

SOLDIERS OF GOD – WAR, FAITH, EMPIRE, AND THE TRANSFORMATION  
OF INTERNATIONAL ORDERS FROM CALVIN TO AL QAEDA

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SOLDIERS OF GOD – WAR, FAITH, EMPIRE AND THE TRANSFORMATION  
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What accounted for the transformation of historic international orders such as that of Medieval Latin Christendom and the suzerain state system of nineteenth century East Asia? And what can the demise of both of these orders tell us about the modern state system's present condition and long-term prospects? This dissertation engages these questions by undertaking a macro-historical investigation of the transformation of international orders from the Protestant Reformation through to the present era. I argue that international orders consist of constellations of constitutional norms and fundamental institutions through which cooperation is cultivated and conflict contained between different political communities. International orders rest on authoritative forms of power deriving from shared conceptions of the good, as well as coercive forms of power inhering in dominant forms of legitimate organized violence. These orders are transformed when pre-existing patterns of institutional decay intersect with systemic ideological schisms and dramatic material increases in the scale and scope for violence between political communities.

This argument is tested through a consideration of two epochal transitions in world history, specifically the emergence of the Westphalian state system from Christendom's ashes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the nineteenth century destruction of the East Asian Sinosphere and the region's subsequent incorporation into a Western-dominated sovereign state system. In both cases, I

demonstrate that international orders were transformed as a result of coherent conjunctures of institutional decay, religiously inspired ideological challenges to the old order, and destabilizing increases in violence interdependence occasioned respectively by the European military revolution and the nineteenth century industrialization of war. I then identify analogous subversive processes now active within the contemporary state system, before identifying measures that must be taken if the state system is to avoid its predecessors' sorry fate. These findings carry important implications for our understanding of the nature of international order, the dynamics of international systems change, the trajectory of global political evolution from 1500 CE to the present, and the long-term viability of a universal system of sovereign states.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Andrew Phillips was born in Melbourne, Australia in 1977. Between 1995 and 1999, he attended Monash University, where he completed his Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honours), majoring in Political Science. His BA thesis, 'Barking at Leviathan – Dogs of War, the Resurgence of Non-State Violence, and the Decline of the Nation-State', was supervised by Christian Reus-Smit. While attending Monash University, Andrew was also involved in inter-varsity debating, winning the World University Inter-Varsity Debating Championship in 1999. Upon graduation, he served as a policy advisor in the Social Policy Division (Office of Indigenous Policy) within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in Canberra, Australia.

In the fall of 2000, Andrew commenced his graduate studies in the Department of Government at Cornell University, where his research interests focused on the historical and contemporary dynamics of international systems change. These interests were reinforced in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, leading Andrew to focus his dissertation research on the transformation of international orders from 1500 CE to the present. In May 2003, he returned to Australia, where he taught courses in international relations at the University of Melbourne while continuing his dissertation research. In August 2004, he was awarded a Master of Arts, while from July to November 2007 he completed his dissertation while serving as a visiting lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University. He is now a lecturer in international relations at the School of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.

Dedicated to my Mum and Dad  
and to Natalia  
with love and gratitude

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This is an ambitious dissertation, and the debts I have accumulated during my life in preparation for writing it have been correspondingly large. My first and greatest debt is owed to my parents, Bob and Judy Phillips, who have always given me their unconditional love and support. From as far back as I can remember, dinner-table conversations were enlivened by discussions about national and international politics, and I will always be grateful to my father for conveying to me his passionate interest in all things political. I also thank my mother for reminding me during the dissertation process to keep some sense of perspective when my academic preoccupations threatened to become all-consuming.

I have been unusually lucky in enjoying the help of wonderful mentors at every stage of my academic career. At Monash University, I was privileged to have been taught by several great teachers, including Christian Reus-Smit, Paul James, and Robyn Eckersley, and it is an honour to now be able to know these people as friends and professional colleagues. My greatest individual debt is owed to Chris Reus-Smit, who first introduced me to the world of international relations and who inspired me to contemplate the possibility of undertaking graduate training in political science overseas. As a member of my advisory committee, Chris's advice also proved decisive in influencing the final shape of this dissertation. Chris has been an inspiring teacher, an amazingly generous mentor, and a great friend, without whom my intellectual journey from Clayton to Cornell would not have been possible.

During my time at Monash, I was also privileged to be involved for five years with the Monash Association of Debaters. I owe special thanks to Ray D'Cruz, Chris Fladgate,

Roushad Khambatta and Ben Richards for encouraging me to pursue debating beyond high school. It is hard for me to overestimate the importance of my inter-varsity debating experiences in sharpening my skills in analysis and argumentation, and solidifying my passion for international affairs. I will always be grateful for the opportunities debating afforded me for travel and intellectual development, and for the enormous privilege of being able to match wits with some of the brightest young minds in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond during this period.

At Cornell University, I continued to be blessed by great mentors and great friendships. Peter Katzenstein's reputation as a brilliant mentor is well known and even more well deserved. His intellectual guidance throughout every stage of this project was remarkable, as was the extraordinary kindness, sensitivity and patience he demonstrated towards me from my first days in Ithaca. Matthew Evangelista and Richard Bensele also provided inspiring intellectual leadership throughout my journey, constantly challenging me to make my arguments more rigorous and my prose more readable. I owe all three a personal and intellectual debt that can never be adequately repaid, and I can only hope that I will be able to emulate their examples in my own teaching career. Special thanks are also due to Daniel Nexon, Daniel Philpott, and Loren Rytter for their generosity in reading portions of this dissertation and for their trenchant criticisms, which sharpened my argument considerably. I also thank Allen Carlson for providing me with opportunities to think critically about the dynamics of international systems change, in my capacity as both his student in the graduate seminar in Sovereignty, and also as his Teaching Assistant in the course New Forces in International Politics. Allen's suggestions for revising the dissertation in his capacity as the external reader were also both stimulating and extremely helpful.



Both in the United States and in Australia, I benefited from essential financial and institutional support from a range of sources. This dissertation was made possible by the generous financial support provided by fellowships from the Sage Foundation, the Mellon Foundation and the Peace Studies Program at Cornell University. Upon my return to Australia, I was particularly fortunate to enjoy the friendship and patronage of Robyn Eckersley, who gave me the opportunity to refine my teaching skills in my capacity serving as a sessional lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Melbourne from 2003 to 2006. Equally, Chris Reus-Smit's offer for me to serve as a visiting lecturer at the Department of International Relations at Australian National University from July to November of 2007 could not have been timelier, providing me with an exciting and stimulating environment in which to bring the dissertation to successful completion.

Throughout my studies, my spirits have been sustained by many wonderful friendships. I have taken much from my time at Cornell, but what I most value from my time as a graduate student are the friendships I forged with Devashree Gupta, Barak Mendelsohn, Scott Siegel and Steve Watts. All are fantastic scholars, but more importantly, all are also magnificent human beings. In Australia, many laughs and too many beers were shared with Dan Celm, Nick Chiam, Simon Cooke, Libby Hetherington, Chris King, Bianca Lowe, Luke Oliver, and Helen Waters. These people have enriched my life from our days as first years at Monash University, and I look forward to sharing many more laughs with them in the years ahead.

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ask a lot of their partners, but the burdens I have imposed on Natalia have been excessive by any measure. For three years she endured the sorrows of a long-distance relationship without complaint as I completed my graduate training at Cornell, and in the subsequent four years she has never faltered in her support for me, even as she has stoically fought her own battles with ill health. Her kindness, bravery, and wisdom are my continuing inspiration. This dissertation is dedicated to her with love and gratitude, and in the hope of happier times to come.

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## INTRODUCTION

International orders do not last forever. Throughout history, rulers have sought to imbue relations between different political communities with a measure of peace and stability. From Rome's dominion over the Mediterranean in late antiquity through to China's maintenance of an East Asian suzerain state system as recently as the late nineteenth century, international order has most often been secured via the institution of empire. The Greek city-states, their Renaissance counterparts, and the protean form of state system that existed in China during the Period of Warring States stand as historical examples of alternative forms international order organized around the framework of sovereign state systems. The papal-imperial diarchy that prevailed in Latin Christendom from the eleventh century to the early sixteenth century provides yet a third form of international order, which was neither imperial nor sovereign but rather heteronomous in its ordering principles.

Their great differences notwithstanding, two features unite the international orders mentioned above. Firstly, in each instance, order was secured among political communities through the mobilization of both authoritative and coercive forms of power. Both practices of communicative action and authorized practices of organized violence have worked in uneasy combination to cultivate cooperation between polities while limiting conflicts between them within manageable bounds. Secondly, regardless of their level of ideological integration or institutional sophistication, each of the aforementioned orders eventually proved finite. Much like the polities that inhabit them, international orders are fragile and provisional creations, and are continuously susceptible to processes of decay culminating in the possibility of dissolution. The fall of Rome, the end of the *Respublica Christiana*, and the collapse of the late imperial Sinosphere all testify to the impermanence of international orders.

Equally, the sorry fate of orders past should remind us of the fragility of the contemporary world order, and caution against the belief that history has definitively ended with the emergence of a universal system of sovereign nation-states.

What are international orders, how are they transformed, and is the contemporary world order on the cusp of fundamental change? These are the three questions that drive this inquiry. The problem of order has long preoccupied international relations theorists, who have acknowledged both the necessity and the frailty of ordering institutions in the formally anarchic realm of world politics.<sup>1</sup> With the 9/11 attacks and the ensuing war on terror, the fragility of institutions first forged in the twentieth century to combat the horrors of the total state and total war has become painfully apparent, prompting renewed speculation about the state system's future.<sup>2</sup> In this study, I bring a new perspective to debates on international systems change by anchoring them firmly within a comparative historical account of the transformation of international orders. My concerns in undertaking this study are at once theoretical, practical and ethical in nature.

Theoretically, the discipline's focus on the problem of achieving order in world politics inevitably invites two questions. Firstly, what is international order and how is it maintained? And secondly, how are international orders destabilized, contested, and ultimately transformed? I engage with both of these questions in this study. In the last decade, several landmark constructivist studies have collectively enriched our understanding of international orders' culturally and historically

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<sup>1</sup> The *locus classicus* on this subject remains Hedley Bull. *The Anarchical Society – A Study of Order in World Politics*. London: MacMillan Press, 1995, but see also John A. Hall. *International Orders*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996; and Martin Wight. *Systems of States*. London: Leicester University Press, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> See for example the collection of essays in Ken Booth, and Tim Dunne, eds. *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002. See also Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, and Nicholas Rennger. "Apocalypse Now? Continuities or Disjunctions in World Politics after 9/11." *International Affairs* 82, no. 3 (2006): 539-52.

contingent character.<sup>3</sup> However, while these studies have undermined the sparse and asocial conceptions of the international realm that were previously dominant within the discipline, they nevertheless serve as both foils as well as inspirations in the following pages. For while I re-affirm constructivist insights regarding international orders' socially constructed character, I also seek to correct what I regard as the excessive idealism (in both senses of the term) of constructivist accounts of international orders' constitution and transformation. Practices of communicative action and shared rules, norms, laws, and authoritative institutions are undoubtedly crucial in sustaining international order. But international order is equally sustained by corresponding practices of legitimate organized violence. In placing disproportionate emphasis on the former to the neglect of the latter, I maintain that existing constructivist accounts have provided us with an artificially bloodless account of international orders' constitution and operation. Conversely, in according equal significance to authoritative and coercive institutions, I aim to provide a more comprehensive conception of international orders that more accurately captures the paradoxical essence of international politics, as a realm in which the struggle for power and the pursuit of the good remain irreducibly important and unavoidably intertwined spheres of action.

On the question, 'what are international orders?', this study is thus intended as both a *vindication* as well as a *qualification* of existing constructivist accounts. My argument vindicates constructivist claims concerning the centrality of systemic

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<sup>3</sup>See Mlada Bukovansky. *Legitimacy and Power Politics - The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002; Rodney Bruce Hall. *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999; Daniel Philpott. *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001; and Christian Reus-Smit. *The Moral Purpose of the State - Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.



normative structures and authoritative institutions in constituting international orders. However, I also qualify these claims by illustrating the necessity of supplementing these institutions with authorized practices of organized violence. Far from being novel, the acknowledgment that international order is sustained through both authoritative and coercive institutions finds antecedents in both classical realism and also within the English School tradition.<sup>4</sup> One of my core goals in this dissertation is to flesh out this insight by demonstrating the mutual indispensability of orders' authoritative and coercive institutions, as well as identifying their common origins in shared identities and overarching beliefs about the underlying purpose of collective association.

In affirming international orders' culturally and historically contingent character, my account necessarily emphasizes their distinctiveness from one another. Nevertheless, as I seek to account not merely for orders' constitution but also for their transformation, I have also sought to identify the common dynamics operative across my cases that have precipitated international orders' demise. For international relations scholars, the 'short' twentieth century (1914-1991) continues to cast a long shadow, with the cataclysm of 1914-1945 providing the catalyst for the establishment of international relations as an academic discipline. However, while it was singular in its destructive scale, the crisis that engulfed the world during this period was far from exceptional in its essential character. On the contrary, the conjuncture of ideological schism, institutional breakdown, and pervasive civil and international warfare that characterized the 'thirty years crisis' finds jarring historical parallels elsewhere. These

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<sup>4</sup>To cite but one famous example, in Bull's classic analysis of the modern state system, he explicitly identifies war as a key ordering institution in world politics, arguing thus: 'From the perspective of international society, war retains its dual aspect: on the one hand, a threat to be limited and contained; on the other, an instrumentality to be harnessed to international society's purposes.' See Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, p. 191. Bull's recognition of war's paradoxical character – alternating at different times as a source of order and disorder – can be more generally applied to characterize the dominant coercive practices operative within the international orders considered in this dissertation.

parallels suggest the possibility of more systematically drawing out the common processes underpinning ostensibly disparate episodes of international systems change. In illuminating these commonalities, I seek to contribute our understanding of the structural drivers propelling the transformation of international orders. Additionally, I also hope to provide some insight into the strategies undertaken by agents that may either forestall or accelerate processes of systemic change.

