving Westernization of political and cultural forms was a specifically modern historical process of sociocultural transformation determined, in part, by the authority of the evolving natural and social sciences. At a deeper sociological level, this transition points to changes in the underlying bases of political rule itself. Influenced by ideologies of scientific racism and prevailing forms of colonial anthropology, the idea of Western civilization embraced by US empire-builders and military elites was a quasi-rational conceptualization of authority and legitimate domination. While the first ideologies of American manifest destiny took Christianity as their primary reference, by the 1880s and 1890s these notions of providence had been partly overtaken by the kind of evolutionary theory and economic determinism propagated by thinkers like Adams, Mahan and Strong.¹⁰⁰ Though Christianity remained an archaic presence in these accounts of American expansion, it was not the primary rationalization for empire.

Seen in this historical context, the emergence of the West at the centre of elite political cultures points to a wider shift in social foundations of political hierarchy — away from the systems of religious and aristocratic authority which sustained earlier state-forms, and toward a quasi-

⁹⁷ See, Martin J. Bayly, *Taming the Imperial Imagination: Colonial Knowledge, International Relations, and the Anglo-Afghan Encounter, 1808-1878* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), here, 49.

⁹⁸ According to one article on naval organization, “the Department of Organization and Discipline should include: (1) efficiency; (2) general physical fitness as determined by the Medical Board each yea; (3) fencing; (4) boxing; (5) shooting; (6) swimming; (7) general gymnastics. These marks to be combined in proportion to their importance to the physical officer and to his effectiveness, to have appreciable value in his multiple, as they will have in his ultimate value to the service.” Lieutenant J.S. McKean, “How Best to Meet ‘The Navy’s Greatest Need,’” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 28, no. 4 (1902): 859.

⁹⁹ Theodore Roosevelt to Kermit Roosevelt, March 5, 1904, in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, vol. 4 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 744.

¹⁰⁰ For this argument see, Anders, Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*, 67ff.

rational order of legitimate domination grounded in the prestige of secular cultural symbols like race or Western civilization. Unlike, for example, the transcontinental aristocracy of earlier Europe, the ruling elites of the American and other late-nineteenth century empires were rooted in increasingly depersonalized political spheres where political legitimacy was structured in terms of rational-bureaucratic, democratic, and (especially in the colonies) racial and civilizational authority relations. “The nobility” was converted into a secular class of state officialdom. The conflicts dynamics of political modernity could thus appear in a new worldly form: empire versus empire, nation-state versus nation-state, the elite versus the people. Under these socio-historical conditions, the mythology of the West provided a series of social and symbolic resources which promised to rationalize and justify prevailing forms of political hierarchy and domination in quasi-rational terms. As Pierre Bourdieu encapsulates this historical trajectory: “Culture succeeds religion, with quite similar functions. It gives the dominant the sense of being justified in their domination, not only on the level of a national society but also on that of global society, so that the dominant or colonizers, for example, can see themselves in all good conscience as bearers of the universal.”¹⁰¹

IV. The Production of the West in the Anglosphere

The competitive coexistence of rival imperial systems was the major feature of the international context in which ideologies of Western superiority flourished. What accounts for the sudden breakthrough to essentialist forms of Occidentalism in this period, then, is in part the rapid escalation of imperial competition that appeared after c.1880.¹⁰² The historical conjuncture of the New Imperialism spawned a novel reflexivity about the contested unevenness of the prevailing international order, which led both British and American elites to seek more sustained forms of imperial identity. By examining some of ideological patterns which emerged at the intersection between the Anglosphere and its geopolitical exterior, this section of the chapter locates the key intersocietal transformations which made identification with the West a core principle of visions within both British and American imperial cultures. With the advent of intense military-industrial rivalry, an imperial order exposed to power struggles from its constitutive outside was forced to confront the possibility of its own degeneration or decline. It was this cultural mediation between the concerns of Anglophone imperialists and the increasingly global space of international power politics that defined the evolving paradigm of the West.

¹⁰¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*, trans. David Fernbach (Polity, 2014), 160.

¹⁰² While GoGwilt’s study makes a similar argument about the punctual emergence of the West at the end of the nineteenth century, it is strangely silent on role of imperial competition as a driver of the kind of Occidentalism embraced by late-nineteenth century empire-builders, political agents perhaps centrally motivated by the threatening advance of rival powers such as Japan and Russia — the archetypal “non-West.” A similar neglect of international dynamics is the study’s tendency to ignore the inter-relations *between* British and American Westernizers. GoGwilt, *The Invention of the West*, 236ff.

OCCIDENTALISM IN AN IMPERIAL FIELD

Acting as a key ideologue of civilizational imperialism, Mahan advocated strengthening the bond between the US and Great Britain on the basis of the common racial and cultural bonds of white “Anglo-Saxons.”¹⁰³ The common anti-type of this policy was the Russian and Japanese, Slavic and Asiatic, empires that threatened British and American global interests. For Mahan, the expansionary “outlook” of the rising US and European empires was inaugurating a “new era of colonization”¹⁰⁴ which would generate conflicts between “the East and the West” as the latter drew the former out of its enduring inertia.¹⁰⁵ In a time when a “new and significant restlessness” was emerging “among the Oriental peoples, aroused at length, by intimate contact with Europeans, from the torpor and changelessness of ages,” Anglo-Saxon solidarity was required to defend American and British interests against new centers of civilizational expansion.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the spreading of European technologies and military techniques to formerly “savage” and “barbarian” lands threatened to create rival civilizational bloc in East Asia, where the potential for racial solidarity among Chinese and Japanese societies figured as a worrying sign of global disorder.¹⁰⁷

For Roosevelt, the rise of Imperial Japan as a potential great power represented a seismic geopolitical shift with worrying consequences for the future of Western civilization.¹⁰⁸ As a result, the specter of Japanese power that emerged after 1905 activated anxieties about the American Empire’s national efficiency, linking these to concerns about domestic consequences of East Asian immigration.¹⁰⁹ While geopolitical assessments of this kind appear irrational, they resonated with the intersocietal character of the world economy, where the rapid transfer of economic and technical infrastructures was enabling formerly “backward” societies to engage in modern forms of global power-projection. Categorized through preexisting cultural schemas of racial differentiation, the sight of catch-up development in societies like China and Japan exposed US political culture to an internationally-generated dynamic of combined development.

The anxious reactions to the Russo-Japanese War in Europe and North America, discussed in the previous chapter, are testament to this structured dynamic between uneven and combined development and symbolic competition. The volatile pattern of inter-imperial rivalries

¹⁰³ Mahan and Beresford, “Possibilities of an Anglo-American Reunion.” For the contribution of Anglo-Saxon solidarity to US-British rapprochement in this era, see, Vucetic, *The Anglosphere*.

¹⁰⁴ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Retrospect and Prospect: Studies in International Relations, Naval and Political* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 31.

¹⁰⁵ For Mahan’s stylization of the world-map in terms of East and the West see Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” in *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1902), 217. .

¹⁰⁶ Mahan, *Retrospect and Prospect: Studies in International Relations, Naval and Political*, 31.

¹⁰⁷ Bradley Fiske, “American Naval Policy,” *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute* 31 (1905): 2; Bradley Fiske, *Invention, the Master-Key to Progress*. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1923), 307–8, 317–18.

¹⁰⁸ As described Theodore Roosevelt to Robert Grant, March 14, 1905, and Theodore Roosevelt to Arthur Cecil Spring Rice, June 16, 1905, both in Morison, *Letters*, 1951, 4:1140 and 1233-1234 respectively.