Whereas my analysis of international orders' constitution is intended as simultaneously a confirmation and corrective to established constructivist studies on international order, my points of reference on the question of orders' transformation are more eclectic. For while constructivists have made convincing arguments regarding the centrality of ideational factors in driving great transformations in international politics, these insights have recently been complemented by the works of scholars who have alternatively stressed the materialist and institutional dimensions of international political change. In addition to the constructivist scholars cited above, my thinking on processes of systemic change has been heavily influenced by these more recent contributions, most particularly by the arguments of Daniel Deudney and Daniel Nexon.<sup>5</sup> Given these eclectic influences, my task in conceptualizing the dynamics of international orders' transformation has been one of synthesis and integration rather than either the outright ratification or refutation of existing frameworks. Accordingly, the explanation I advance accords equal primacy to the ideational, institutional and material drivers of international systems change, offering an account that remains sensitive to the particularities of each case, while nevertheless

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<sup>5</sup>See Daniel Deudney. *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007; and Daniel Nexon. *Religion and the Fate of Empires in Early Modern Europe*. Ph.D. thesis, New York, NY, Department of Political Science, Columbia University, 2004.

identifying a common causal constellation underpinning otherwise disparate episodes of international order transformation.

Beyond the theoretical questions of order constitution and transformation outlined above, important practical and ethical concerns also motivate this inquiry. At the practical level, this study is driven by the strategic necessity of better comprehending the present global security environment. This environment has been radically reshaped in recent decades by processes such as the growth of transnational terrorism, the rise of religious fundamentalism, widespread post-colonial state failure, and the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction to both state and non-state actors. In the wake of 9/11, many commentators and some governments have invoked these security challenges to argue that 'the world has changed'.<sup>6</sup> These narratives of transformation have often been accompanied by claims that the new security challenges demand both fundamental revisions in the practice of sovereignty, as well as a relaxation of norms governing the use of force if international order is to be maintained.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, the international community's rapid post-9/11 counter-mobilization against Al Qaeda provides suggestive evidence that the state system may be capable of responding to the new security challenges without fundamentally compromising its essentially liberal constitutional principles.<sup>8</sup> The events of recent years have thus accorded far greater practical urgency to debates on international

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<sup>6</sup>See for example Ludger Kuhnhardt. "Global Society and Its Enemies: 9/11 and the Future of Atlantic Civilisation." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 4, no. 2 (2003): 157-72. The influential official transformationalist conception of the post 9/11 world remains that outlined in the United States' 2002 National Security Strategy. See generally *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 2002 [cited October 30, 2007]. Available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2002/nss.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>From a neoconservative perspective, see for example David Frum, and Richard Perle. *An End to Evil - How to Win the War on Terror*. New York: Random House, 2003; and more generally Charles Krauthammer. "The Unipolar Moment Revisited." *The National Interest* (2002/03): 5-17. From a liberal perspective, see for example Lee Feinstein, and Anne-Marie Slaughter. "A Duty to Prevent." *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 1 (2004): 136-50; and Allen Buchanan, and Robert O. Keohane. "The Preventive Use of Force: A Cosmopolitan Institutional Proposal." *Ethics and International Affairs* 18, no. 1 (2004): 1-22.

<sup>8</sup>On this point, see generally Barak Mendelsohn. *Jihadism, International Society, and Interstate Cooperation*. Ph.D. thesis, Ithaca, NY: Department of Government, Cornell University, 2006.

systems change than existed previously, with the perils of alarmism and complacency each presenting their own dangers for the would-be custodians of international order. Whether or not world leaders will effectively adapt to the new security environment depends largely on their ability to first comprehend the origins, nature, and magnitude of emerging threats. In situating contemporary developments within a larger historical frame, I hope to both more effectively highlight the extensive decay that has already beset the global state system, as well as delineate with greater precision the vectors of change with which the international community will need to contend if the present world order is to be preserved.

Finally, this project is framed by an ethical concern for the future of the global state system. As my historical cases demonstrate, the transformation of international orders has traditionally been associated with massive social dislocation, seismic shifts in cultural and intellectual landscapes, cataclysmic physical destruction, and loss of life on a mass scale. In early modern Europe, the century of conflict inaugurated by the Reformation unleashed death and destruction on a scale that remained unsurpassed until the advent centuries later of industrialized total warfare.<sup>9</sup> The nineteenth century collapse of the Sinosphere was similarly traumatic. Hastened by the millenarian Taiping rebellion, a catastrophe that by itself claimed approximately twenty million lives, the collapse of the Sinosphere plunged the region into over a century of violence, which arguably concluded only with the end of the Indochina wars and China's post-Mao reintegration into global political and economic structures in the last decades of the twentieth century.

Unlike either sixteenth century Christendom or the nineteenth century Sinosphere, the global state system is not on the brink of transformation. Nevertheless,

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<sup>9</sup>On the extremely high frequency and intensity of war in Europe in the sixteenth and particularly the seventeenth centuries, see Jack Levy. *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983, pp. 139-144.

it would be dangerous to take false comfort from this observation. For like its predecessors, the global state system has already demonstrated signs of decay that may herald the corrosion of its governing principles if left unchecked. Like all international orders, the present world order is far from perfect, with its liberal legitimating values finding partial and uneven realisation in the actual practice of global politics. Yet for all of its imperfections, the international order forged after World War II institutionalized a host of moral advances that are worthy of preservation. The global generalization of the sovereignty regime; the institutionalization of norms of non-aggression and non-intervention; the articulation of human rights covenants curbing the arbitrary exercise of state power – each of these are justly celebrated as having contributed to international stability in the post-war era. However, in the face of endemic state failure, an unprecedented spread of destructive capabilities to anti-systemic state and non-state actors, and the waxing of religious fundamentalist resistance to the present world order, the long-term durability of these principles is far from assured. In emphasizing the impermanence of past orders and the fragility of the present one, I hope to lend added urgency to the search for solutions to contemporary threats that reconcile the timeless desire for order with the more historically contingent task of preserving the liberal principles upon which the present world order has been built.

## **The Argument**

### Conceptual Building Blocks

Already, I have introduced concepts into this discussion that demand definition. The most important of these is the concept of *international orders*.

International orders are defined here as the constellation of constitutional norms and fundamental institutions through which cooperation is cultivated and conflict contained between different political communities. This conception of international order, incorporating both ideational and institutional components, is consistent with that advanced by many constructivist scholars of international systems change.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, my conception of international orders differs from that of most constructivists in two ways. Firstly, while the focus of my attention lies with the order-producing norms and institutions that define international orders, I also acknowledge that international orders depend at least partially on the continued existence of a permissive order-enabling material context. This acknowledgement informs my argument that transformations of international order are propelled by a combination of ideational and material forces, rather than being driven by the force of revolutionary ideas alone.

Secondly, I argue that international orders are inherently dualistic in their constitution, incorporating both positive and negative (or alternatively, Aristotelian and Augustinian) dimensions into their animating purposes. On the one hand, international orders seek to advance a normatively thick and culturally and historically contingent conception of the good. The moral values that inform this conception of the good inevitably reflect the perspectives of the dominant actors within international orders. However, in stable orders these values and purposes generally secure wide assent among the order's constituent polities. Simultaneously, however, I argue that international orders are also dedicated to the more basic objective of containing violent conflict between different polities within manageable bounds. By necessity, these positive and negative dimensions of international order inform one another, an

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<sup>10</sup>See for example Hall, *National Collective Identity*; Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*; and Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*.

observation that is reflected in the fundamental institutions of international orders. International orders are sustained through a combination of authoritative institutions, which attract agents' compliance through their concordance with shared standards of legitimacy, and coercive institutions, which compel agents' compliance through the application of authorized practices of organized violence. In giving equal primacy to authoritative and coercive institutions in sustaining international orders, I hope to 'bring violence back in' to accounts of international systems change, without abandoning constructivists' emphasis on the centrality of shared legitimacy concepts in conditioning the purposes and institutional forms of international orders.

International orders can be distinguished from one another along the following axes: (a) principle of differentiation – the organizing principle (e.g. heteronomy, sovereignty, or suzerainty) that governs relations of authority between different political communities; (b) purposive orientation – the particular conception of the good that an international order seeks to advance; (c) institutional form – the precise combination of authoritative and coercive institutions that an international order relies upon to promote cooperation and contain enmity between its constituent communities; and (d) distribution of capabilities – the distribution of material capabilities (particularly capabilities for organized violence) among the different political actors inhabiting a given international order. These axes of comparison inform my conceptualization of different types of *international systems change*. At the lowest level of magnitude, international orders may be buffeted by instances of *positional change*, whereby the relative distribution of power and prestige between different political units is altered (either by diplomatic re-alignments or by war), but in which an international order's institutional forms, its purposive orientation, and its principle

of unit differentiation remain unchanged.<sup>11</sup> France's relative decline *vis-à-vis* Great Britain following the Seven Years' War, which marked a dramatic shift in the global balance of power without witnessing any fundamental alteration in the international order of the *ancien regime*, stands as a clear example of positional change. At a higher level of magnitude, one finds instances of *institutional change*, entailing significant revisions to the fundamental authoritative and/or coercive institutions by which international order is maintained. In the twentieth century, an example of authoritative institutional change would be the establishment of permanent universal conferences of states, in both 1918 and 1945, as a key authoritative mechanism of order maintenance. Similarly, the rise of practices of forcible humanitarian intervention in the post-Cold War period stands as an embryonic example of shifts in the scope and purpose of war as a coercive institution dedicated to the purpose of order preservation.<sup>12</sup>

Higher up on the spectrum of international systems change, one finds instances of *purposive change*, whereby the principle of unit differentiation remains constant, but in which both the conception of the good informing international order and the institutional forms dedicated to its preservation undergo radical change.<sup>13</sup> Within the history of the modern state system, purposive change is embodied most distinctly in

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<sup>11</sup>My conception of positional change is roughly comparable to Robert Gilpin's conception of systemic change, which he defines as entailing '...changes in the international distribution of power, the hierarchy of prestige, and the rights and rules embodied in the system...'; see Robert Gilpin. *War and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 42. However, whereas Gilpin conflates changes in the international distribution of power and prestige with alterations in the rights and rules of the international system, thus assuming that changes in the distribution of power unproblematically translate into changes in rights and rules, I see the relationship between the two as being contingent rather than necessary, hence my distinction of positional from institutional change.

<sup>12</sup>The expansion of practices of humanitarian intervention following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union demonstrates that instances of institutional change may be enabled by permissive positional changes within an international order. They are not, however, logically dependent on positional changes, thus positional and institutional changes must be kept analytically separate from one another.

<sup>13</sup>Both the distinction between purposive and configurative forms of systems change and the terminology distinguishing the two types are drawn from Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, pp. 164-165.



the protracted transition from an Absolutist system of states grounded in monarchical sovereignty, to a modern system of states predicated on popular sovereignty.<sup>14</sup> The magnitude of purposive changes in international order is clearly captured in the contrast between the radically different conceptions of the moral purpose of the state informing both sovereign state systems, as well as the different fundamental institutions developed in both systems to cultivate cooperation and contain enmity between their constituent polities. Finally, international orders may undergo episodes of configurative change, whereby an order's principle of unit differentiation changes alongside its purposive orientation and ordering institutions. The transition from the heteronomous order of Latin Christendom to a Westphalian sovereign state system stands as the classic instance of configurative international systems change in modern European history. Beyond Europe, East Asia's protracted transition from the suzerain state system of the Sinosphere towards incorporation into the global sovereign state system serves as an additional example of configurative change. Unless otherwise stated, when I refer to the *transformation of international orders*, this term refers to instances of configurative international systems change only.

Upon first glance, the three international orders considered in this study differ in profound ways. Latin Christendom, the Sinosphere, and the global state system are distinguishable most obviously on the basis of the distinct cultural and historical contexts out of which they emerged. Additionally, all three orders are notable for differences in their organizing principles – heteronomous in the case of Christendom, suzerain in the case of the Sinosphere, and sovereign in the case of the global state system. These differences notwithstanding, I argue that important commonalities unite my two historical cases, commonalities that are discernible also in a more muted form in the contemporary context. Specifically, I argue that both Christendom and the

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<sup>14</sup>On this transition, see generally *Ibid.*, chapter six.

Sinosphere were transformed by protracted crises driven by a combination of institutional decay and ideological schism, together with technological changes that radically increased the potential scale and scope for violent interactions within and between different political communities. While none of these factors by themselves accounted for transformations of international order, their combined influence in both of my historical cases worked to bring about configurative changes in the respective international orders governing Western Europe and East Asia. Equally, I maintain that this transformative triumvirate of forces is also observable within the global state system, suggesting that the present order's indefinite survival cannot be guaranteed. Given the importance of these macro-processes to my argument, a brief definition of each is provided below.

In this study, the concept of *institutional decay* refers both to the declining effectiveness of an international order's institutions in advancing its fundamental purposes, as well as to the diminishing legitimacy that the custodians of international order are able to attract as a result of this failure. Institutional decay thus refers to a decline in both the capacity and the legitimacy of the ordering institutions of a given international order. While the exact causes of institutional decay differ in each of my cases, the manifestations of decay are similar across each of them. These manifestations of institutional decay include rising ideological dissent, increasing popular dissatisfaction with existing governance structures, and a decrease in rulers' ability to manage and contain violent conflicts within existing institutional forms. Institutional decay is generally protracted in character, and it provides the permissive context for the operation of the two macro-processes that then actively propel the order towards transformation. These processes are ideological schisms, and technologically driven increases in systemic violence interdependence.