¹⁰⁹ See, Denby, *China and Her People*, 106–11; also, Theodore Roosevelt to Whitelaw Reid, March 30, 1908 in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, vol. 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 985.

generated by such efforts at national self-strengthening, became a key factor in the emergent political geography of American world power calculations. In this context, it is revealing to see that Mahan became the first author to coin the notion of the “Middle East” as a distinct object of Western strategic policy. In an influential 1902 article for the London *National Review*, he outlined the evolving economic and geopolitical power struggles of the Persian Gulf — “one terminus of a prospective interoceanic railroad” and hence an increasingly vital center of global commerce — to advocate the cause of British naval expansion.¹¹⁰ Essentially an argument for the preparation of British naval forces against Russian expansion into the Gulf of Aden, Mahan’s strategic analysis revolved around the seminal Occidental theme of Oriental backwardness, which showed that neither an uncivilized “Middle East” nor a largely undeveloped Russian Empire could be trusted to safeguard the needs of commerce in the region. The kind of protectionist economic policy practiced in the Russian Empire threatened to establish a system of closed tariff walls that would prevent the rational expansion of markets across North Africa and Western Asia. “Applied to what is now Persia, this would be a direct injury to India, which, even under the present backward conditions of the inhabitants and of communications, carries on a large part of the Persian trade, as might naturally be expected from the nearness of the two countries.”¹¹¹ As a result, “the rules of intercourse with Oriental nations” demanded that a European power, Germany in this instance, would be allowed to “have her voice heard in many local matters, affecting the interests of her subjects who are thus engaged in developing the country.”¹¹²

What is striking here is the close rhetorical and conceptual relation between the idea of a racially defined Western alliance and the actual conflict dynamics of imperial geopolitics. The central problematic of Mahan’s argument about the strategic importance of a Western alliance in the Middle East is the emerging threat of international competition between Japan, Germany, Russia and the Anglo-Saxon powers.¹¹³ The ideological frame for this analysis was provided, in part, by the notions of racial development and social evolution which inspired late-nineteenth century visions of manifest destiny.¹¹⁴ According to this body of ideas “the English race in America” was the guardian of historical progress against barbarism.¹¹⁵ The Anglo-Saxon West and its colonial extension was the bearer of modernity in lands peopled by “irredeemable savages hardly above the level of brutes.”¹¹⁶ As Theodore Roosevelt opined in his 1898 work, *The Winning of the West*, the process of westward expansion had been an instance of “white conquest:” a “white flood” of Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, and other European “races” eventually overcoming the lesser-civilization of the Native-American “red men.”¹¹⁷ When the project of

¹¹⁰ Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations.”

¹¹¹ Mahan, 225–26.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 243

¹¹³ Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The United States Looking Outward,” in *The Interest of America in Sea Power: Present and Future* (1890; repr., London: Sampson Low, 1897), 3–30; Mahan, “The Persian Gulf and International Relations,” 248–49.

¹¹⁴ Anders, Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny*, 80–90.

¹¹⁵ Fiske, *American Political Ideas Viewed from the Standpoint of Universal History*, 129.

¹¹⁶ Fiske, 141. The specific focus of this reference is aboriginal peoples of Australia, who Fiske views in the same manner as Roosevelt defines the Native American population of the North American continent.

¹¹⁷ Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: Part I*, 15–17.

territorial expansion turned outward to the world overseas, racialized understandings of Western civilization thus provided a framework of rationalization and legitimacy. Despite its atrocities, now the object of much public criticism in the United States, Roosevelt argued that victory in the Philippine-American War (1899-1902) had been “the triumph of civilization over the forces which stand for the black chaos of barbarism.”¹¹⁸ A central driver of the expansion of the West in the modern epoch, “the warfare that has extended the boundaries of civilization at the expense of barbarism and savagery has been for centuries one of the most potent factors in the progress of humanity.”¹¹⁹ This idealization of a civilized yet expansionary white race lent shape and meaning to the dynamics of imperial power politics, providing a quasi-rational basis for the Western dominance in international affairs.

WESTERNIZING THE ANGLOSPHERE

The ideological production of the West in these arenas of empire and colonialism was by no means an internal process of American cultural development. In fact, as the preoccupation with whiteness and Anglo-Saxonism suggests, the combination between US and British imperial formations was an integral part of the late-nineteenth century development of Occidentalism. Indeed, the proposals for British imperial expansion and Anglo-American union outlined by Mahan were immediately taken up by the English theorist of empire and expert on “Eastern” affairs, Valentine Ignatius Chirol.¹²⁰ In *The Times* — a publication which praised Mahan as a modern Copernicus — Chirol produced some twenty articles between 1902 and 1903, expanding on the evolving idea of the West in relation to the demands of British Middle-Eastern policy.

For Chirol, the core regional issue was Russian expansion. With the influence of Japan and Germany rising, the British Empire would have to strengthen its control of key frontier positions to defend India. This would be dangerous. In Persia, an “Oriental government” was being undermined by exposure to new forms of “luxury” produced by the “Western world.”¹²¹ On the “Khaibar Pass” tribal peoples clung “fiercely to their own savage ideals of freedom.”¹²² Throughout Asia, “great European powers” were becoming “great Asiatic powers,” as Oriental empires fell into decline, and British interests underwent an unprecedented challenge. “There lie in these events and in this renewed contact or collision, as the case may be, between the East and the West, omens of the greatest significance to this country.”¹²³

¹¹⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *Address of President Roosevelt at Arlington, Memorial Day, May 30, 1902*. (United States: publisher not identified, 1902). At this juncture, it is worth recalling that the annexation of the Philippines was characterized by intensive forms of violent military suppression of the local population, a fact to which Roosevelt’s Arlington address alludes somewhat obliquely. On Roosevelt’s campaign to publically minimize these atrocities in the face of domestic criticism see David J. Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2007), 204ff.

¹¹⁹ Roosevelt, *Address of President Roosevelt at Arlington, Memorial Day, May 30, 1902*.

¹²⁰ For this encounter see, Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902-1922* (Yale University Press, 1995), 21–22.

¹²¹ Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question or Some Political Problems of Indian Defence*, 91.

¹²² Chirol, 311.

¹²³ Chirol, 3.

Against this background of cultural and strategic challenges, Chirol's interpretation of the Russian Empire crystallized around the conventional distinction between Oriental despotism and Western rationalism. Drawing on the Orientalist conception of Russia as a Slavic despotism, Chirol produced a characterization of the Russian-Western divide which epitomized the changing coordinates of imperial ideology. Though it be might on the rise, Imperial Russia was a backward historical entity — its progressive elements originated in the spirit of the West. Though the expanding power of the Tsarist state in Asia might appear to be a challenge to British claims to supremacy, this perception masked a deeper truth — the West would naturally triumph over the retrograde empires of the East. This self-reinforcing conclusion epitomized the advent of an exclusive and essentialized understanding of the West within the Anglophone world. Such depictions of foreign geo-cultures brought the realities of intersocietal unevenness engendered by the emergent global condition into the internal symbolic order of imperial cultures. One such depiction is worth reproducing at length:

The most superficial observer who passes into Russia from Germany or Austria can hardly help feeling that, whatever the geographical text-books may say, when he has crossed the Russian frontier he is no longer quite in Europe, though he is not yet actually in Asia... The comparison may seem paradoxical, but to anyone who has visited Northern China, Moscow itself, with its semi-sacred Kremlin, in which the barbaric splendour of palaces and churches, stiff with gold and precious stones, has been accumulated for centuries to glorify the mystical association of spiritual and temporal sovereignty in the person of the Tsar, carries more than a suggestion of Peking and its Forbidden City, sacred to the Son of Heaven. Even to the outward eye the view from the tower of Ivan Veliky over the thousands of cupolas and domes, gleaming with gold plates or painted in vivid taints of green and blue, and the green or brown roofs of the Russian houses, intermingled with trees and gardens, which mark the panorama of Moscow, has no little in common with the spectacle which the yellow-tiled places and temples of Imperial Peking and the green or grey roofs of the Manchu and Chinese cities in a similar setting of foliage present from the walls of the Celestial capital... In the history of nations there has been perhaps no more curious phenomenon than the experiment upon which the rulers of modern Russia have embarked in their endeavour to blend with the fatalism and mysticism and passivity of the East the spirit of enterprise and individualism peculiar to the West. Whatever may be the case in other parts of Russia, in Baku, at any rate, the West has triumphed. Though long strings of camels may still be seen journeying towards its markets laden with the produce of Asia, though the Tartar city is still girdled with its ancient walls, though Persians and Turkomans in their quaint Oriental dresses still crowd its bazaars, Baku is essentially a European city in which the spirit of the West prevails.¹²⁴

This Occidentalist conception of imperial supremacy was widely held among the generation of empire-builders who presided over the decades of colonial expansion before WWI.¹²⁵ For Lord Balfour, Conservative Party prime minister between 1902 and 1905 and later an advocate of imperial federation for the white dominions, the British Empire stood firm as the exemplar of a Western civilization rooted in “Graeco-Roman culture.”¹²⁶ “Progress is with the West,” Balfour claimed, “with communities of the European type.” Like Chirol's visions of a

¹²⁴ Chirol, 21–22.

¹²⁵ On British ideologies of the white race and Anglo-Saxonism in this period, see also Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and The Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 113–19, 181–88.

¹²⁶ This characterization is from the Cambridge lecture on ‘Decadence,’ Balfour, *Decadence: Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture*, 40.

retrograde Russian Despotism, Balfour's analysis was couched in a combination of racial and cultural determinism that helped solidify the paradigm of the West as quasi-rational designation of international hierarchies. "I at least," Balfour stressed in a Cambridge lecture of 1908, "find it quite impossible to believe that any attempt to provide widely different races with an identical environment, political, religious, educational, what you will can ever make them alike. They have been different and unequal since history began; different and unequal they are destined to remain through future periods of comparable duration."¹²⁷ As such, the Anglo-Saxon powers were obligated to expand and maintain a civilizational order rooted in the imagined *longue durée* of Western development:

Where are the untried races competent to construct out of the ruined fragments of our civilisation a new and better habitation for the spirit of man? They do not exist: and if the world is again to be buried under a barbaric flood, it will not be like that which fertilised, though it first destroyed, the western provinces of Rome, but like that which in Asia submerged for ever the last traces of Hellenic culture.¹²⁸

For other advocates of a closer Anglo-American union, this vision of racial and civilizational superiority provided a common rationale for strategic policy decision. Lord Milner, governor of South Africa between 1897 and 1901, thus placed the superiority of Western "civilization" and the "white race" at the center of his argument for stronger form of "imperial federation" linking the British Empire to its self-governing colonies.¹²⁹ As these examples illustrate, the articulation of the West as a form of political subjectivity was inseparable from strategic and political questions provoked by the late-nineteenth transfer of power politics to a new global plane. Western civilization, as a logic of imperial prestige and societal differentiation, provided a range of symbolic resources through which the prevailing conflict dynamics of the period could be rendered into a meaningful social reality.

In this connection, the convergence of British and American elites on a shared conception of Western civilization points to the mediating influence of trans-imperial interactions on the development of Occidentalism within the broader Anglosphere. The social contexts in which Western identity-formation flourished were characterized by an intersocietal setting in which political elites were not just oriented to a domestic social order, but also the ruling groups of other major empires. Theodore Roosevelt, in particular, was a personal intimate of the social class and cultural milieu which spawned British Westernizers like Balfour and Chirol. In May 1910, he travelled to London following a period on safari in Sudan and a brief tour of Khartoum and Cairo. Recent events in Egypt, where the pro-British Prime Minister Boutros Ghali had been assassinated by nationalists in February, demonstrated that "fanatical" Egyptians were unready for self-government. Conceiving the British Empire as the guardian of civilization, Roosevelt impressed upon the British their duty to rule. "You are in Egypt for several purposes, and among them one of the greatest is the benefit of the Egyptian people. You saved them from ruin by coming in, and at the present moment, if they are not governed from outside, they will sink into a welter of chaos. Some nation must govern Egypt. I hope and

¹²⁷ Balfour, 46–47.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹²⁹ Milner, *Imperial Unity, Speeches Delivered in Canada in the Autumn of 1908*, 18,56-57, 83.

believe that you will decide that it is your duty to be that nation.”¹³⁰ In June, Balfour endorsed Roosevelt’s demand for the maintenance of British rule by saying “we have gone on in Egypt doing more and more good work, year after year” and “that good work depends on our staying there.” The British “cannot abandon Egypt without disgrace to ourselves.”¹³¹

Such intra-imperial interactions point to the constitutively global character of the West as a geo-cultural formation. By 1900, a discourse of whiteness and Occidentalism formed a global culture of Anglo-American solidarity which promised to stabilize culturally the systematic and contested unevenness of a global-imperial field — what Roosevelt stylized as the “seething modern turmoil” confronting “all our Western civilization.”¹³² Conscious of their location within a rivalrous and rapidly transforming hierarchy of empires, British and American elites projected a vision of Western civilization which resonated with the intersocietal character of global power politics, its underlying imperial hierarchies, and historical patterns of capitalist unevenness. Despite its outer self-confidence, such ideologies of civilizational imperialism were thus inherently prone to the destabilizing impact of rising powers from outside the imagined Western core. Reflecting the anxieties of many Anglo-Saxonists at the end of the nineteenth century, the British diplomat and close friend of Theodore Roosevelt, Arthur Cecil Spring Rice worried that the “future of the world” may now be “in the hands of Slavs.” Predicting that the Russian Empire would soon impose a new order of civilization upon Asia, Spring Rice feared the advent of an imperial power on par with that of Rome. These were “the powers of darkness” that might engender a future decline of the West.¹³³ In the final section of the chapter, I conclude the argument by considering how the fin-de-siècle ideology of Western civilization evolved in the context of the early-twentieth rise of American world power.

V. Occidentalism as a Power-Political Form

The self-image of the West as the guardian and epicenter of modern civilization was intrinsically prone to deployments in power politics. In the build-up to WWI, the notions of civilized freedom associated with a trans-Atlantic Western world entered directly into the growing antagonism between the American and German empires. As Elihu Root described in 1909, “German absolutism” had emerged as a major threat to the existence of democratic society as such.¹³⁴ Now the autocratic character of the Wilhelmine state became a central marker of the differences between the Western core and its geopolitical adversaries. Prussianized Germany, in contrast to the Anglosphere, was depicted as inherently prone to militarism and thus a more natural ally of Russia and Japan, the major autocratic powers of the era. Often invoking racialized conceptions of an essential German character, the opposition between Western democracy and Prussian autocracy developed a key theme of American

¹³⁰ Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East*, 81.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

¹³² Theodore Roosevelt to Arthur Cecil Spring Rice, January 27, 1900 in Morison, *Letters*, 1951, 2:1147.

¹³³ Cited in Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (London: Associated University Presses, 1981), 93. These statements derive from a series of letters sent by Rice to such central figures in the US political establishment Theodore Roosevelt the Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, as well as brother Stephen Spring Rice, a civil servant in the British Foreign Office.

¹³⁴ As cited in Coates, *Legalist Empire*, 148.

political culture in the lead-up to 1917.¹³⁵ According to Robert Lansing, US Secretary of State under Wilson, the successful alliance of these states “would mean the overthrow of democracy in the world, the suppression of individual liberty” and “the setting up of evil ambitions” based on the power of brute force.”¹³⁶ Forged in the age of empire, the *fin-de-siècle* paradigm of the West, thus entered directly into the conceptions of international order and geopolitical rivalry that developed with ascendancy of American power in the twentieth century. An instructive instance of these continuities is to be found in the life of George Frost Kennan, whose portrayals of the Soviet Union became a central influence on American Cold War grand strategy. His example serves as an apt coda for the argument developed in the pages above.

In 1929, Kennan travelled to the University of Berlin to attend the *Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen*, a centre of colonial studies founded by Bismarck in 1887 to educate “diplomats destined for service in the Orient.”¹³⁷ The two-year training programme was a lasting influence on Kennan and shaped his understanding of the Soviet Union as a degenerate state rooted in pre-Enlightenment “Eastern” cultural tradition.¹³⁸ From his tutors, mainly “highly cultured Russian émigrés” who had supported the counterrevolutionary White Movement,¹³⁹ he learned a romanticized history of Romanov Tsarism, which confirmed his interpretation of the Bolsheviks — “spiteful Jewish parasites in Moscow” — as the negation of “Western European civilization.”¹⁴⁰ In this perspective, the end-result of the revolution was a return to the non-Western path of Oriental Despotism: “Again we have the capital back in Moscow, and Petersburg is sinking back into the swamps out of which it was erected ... We have again an oriental holding court in the barbaric splendor of the Moscow Kremlin. Again we have the same Byzantine qualities in Russian politics, the same intolerance, the same dark cruelty, the same religious dogmatism in word and form, the same servility, the same lack of official dignity, the same all-out quality of all of official life. Finally we have the same fear and distrust of the outside world.”¹⁴¹ Kennan’s romantic fascination with the East and his aversion to the Russian Revolution were acutely-felt commitments, shaped by professional training and social milieu. In the late-nineteenth century his father’s cousin had earned national distinction as a travel writer and explorer in Siberia, where he documented the daily lives of “the savage” in Northern Asia.¹⁴² A staunch opponent of the revolution, Kennan’s ancestor advised Wilson to pursue the Allied offensive against the Red Army in 1918. Decades later, Kennan wrote that he was “in

¹³⁵ These racialized depictions of Germany in American political discourse and popular media are described in Zachary Smith, *Age of Fear: Othering and American Identity during World War I* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019), here 57, 109.

¹³⁶ Coates, *Legalist Empire*, 147–48.

¹³⁷ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*. (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and company, 1967), 31ff.

¹³⁸ George Kennan, “The ‘Long Telegram,’” in *Origins of the Cold War: The Novikov, Kennan, and Roberts “Long Telegrams” of 1946*, ed. Martin Kenneth Jensen, 1993.

¹³⁹ Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950.*, 33. On Kennan’s training at the University of Berlin see Walter L. Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1989), 4ff.

¹⁴⁰ These notes from Kennan’s diary are cited in John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 129.

¹⁴¹ This characterization of the Soviet Union comes from Kennan’s address in Bad Nauheim, 1941-1942, quoted in Anders Stephanson, *Kennan and the Art of Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 14.