The term *ideological schism* refers here to the emergence of an anti-systemic ideology that emphatically repudiates the animating purposes and constitutional norms of the existing order. Anti-systemic ideologies subvert international order in two ways. Firstly, they destroy the normative consensus necessary to sustain the operation of ordering institutions, effectively paralysing collective capacities to manage and contain violent conflict. Secondly, the emergence of anti-systemic ideologies polarizes polities both internally and internationally between defenders and opponents of the existing order. The introduction of ideological antagonisms into social and geopolitical conflicts in turn radically intensifies these disputes, thus further accelerating the breakdown of the old order. In Latin Christendom, an ideological schism was precipitated with the outbreak of the Reformation, and culminated in the European Wars of Religion, which in turn catalysed the establishment of a modern sovereign state system. In East Asia, by contrast, the normative coherence of the Sinosphere was compromised by the intrusion of Western ‘standards of civilization’, before being challenged internally within the imperial core itself with the outbreak of the Taiping rebellion against China’s Confucian social order. In the contemporary state system, jihadist terrorism stands as the sharpest expression of religious fundamentalist hostility to the current world order, albeit one that has yet to acquire the broad social base necessary to seriously threaten the working of the state system’s ordering institutions in the near term.

The lethal interplay of institutional decay with ideological schism was compounded in each of my cases by technologically driven increases in the scale and scope for violent conflict both between and within an order’s constituent polities. For the sake of convenience, I refer to this phenomenon as an increase in *violence*

*interdependence*.<sup>15</sup> Increases in violence interdependence emerge in many instances as a byproduct of broader technological improvements, particularly in the areas of transportation and communication, which increase the scope for both peaceful and violent kinds of social interaction between polities. Nevertheless, central to the concept of violence interdependence is the parallel development of more destructive forms of war-making, together with their diffusion to a larger range of actors than existed previously. In Latin Christendom, increasing violence interdependence – in the form of the growth of large-scale commercial mercenarism and the introduction of gunpowder into European warfare – was already corroding the material foundations of the old order prior to the Reformation. Nevertheless, it was ultimately Christendom’s religious polarization combined with the advent of Europe’s first ‘military revolution’ that condemned Christendom to destruction.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in nineteenth century East Asia, international order had historically been predicated upon China’s uncontested hegemony as the most successful of the Old World ‘gunpowder empires’ to have emerged in the early modern period.<sup>17</sup> The industrialization of warfare beginning in the mid to late nineteenth century finally permitted the Western Powers to force China open to foreign trade and cultural influences from the First Opium War onwards. This forced opening, and the social and economic destabilization that it wrought in southern China, in turn facilitated the Taiping millenarian challenge to imperial authority, a challenge that ultimately gutted the empire and thereby enabled East Asia’s forcible incorporation into a Western-dominated global state system. In the contemporary

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<sup>15</sup>This concept of violence interdependence is borrowed directly from Daniel Deudney. *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 18. The materialist dimension of my account of transformations of international order draws much of its inspiration from Deudney’s work in this area.

<sup>16</sup>On the nature and consequences of Europe’s early modern military revolution, see generally Geoffrey Parker. *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500-1800*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>17</sup>The concept of ‘gunpowder empires’ is drawn from William H. McNeill. *The Age of Gunpowder Empires 1450-1800*. Washington DC: American Historical Association, 1989.

period, the processes of globalization, the information technology revolution, and the diffusion of dual-use technologies to state and non-state actors have already provided the permissive material context for jihadist terrorists to mount a low-level armed challenge to the existing world order. Should jihadists or other non-state actors succeed in acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction, I suggest that the resulting increase in violence interdependence could exert transformative effects on the global state system comparable to those witnessed in my historical cases of international systems change.

Transformations of international order are protracted episodes of historical change, with the movement from one order to another typically taking place over many decades. For example, the transition from Christendom to a Westphalian state system traced its beginnings to the late fifteenth century, but was really only complete with the onset of the Age of Absolutism after 1660. Similarly, the Sinosphere's decline arguably began with the death of the Qian Long emperor and the onset of the White Lotus rebellion in the late eighteenth century, and concluded at the earliest with the re-establishment of a functioning central state in China in 1949. Given the nature of the subject matter, taking a 'God's eye view' on transformations of international order and privileging structural variables over the agency of individual actors is potentially unavoidable. Nevertheless, while the following account places great emphasis on structural forces as catalysts for international systems change, I wish to stress from the outset the importance of actors' agency in facilitating or inhibiting transformations of international order.

Institutional decay, ideological schisms, and increases in violence interdependence together place enormous stress on international orders. But these forces are together necessary rather than sufficient causes for international systems change. The example of the 'thirty years crisis' of 1914-1945, in which the global

state system was tested but not transformed by the breakdown of existing systems of collective security, the irruption of totalitarian challenges to liberalism, and the advent of industrial total war, is illustrative of this broader point. Faced with the challenge of Nazi and Japanese imperialism, the Allied Powers succeeded not only in defeating Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan militarily, but also in reconstituting a post-war order that vigorously repudiated the moral visions of racist hierarchy underpinning Hitler and Tojo's respective visions of world order. Similarly, the period 1789-1815, punctuated in Europe by ideological polarization, civil and international war, and the rise of the *levee en masse*, bore many of the hallmarks of a systemic crisis. But while the era of revolution did eventually yield a shift in the purposive foundations of the European state system, this transition was in many respects managed and moderated by Europe's rulers over the course of several decades following the Congress of Vienna. The Concert of Europe and 'old regime liberalism' can be retrospectively read as the international and domestic faces of a grand strategy of 'muddling through', which was largely successful in containing the threats of systemic war and Jacobin republicanism for the course of the nineteenth century. Both the crushing of the Axis challenge and Europe's managed transition from an Absolutist to a modern system of states demonstrate that repression and defensive adaptation offer pathways from systemic crisis that do not terminate in configurative international systems change. It is with this appreciation that human agents retain a capacity to shape the evolution of international orders, even in circumstances where structural forces heavily militate towards their transformation, that I proceed.

## Outline of the Argument

This study begins by outlining my conception of the nature of international order, before outlining the theoretical framework I employ to account for their transformation. In chapter one, I argue that international orders are inherently dualistic in their constitution, both in the goals they seek to advance, and in the means that they employ to secure order. Specifically, I claim that international orders seek to promote both a historically and culturally specific conception of the good, while simultaneously pursuing the more generic goal of containing violent conflict between their constituent polities within manageable bounds. I further argue that these positive and negative dimensions of order are realised through recourse to authoritative and coercive forms of power. International orders are constituted by a normative complex, which prescribes an order's animating purposes, and by a governing institutional framework, composed of the fundamental authoritative and coercive institutions employed by the custodians of international order to advance these purposes. These order-producing normative complexes and their accompanying fundamental institutions are in turn embedded within an order-enabling material framework, which imposes hard physical constraints on the scale and scope for organized violence within and between political communities.

Practices of communicative action channelled through authoritative institutions, and practices of coercion channelled through authorized practices of organized violence, form the twin pillars of international order. In chapter two, I argue that international orders are transformed as a result of systemic crises that are inaugurated by processes of institutional decay, but are brought to fruition by a combination of ideological schisms and increases in violence interdependence. Ideological schisms undermine international order by destroying the consensus over

ultimate ends that undergirds all orders. The emergence of challengers to the existing order both paralyses the operation of ordering institutions, while simultaneously polarizing populations and overlaying positional struggles for power and privilege with ideological struggles over competing conceptions of the good. Meanwhile, increases in violence interdependence corrode the efficient operation of ordering institutions that initially evolved in a different geopolitical context, while simultaneously increasing the scale and scope for violent conflict both between and within political communities. Ideological schisms and increases in violence interdependence transform international orders by respectively undermining the legitimacy and efficiency of existing ordering institutions. Having wrecked the old order, they then perpetuate disorder by providing actors with opportunities to pursue mutually antagonistic ultimate ends with the assistance of expanded destructive means. It is this intersection of fanaticism and firepower that drives the destruction of old international orders, while the ensuing period of chaos eventually prompts the development of intellectual and institutional innovations that permit the re-establishment of international order, albeit on radically different normative and material foundations.

Having laid the foundations of my argument in chapters one and two, I seek to empirically illustrate my claims in chapters three through seven through reference to the transformation of two historical international orders, specifically Latin Christendom and the East Asian Sinosphere. Chapters three through five detail the origins, constitution, operation and decay of Latin Christendom, Christendom's collapse, and the prolonged period of chaos that followed Christendom's demise before ultimately bequeathing the Westphalian state system. In keeping with my overall argument, I attribute Christendom's collapse to the combined impact of the Protestant Reformation and the early modern military revolution. With the onset of the



Reformation and the breakdown of Christendom's spiritual unity, I argue that Christendom's already decaying system of canon law was fatally undermined, with confessional controversy additionally opening up poisonous sectarian rivalries within and between Europe's polities at a time when technological innovations were already dramatically increasing the cost, scale, and destructiveness of warfare. In a world in which religion continued to be conceived as referring to an embodied community of believers rather than to an abstract body of beliefs, the rapid spread of Protestant heresies undercut Europe's most basic governing principles and rites of social integration. Once the abortive Habsburg attempt to reconstitute Christendom along imperial lines had been foreclosed, European rulers sought to re-establish order in their own kingdoms through the forcible imposition of confessional conformity, in so doing conflating religious heresy with political treachery and thereby condemning Europe to a century of violence. The correspondence of this crisis with the emergence of a cluster of military innovations that initially empowered rebels and rulers alike radically raised the destructiveness of the ensuing conflicts. This destructiveness was further amplified by the absence of any systemic ordering institutions to prevent localized conflicts from rapidly metastasizing throughout the international system. Ultimately, it was only in the wake of a series of cultural and intellectual innovations forged in the maelstrom of Europe's Wars of Religion that a new international order based on sovereign principles crystallized, a process that was begun but was by no means completed by 1648.

Whereas the transformative forces of Reformation and military revolution emerged within Latin Christendom itself, the Sinosphere was torn asunder by a concatenation of shocks that developed largely but not exclusively beyond its borders. Chapters six and seven describe the processes by which internal processes of dynastic decline interacted with millenarian peasant rebellions and the global industrialization

of warfare to destroy the Sinosphere and thereby propel East Asia's entry into a Western-dominated global state system. Given that the Sinosphere was a suzerain state system centred round the Qing dynasty, it is unsurprising that I argue that the Sinosphere's demise was largely driven by the decline and disintegration of the imperial Chinese state. This process was hastened but not initiated by the forcible opening of China to Western commerce in the 1840s, a development that had been enabled by the unprecedented augmentation of European naval power yielded by early industrialization. The opening of China to Western commercial and cultural influences in turn provided the ideological inspiration for the Taiping rebellion, a puritanical millenarian movement that synthesized evangelical Christianity with Chinese folk religious traditions to create an insurgency of exceptional fanaticism and ferocity. While ultimately defeated, the Taiping rebellion ripped the heart out of the Qing imperial state, forcing expedients that radically accelerated the domestic devolution of fiscal and military power to regional warlords. This decentralization of dynastic power hollowed out the Chinese state, paving the way for the Sinosphere's subsequent dissolution. The last days of the Sinosphere, punctuated by defeat in war, renewed religious *qua* nationalist rebellions, and ultimately the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty, are recounted in chapter seven.

Having traced the historical contours of configurative international systems change in Western Europe and East Asia, I turn my attention to the current challenges confronting the global state system in chapters eight and nine. Chapter eight describes the constitution of the global state system, before detailing the range of centrifugal forces that have been undermining it almost from its inception in the post-war era. I argue that while the present world order is dedicated to the promotion of popular eudemonism and national self-determination, its capacity to realize these substantive values has been hamstrung from the outset by the low institutional capacity and

popular legitimacy of many post-colonial states. From the late 1960s, the state system's susceptibility to subversion has been amplified by two factors. The rise of religious fundamentalism, specifically the Islamist incarnation derived from the writings of Sayyid Qutb, has provided a powerful philosophical critique of the state system for many individuals who are disillusioned with the present order. At the same time, globalization has increased violence interdependence at a global level. Improvements in transportation and communication networks and the continued spread of dual-use knowledge and technologies have provided jihadist terrorists with the logistical and technical capabilities necessary to mount an armed challenge to the liberal world order. The background to the jihadist challenge is sketched in chapter eight, while its emergence, evolution and significance are considered in chapter nine.

Transformations of international order are infrequent, protracted, and profoundly traumatic episodes of historical change. My analysis suggests that the global state system will not be swept away any time soon. Nevertheless, the centrifugal forces now present are more likely to accelerate than they are to abate in the future. For this reason, the international community will increasingly struggle to reconcile the positive imperative of promoting human emancipation with the negative imperative of providing member polities with security from violence. Harmonizing the positive and negative purposes of world order will be difficult for the present and future custodians of the state system, but it will not be impossible. My historical cases demonstrate that while the structural drivers of international systems change are irreducibly important in transforming international orders, they are not entirely determinative. For this reason, I conclude this study by considering the range of future trajectories for the global state system, before identifying the steps that will need to be taken if the global state system is to be preserved, and liberty and order are to together endure in the twenty-first century.

## CHAPTER ONE

### WHAT ARE INTERNATIONAL ORDERS?

‘You must understand, therefore, that there are two ways of fighting: by law or by force. The first way is natural to men, and the second to beasts. But as the first way often proves inadequate one must needs have recourse to the second. So a prince must understand how to make a nice use of the beast and the man. The ancient writers taught princes about this by an allegory, when they described how Achilles and many other princes of the ancient world were sent to be brought up by Chiron, the centaur, so that he might train them this way. All the allegory means, in making the teacher half beast and half man, is that a prince must know how to act according to the nature of both, and that he cannot survive otherwise...’

– Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Order Under the Centaur’s Shadow**

In taking the centaur to personify the dualistic character of political power, Machiavelli captured an essential truth about the nature of order, one that obtains equally in the domestic and international spheres. Both the power of moral suasion and the force of material sanctions sustain political order. This elementary observation is worth emphasizing, precisely because it is so often overlooked in the study of international relations. Far from constituting mere decorative artifice, the rules, norms, principles and moral conventions that infuse political orders provide the essential media through which cooperation is realised and conflict mitigated between social agents. Similarly, recourse to organized violence – whether employed by rulers against

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<sup>18</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli. *The Prince*. Translated by George Bull. London: Penguin Books, 1999, p. 56.

subjects or by rulers against each other – frequently fortifies and perpetuates rather than weakening or undermining political orders. Rather than representing mutually opposed modes of action, communicative action and organized violence – the respective arts of man and beast – are equally central to the generation of political order. Political orders crystallize at the intersection of ethical and coercive modes of action. For the duration of their existence, they are sustained by these modes of action. And it is precisely when the tentative reconciliation between these factors fails that political orders are destroyed.

In the next two chapters, I will present the theoretical framework that informs this study. I begin by exploring the nature of political order – what it is, why it is necessary, why it is difficult to realise, and why all political orders are unavoidably fragile and provisional. I then narrow the discussion to consider the specific problems of realizing order within multi-actor international systems, before finally advancing my own conception of international order. Whereas chapter one is dedicated to an exploration of the nature of international orders, chapter two is devoted to a consideration of the processes by which international orders are transformed. I begin by critically evaluate existing cyclical, linear process and punctuated equilibria explanations for the transformation of international orders, before then articulating my own account of why and how international orders are transformed.

## **1.1 The Nature of Political Order**

### **1.1.1 What is Political Order and Why is it Necessary?**

The notion of order evokes multiple meanings that are relevant to this inquiry. Firstly, order can be understood as a purposive arrangement of a series of objects with

a view towards realising a functional goal. This conception of order is the starting point of Hedley Bull, who divines the rudiments of international order in states' collective commitment to the maintenance of institutions designed to maximize realization of the bases of social order (security, promise-keeping, property) under conditions of anarchy.<sup>19</sup> The notion of order also carries with it a sense of inter-temporal stability, holding out the promise of predictability and thus susceptibility to rational control. Finally, in being the antithesis of disorder, the concept of order has normative connotations, suggesting a condition of peace, harmony, and unity in pursuit of common ends.

All of the aforementioned associations are relevant in conceiving of political order. Each, however, emphasize a different dimension of order that demands attention. The conception of order as a functional arrangement highlights an understanding of order as *structure*. Seen through this lens, order denotes the panoply of norms, ideas, rules, institutions and material structures that together make the realization of agents' functional ends possible. Conversely, a conception of order emphasizing stability over time illuminates a notion of order as *process*. Order from this perspective is manifest in agents' routine subscription to regular patterns of practice that reliably recur over time. Lastly, the notion of order as the antonym of disorder emphasizes a conception of order as *ideal*. This conceptualization of order encompasses the final condition of harmonious unity to which the structures of order and their accompanying processes are dedicated. These different conceptions of order – as structure, process and ideal – do not exhaust the full spectrum of meanings attached to the term, but together they constitute the interpretations that are most relevant to this discussion, and will be invoked both separately and together when necessary over the course of my analysis.

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<sup>19</sup>Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, p. 4.

Political orders share the generic features of orders outlined above. At one level, they are holistic structures composed of ideological, institutional and material elements. Functioning political orders also demonstrate a strong degree of stability over time, and are also sustained through their sponsors' commitment to idealized visions of community and shared moral purpose. Beyond these generic characteristics, political orders are defined primarily by the social functions they are expected to perform. Following Christian Reus-Smit, I argue that communities establish political orders to fulfil three elementary social needs for their members, specifically the provision of physical security, the provision of a minimum standard of material welfare, and the provision of a shared sense of collective identity and common purpose.<sup>20</sup> Fear of violent death constitutes the primary catalyst for the creation of political order, and the success of any order must be judged firstly by the degree to which it protects its members from physical threats to life and property. Freedom from extremes of want provides an additional spur for the development of political orders, although both the means adopted to discharge this function and the benchmarks by which minimum standards of welfare are said to have been met varies considerably across orders. The collective identity function of political orders is the least tangible of the three functions, but it is far from unimportant. In cultivating a sense of common identity amongst its members, political orders generate the sense of fellow-feeling necessary to secure members' voluntary compliance with norms, rules and laws, thereby enhancing rulers' capacity to guarantee members' physical security and material welfare.<sup>21</sup> Beyond its instrumental significance in fostering social

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<sup>20</sup> Christian Reus-Smit. "Changing Patterns of Global Governance: From Absolutism to Global Multilateralism." In *Between Sovereignty and Global Governance: The United Nations, the State, and Civil Society*, edited by Albert Paolini, Anthony P. Jarvis and C. Reus-Smit, 3-28. London: Macmillan, 1998, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> On the instrumental importance of ruler-sponsored ideologies as a means of reducing the enforcement costs of social norms and rules, see Douglass Cecil North. *Structure and Change in Economic History*. 1st ed. New York: Norton, 1981, p. 47.

solidarity, fulfilment of the collective identity function is also crucially important for its own sake. The systems of meaning that help constitute political orders encompass the most basic moral, social and frequently even spiritual values and ideals of the societies over which they preside.<sup>22</sup> Political orders play a vital role in embodying and perpetuating the values and ideals by which collectivities define themselves, fulfilling a role that cannot be conflated with the more prosaic security and welfare functions to which they are also dedicated.

In addition to being identifiable by their functions, political orders are also distinct inasmuch as they rely at least partially on institutionalized relations of command and obedience to realise these functions. Political orders imply by their nature the rule of some over others - they represent institutionalized forms of organized domination, wherein some are entitled to command and others are obliged to obey.<sup>23</sup> Rulers' powers may be limited by protective thicket of laws, customs and conventions, but the essential asymmetry of power between rulers and ruled remains a constant feature of political orders. This asymmetry in power relations between rulers and ruled requires the forbearance of the latter if it is to persist for any length of time, and the task of justifying this asymmetry constitutes one of the most enduring challenges for all custodians of political order.<sup>24</sup>

From the foregoing discussion, we can extract a definition of political orders as *normative and institutional arrangements designed to fulfil the three elementary social functions (security, welfare, and collective identity functions), and that are*

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<sup>22</sup>On this point, see for example Reus-Smit, 'Changing Patterns of Global Governance', p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> This conception of political order as a form of institutionalized domination owes its inspiration to the work of Max Weber. Weber's conception of the relationship between order, domination, organization and legitimacy is pithily summarized in Reinhard Bendix. *Max Weber - an Intellectual Portrait*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, pp. 290-297.

<sup>24</sup> In this regard, my argument again derives inspiration from Weber, who defines domination as the probability that commands will be obeyed by a given group of persons, and who further acknowledges that the very requirement of routine obedience implies a degree of voluntary compliance on the part of the dominated if relations of organized domination are to long endure. See Max Weber. *Economy and Society - an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. 212.



*undergirded at least partially by relations of rule entailing the organized domination of some by others.* The applicability of the latter part of this definition to international orders may initially seem questionable, for at least in international systems governed by the institution of sovereignty, ‘none is entitled to command; none is required to obey.’<sup>25</sup> However, the scope of this objection is immediately limited when one considers that most international orders throughout history have assumed confederal, heteronomous or imperial forms, and have thus entailed routinized relations of command and obedience both between and within different political communities.<sup>26</sup> Sovereign international orders - which in any case rely on power asymmetries between rulers and ruled within but not between political communities - have been the historic exception rather than the rule, a status that as we will see endows them with very distinctive strengths and vulnerabilities.

In providing their members with essential collective goods, political orders secure the possibility of community among strangers, expanding the realm of sociability beyond the small circles of sympathy delimited by bonds of family and friendship. Additionally, political orders also offer a remedy for humankind’s unsocial sociability.<sup>27</sup> Across different types of social formations, humans have consistently demonstrated an irrepressible capacity for sociability. The material and social needs of individuals compel them towards engagement with others, yielding webs of interdependence that require the protection of a political order if they are to persist and

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<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Waltz. *Theory of International Politics*. New York: Random House, 1979, p. 88.

<sup>26</sup>On the historical prevalence of suzerain systems, and on the established tendency for most sovereign state systems to eventually evolve into suzerain state systems, see Martin Wight. *Systems of States*. London: Leicester University Press, 1977, pp. 43-44.

<sup>27</sup>On ‘unsocial sociability’ as a constitutive characteristic of humanity that renders the construction of a civil order both difficult and necessary, see Immanuel Kant. *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*. Translated by Ted Humphrey. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983, pp. 31-38.

expand.<sup>28</sup> For while the impulse towards sociability is strong, it is frequently in tension with humans' equally strong desire to maximize their freedom to engage in autonomous action unfettered by external constraints. Political orders harmonize the imperatives of interdependence and autonomy by establishing a shared corpus of norms, conventions, rules and laws to govern actors' behaviour in different spheres of social interaction. The authoritative power vested in political institutions is necessary firstly to codify these norms, conventions, rules and laws, and secondly to organize the coercive power necessary to enforce them in cases of non-compliance. More generally, Thomas Hobbes' observation that 'Man is not fitted for society by nature but by discipline'<sup>29</sup> pithily captures the pro-active role played by the custodians of political order in inculcating into their subjects shared standards of appropriateness and common habits of self-restraint, for in the absence of this socialization only constant surveillance and the costly threat of punishment would guarantee the maintenance of society among strangers. Finally, political order is necessary to contain the problem of enmity in social life. Regardless of its underlying causes, the condition of enmity between contending parties is an ineradicable aspect of human existence, and the responsibility for containing enmity within manageable bounds falls to rulers.<sup>30</sup> Of all the responsibilities falling to rulers, it is the containment of enmity that poses the greatest challenge to the maintenance of order.

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<sup>28</sup>On this point, see for example Norbert Elias. *The Civilizing Process*. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. Vol. II - State Formation and Civilization. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, pp. 87-88.

<sup>29</sup>Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, chapter I., p. i. Quoted in Gerhard Oestreich. *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 269.

<sup>30</sup>The problem of enmity in relation to the maintenance of international political orders is brilliantly elucidated in William Walker. *Weapons of Mass Destruction and International Order, Adelphi Paper 370*. New York: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2004, chapter one *passim*.

### 1.1.2 Why is Political Order Difficult to Achieve?

Regardless of its necessity, political order remains difficult to secure and is always provisional in nature. This is so firstly because the character of political order as a form of organized domination raises the immediate problem of justification. Hans Morgenthau observes of man that “[He] is born a slave, but everywhere he wants to be the master... Out of this discord between man’s desire and his actual condition arises the moral issue of power, that is, the problem of justifying and limiting the power which man has over man.”<sup>31</sup> While Morgenthau and other classical realists acknowledged domination as an inevitable aspect of political life, they also recognized that this domination is continuously subject to moral evaluation, and that it must at least partially meet its members’ ethical demands if it is to survive for any length of time.<sup>32</sup> If domination – understood as the probability that commands will be routinely obeyed – is intrinsic to political order, it also presents problems if its exercise is perceived as illegitimate. The necessity that people submit to externally imposed restraints if they are to enjoy the benefits of political order clashes violently with their desire to maximize their autonomy. For this reason, the members of a political order must ideally perceive this order as legitimate, with its requirements of obedience seen as morally binding, if it is to survive.<sup>33</sup> It is precisely because agents are continuously

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<sup>31</sup>Hans Morgenthau. *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946, pp. 168-169.

<sup>32</sup> This point was expressed particularly well by E.H. Carr, who wrote: “Just as within the state every government, though it needs power as the basis of its authority, also needs the moral basis of the consent of the governed, so an international order cannot be based on power alone, for the simple reason that mankind will in the long run always revolt against naked power... *The fatal dualism of politics will always keep considerations of morality entangled with considerations of power...*” [emphasis added]; See Edward Hallett Carr. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*. New York: Harper & Row, 1946, pp. 235-236.

<sup>33</sup> Certainly, it is possible for a political order to endure in the absence of legitimacy if its custodians choose instead to rely on coercion and repression as their primary mode of governance. However, political orders of this nature are likely to be rigid and brittle rather than truly strong, and are susceptible to rapid collapse in the face of exogenous shocks such as defeat in war or financial collapse. The pervasive propaganda characteristic of modern totalitarian governments is evidence enough of the

evaluating the legitimacy of political orders that they are so fragile, for evaluations of legitimacy are necessarily subjective and can be revised at any time.

Judgements about the legitimacy of political orders turn on questions of purpose, process and performance.<sup>34</sup> Questions of purpose centre on the extent to which the declared functional and ethical purposes legitimizing a political order accord with agents' deeply held moral frameworks. Questions of process relate to the degree to which agents believe that an order's purposes are properly reflected in the design and operation of its fundamental institutions. Finally, questions of performance concern agents' judgements about the effectiveness with which the existing political order fulfils the purposes to which it is dedicated. Inevitably, in any order, different agents' judgements about questions of purpose, process and performance – and thus their assessments of a political order's legitimacy – will vary considerably. Consequently, the durability of a given order is partially determined by its capacity to elicit positive evaluations of its legitimacy that will translate into loyalty to the present system and continued support for its perpetuation. Equally, its durability will also be determined by its capacity to manage sentiments of estrangement from the order deriving from negative assessments of its legitimacy.

Agents' orientations towards a given political order can be classified into four categories that can in turn be located on a continuum ranging from radical alienation to full support. Agents that are radically alienated from a political order are those that perceive a profound dissonance between the declared purposes of that order and their own world-views and moral convictions. For the radically alienated, the ultimate ends

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importance that even the most brutal and terroristic rulers place on cultivating the appearance of popular legitimacy.