¹⁴² Kennan, *Tent-Life in Siberia*, 209.

some strange way destined to carry forward as best I could the work of my distinguished and respected namesake.”¹⁴³

With the onset of the Cold War, the characterization of American power-projection as the defender and embodiment of the West became entrenched within US national security discourse. As the details of Kennan’s life and education suggest, this development was not an isolated reaction to the advent of Bolshevik Communism. Declaring themselves the guardians of Western Civilization, the highest authorities of US government have drawn directly upon cultural archetypes generated in the context of European imperial expansion, where the idealization of the West as an exclusive political entity was first established as a rationalization for domination.¹⁴⁴ For Kissinger, the divisions between East and West perceived by Kennan meant that only within Euro-American societies could a “Newtonian” commitment to “empirical reality” be regarded as the foundation of political action, a cultural privilege which the USSR had only partially attained, the rest of the world not at all.¹⁴⁵

What the mythology of Western civilization presents as an organic cultural exceptionalism — putatively rooted in the Graeco-Roman inheritance of Christian Europe — arose in reality within the concrete historical setting of the modern colonial era. By the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, this process of cultural production had crystallized into an increasingly rationalistic discourse of civilizational hierarchy and international geopolitical division, often conceptualized in terms of race. Now, an “official racism in Western culture” promised to rationalize and justify the prevailing lines of global conflict in terms that contemporaries found scientifically and politically compelling.¹⁴⁶ Thus in the aftermath of WWI, as Britain and the United States blocked Japan’s proposal to include racial equality in the articles of the League of Nations, the Supreme Council of the League constituted by Wilson announced that the Western powers would remain the guardians of the civilized world. The former “Ottoman Middle East” would be governed by the “advanced nations” as a “sacred trust of Civilization” until “backward” societies unready for self-government were “able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.”¹⁴⁷ Against this background, the expansion of the mandate system, originally proposed by Britain and its “white dominions,” strengthened the system of colonial rule.¹⁴⁸ This convergence between a geopolitical structure of power and a culture of racial supremacy is typical of the paradigm of the West which emerged from the late-nineteenth century.

¹⁴³ Quoted in Hixson, *George F. Kennan*, 5.

¹⁴⁴ For the argument that Cold War notions of Western Civilization were rooted in the ideological legacies of colonialism, especially the opposition between an Eastern Oriental despotism (“totalitarianism”) and the rationalist tradition of the West (“freedom”), see Heonik Kwon, *The Other Cold War* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010), 57–79.

¹⁴⁵ Henry Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1974), 48–49. Kissinger’s remarks are given prominence by Edward Said as an epitome of orientalist discourse. See, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 46.

¹⁴⁶ David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 76; also, Graves, *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, 37–85.

¹⁴⁷ Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 29.

¹⁴⁸ Barbara Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (Routledge, 1999), 40–41.

The strange pattern of cultural rationalization and ideological fantasy that lies behind modern conceptions of the West draws attention to the deeper social sources of global power politics. Shaped by the forms of cross-cultural comparison and intersocietal interaction brought into being by the global condition of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century modernity, Anglophone Occidentalism reflected the conflictual constitution of a deeply contested international hierarchy, where the proliferation of quasi-rational authority norms was emerging in tandem with the destabilizing dynamic of catch-up development and imperial competition. Symbolic competition for the recognition of civilized status developed in tandem with the geopolitical and economic power struggles triggered by the tensions between the Anglo-American core and the catch-up empires outside it.

By examining some of the key intersocietal, geopolitical, and sociocultural transformations which made the West into a core principle of imperial vision and division, the present chapter has illustrated the centrality of symbolic conflict and legitimization strategies to the development of interstate power politics. In so doing, it has also described the interplay between the struggle for political order and the pursuit of external influence as a key dimension of the New Imperialism. Rather than conceiving power politics and political authority as two separate features of the modern international order, the argument presented in this chapter has tried to integrate the logics of domination and logics of competition that have accompanied the development of the modern states-system historically. This interrelationship, between political order and international competition, is one of the key dynamics which a historical sociology of power politics makes visible.

6. CONCLUSION

THE NEW WORLD AND ITS TRAJECTORIES

I. Summary of the Argument

The new imperialism marked a profound transformation in the nature of international relations. The overarching argument of this thesis has been that the global scale geopolitical rivalries which defined the 1870-1914 imperial era emerged from a unique conjuncture of international change: the formation of a distinct global condition defined by the uneven historical geography of industrial capitalism, its imbrication with the power hierarchies of an empire-centered international order, and the proliferation of consciously modernist ideologies of imperial prestige. In this context, the forging of an expansionary national-imperial state came to be viewed as a necessary strategic mediation between the universalizing dynamic of a capitalist world economy and the unevenness of its local formations. Linking societies together within a contested yet interdependent global condition, the uneven and combined development of this imperially organized world economy forged the intersocietal conflicts from which the New Imperialism flourished. The attempt to secure world power in the form of an expansive imperial domain, in the United States as elsewhere, was thus a historically specific response to the international-historical unevenness of capitalist and colonial expansion. This was the emergence of global power politics.

In the five preceding chapters, this argument was elaborated in the following way. First, *Chapter 1* established the historical specificity and central importance of the age of empire to the modern origins of global power politics. *Chapter 2* then examined the analytical problems and substantive oversights that prevent prominent IR theories from grasping the transformations in international power relations wrought by the global condition of nineteenth-century modernity. Against this background, an alternative approach, global historical sociology, was employed to reformulate IR-theoretic conceptions of power politics in sociohistorical terms. *Chapter 3* extended this theoretical perspective to conceptualize the novel pathways of international power-projection associated with the development of the New Imperialism. The constitutive elements of inter-imperial power politics — the uneven and combined development of global capitalism; the competitive modernization drives of industrial societies; the symbolic restructuring of imperial states as organic national entities with progressive, civilization-building goals — were thus conceptualized as an intrinsically modern constellation of intersocietal structures. *Chapter 4* showed how this conjuncture of international change shaped the world power ambitions of the American Empire through its competitive interactions with Wilhelmine Germany and Imperial Japan. Finally, *Chapter 5* continued this investigation of American expansion by examining how the ideology of Western civilization emerged within Anglophone imperial culture and conditioned the international rivalries of the *fin-de-siècle*.

This conclusion moves the argument of the thesis forward by considering how a historical sociology of global power politics can inform the analysis of the emergence of US hegemony in the early-twentieth century (Section I), the putative “return of geopolitics” in the twenty-first century (Section II), and the research interests of contemporary international theory today (Section III).

II. Lineages of the American Century

World power, for the US political and military elites who presided over the global rise of the American Empire, signified the capacity of the American state to control the external spaces of a regionally differentiated global economy from its national-imperial core. With the United States’ entry into World War One in 1917, these ambitions became increasingly centered on the core zones of European states-system, where the German decision for unrestricted submarine warfare and the deep financial ties between New York and London led the American state to ally with the Entente. This alliance of the dominant industrial states of the era ensured the defeat of the Axis and prepared the ground for American hegemony after it. This was a war, Woodrow Wilson proclaimed, in which America enjoyed “the infinite privilege of fulfilling her destiny and saving the world.”¹ If the world power advocacy of previous decades had prepared the US political-military establishment for an extensive conflict with rival empires, the program of naval expansion and military activism launched by the Wilson administration, which troops sent to Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua before 1917, made the prospective globalism of Luce, Mahan, and Roosevelt’s generation the dominant mode of American statecraft.

World War One thus provided the opportunity for the most central of American world power ambitions to be expressed on a global scale. The descent of the European states-system into a catastrophic era of total warfare made the imposition of economic discipline over rival empires — the long-term strategic rationale of the Open Door policy — into a realizable objective. In the characteristically zealous style of earlier conceptions of “manifest destiny”, Wilson announced this project as a war of democratic society against the principle of autocracy itself: “Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force, which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances.”² Given the increasingly hostile conception of German expansionism promoted by American world power advocates in the 1910s — when “Prussianism” came to represent the antithesis of “Anglo-Saxon” liberties — such exalted descriptions of US war aims are not surprising, echoing

¹ From a speech of 1919, cited in Perry Anderson, “Imperium,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 83 (October 2013): 10.