<sup>34</sup> This typology is my own, but has been inspired by and builds upon Fritz Scharpf's discussion of the distinction between input-oriented and output-oriented (or in my terms, purposive and process-oriented versus performance-oriented) accounts of legitimacy. See Fritz Scharpf. "Economic Integration, Democracy, and the Welfare State." *Journal of European Public Policy* 4, no. 1 (1997), p. 19.

to which the order is directed are anathema – the order is already seen as rotten to the core, making further reflection on questions of process or performance redundant when assessing its legitimacy. The sentiment of radical alienation can manifest itself in two ways. Actors may firstly choose to withdraw from the order and to minimize contact with the society over which it governs. In modern states, this mode of alienation is most conspicuously expressed in the activities of quietist religious sects, while internationally it finds expression in those rogue states that repudiate a Western-dominated international society without actively seeking to subvert it. Alternatively, radical alienation can manifest itself in the absolute enmity of the revolutionary partisan, who dedicates himself to the annihilation of the existing order. Domestically, it is the clandestine revolutionary organization that expresses radical alienation in this mode, while internationally a transnational insurgency network such as Al Qaeda or a deeply revisionist state such as Nazi Germany fulfils this role.<sup>35</sup>

Radically alienated actors constitute a serious threat to political orders, and their subversive activities must be suppressed and preferably eliminated if the order is to survive. Conversely, greater scope for engagement exists with actors who, while estranged from the order because of its perceived failures of process and performance, are not radically alienated from the purposes that the order purports to advance. Actors who fall into this category are aggravated by the perception that existing institutional arrangements neither properly reflect nor adequately realise the order's animating purposes. Without abandoning their commitment to these purposes, actors who are estranged from the existing order will seek revisions to established structures and

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<sup>35</sup>On Al Qaeda as a radically alienated actor within the contemporary international system, see for example Khimbra L. Fishel. "Challenging the Hegemon: Al Qaeda's Elevation of Asymmetric Insurgent Warfare onto the Global Arena." *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* 2, no. 3 (2002): 285-98. On the notion of deeply revisionist states and their potentially system-subverting character, see Bukovansky. *Legitimacy and Power Politics*, p. 169.

procedures in the hope of narrowing the gap between an order's purpose and its processes and performance. Naturally, the magnitude of actors' estrangement will determine the extent of their revisionist activities. Thus for example, in the southern United States in the 1960s, the centrist core of the African-American civil rights movement could be classified as being only moderately estranged from the existing order. This is so because their activities were devoted to securing for their constituency the extension of rights (e.g. the right to vote) that the Constitution had already theoretically guaranteed to them. By contrast, the activities of the non-aligned states in trying to secure the creation of a New International Economic Order in the 1970s can be interpreted as being more profoundly revisionist in character. For while advocates of the NIEO remained committed to the core principles and purposes of the United Nations system (e.g. the promotion of national self-determination and human rights), they nevertheless sought to significantly enhance the developing world's collective bargaining power within the organization, as well as affording greater emphasis to the social and economic dimensions of the UN's rights agenda.<sup>36</sup>

While estranged actors are not yet committed to total confrontation with the existing order, mechanisms of accommodation must ideally be in place to meet their concerns, for estrangement can evolve into radical alienation if left unaddressed for a prolonged period. Further along the continuum of sentiment from estrangement, one finds actors who generally support the purposes and processes of the existing order, but who nevertheless find its performance wanting. In practice, it is difficult to disentangle judgements about performance from judgements about process, and dissatisfaction with an order's performance is likely to eventually engender

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<sup>36</sup>On this point, see generally Stephen D. Krasner. *Structural Conflict: The Third World against Global Liberalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

dissatisfaction with its processes as well.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, it is theoretically possible for an actor to be satisfied with the constitutional structure of a political order, while still being disappointed with its efficacy in realising its purposes. Actors may identify with the moral content of a constitutional order and believe that its essential principles are faithfully reflected in its established rules, norms, and institutional structures while still judging it ineffective in realising its functions. The attitudes of many Western democracies to the League of Nations in the lead-up to World War II reflect this sentiment of dissatisfaction, which eventually resolves itself in either agitation for institutional renovation or disillusionment and disengagement.

Finally, we are left with political actors that are satisfied with the purposes, processes and performance of an existing political order, and who accord it a high level of legitimacy. These actors identify strongly with the existing order and have a strong interest in ensuring its perpetuation. Nevertheless, given that political orders are a collective good, and present all the problems of free riding characteristic of collective goods, the perception of legitimacy does not by itself ensure active support for the order in the face of efforts to subvert it. Instead, the custodians of political order must directly enlist active support for the order if it is to endure.

From the foregoing discussion, we can extract several observations that account for the fragility of political orders. Firstly, the maintenance of order requires the constant cultivation among its members of the perception that the order is

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<sup>37</sup> For example, the ambivalence towards the UN demonstrated by the George W. Bush administration reflects very strongly the mutually entwined character of judgements about performance and process. The administration's preference for unilateralism (mitigated only partially by occasional recourse to *ad hoc* coalitions of the willing) and its penchant for the pre-emptive use of force as a means of dealing with threats to international peace and security derives from a negative assessment of the UN's *performance* in dealing with these threats. But the administration's posture arguably also reflects a broader scepticism regarding the effectiveness and desirability of operating through the established multilateral structures, rules and procedures (i.e. the fundamental *processes*) of the UN system of global governance.

legitimate, for political orders are predicated on relations of organized domination that depend on the voluntary compliance of the ruled to survive. Secondly, the attribution of legitimacy to political orders derives from agents' beliefs that the purposes to which the order is dedicated are compatible with their most deeply held ethical convictions. Additionally, an order is most likely to enjoy legitimacy when its members regard its fundamental institutions as being also broadly effective in realising these purposes. Thirdly, as political orders evoke a broad spectrum of judgements regarding their legitimacy, the custodians of these orders must develop a range of responses to deal with the behaviours flowing from these judgements. As the radically alienated are most likely to attempt to subvert the existing order, the custodians of order must possess capacities for suppressing the threat that the alienated represent. Those that are estranged from the order must be reconciled with it and their demands at least partially accommodated, lest their estrangement evolve into alienation over time. Those that endorse the existing order but are dissatisfied with its performance must be actively engaged, if necessary through reforms that close the gap between the order's purposes, processes, and performance. And those that accord the political order the greatest legitimacy must be actively mobilized for the order's maintenance and defence.

Political orders depend for their survival on both the cultivation of legitimacy and also upon the maintenance of institutional capacities to suppress subversion, accommodate dissent, and mobilize loyalty and support. Given the centrality that I accord legitimacy in the maintenance of political orders, it logically follows that a key point of vulnerability for these orders lies in their susceptibility to legitimacy crises. I use the term legitimacy crises here to denote episodes in which political orders become debilitated as their members deem the existing order to be illegitimate and withdraw their support for its continued perpetuation. Crises of legitimacy may manifest themselves in either chronic or acute forms. Chronic crises of legitimacy are



characterised by the insidious leakage of support away from an existing order, and are punctuated by agents' increasing unwillingness to comply with the rules, norms, laws and commands of established authorities. The increasing unwillingness of agents to accord legitimacy to established authorities, and their reticence to sustain the relations of organized domination that are constitutive of political orders, works to progressively corrode rulers' capacities to govern. This corrosion of institutional capacity in turn feeds back into negative assessments of the order's performance, further diminishing its perceived legitimacy and institutional capacity.<sup>38</sup>

While chronic crises of legitimacy are protracted and insidious, acute crises of legitimacy are both sudden and more immediately confronting. Acute legitimacy crises entail a more precipitate decline in an order's institutional capacities, as well as involving a more direct challenge to its legitimacy than the slow leakage of support that is characteristic of more chronic crises. Whereas in protracted legitimacy crises, the political order's deterioration is marked by a swelling in the ranks of those that are either estranged from the existing order or otherwise dissatisfied and disillusioned with it, in chronic crises one observes instead a polarized confrontation between radically alienated challengers and mobilized supporters of the status quo. Moreover, while a nominal commitment to a shared world-view may persist among the members of a political order mired in chronic crisis, acute crises are characterised by a violent confrontation between proponents of mutually antagonistic world-views. Analytically, it remains useful to distinguish between chronic and acute legitimacy crises, for chronic crises need not presage the collapse of a political order – prolonged stagnation or renovation and renewal both present as alternative possibilities to

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<sup>38</sup> On the reciprocal relationship between polities' institutional capacities and their level of popular legitimacy, and the possibility of negative feedback between the two contributing to a downward spiral of institutional effectiveness and performance, see Francis Fukuyama. *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 68.

collapse.<sup>39</sup> In practice, however, chronic and acute legitimacy crises frequently constitute successive phases of a single overarching crisis encompassing the decay of an order and its subsequent dissolution.

Crises of legitimacy constitute a major threat to the survival of political orders, but they do not constitute the only threat to their perpetuation. Rather, actors engaged in struggles for relative power and influence can also indirectly undermine political orders. Positional struggles for relative power and influence are endemic to political life, but they are not necessarily subversive of order if conducted within that order's existing normative and institutional parameters. Conversely, when positional struggles are conducted without heed for established restraints – that is, when actors resolve not merely to outmanoeuvre and defeat their opponents but to subjugate and annihilate them – then the constitutional foundations of a political order may be indirectly imperilled, even if this is not necessarily the intention of the protagonists.

In his *Theory of the Partisan*, Carl Schmitt introduces a useful typology to capture the different forms of enmity that characterise political life. Schmitt's analysis begins with a discussion of the conventional enmity that characterised inter-state warfare in the nineteenth century Europe, during which time norms of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* received systematic expression in international laws of war.<sup>40</sup> For Schmitt, what defined European warfare during this period was its boundedness within clearly defined and routinely observed conventions, hence his characterisation of it as being suffused with the spirit of conventional enmity.<sup>41</sup> European interstate warfare after the Congress of Vienna was undertaken between the regular armed forces of states. These forces operated at the behest of governments and their members were

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<sup>39</sup>On the possibilities of taking remedial action to resolve international crises of legitimacy, see Christian Reus-Smit. "International Crises of Legitimacy." *International Politics* 44, no. 2/3 (2007), pp. 169-173.

<sup>40</sup>Schmitt, *Theory of the Partisan*, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

clearly distinguished from non-combatants.<sup>42</sup> Conventions of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* were observed between protagonists, and state governments regarded their opponents as enemies to be defeated and brought to terms rather than criminals to be eliminated. Schmitt contrasts this conventional enmity between state opponents to the real enmity that characterises the relationship between guerrilla partisans and state occupiers, arguing that the partisan is irregular by nature, and that the struggle between partisan and occupier is fought without mercy and without regard to the conventional restraints that traditionally corralled interstate conflicts within manageable bounds.<sup>43</sup> The real enmity that defines the ‘tellurian’ (or terrestrial) partisan fighting to expel foreign occupiers contrasts again with the absolute enmity that characterises the nomadic revolutionary engaged in a global struggle to overthrow the existing political order.<sup>44</sup> For Schmitt, it was the absolute enmity epitomized in the global revolutionary that accounted for the unprecedented violence and moral depravity of twentieth century total warfare.<sup>45</sup>

Schmitt’s distinction between different modes of enmity can be more generally applied to characterise the diverse forms of hostility that can obtain between actors struggling for relative power and influence within a given political order. Far from being the exclusive preserve of partisan guerrillas or global revolutionaries, the unrestrained hostility suffusing states of real and absolute enmity can express itself also in conflicts between nominally symmetrical opponents such as warring states and empires. The emergence of sentiments of absolute enmity can threaten the very survival of political orders. This is because the circumvention of established norms,

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> For an outstandingly lucid distillation and discussion of Schmitt’s insights in *Theory of the Partisan*, see generally Gabriella Slomp. "The Theory of the Partisan: Carl Schmitt's Neglected Legacy." *History of Political Thought* XXVI, no. 3 (2005): 502-19.

conventions and institutional structures for mediating conflict can imperil their continuing validity and efficacy more broadly, even if competing protagonists seek only each others' destruction and not the larger order that they jointly inhabit. As positional conflicts over relative power and influence are perennial in politics, and as such conflicts carry the potential for generating sentiments of absolute enmity that are corrosive of order more generally, the problem of containing enmity within conventional bounds remains a critically important challenge for custodians of political order.

Both legitimacy crises and the irruption of sentiments of absolute enmity constitute serious threats to the reproduction of political order. While it is analytically necessary to distinguish between the *direct* threat to political orders posed by legitimacy crises and the *indirect* threat posed by the breakout of absolute enmity between an order's members, in practice these threats frequently coincide and intertwine. Indeed, in each of the cases considered in this study, legitimacy crises and power struggles suffused with sentiments of absolute enmity became intertwined to the point of partial fusion. This tendency for legitimacy crises and positional power struggles to become intertwined is further testament to the importance of the twin imperatives of cultivating legitimacy and containing enmity if political order is to be preserved.

### 1.1.3 How is Political Order Generated and Maintained?

Having illustrated why political order is both necessary and difficult to achieve, it is now imperative to consider exactly *how* political order is produced. To reiterate: political orders depend for their functioning on both authoritative and coercive forms of power – both moral suasion and material sanctions, the respective

arts of man and beast embodied in Machiavelli's centaur, are equally essential for the maintenance of political order. Authoritative and coercive forms of power are sometimes portrayed as residing at different ends of a continuum of forms of social power.<sup>46</sup> Thus, whereas authoritative power is seen to attract subjects' voluntary compliance with rules or commands deemed by them to be morally legitimate and therefore compulsorily binding, coercive power is conceived as extracting subjects' otherwise unwilling compliance through the use or threatened use of force.<sup>47</sup> While this ideal-typical distinction is not without value, I would suggest that both authoritative and coercive power typically work simultaneously and in conjunction with one another to produce order, and that the marshalling of both forms of power is necessary for societies to realise their elementary goals.

Political order involves the imposition of ethical and institutional restraints on agents' freedom of action. While these restraints are necessary to cultivate cooperation between actors and limit enmity between them, their imposed character makes it vital that they be recognized as legitimate if they are to command compliance. Authoritative power relies upon the issuing of rules and commands, the obligatory force of which increases the more closely they are identified with agents' subjectivities, their essential purposes and their most deeply held ethical convictions. Where agents inhabit what Habermas calls a common 'life-world', that is, where they share a 'storehouse of unquestioned cultural givens' that form the backdrop for practices of communicative action, authoritative power acquires a particularly strong purchase over agents' actions.<sup>48</sup> This is because the close identification between a ruler's commands and a community's shared moral values renders the obligation to

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<sup>46</sup>See for example Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order*, p.58.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>Jurgen Habermas. *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Translated by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990, p. 135.

obey a routine social expectation on the part of the dominated. This expectation in turn increases agents' compliance with authority and thereby reduces the need for costly recourse to coercive power to maintain political authority.<sup>49</sup> Where a close fit exists between a society's constitutional values and the rules and commands of governing agencies, the legitimacy accorded to these agencies grows, the scope for the exercise of authoritative power expands, and the stability of the prevailing social and political order increases accordingly.

The ability of authoritative power to attract actors' voluntary compliance makes it indispensable, but authoritative power alone is insufficient to maintain political order. This because even in the most well-integrated orders, where governing structures are sustained by very high levels of social legitimacy, the basic asymmetries of power and opportunity between rulers and ruled will inspire resentment and resistance in some quarters. This resistance may assume the form of a direct attack on the order by actors that deem it illegitimate, and who seek to overturn it in favour of a purportedly more just alternative. Alternatively, it manifest itself in a more indirect and unprincipled way, with actors ignoring or defying rules, norms, commands and laws for the sake of advancing their own interests at the expense of others. What unites both such instances of resistance is the imperviousness of the actors involved to the normative force upon which authoritative power relies. It is precisely because some will always be beyond the reach of authoritative power that coercive power becomes necessary.

Coercive power, entailing the use or threatened use of material sanctions to compel actors' compliance where authoritative power has failed to elicit it voluntarily, fulfils a variety of functions germane to the maintenance of order. Coercive power can punish transgressors and deter future violations of the existing order by providing

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<sup>49</sup>On this point, see again North, *Structure and Change in Economic History*, p. 47.

actors with strong negative inducements to comply with existing constitutional arrangements.<sup>50</sup> It can also be deployed to enforce established norms, rules, laws and commands and thereby preserve the existing order in the face of principled and unprincipled efforts to undermine it.<sup>51</sup> Coercive power can also be deployed in a restorative sense to reverse or mitigate injuries sustained by the victims of transgressors, in so doing upholding communally shared conceptions of justice that the prevailing political order purports to embody. Equally, coercive power can also serve a pedagogical purpose, re-affirming in the punishment of transgressors the key constitutional values of society, while simultaneously providing renewed opportunities to reflect, reiterate and communicate these values and identities back to the community.

In stable orders, authoritative and coercive power form complementary and mutually indispensable modes of action. Exclusive reliance on authoritative power is unsustainable in the long-term, for the failure to effectively punish violators of norms, rules, laws and commands inhibits a political order's capacity to provide elementary social goods, thus inviting negative assessments of its performance that corrode its legitimacy over time. Equally, excessive reliance on coercion is suggestive of an order's lack of legitimacy and its ineffectiveness in attracting voluntary compliance. Only by maintaining strong reserves of both authoritative and coercive power, deploying the former where possible and the latter where unavoidable, can a political order be successful in providing the social goods that are its *raison d'être*.

The complementary character of authoritative and coercive power is most evident in the constitution of the modern nation-state. The classic nation-state weds the normative appeal of concepts of popular sovereignty and shared national identity

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<sup>50</sup>On this point, see for example Bull's discussion of war as a fundamental institution contributing to the maintenance of order in modern international society. See Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, pp. 180-183.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 182.

to the coercive capacities of a bureaucratic state endowed with systematic surveillance capabilities and a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.<sup>52</sup> Within functioning nation-states, a coherent sense of shared identity binds the citizenry to one another, while law acquires its moral force from its presumed concordance with the democratically expressed will of the people. An exo-social mass education system and state-regulated mass media institutions meanwhile provide institutional vehicles through which habits of compliance with the law and sentiments of mutual identification between citizens may be cultivated.<sup>53</sup> The routine compliance of most citizens with the law is a testament to the considerable authoritative power disposed of by the modern nation-state.

Nevertheless, the maintenance of order is secured equally by the comprehensive disarmament of the population and the arrogation of all capacities for legitimate organized violence to state institutions.<sup>54</sup> The overwhelming disparity in coercive power separating state from citizens endows the former with a formidable capacity to suppress rebellion, punish law-breakers, and enforce the order needed for society to realise its elementary social goals.<sup>55</sup> That the state's awesome coercive powers are largely held in reserve should in no way detract from the pivotal importance of its monopolization of violence in promoting the physical security and material welfare of its citizens, at least in the developed world. For it is by dramatically reducing the possibilities for physical violence in everyday life, thereby dampening the security dilemma at the individual level, that the state provides the atmosphere of generalized trust between strangers that is necessary for all other social

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<sup>52</sup>On this point, see for example Anthony Giddens. *The Nation-State and Violence*. Cambridge: Polity, 1985, pp. 233-235.

<sup>53</sup> On the importance of an exo-social mass educational system and state media in promoting both cultural standardization and citizens' compliance with the laws of the nation-state, see Ernest Gellner. *Nations and Nationalism*. London: Basil Blackwell, 1983, pp. 35-39.

<sup>54</sup> On this point, see generally Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, pp. 181-192.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*



goals to be realised. It is precisely in the conjunction of authoritative power (democratic popular legitimacy) *and* coercive power (a Weberian monopoly on organized violence) embodied in the modern nation- state that Machiavelli's fabled centaur finds its most powerful expression, and its most evocative demonstration of the dualistic foundations of political order.

## **1.2 What is International Order and How is it Realised?**

### 1.2.1 Order and Diversity

The provision of order is necessary not only within communities, but between them as well. This is so because rulers' ability to provide their subjects with essential social goods is at least partially conditioned by the quality of their relations with other rulers. Thus, rulers that find themselves in a state of perpetual conflict with neighbouring polities will find it much more difficult to guarantee the physical security of their subjects' lives and properties. Equally, the benefits of long-distance trade will be forfeited or severely curtailed in an international environment characterised by conflict and disorder, thus impinging on rulers' ability to secure their subjects' material welfare. Finally, a disturbed international environment can threaten even the maintenance of coherent collective identities within polities. For while the existence of external enemies can momentarily fortify feelings of solidarity, the myriad pressures produced by prolonged mobilization for war typically exacerbate internal strains, fraying and fragmenting political communities rather than unifying them in the long run.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>On the centrifugal internal effects of prolonged war-time mobilization for the maintenance of coherent political orders, see for example Theda Skocpol. *States and Social Revolutions - a Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

While the provision of order within polities is dependent upon the maintenance of order between them, the existence of a plurality of power centres in international systems makes international order more difficult to achieve. The reasons for this difficulty are not hard to discern, and are readily illuminated by contrasting international systems with the enclosed order of the nation-state. As the institutional equivalent of Machiavelli's centaur writ large, the nation-state draws upon both a deep well of authoritative power deriving from its popular democratic constitution, as well as from vast reserves of coercive power deriving from its Weberian monopoly on legitimate organized violence. Concentration and monopolization of authoritative and coercive power respectively are key to the maintenance of political order within the nation-state. Conversely, international systems by definition are characterised by the diffuse distribution of authoritative and coercive powers among multiple actors – this is so even in imperial systems, where authoritative and coercive power are nominally (but rarely actually) monopolized by a single suzerain centre.<sup>57</sup>

Given the pluralistic distribution of coercive and authoritative power internationally, two obstacles to the generation of order present themselves. Firstly, the dispersal of coercive power among multiple actors immediately introduces the security dilemma into social life, suffusing relations between rulers with suspicion and mistrust and thus corroding prospects for cooperation.<sup>58</sup> With the spectre of violent conflict ever present, and with rulers painfully aware of the uneven distribution of capabilities and the varying possibilities for predation and victimization these power

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<sup>57</sup>It is partially as a result of the disarticulated and pluralistic distribution of power that is frequently characteristic of empires that Alexander Motyl prefers to characterise empires as distinct international systems in and of themselves, even when embedded within a broader global political framework. See Alexander J. Motyl. *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 124.

<sup>58</sup>On this point, see generally Kenneth Waltz. *Man, the State, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, chapter six *passim*.

asymmetries present, the scope for securing institutionalized cooperation between rulers initially seems limited.<sup>59</sup>

In reality, the dispersal of coercive power presents a less insurmountable challenge to the generation of order than may first be supposed. Hedley Bull's paradoxical characterisation of the institution of war in international societies, which has historically threatened order while also working to sustain it, illustrates the fact that organized violence plays a vital role in the generation of order between political communities as well as within them.<sup>60</sup> Neorealists have long emphasized the importance of concepts such as the balance of power and conventional and nuclear deterrence in underpinning international order, although they have sometimes cast these concepts in extremely materialist terms.<sup>61</sup> What a closer consideration of practices of organized violence across different international orders reveals is that coercive power works to sustain rather than subvert order when it operates within the parameters of a commonly shared justificatory framework. When corralled within a framework prescribing the circumstances when violence is justified, the agents that may legitimately employ it, the purposes to which it may be directed, and the ways in which it may be deployed, coercive power fulfils a similar range of ordering purposes internationally as it does within the confines of the nation-state. The punishment of transgressors, the enforcement of laws, the rectification of injuries and the enactment of shared conceptions of justice each provide warrants for the legitimate use of coercive power internationally. To make such an observation is not to underestimate the intensity of the security anxieties actors confront in international orders. Nor is it

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<sup>59</sup>On this point, see generally Joseph Grieco. "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism." *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 485-507.

<sup>60</sup>Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, chapter eight *passim*.

<sup>61</sup>See for example Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, chapter six *passim*; and also more generally John J. Mearsheimer. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

do deny the fragility of these orders in the face of illegitimate applications of violence by powerful actors. But just as the state's recourse to violence domestically may be construed as productive of order rather than subversive of it, so too does this situation frequently obtain internationally as well.

That coercive power may be legitimately employed to promote order internationally merely begs larger questions concerning the identity of those who are authorised to make such judgements, as well as the criteria by which applications of coercive power are appraised. More broadly, it opens up questions regarding the scope for the exercise of authoritative power within systems populated by a plurality of different power centres. Recalling comments made earlier, authoritative action operates through the medium of practices of communicative action. These communicative practices in turn require as a prior condition of possibility the existence of a shared life-world that binds agents together and provides the backdrop of common cultural assumptions enabling effective communication to take place. In international systems comprised of different political communities, this then raises two questions: (1) to what extent do the constituent polities of an international order inhabit a common life-world? And (2) what scope exists in international systems for effective communicative action and the marshalling of authoritative power in the service of political order?

Despite their diversity, the cases I consider below suggest that the existence of a common life-world has been an antecedent condition for the generation of international order across a range of different contexts, and that the use of authoritative power been vital in producing order in each of these cases. Latin Christendom, the Sinosphere, and the contemporary global state system each varied dramatically in their normative and institutional composition, but each also shared the quality of being purposive rather than merely practical associations. As with all orders,

authoritative power in each of these cases acquired its persuasive force precisely because of agents' prior subscription to a world-view incorporating a common collective identity, shared purposes, and an agreed moral framework. Certainly, authoritative power operated very differently in these different contexts, with the hierarchy of the Sinosphere contrasting with the looser papal-imperial *diarchy* of Christendom and the even more negotiated order of the contemporary global state system. Nevertheless, in each case, subscription to a common set of constitutional values was critical to the development of the fundamental institutions necessary to realise order between different political communities. Even more critically, in each case, it was the partial or total breakdown of consensus over these values – and thus the withering of agents' capacities to deploy authoritative power in the service of common goals – that presaged the decay (and in two cases, the eventual transformation) of international orders.

### 1.2.2 International Orders Defined

How, then, is order generated internationally? More specifically, what are international orders? International orders are understood here as coherent systemic structures comprised of an *order-producing* normative complex and an accompanying governing institutional framework, both of which rest in turn on a permissive *order-enabling* material foundation. The normative complex of an international order confers upon actors a shared collective identity, as well as providing ethical prescriptions to regulate actors' behaviour and a justificatory rationale to stabilize and sustain existing relations of organized domination. The constitutional values expressed in the normative complex are practically realised through a governing framework. This framework is comprised of recognized loci of authoritative and decision-making

power, a legal or ritualistic framework through which relations of cooperation are fostered and conflicts mitigated, and authorized practices of violence through which order is enforced, transgressors punished, and the order's values re-affirmed. Finally, the order-enabling foundation sets concrete material constraints on the scope and character of agents' interactions. While not determining the character of an international order, the material foundation indirectly shapes it by providing the permissive context within which international orders are forged.