² Woodrow Wilson, “At War with Germany: Address to Congress, April 2, 1917,” in *War Addresses of Woodrow Wilson* (Boston, MA: Ginn and Company, 1918), 38–39.

as they do a preexisting tendency to identify American power with the cause of “Western civilization” as such.³

Much as war against Spain in 1898 served to confirm the providential vision of “manifest destiny,” victory over Germany figured as a symbol of American exceptionalism, confirming the virtues of democratic society against the pitfalls of authoritarianism. The deeply racialized character of an earlier civilizational imperialism did not thereby disappear — civilization for Wilson was largely the preserve of the white world. But the twentieth-century reality of warfare against autocratic states gave the democratic identity of American statehood a particular strategic fitness. In the long-run, this ideological variation on the existing theme of world power shaped the ideological framing of the subsequent Cold War, a struggle which Dean Acheson, architect of US anti-Soviet policy, defined as a contest between the “free world” of “Graeco-Judaic-Christian” civilization and the USSR’s despotic “police state.”⁴ The civilizational self-conception of American power thus outlived the United States’ preference for colonialism proper. Anticipating this messianic conception of American hegemony, Wilson cast US entry into World War One as a necessary response to the “sufferings and indignities inflicted by the military masters of Germany against the peace and security of mankind.”⁵ As the controlling power of the postwar order, the United States would play the “leading part in the maintenance of civilization.”⁶

A closer inspection of the geopolitical rationales which informed American grand strategy reveals some of the deeper continuities of American world power ambitions. In his 1921 work, *The New World*, Isaiah Bowman, Wilson’s chief advisor on geopolitical affairs at the Paris Conference, described the overarching logic of US grand strategy post-1917.⁷ In marked contrast to the received opposition between power politics and liberal internationalism, Bowman described the “new order” of postwar international relations as a “competitive world”

³ See above, Chapter 4, section IV. For such representations of Germany in the years before World War One, see, Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Origin and Character of Present International Groupings in Europe,” in *The Interest of America in International Conditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company LTD, 1910), 55–57, 67; Alfred Thayer Mahan, “The Present Predominance of Germany in Europe — Its Foundations and Tendencies,” in *The Interest of America in International Conditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company LTD, 1910), 69–124; Elihu Root, “The Outlook for International Law,” *The American Journal of International Law* 10, no. 1 (1916): 1–11; Elihu Root, “The Effect of Democracy on International Law,” *American Society of International Law Proceedings* 11 (1917): 2–11; also, Benjamin Allen Coates, *Legalist Empire: International Law and American Foreign Relations in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 147ff.

⁴ Dean Acheson, *The Pattern of Responsibility*, ed. McGeorge Bundy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 19; Dean Gooderham Acheson, “Postwar Foreign Policy: The Second Phase,” in *This Vast External Realm* (New York, NY: WWNorton & Co, 1973), 25–26. This echoed the terms of American cold war foreign relations outlined in “NSC-68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Vol. I* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1977). For a discussion of the orientalism of this discourse, see William Pietz, “The ‘Post-Colonialism’ of Cold War Discourse,” *Social Text*, no. 19/20 (1988): 55–75.

⁵ Woodrow Wilson, “The Four Principles of Peace: Address to Congress, February 11, 1918,” in *War Addresses of Woodrow Wilson* (Boston, MA: Ginn and Company, 1918), 107.

⁶ Wilson, 107.

⁷ For Bowman’s influence on the grand strategies of the Roosevelt and Wilson administrations, see Neil Smith, *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), chapters 6–7.

riven with interminable “national and racial ambitions.”⁸ While the United States was fundamentally a “democracy” inclined to commercial forms of international organization, its external outlooks had to be formulated in a world made up of “other powers”, where “Bolshevism” threatened a “backward step toward the barbarism of earlier times,” and the reality of national rivalries demanded an assertive global policy.⁹ Yet it was also true that “the world has now been parceled out nearly to the limit of vacant ‘political space,’” making further attempts at colonial expansion “not worth the price” of military and diplomatic conflict.¹⁰ As a result, the task of the Paris Conference was to curb the ability of rival empires to use the Old World strategy of territorial imperialism to raise barriers to American economic expansion. In the updated, 1928 edition of *The New World*, Bowman clarified the underlying presuppositions of this project. In a world where there was “no reality to a policy of isolation” for any significant state, the United States should seek to establish a world economy open to American economic expansion by converting the European powers to a US-led system of “commercial equality.”¹¹ This was a global policy based on the principle that “territorial expansion” had been “succeeded by economic expansion.”¹² The fusion of economic and geopolitical priorities under the sign of the Open Door thus carried American grand strategy from the era of the New Imperialism to the new world order of postwar reconstruction. In order to align the European states-system with the economic and security priorities of the United States, American strategists sought to enforce a free-trade order backed by the demilitarization of rival powers under the authority of the League of Nations. The result was not a depoliticized form of global governance, but an attempt to realize long-standing world power ambitions in a more sustained form.

The underlying logic of much US world power strategizing since c. 1890, this thesis has argued, was to stress the control of global markets as a route to wider forms of international control. This overarching conception was in continuity with the so-called “New Diplomacy” of the Wilsonian administration that led the United States into World War One. Where German expansionism before 1914 had been predicated on a territorial model of imperialism as conquest, the model of American Empire carried over from the nineteenth century was the more informal-economic mode of global penetration associated with the Monroe Doctrine and Open Door.¹³ Expressing sympathy with the “German people,” the war aims Wilson declared in 1917 made the “partnership of democratic nations” against “autocracy” the bulwark of this grand strategy, which aimed at securing the freedom of European economies from the rising threat of autarchy.¹⁴ Outlined in the famous “Fourteen Points,” this liberal-democratic system

⁸ Isaiah Bowman, *The New World: Problems in Political Geography*, 1st ed. (London: Yonkers-on-Hudson, 1921), v, 11.

⁹ Bowman, v, 388, 561–62.

¹⁰ Bowman, 92.

¹¹ Isaiah Bowman, *The New World: Problems in Political Geography*, 4th ed. (Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book Company, 1928), 732.

¹² Bowman, 714.

¹³ Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism* (London: Verso Books, 2012), 48.

¹⁴ Wilson, “At War with Germany: Address to Congress, April 2, 1917,” 40–41. For the development of Wilsonianism in this context see, Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order, 1916-1931* (London: Penguin, 2014), chapters 2-3.

would entail the regulation rather than prohibition of European colonialism under the postwar Mandate system. Still, the “Wilsonian moment” of national self-determination which followed was decisive for the involution of the Axis empires of Imperial Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Ottoman Turkey after 1919.¹⁵ American liberal internationalism was in this sense inseparable from the United States’ longstanding interest in curbing the influence of its major imperial rivals.

The long-term object of this strategy was the demilitarization of rival states. With the Washington Naval Conference of 1921, the Harding administration thus set out to define the world’s legitimate distribution of battleship power in a ratio of 10:10:6:3:3. At the apex of this hierarchy stood the British and American Empires, the dominant industrial powers of the international system since the late-nineteenth century. Immediately below them was Japan, granted third place as a major power in the Pacific. As if to confirm the subordination of continental Europe, France and Italy were allowed only a much smaller distribution of naval force, confining their spheres of operation to the coastlines of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Germany and the USSR were not even counted in the new equilibrium.¹⁶ While it set the stage for the long-term decline of territorial imperialism, the deeply power-political nature of this agenda — framed as it was by the hegemonic objectives of American grand strategy — proved deeply contradictory over the course of the interwar period. Rather than depoliticizing the world economy, American efforts to combine postwar reconstruction with the subordination of rival empires perpetuated the dynamic of economic crises and geopolitical rivalry seen in the era of the New Imperialism.

These long-running contradictions can be seen in the basic patterns of geopolitical and financial coercion that made up the post-World War One international order. Thus, for the victorious imperial powers, the mandate system provided a means of territorial settlement that maintained the prevailing colonial status quo. As Lloyd George noted, Britain “retuned home” from the Paris peace negotiations “with a pocket full of sovereigns in the shape of the German colonies, Mesopotamia, etc.” in return for the agreements on war debts desired by Wilson. For the United States in particular, the mandates promised to transform the Open Door into a mechanism for easing the commercial rivalries associated with great power antagonisms.¹⁷ Yet the basic parameters of imperial expansionism were left intact. By dispossessing Germany of its colonial possessions, the British Empire rose to its greatest territorial extent in the immediate aftermath of World War One, while the French and Japanese empires also expanded during the interwar conjuncture. Germany’s subordinate position within the hierarchy of world empires — a major cause of World War One — was thus entrenched and intensified. In a world where empire remained a standard mode of political organization and prestige, this

¹⁵ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 25, 31, 37; Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 129–32; see also, Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Tooze, *The Deluge*, 43.

¹⁷ Anthony D’Agostino, *The Rise of Global Powers: International Politics in the Era of the World Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 118; cf. Pedersen, *The Guardians*, 259.

experience helped promote the resurgence of geopolitical expansionism under the Third Reich.¹⁸ Although the United States was increasingly reluctant to engage in formal imperialism after World War One, its pre-eminent position within a global economic hierarchy that dated back to late-nineteenth century made American capitalism perhaps a central target of this backlash.¹⁹ Rather than coming to an end with the outbreak of World War One, the imperial rivalries of the modern international order were thus perpetuated by the forms of intersocietal conflict and global economic hierarchy which emerged from an earlier conjuncture of unevenness.