International orders are comprised firstly by a thick web of shared meanings that make the exercise of authoritative power possible between different political communities. This normative complex can be disaggregated into a composite of overlapping norms that perform identity-constitutive, ethical-prescriptive, and power legitimating functions.<sup>62</sup> Identity-constitutive norms integrate the constituent communities of an order by conferring upon them a shared identity, and providing consensus on the ultimate purposes of collective association. They answer such basic questions as 'who am I' and 'what do I want', offering agents what Charles Taylor has referred to as the 'inescapable frameworks' operative in all societies that link concepts of the self with concepts of the good.<sup>63</sup> Identity-constitutive norms provide societies with a sense of the ultimate *sources* of morality, be that the revealed Word of God, the divine mandate of the Imperial Son of Heaven, or universally valid ethical principles held to be readily discernible from the unfettered exercise of human reason. They also help agents to locate themselves within the world, allowing them to orient themselves in relation to the higher purposes of collective association. This consensus over the

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<sup>62</sup> Once again, it is necessary to note that my conception of the component elements of international orders' normative complexes derives strong inspiration from Chris-Reus-Smit's interstitial conception of political rationality as articulated in Reus-Smit, 'Politics of International Law', pp. 25-30.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Taylor. *Sources of the Self - the Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 3.

ultimate purposes of community provides a critical counter-point to the seemingly interminable jostling for power and influence that is equally manifest in each of the cases I consider. In both Christendom and the Sinosphere, this unity in overarching purposes derived from actors' subscription to a common cosmology, with the Church's salvation mission and the aspiration to bring society into conformity with Confucian ideals of peace and harmony (*ping*) providing the respective ideological foundations that held these orders together. While bereft of any cosmological foundation, the contemporary state system equally anchors its legitimacy in its members' shared subscription to purposes (specifically popular eudemonism, human emancipation and individual and collective self-determination) that are of purportedly universal validity.

While identity-constitutive norms integrate international orders by providing consensus on the ultimate *sources* of moral obligation, ethical-prescriptive norms seek to regulate agents' behaviour by conveying to them the precise *nature* and *content* of these obligations. Whereas identity-constitutive norms give actors a sense of what the good is, whereas ethical-prescriptive norms give them a sense of how to go about being good. As such, ethical-prescriptive norms perform a vital civilizing role in international orders, laying down shared standards of rightfulness against which the legitimacy of actors' actions may be judged. Again, the existence of such a shared moral vocabulary is absolutely critical if order is to endure, for authoritative power in all its forms can only operate in an environment in which actors share a common sense of what is right and wrong. Politics by its nature involves intense and often violent struggles over the ethical evaluation of actors' motives and actions, but the mere existence of such interpretive contests in no way suggests the marginality of ethical-prescriptive norms to the generation of international order. On the contrary, such contests rather testify to the practical political importance actors perceive in being

seen to be ‘good’, thereby indirectly affirming the power of ethical-prescriptive norms in conditioning actors’ political judgments and thus corralling conflict within shared moral parameters.

Politics necessarily entails relations of organized domination, and this reality manifests itself in international orders in the existence of power-legitimizing norms that work to stabilize the relations of domination upon which international order depends. In a sense, power-legitimizing norms constitute a sub-set of ethical-prescriptive norms, inasmuch as their function is to convince agents that political obedience is both necessary and consistent with the demands of morality. At the same time, however, power-legitimizing norms also work to fortify established structures of organized domination by situating them as necessary expressions of politically salient collective identities, whose continued operation is essential if the community’s shared purposes are to be realised. In this regard, power-legitimizing norms harmonize the imperatives of morality and identity with the realities of power, legitimizing and securing the relations of organized domination that are characteristic of all political orders.

Power-legitimizing norms are most conspicuous internationally in orders predicated on explicitly hierarchical and inegalitarian world out-looks. Thus, in Latin Christendom, an Augustinian political theology and a social ideology of tri-functionality jointly operated to naturalise a rigidly hieratic social order.<sup>64</sup> Confucian ethics provided a similarly effective justification for the maintenance of Chinese suzerainty over its tributary states, with Confucianism’s ritualistic paternalism

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<sup>64</sup>On the normative foundations of medieval Christendom, see generally Georges Duby. *The Three Orders - Feudal Society Imagined*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978; and Walter Ullman. *Law and Politics in the Middle Ages - an Introduction to the Sources of Medieval Political Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975. On the ideas informing medieval Europe’s Augustinian political theology, see generally Herbert Deane. *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.



legitimizing asymmetrical relations of benevolence and obedience between the Son of Heaven and his foreign dependents.<sup>65</sup> The contemporary state system by contrast maintains a regime of strict formal equality between its constituent polities, an equality that sits awkwardly with the institutionalised accommodations that have been adopted to invest Great Powers with an interest in maintaining the present order. Nevertheless, even within the contemporary world order, norms of popular sovereignty paradoxically play a power-legitimizing role, with popular submission to the state domestically being demanded precisely because of the presumed concordance between the commands of the state and the democratic will of the governed.

The mutually entwined identity-constitutive, ethical-prescriptive, and power-legitimizing norms sketched above constitute nothing less than the ideological cement that holds international orders together, providing consensus on questions such as ‘who are we’, ‘what do we want’, ‘how should we act’, and ‘how should we organize ourselves politically to get what we want.’<sup>66</sup> Normative complexes pacify relations between polities by unifying them around a common moral ontology and shared purposes, creating the shared life-world within which communicative action becomes possible. They effectively regulate agents’ behaviour through the codification of binding standards of rightfulness, and they legitimize and stabilize the relations of organized domination within and between polities that are necessary for the realisation of political order. More fundamentally, normative complexes infuse the institutional infrastructures that are erected by rulers to facilitate cooperation and mitigate conflict.

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<sup>65</sup>The best general overview of the normative content of the Sinosphere’s international order remains the series of essays contained within John King Fairbank, ed. *The Chinese World Order - Traditional China's Foreign Relations*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968. See in particular John King Fairbank. "A Preliminary Framework", pp. 1-19; and also Mark Mancall. "The Ch'ing Tribute System: An Interpretive Essay", pp. 63-89.

<sup>66</sup>Christian Reus-Smit. "Politics and International Legal Obligation." *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003), pp. 607-608.

Normative complexes profoundly inform institutional design, thus shaping the governing frameworks within which authoritative and coercive power are jointly marshalled to the task of producing order between communities.

The governing institutional frameworks of international orders are composed of the following: (i) authoritative institutions that wield supreme authority within a given issue area and/or territory; (ii) a legal or ritual framework that codifies agents' rights and obligations and provides the medium through which relations of amity are fostered and relations of enmity contained, and (iii) authorized practices of legitimate violence through which order is enforced, violators are punished, and injuries are remedied. It is through this framework that the imperatives encoded in the normative complexes of international orders are practically realised. Inevitably, all international orders are compromised by a pronounced gap between promise and performance, with attempts to institutionalize visions of the good falling well short of stated ideals. But such imperfections do not detract from the necessary role these institutions play in mitigating conflict and promoting order.

The diversity of the normative complexes informing different international orders is reflected in the distinctiveness of their accompanying governing frameworks. In Christendom, power was organized along heteronomous lines, with actors ensnared in elaborate webs of crosscutting, territorially non-exclusive and frequently mutually contradictory obligation.<sup>67</sup> Social power crystallized overwhelmingly at the local level in medieval Europe, with the system's coherence deriving from the operation of a loose *diarchy* composed of the Church and the Empire, serving as the respective pinnacles of sacred and secular power within Christendom.<sup>68</sup> This framework contrasts

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<sup>67</sup>On heteronomy as the organizing principle of medieval Christendom, see John Gerard Ruggie. *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization*. London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 146-147.

<sup>68</sup>Michael Mann. *The Sources of Social Power*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 394.

starkly with hierarchical order of the Sinosphere, in which the Chinese emperor laid claim to supreme spiritual and temporal power throughout the both the empire proper, as well as throughout a penumbra of adjacent tributary states.<sup>69</sup> The Sinosphere differs in turn from the modern sovereign state system, in which political authority is concentrated primarily in territorially exclusive and formally equal sovereign states, and secondarily in multilateral institutions that derive their legitimacy from their perceived concordance with the collective will of their member states.<sup>70</sup>

The papal-imperial *diarchy*, the Sino-centric tributary state system, and the global sovereign state system each epitomize different ways of organizing authoritative power internationally. In each of these orders one finds not only different configurations of authoritative power, but also historically specific legal or ritual frameworks through which this power is deployed. These legal or ritual frameworks are accompanied also by authorized practices of violence through which coercive power is brought to bear in the service of order. In Christendom, a combination of canon law and feudal law codified the essential matrix of social relations through which conflicts were mediated. As the supreme interpreter of canon law, the papacy was empowered to authoritatively adjudicate temporal as well as spiritual disputes, with its ability to credibly threaten excommunication to recalcitrant parties ensuring a notably high rate of compliance with the rulings of the papal courts.<sup>71</sup> This system of papal mediation and adjudication functioned side by side with a system of violent self-help, in which an armed aristocracy routinely resorted to violence as a means of

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<sup>69</sup> Fairbank, 'A Preliminary Framework', pp. 6-8.

<sup>70</sup> See generally John Meyer. "The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State." In *Studies of the Modern World-System*, edited by Albert Bergesen, 109-37. New York: Academic Press, 1980; and Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*, chapter six *passim*.

<sup>71</sup> Randall Lesaffer. "Peace Treaties from Lodi to Westphalia." In *Peace Treaties and International Law in European History*, edited by Randall Lesaffer, 9-44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. See specifically pp. 24-26.

seeking legal redress within the parameters of a shared corpus of feudal law.<sup>72</sup> Rather than operating as alternative and antithetical systems of dispute resolution, papal adjudication and feudal self-help complemented one another in an environment in which spiritual and legal power was highly concentrated, but capacities for organized violence remained widely dispersed.<sup>73</sup>

A similar complementarity in the exercise of authoritative and coercive power can be observed also in the Sinosphere. In the Sinosphere, authoritative power was not deployed principally through the medium of a shared legal framework, but rather through the ritual affirmation of asymmetric bonds of benevolence and obedience linking the emperor to his domestic and foreign vassals. *Li*, understood as proper adherence to divinely sanctioned forms and ceremonies, was seen as vital to the transmission of ethical principles and the maintenance of moral, social, and even cosmic order within the Sinosphere.<sup>74</sup> In China's relations with her tributary states, *li* manifested itself most regularly in vassals' highly ritualized tribute missions to the imperial court, and also in the less frequent but arguably more important investiture missions undertaken on behalf of the emperor to confirm the authority of newly appointed kings in vassal states.<sup>75</sup> Conversely, where the proper enactment of ritual was insufficient to secure order within the Sinosphere, the imperial court resorted to *fa*, understood as the rectification of error through the punitive use of force against those unwilling to submit to the requirements of *li*.<sup>76</sup> Internationally, *fa* was

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<sup>72</sup>On the fundamentally litigious character of aristocratic legal feud, see generally Philip J. Geary. "Living with Conflicts in Stateless France - a Typology of Conflict Management Mechanisms, 1050-1200." In *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, edited by Philip J. Geary, 125-60. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

<sup>73</sup>Lesaffer, 'Peace Treaties from Lodi to Westphalia', p. 11.

<sup>74</sup>Frederick Tse-shyang Chen. "The Confucian View of World Order." In *Religion and International Law*, edited by Mark W. Janis and Carolyn Evans, 27-49. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004, p. 33.

<sup>75</sup>Key-Hiuk Kim. *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order - Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 7-9.

<sup>76</sup>Bozeman, *The Future of Law in a Multicultural World*, pp. 152-153.

intermittently manifest in imperial interventions to punish outlaws (such as the Japanese *wako* pirates active in the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries), and to defend tributary states from external attack by ‘barbarians.’<sup>77</sup>

Within the global state system, the respective roles of law and force in maintaining international order are equally evident. While the global state system lacks a judiciary with the same powers of universal and compulsory jurisdiction enjoyed by the medieval papal courts, it nevertheless possesses a richly articulated international legal framework through which international conflicts are routinely mediated and resolved. This framework is infused with the liberal values favoured by the dominant states, with the fundamental institutions of multilateralism and contractual international law faithfully reflecting a conception of law as reciprocal accord between formally equal parties.<sup>78</sup> Unlike either the papal-imperial *diarchy* or the Chinese imperial hierarchy, authoritative power in the modern state system is not imposed downwards in the form of binding commands. Rather, it is negotiated between parties, with its obligatory character supposedly deriving from its basis in the consent of the signatory parties.<sup>79</sup>

Much like their counterparts in Latin Christendom and the Sinosphere, the custodians of order in the global state system aspire towards reducing members’ recourse to organized violence while also conceding the practical necessity of employing authorized violence to secure international order. In the global state system, coercive power manifests itself firstly at the unit level, with the maintenance of state monopolies on the domestic use organized violence forming a vital prerequisite for the

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<sup>77</sup> David Kang. "Hierarchy in Asian International Relations: 1300-1900." *Asian Security* 1, no. 1 (2005), p. 59.

<sup>78</sup> Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*, pp. 146-148.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

maintenance of international order.<sup>80</sup> At the systemic level, the scope for the use of authorized violence is limited by the requirement that it first be endorsed by a majority vote from the United Nations Security Council, and that it be undertaken for the purpose of preserving international peace and security. As in all orders, such restrictions on the use of force reduce rather than eliminate agents' propensity to act outside of these parameters. This observation aside, the broader point remains that the global state system, like each of its predecessors, depends upon a judicious mixture of authoritative and coercive power to sustain international order.

The normative complexes and governing frameworks of international orders provide them with the ideological unity and institutional capacity needed to produce order between diverse political communities. But these norms and institutions are themselves embedded within an order-enabling material context. This context profoundly conditions the order-producing norms and institutions of international orders, but it does not mechanically determine their composition. The three most salient features of this material context are (i) the aggregate social capacities for organized production and destruction extant within a given order; (ii) the configuration of mobilizational networks – organized around principles of kinship, patronage, contract or bureaucratic command - through which collective action may be channelled; and (iii) the volume and density of interactions (the systemic interdependence) operative between the order's constituent communities.<sup>81</sup> Each of these features is influential in determining both the social resources available to the

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<sup>80</sup>On the genesis and subsequent generalization of the Weberian norm mandating states' monopolization of legitimate violence within their territory, see generally Janice E. Thomson. *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994.