At the same time, the combination of geopolitical and financial goals that made up US grand strategy after 1919 worked to uphold the same Anglo-American-centric economic order which had propelled German expansionism since the late-nineteenth century. With its emergence as the world's leading creditor power during World War One, the American state acquired a unique form of structural power linked to its ability to determine the rate and size of war-debt repayments. In the 1920s, American foreign policy-makers and financiers used these powers to reconfigure the military and economic policies of both France and Germany, with profoundly destabilizing consequences for the emerging European order. By using the Dawes Plan and the issue of war debts to promote French disarmament after 1924, US policy served to undermine the Treaty of Versailles as an effective diplomatic instrument. Although it temporarily halted the arms races of the pre-World War One era, this policy agenda effectively made the Versailles System unenforceable. As a result, the United States' wider efforts to demilitarize great power relations after World War One created an unstable power vacuum rather than a coherent liberal international order. Together with their refusal to either significantly restructure European war debts or back the Versailles System as a League member, American commitments to a power-political foreign economic policy undermined the process of post-war stabilization. By utilizing its financial position as a creditor power to uphold an Anglo-centric hierarchy of global capitalism, American grand strategy fueled the creation of a deeply contested international order subject to rival strategies of great power expansion. In the aftermath of the 1929 Great Depression, the resurgence of radically revisionist, pro-nationalist foreign policy agendas in both Germany and Italy showed that the post-World War One international order remained subject to dynamics of imperial rivalry associated with the breakdown of the *Pax Britannica* in the 1880s. These historical parallels illustrate the continuities of global power politics beyond the *fin-de-siècle* age of empire.²⁰

For the United States, world power — military, economic, ideological — had been accomplished. Yet the resulting geopolitical system failed to stabilize the core states of Western

¹⁸ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, "Empires after 1919: Old, New, Transformed," *International Affairs* 95, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 89.

¹⁹ This is the fundamental argument of Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York, NY: Penguin, 2006).

²⁰ The account of the contradictions of American economic and financial strategy in this paragraph is based on Robert W. D Boyce, *The Great Interwar Crisis and the Collapse of Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 159–60; Tooze, *The Deluge*, 468ff; Emily Rosenberg, *Financial Missionaries to the World: The Politics and Culture of Dollar Diplomacy, 1900-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 101; Panitch and Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism*, 48–49.

civilization in the ways imagined by the most zealous supporters of American expansionism. Nor did it establish the kind of liberal internationalism that is often associated with the postwar Wilsonianism. Rather, the protracted transition to American hegemony in the post-World War One era was structured by the deeply uneven political economy and inter-imperial world order that emerged from the nineteenth century. Although there might be an understandable desire to deny him any theoretical insight, Carl Schmitt captured the fundamentals of this American-centered world system with striking accuracy.²¹ Like the pessimistic forecasts of American preponderance that marked Imperial Germany before World War One, Schmitt's postwar writings cast the United States as a global imperium based on the exercise of long-range forms of economic and financial control. This was an unprecedented system of global power-projection, based on the disarticulation of territorial sovereignty from any effective form of political or economic independence, and legitimized by the identification of opponents as illiberal war criminals. Even as it sought to depoliticize prevailing economic and diplomatic norms, the extreme instability of this system — an American-dominated informal empire which defanged the European powers while seeking to confine the German state to a subordinated international status — was obvious.²² The fascist imperialism of Nazi Germany was an extreme example of the forms of backlash such a system could engender.²³

Trotsky too emphasized the transformative impact of American capitalism on the European states-system. “The staggering material preponderance of the United States,” he highlighted, “automatically excludes the possibility of economic upswing and regeneration for capitalist Europe. If in the past it was European capitalism that revolutionized the backward sections of the world, then today it is American capitalism that revolutionizes over-mature Europe.” This crisis of European hegemony foretold the coming struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union as the most general expression of the geopolitical rivalries fostered by the condition of historical backwardness.²⁴ This account of the contested expansion of American hegemony in the early to mid-twentieth century support the wider claim about the power-political dynamics of the modern global condition outlined in the thesis. While a full analysis of this process lies outside the scope of this work, the pattern of American economic expansion, inter-imperial rivalries, and aggressive nationalism seen during the 1930s and 1940s, is testament to the long-term historical continuities of global power politics. Indeed, it highlights three specific implications of the analysis presented in this thesis.

The first of these concerns the character of the world power goals underlying American grand strategy. Bowman's early-twentieth century articulation of a post-territorial world order, a

²¹ On this issue, see the debate between Benno Teschke and Gopal Balakrishnan. Benno Teschke, “Decisions and Indecisions: Political and Intellectual Receptions of Carl Schmitt,” *New Left Review*, February 2011, 61–95; Teschke; Benno Teschke, “Fatal Attraction: A Critique of Carl Schmitt's International Political and Legal Theory,” *International Theory* 3, no. 02 (June 2011): 179–227; Gopal Balakrishnan, “The Geopolitics of Separation,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 68 (April 2011): 57–72.

²² Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*, ed. and trans. G.L. Ulmen (1950; repr., New York, NY: Telos, 2003), 140, 255, 260, 262, 280–81.

²³ For the ways in which the perception of US industrial potential and American society more generally shaped Nazism, see Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 282–84, 407–10.

²⁴ Leon Trotsky, “Europe and America - Part 1,” 1926, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1926/02/europe.htm>.

commercially oriented interstate system grounded in the political-economic integration of distinct societies and regions, translated the geostrategic concerns of earlier world power discourses into a seemingly liberalized conception of globalization. Yet the supremely power-political character of this outlook captures, in a condensed form, the long-run echoes of nineteenth century imperialism: the close historical and ideological ties between a political economy of global capitalism, a Social Darwinian geopolitics, and the formation of a perceptibly compressed world-political arena. Wilsonian internationalism shared with earlier ideologies of world power a fixation on the competitive expansion of a global economic hierarchy centered on national-imperial states; it presupposed the deeply uneven social structure of an international order and world market dominated by the Anglo-American Empires. The attempt to secure an economically liberalized international system together with the demilitarization of rival empires in the context of this overarching international hierarchy brought into being a historically distinct form of global hegemony which departed from earlier forms of imperialism as conquest. What held together these distinct strategic and ideological concerns beyond their common intellectual lineages were their roots within the conjuncture of uneven development generated by the empire-centered political economy of nineteenth and early-twentieth century global capitalism.

Second, the post-World War One realization of American world power ambitions draws attention to the centrality of intersocietal unevenness as a constitutive element of the modern international order. The phenomenon of unevenness, as Trotsky argued, is essential to the process of historical change as such.²⁵ Yet as the preceding chapters have illustrated, the historical conjuncture of the New Imperialism was shaped by features that not only made the fact of uneven development especially intense, but also gave the ensuing experience of intersocietal difference a political and symbolic resonance that transcended the purely-material unevenness of industrial capitalism's historical geography. During much of the pre-1914 era, the particular relationship between the national-imperial state and the development of standard-of-civilization world hierarchy made the regional unevenness of the industrial economy into an object of symbolic power struggles. Inter-imperial rivalries over the possession of colonies and the distribution of global markets resonated with the widely-felt status norms of an imperially-organized international order that sanctioned external expansionism as legitimate method of civilization-building and national development. As a lived experience, uneven development was a doubly political and cultural condition. It shaped the proliferation of expansionist imperial projects as a strategic mediation of the concerns about historical backwardness fostered by the intensification of societal unevenness on a global scale. This distinctive patterning of socio-symbolic conflicts outlasted the high imperialism of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Its afterlives were felt in the popular appeal of utopian visions of political-economic autonomy which animated many insurgent regimes of the post-1929 Great Depression Era, when the perceived imperatives of catch-up development became a major theme of both fascist and socialist opposition to American capitalism. A sociohistorical conception of uneven and combined development as a medium of both strategic and symbolic

²⁵ Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (1932; repr., London: Penguin, 2017), 5.

power struggles therefore draws attention to the long-term intersocietal tensions that underpinned some of the major ideologies of twentieth century power politics.

Finally, by foregrounding the deeper historical-intersocietal foundations of these geopolitical rivalries, the kind of global historical sociology advanced in this thesis helps to detach the idea of power politics from its conventional status as a realist theoretical concept. This reveals, fundamentally, the “thick” international social relations which underpin modern interstate politics, despite their concealment by realism’s “thin” understanding of power politics as an unmediated reflection of military-strategic drives. The struggle to mediate and control the geopolitical pressures generated by an American-centric world economy and international order cannot be grasped without locating modern states within the wider global condition of intersocietal unevenness surrounding them. Power politics, in this respect, should be seen as a deeply social process whose modalities of international conflict and competition — such as territorial conquest, informal empire, colonialism, hegemony, liberal internationalism and so on — have to be historicized in relation to the types of social formation which shape the interactive multiplicity of modern polities at a global level. This final observation can be expanded by revisiting the debates about the apparent resurgence of great power politics today.

III. The Return of Geopolitics?

The present historical conjuncture is marked by the complex entwinement between the unevenness of economic globalization and the proliferation of nation-centered strategies of great power competition and political mobilization. Contrary to a widespread belief, the removal of restraints on the expansion of capitalist democracy that followed the collapse of the USSR has failed to generate the pacific international environment envisioned by the most enthusiastic theorists of a post-political age.²⁶ Quite the converse. Echoing older, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, conceptions of geopolitics and *Realpolitik*,²⁷ civilizational rivalry and ethnic nationalism,²⁸ the contemporary world scene is imbued with visions of international rivalry associated with the historical condition of global power politics. In the current historical moment, such international fractures are centered on the legitimacy of the so-called liberal international order propagated by the American state after the Second

²⁶ For representative statements of the post-Cold War globalization zeitgeist, see Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992); John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); David Held and Anthony G. McGrew, *Governing Globalization: Power, Authority and Global Governance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001). For a critical overview of this discourse, see especially Justin Rosenberg, “Globalization Theory: A Post Mortem,” *International Politics* 42, no. 1 (2005): 2–74; Perry Anderson, “Arms and Rights,” *New Left Review*, II, no. 31 (February 2005): 5–40; also, Timothy Brennan, “Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism,” *New Left Review*, no. 7 (2001): 78.

²⁷ Stefano Guzzini, *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) chapters 1-2. For a related discussion of the resurgence of far-right geopolitical ideology see Jean-François Drolet and Michael C. Williams, “Radical Conservatism and Global Order: International Theory and the New Right,” *International Theory* 10, no. 3 (2018): 285–313.

²⁸ Rogers Brubaker, “Why Populism?,” *Theory and Society* 46, no. 5 (2017): 357–85; Rogers Brubaker, “Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 8 (June 21, 2017): 1191–1226.

World War. Subject to mounting pressure, the patterning of diplomatic, economic, and cultural norms underlying this international order has been distorted by a range of interlocking crises. Foremost among these is the escalating competition between Washington and Beijing, with its destructive global economic implications, and spotlighting of America's own declining economic fortunes. The combination of this bilateral crisis in the US-China relationship with the apparent revanchism of Russian foreign policy and the ongoing resurgence of national populism in core capitalist states signals the crisis of liberal internationalism as a hegemonic mode of international governance.

Yet in a striking reversal of its conventional strategic outlooks, the epicenter of this crisis of liberal internationalism is in many ways the United States itself. A combination of domestic populism and declining economic fortunes threatens to transform the American state into a revisionist power bent on upturning the forms of liberal internationalism that once underpinned its global hegemony. According to the Trump administration's first National Security Strategy statement in 2017, the policy of expanding the "liberal economic trading system" overseas has been a failure, undermined by the competitive strategies of economic advancement pursued by rival powers, and converted into a barrier to American prosperity by the Chinese state's ability to exploit Western liberalism in order to catalyze its own industrial take-off.²⁹ As a consequence, "a geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region."³⁰ Heralding the end of the democratic peace era, American strategic planners now envisage a world of "simultaneous threats" where "contests over influence are timeless" and "geopolitics is the interplay of these contests over the globe."³¹

Viewed in a wider historical perspective, this apparent revitalization of great power competition, commonly heralded as a diminishing feature of late-twentieth century world politics, does more than undermine the depoliticized narratives of permanent liberalism that hailed the collapse of the Soviet Union. By illustrating the conflictual constitution of the modern international order, the present conjuncture also raises foundational questions about the structural and historical forces which make power politics an ongoing feature of the international order, even in the context of extensive global interdependence. Against the expectations of the cosmopolitan political discourse which adorned earlier conceptions of globalization,³² it now seems clear that any adequate conception of "the global" must reckon with its constituting forms of international conflict and domination. This insight is perhaps the central theoretical conclusion of a growing literature on the political construction of globalization as a distinctly power-laden project of twentieth-century capitalist states and elites. To this growing interest in the politics and ideologies of modern globalism, this thesis adds a broader historical sociology of the violent tensions implicated in the very origins of modernity's

²⁹ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: US State Department, 2017), 17, 25.

³⁰ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 45.

³¹ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 26.

³² See, Brennan, "Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism" here 78.

encompassing global condition.³³

Of particular importance, in this connection, are the deep internal relations between the production of global economic space and the nationalization of modern societies.³⁴ From this angle, the structured dynamic between the deeply uneven process of global economic integration and the pursuit of national autonomy suggests that conflicts such as that between China and the United States are basic to the intersocietal constitution of the modern international order. The recrudescence of a seemingly backward-looking ideology of civilizational geopolitics in a society like the United States attests to the fact that even “advanced” societies are embedded within global fields of intersocietal interaction, where the dynamic of uneven and combined development — powerfully illustrated by the temporal synchronicity between the process of industrial take-off in China and the transition to a financialized neoliberal accumulation model in the United States — tends to upturn established political orders.³⁵ From a global-historical-sociological perspective, what is striking about the unfolding crisis of American authority is its intersocietal foundations in the external effects of a Chinese-led catch-up revolution, which promises to transform the structures of international hierarchy established during the nineteenth century age of empire.³⁶ The appropriate lens for these transitions is not the hypostatized balance of power associated with many IR conceptions of international history, but a much deeper conception of the historical power struggles triggered by deeply uneven and coercively maintained pattern of capitalist modernity.

This is not to suggest a deterministic conception of international change, where power politics is governed by repetitive cycles of hegemonic decline and their attendant great power wars.³⁷ For an international order made up of such closely interdependent, if politically differentiated and historically uneven, capitalist states is unlikely to produce the kind of zero-sum military competition which such formulations typically envisage. The dynamics of any US-China power shift will likely operate through multiple axes of competition. Quite unlike the highly-militarized dynamics of European imperialism within and against which an American-led international order emerged, US hegemony itself has operated through a broad-spectrum

³³ For historical accounts of the ideological origins of globalization, see Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2014); Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). Important IR contributions to the study of the contested politics of globalization include Rosenberg, “Globalization Theory”; Barry Buzan, “A World Order Without Superpowers: Decentred Globalism,” *International Relations* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 3–25; Richard Saull, “Rethinking Hegemony: Uneven Development, Historical Blocs, and the World Economic Crisis,” *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 323–38; Barry Buzan and George Lawson, “Capitalism and the Emergent World Order,” *International Affairs* 90, no. 1 (2014): 71–91; Julian Germann, “German ‘Grand Strategy’ and the Rise of Neoliberalism,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 706–16; Julian Germann, “Beyond ‘Geo-Economics’: Advanced Unevenness and the Anatomy of German Austerity,” *European Journal of International Relations* 24, no. 3 (2018): 590–613.

³⁴ This dynamic is a central analytic theme of Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), here 282.

³⁵ For analysis of Justin Rosenberg and Chris Boyle, “Understanding 2016: China, Brexit and Trump in the History of Uneven and Combined Development,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 2019.

³⁶ Cf. Buzan and Lawson, “Capitalism and the Emergent World Order.”

³⁷ An approach recently exemplified by Graham T Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

system of international dominance: the logic of American power in the global financial system is different to that of constructing a world trade order such as the “Belt and Road Initiative.” And the forms of political conflict associated with these dimensions of the global economic system are different again from the task of organizing a worldwide geopolitical alliance. This diplomatic arena is, in turn, distinct from the kind of ideological power an American hegemon predicated on democratic capitalism was able to call forth. Geopolitical-military competition might enter into all of these operations, but it is not their determinant. Nor are the ensuing conflicts the product of a single logic of state power. *Pace* realist accounts, understanding the power-political dynamics associated with this highly differentiated international order requires a sustained analysis of the multiple pathways of international power-projection generated by a historically specific conjunction of intersocietal processes, not a unitary logic of interstate competition. While the neorealist discourse of a “return of geopolitics” captures the surface reality of great power competition, the timeless image of the “rise and fall of great powers” which undergirds it lacks purchase on the historical specificities of contemporary global change.³⁸

This thesis has sought to overcome the limits of such theories, which have enshrined a fixed definition of internationality and security as immutable, and obscured the multilinear historical trajectories generated by particular formations of societal multiplicity. By adopting a sociohistorical perspective, it has elaborated the reciprocal relations between the production of an uneven global political economy, key strategies of international power-projection, and the mobilization of industrial societies into world-scale projects of economic and geopolitical expansion. The historicist understanding of global political-economic space which underpins this analysis underscores the internal relations between capitalist development and geopolitical change without postulating a universal “theory” of interstate competition. It is thus possible to highlight a number of themes which the present disorders of the global scene evoke for the study of power politics in general: first, that the continuing unevenness of global capitalism means that power-political strategies of external statecraft remain a basic feature of the national security repertoire, despite attempts to institutionalize cooperative interstate norms and institutions; second, that such exercises in strategic power-projection open out onto wider sociopolitical and ideological conflicts about the organization of social order on a variety of spatial scales, especially because efforts to manage unevenness are imbricated with the progressivist ideological expectations fostered by modernity; third, that the fundamental actors of global powers politics are historically developing societies, rather than isomorphic political units; and finally, that the means and logics of intersocietal conflict are shifting historical constellations rather than fixed geopolitical entities.

³⁸ For representative examples, see John J. Mearsheimer, “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to US Power in Asia,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (2010): 381–396; Christopher Layne, “This Time It’s Real: The End of Unipolarity and the Pax Americana,” *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2012): 203–13; Christopher Layne, “Sleepwalking with Beijing,” *National Interest* 137 (2015): 37–45; Walter Russell Mead, “The Return of Geopolitics: The Revenge of the Revisionist Powers,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2014): 69–79. For a critique of neorealist and other IR theories of rising powers along these lines, see Shahar Hameiri and Lee Jones, “Rising Powers and State Transformation: The Case of China,” *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 72–98.

This recalls the historical sociology of international change developed in the previous chapters of this thesis. An historicist conception of international power transformations suggests that studying ongoing episodes of interstate rivalry requires a more substantive conception of the distinct coercive, ideological, and socioeconomic foundations of contemporary intersocietal conflicts. A multilinear conception of historical development necessitates a sustained analysis of the specific “conjuncture of structures”³⁹ within which particular societies engage in power-projection at a global level. As the radically different developmental trajectories of Chinese and American capitalisms demonstrate — the former experiencing the first signs of a sustained slowed down after its original industrial transition, the latter a highly financialized neoliberal economy attempting to reassert the competitiveness of national manufactures — the standard image of the states-system as a composite of homogenous units remains as inadequate for studying contemporary power politics as it is for understanding the era of the New Imperialism. Rather than the continual rehearsal of so many trans-historical drives, an internationally-oriented historical sociology draws attention to such long-term patterns of societal transformation as a key analytic resource for understanding how the mobilization of societies for interstate competition takes place at particular historical conjunctures. Extending the analysis of contemporary geopolitical realities along these lines also means that scholars of international security would have to reckon with such transformations in the social bases of international politics as the well-documented decline in popular militarism, the fragmentation of class structures through the financialization and globalization of much contemporary capitalism, alongside the overall narrowing of ideological polarities brought by the spread of neoliberalism. Analogies between the contemporary period and the era of mass-mobilization warfare and imperial rivalry that marked the early to mid-twentieth century underestimate these long-term historical developments: they misstate the novelty of the context in which contemporary power politics operates.⁴⁰

In a wider sense, this suggests that the image of a cyclical historical process evoked by the contemporary realist discourse of a “return of geopolitics” represents a fundamentally misleading description of the present conjuncture. While the post-political, “end of history” narratives associated with the demise of the Soviet Union have been falsified by the actual trajectories of contemporary international change, viewing great power competition as an eternally returning dynamic of inexorable geopolitical forces elides the historically evolving character of international systems and occludes the social foundations of power politics as a mode of international engagement. In place of such over-generalized theoretic frameworks, what is needed is a conception which incorporates the antagonistic constitution of the modern global condition within a historical sociology of intersocietal conflict and interaction, the pathways for international power-projection constituted at particular historical conjunctures, and the specific logics of uneven and combined development underpinning them. In the final section of this chapter, I derive broader conclusions in this area by considering how

³⁹ William Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 221.

⁴⁰ For an argument along these lines, criticizing attempts to compare the contemporary United States to the era of German Fascism, see, Dylan Riley, “What Is Trump,” *New Left Review*, no. 114 (2018): 5–31.

contemporary IR theory might benefit from a deeper engagement with the idea of the global condition elaborated in this thesis. In this connection, I also address some of the oversights and omissions that have characterized the thesis as a whole.

IV. International Theory and the Global Condition

The historical sociology of global power politics outlined in this thesis was borne of a desire to better understand the relationships between two central features of modernity. In the nineteenth century, global capitalism acquired the status of an encompassing structural reality which subjected all peoples to the imperatives of a competitive economic system of unprecedented scale and intensity. As the socioeconomic relations of market dependency became ever wider in their reach, human society was enriched by an unprecedented material abundance even as the conduct of individual life was subsumed by conditions of capitalist production which exist, like a fate, outside of it.⁴¹ Relative to earlier social formations, the productive foundations of material existence now appeared to be separated from the political apparatus of formal coercion institutionalized within the modern state; but in actuality, the industrialization of the world economy ushered in new capacities for violence that were translated into highly coercive strategies of colonial expansion and great power rivalry. Although war and diplomacy ceased to be formal mechanisms of wealth-accumulation, the institutional separation of the economic from the political generated a seemingly volatile strategic field, for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, materialized in an external arena of imperial competition wherein industrial societies struggled to define the terms of global interdependence.

If these features of global capitalism were the first research interest which animated this project, the second major concern was the strategic rationales and ideological motivations that characterize modern attempts to establish spheres of influence and autonomy within the integrated global condition of nineteenth century modernity. Imperial projects of territorial and economic expansionism, whether couched in terms of the civilizing missions or the Open Door, were just one of many such projects. Historically, these struggles for global influence and autonomy properly involved movements of anti-colonialism, national liberation, and class struggle not analyzed in the preceding work. At the same time, for a study focused on the global dimensions of modernity, this thesis has privileged the analysis of a single, if expansive, Western empire. I hope this narrowness of this focus has enhanced the specificity of the account developed above. It is to be hoped that future work on the development of the New Imperialism will encompass a range of empires beyond the American case, as well as a fuller reckoning with the history of resistance to great power politics and its inequities.

⁴¹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 158. In this passage, Marx writes that, under capitalism, “individuals now produce only for society and in society” meaning that “production is not directly social, is not ‘the offspring of association’ which distributes labour internally.” As a result, “individuals are subsumed under social production; social production exists outside them as their fate; but social production is not subsumed under individuals, manageable by them as their common wealth.”

The conception of international transformation and power politics developed in this thesis was rooted in an understanding on the specific conjuncture of social structures associated with the New Imperialism. But its broader analytic categories — uneven and combined development, strategic mediation, symbolic competition, conjunctural analysis — entails a middle range, internationally-oriented historical sociology that can illuminate other areas of IR theory. On the one hand, this way of approaching power politics is applicable to a range of issues in contemporary security studies: to the study of modern transformations in the conduct of interstate politics, the construction of liberal international orders and the governance of the world economy, or to the analysis of changes in the mechanisms of global power-projection, such as dynamics of economic statecraft and the demilitarization of great power relations. A study of any of these developments would seek to draw out the ways in which the changing bases of state power — such as the conversion of former national-imperial states into democratic capitalist forms — is articulated with broader intersocietal transformations in the textures and organization of the world economy in order to better situate the evolving ideological and strategic calculus of contemporary grand strategies. On the other hand, the emphasis on the uneven and combined character of the modern international order developed in this work suggests that intersocietal approaches to international competition could be fruitfully applied to other cases of historical power politics. Such an approach to the unfolding dynamic of the Cold War, for example, raises questions about how a subordinate industrial society like the Soviet Union sought to fashion a kind of geopolitical and ideological autonomy within the prevailing structures of an American-dominated world economy. Given what we now know about the intensity of modern globalization, it is unlikely that the conventional image of superpower-bipolarity and Soviet autarky adequately captures the patterns of global-scale intersocietal connection which marked the post-nineteenth century international order — a global power structure forged in an age of deep imperial entanglements.⁴²

These openings point to some of the possible directions for a wider historical sociology of global power politics. Only by grasping the intrinsic historicity of international relations, the interactive multiplicity of historically evolving human societies, can we begin to reconstruct the constituting power dynamics of the modern global condition. This thesis, by historicizing some of the key sources and conditions of geopolitical rivalry forged during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century imperial era, represents an initial step toward this larger effort.

⁴² For a recent attempt to situate the USSR within an understanding of globalization, see Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014). This work is especially interesting for its attempt to deconstruct the narrative of self-enclosed autarky associated with Soviet society.

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