<sup>81</sup>My emphasis on systemic interdependence as a vitally important determinant of international order is drawn from Barry Buzan, Charles Jones, and Richard Little. *The Logic of Anarchy - Neorealism to Structural Realism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, pp. 66-80 *passim*.

would-be architects of order, as well as the magnitude of governance problems that they are forced to confront.

Both the capacities to generate and appropriate liquid wealth and the capacities to organize and project armed force are central to the generation of political order. Across the cases examined in this study, variations in aggregate capacities for production and destruction left profound imprints on the resulting international orders crafted by elites. Thus, for example, we can only fully understand the order of Latin Christendom with a prior recognition of medieval Europe's poverty, its technological backwardness, and the radical dispersion of capacities for violence among predatory aristocratic nobility. For it was only in such an environment, where economic and military power remained largely localized and the economy centred predominantly around subsistence agriculture, that the crazy-quilt of overlapping authority claims characteristic of a heteronomous system could effectively function as a viable governance structure.<sup>82</sup> Conversely, the continuing viability of the hierarchical order of the Sinosphere over several centuries cannot be comprehended without an appreciation of the qualitatively higher levels of wealth and war-making capacity that the Ming and Qing dynasties were able to access *vis-à-vis* their medieval European counterparts.<sup>83</sup> Equally, the ambitions of contemporary leaders to eradicate war and poverty from the world are only imaginable because of the unprecedented levels of liquid wealth and popular pacification that have been delivered by the advent of a global market economy and the universalization of the modern nation-state.

The raw levels of aggregate wealth and war-making capacity that rulers are able to tap clearly condition the shape of international orders, as do the mobilizational capacities available within a given social milieu. Social networks governed by

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<sup>82</sup>Paul Hirst. *War and Power in the 21st Century - the State, Military Conflict, and the International System*. Cambridge: Polity, 2001, pp. 129-130.

<sup>83</sup>Kang, 'Hierarchy in Asian International Relations', pp. 57-59.

principles of kinship, patronage, contract, or bureaucratic command provide the essential media through which collective identities crystallize and raw resources are mobilized and channelled into concerted action. In each of the orders considered below, rulers drew upon a combination of existing and newly constructed social networks to project power in distinctive ways. In Christendom, aristocratic kinship and patronage networks formed the vital media through which power was projected by both the emperor and the rulers of emerging dynastic kingdoms.<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, from the eleventh century onwards, the papacy crafted a system-encompassing Church governed firmly on principles of legal-bureaucratic command.<sup>85</sup> Within the Sinosphere, a conspicuously modern bureaucratic apparatus and centralized patronage networks formed the twin bulwarks of imperial power within the empire, while rigorously administered commercial networks linked the Middle Kingdom to its tributary states.<sup>86</sup> Finally, in the contemporary state system, political order is crafted from the operation of bureaucratically organized nation-states and multilateral organizations, with each depending on the wealth generated by formally depoliticized and world-straddling commercial networks for the perpetuation of order.<sup>87</sup>

Aggregate capacities for production and destruction and existing mobilizational networks form the raw materials out of which the custodians of international order attempt to craft governing institutions. The magnitude of the problems these institutions must manage is itself deeply influenced by the level of systemic interdependence evident within the international system. All other things

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<sup>84</sup>Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 385.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.* On the Gregorian revolution and its import for the evolutionary trajectory of Christendom more generally, see Harold Berman. *Law and Revolution - the Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

<sup>86</sup>Fairbank, 'A Preliminary Framework', pp. 7-8.

<sup>87</sup>On the relationship between the authoritative power of the nation-state and the wealth-generating capacities of transnational corporations, see generally Stephen Krasner. "Power Politics, Institutions, and Transnational Relations." In *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In*, edited by Thomas Risse-Kappen, 257-79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.



being equal, the scope for potential conflict between polities – and thus the need for ordering institutions – tends to rise as the volume and density of interactions between these polities rises. This observation holds true particularly when the focus is further limited to what Daniel Deudney has defined as the *violence interdependence* of international systems.<sup>88</sup> Violence interdependence is understood here to refer to the material scope for violent confrontation between the constituent polities of an international order, as determined through the interplay of unchanging geography and changing technologies of communication, transportation, and production.<sup>89</sup> Violence interdependence is thus strongly derivative of existing levels of technological development, and of existing aggregate capacities for production and destruction.

The level of violence interdependence decisively shapes the magnitude of governance challenges faced by the custodians of international order. By contemporary standards, social relations in Christendom were suffused with violence, given the aristocracy's oligopolistic control over violence and the universal acceptance of feud as a means of legal redress. However, Christendom's poverty, its technological backwardness and the poor quality of its transportation infrastructure all conspired to keep violence interdependence relatively low. By contrast, the greater wealth and technological sophistication of the Sinosphere ensured significantly higher violence interdependence in this system, although the ordering challenges that this ultimately presented were strongly mitigated by the very high accumulation and concentration of coercive power within the Chinese imperial state.<sup>90</sup> Within the contemporary state system, the unprecedentedly high concentration of Clausewitzian war-making capabilities enjoyed by the United States invites parallels between the Sinosphere's imperial peace and the possibilities for ordering the global state system

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<sup>88</sup> Deudney, 'Regrounding Realism', p. 27.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Kang, 'Hierarchy in Asian International Relations', pp. 61-62.

under an informal American imperium. However, the countervailing diffusion of destructive capacities to non-state actors as a result of globalisation has raised the violence interdependence of the global state system beyond all prior experience, presenting ordering challenges of an intensity not witnessed in either of my historical cases.

### **Conclusion**

I have claimed that order is produced internationally through recourse to a combination of authoritative and coercive power, which are mediated through an ordering normative complex and its associated governing infrastructure. Normative complexes constitute the ideological glue holding international orders together. They make communicative action possible by providing actors with common purposes, a shared ethical code, and a justificatory rationale for existing structures of organized domination. The constitutional values of international orders are then practically realised through a systemic governing infrastructure. It is through this infrastructure that authoritative and coercive power are then marshalled to the task of producing order. Finally, both the normative complex and the governing infrastructure of international orders are embedded within an order-enabling material context. Aggregate capacities for production and destruction and available mobilizational networks set material parameters on the types of order that may be created. Meanwhile, the violence interdependence of the system determines the scope for conflict, and thus the magnitude of governance challenges that the custodians of international order must confront.

**TABLE 1.1 INTERNATIONAL ORDERS AT A GLANCE**

<b>LATIN CHRISTENDOM</b>	<b>THE SINOSPHERE</b>	<b>THE GLOBAL STATE SYSTEM</b>
<u>NORMATIVE COMPLEX</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salvation through Church as <i>raison d'être</i> of collective association</li> <li>• Christian ethics</li> <li>• Augustinian political theology and social ideology of tri-functionality</li> </ul>	<u>NORMATIVE COMPLEX</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement of temporal state of harmony (<i>ping</i>) in concordance with cosmic order</li> <li>• Confucian ethics</li> <li>• Sacerdotal conception of emperor and Confucian norms of benevolence and obedience</li> </ul>	<u>NORMATIVE COMPLEX</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popular eudemonism and augmentation of individuals' potentialities as moral purpose of the state</li> <li>• Globalised human rights system based on cosmopolitan liberal ethics</li> <li>• National self-determination and international regime of sovereign equality</li> </ul>
<u>INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heteronomous system nominally governed by papal-imperial <i>diarchy</i></li> <li>• Canon law and feudal law</li> <li>• Feud as form of aristocratic legal redress; divine imperative of Crusade against infidels</li> </ul>	<u>INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imperial system nominally governed by Chinese emperor (Son of Heaven)</li> <li>• Ritual enactment of shared identities (<i>li</i>) through investiture missions and tribute trade</li> <li>• Imperial resort to judicial sanctions (<i>fa</i>) to rectify error and restore cosmic order</li> </ul>	<u>INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sovereign state system governed by universal concert of formally equal states</li> <li>• Global legal framework based on multilateralism and contractual international law</li> <li>• State monopolies on violence supplemented by collective maintenance of order through force authorized by UNSC</li> </ul>
<u>ORDER-ENABLING MATERIAL CONTEXT</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feudal mode of production, aristocratic oligopoly over organized violence</li> <li>• Aristocratic kinship and patronage networks predominate alongside bureaucratic Church hierarchy</li> <li>• Low concentration and low accumulation of organized violence [low violence interdependence]</li> </ul>	<u>ORDER-ENABLING MATERIAL CONTEXT</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proto-capitalist mode of production organized within framework of gunpowder empire</li> <li>• Dominance of imperial bureaucracy and centralized imperial patronage networks</li> <li>• High concentration and low accumulation of coercive means [moderate violence interdependence]</li> </ul>	<u>ORDER-ENABLING MATERIAL CONTEXT</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global market system organized within framework of states possessing industrial (and in some cases nuclear) capacities for violence</li> <li>• Dominance of state and inter-governmental bureaucracies and formally depoliticized global commercial networks</li> <li>• High concentration and high accumulation of coercive means [high violence interdependence]</li> </ul>

A tabular representation of Christendom, the Sinosphere, and the global state system is presented above (table 1.1). The presentation is necessarily schematic, and is intended to serve as a reference point for the reader rather than as a comprehensive portrait of any of these orders. What table 1.1 cannot show is that international orders are rent with internal tensions and inconsistencies, and that they are capable only of mitigating and containing conflict between their members rather than eliminating it. International orders are susceptible to crises of legitimacy and are vulnerable to breakdown if they fail to contain sentiments of enmity between their constituent communities. It is entirely possible for there to be an international system without an international society, in which antagonisms play out without the civilizing bridle of shared values and institutions to moderate hatred and mitigate human suffering. International orders are contingent constellations of norms and institutions that operate effectively only within a permissive ideational and material milieu. International orders are fragile. International orders are flawed. And international orders are finite.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **HOW ARE INTERNATIONAL ORDERS TRANSFORMED?**

#### **2.1 Existing Accounts for the Transformation of International Orders**

How are international orders transformed? A range of suggestive but incomplete answers to this question may be drawn from the available literature on international systems change. Cyclical theories of order emphasize the dependence of international orders on the fate of great power sponsors, with orders' transformation being determined by shifts in the balance of power away from conservative supporters of the status quo and towards more aggressive and dynamic revisionist powers. Linear process theories of international order conversely see international orders as the systemic residue of largely endogenous processes of polity formation. Seen through this lens, the nation-state's contemporary ubiquity is a testament to a centuries-long process of Darwinian institutional selection, with the global state system representing nothing more than the most efficient available means of organizing political authority on a global scale. A third set of perspectives conceptualizes international systems change in terms of punctuated equilibria, affording causal primacy to either far-reaching societal transformations (changes in the mode of production or destruction) or to the irruption of new and subversive forms of collective identity in explaining international orders' transformation. Each of these accounts provides valuable insights, but none by themselves are adequate as explanations for international orders' transformation.

### 2.1.1 International Orders and the Rise and Fall of Great Powers

Martin Wight's adage that international politics is and will forever be the realm of recurrence and repetition provides a useful entrée into a consideration of the merits and limits of cyclical power transition approaches to the study of international orders.<sup>91</sup> The notion that the fate of international orders is tied to the fortunes of their great power sponsors superficially has much to commend it. Intuitively, it makes sense that international orders would reflect the interests of the powerful, and that they would tend towards disintegration as the relative power of their sponsors ebbed.<sup>92</sup> In privileging the active role played by anti-systemic actors in overturning international orders, power transition theories also leave greater room for agency in their accounts than do many alternative explanations. I have already demonstrated that orders must be perceived as legitimate if they are to endure, and cyclical 'rise and fall' theories provide much scope for exploring the processes whereby radically alienated actors might mobilize to delegitimize and destroy existing orders.

Beyond their intuitive appeal, the greatest strengths of 'rise and fall' theories lie in their parsimonious character, and in their familiarity and accessibility to international relations scholars. The idea that international orders hydraulically rise and fall in tandem with successive hegemonies is attractive in its simplicity, a simplicity that carries with it the further advantage of rendering it potentially applicable across a broad range of cases. Paul Schroeder's account of the post-Vienna Congress of Europe, a collective security system that was guaranteed by the dual hegemony of the

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<sup>91</sup>Martin Wight. "Why Is There No International Theory?" In *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, edited by Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield, 17-34. London: Allen & Unwin, 1966, p. 26.

<sup>92</sup>For a sophisticated recent rendition of this argument, see Torbjorn L. Knutsen. *The Rise and Fall of World Orders*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.

United Kingdom and Imperial Russia as Europe's respective sea and land-power giants, and which crumbled as these powers' interests diverged, accords well with this approach.<sup>93</sup> 'Rise and fall' theories also seem to find confirmation in the fate of the League of Nations, which failed through a combination of Allied abandonment or neglect and the active assaults of ascending totalitarian empires.<sup>94</sup> The credibility of 'rise and fall' theories is further fortified by their august intellectual lineage as the favoured default explanation of realists for the collapse of international orders.<sup>95</sup> The very familiarity and prominence of such 'rise and fall' theories make it necessary that they be critically engaged before alternative accounts are considered.

Cyclical power transition explanations for the transformation of international orders can be faulted firstly on conceptual grounds. The claim that shifts in the distribution of capabilities account for the collapse of discrete economic or collective security regimes has itself been subjected to rigorous criticism in recent decades.<sup>96</sup> However, power transition theories are of even more limited value when trying to comprehend the transformation of international orders as I have conceived of them in this study. For an international order such as Christendom or the Sinosphere did not

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<sup>93</sup>Paul Schroeder. "Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?" *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 3 (1992): 683-706. It must be acknowledged, however, that Schroeder's broader account of the Vienna settlement accords great significance to the development of norms and processes of peaceful conflict mediation and resolution between the five great powers, and that his larger account of the era thus cannot be easily reduced to a realist position.

<sup>94</sup>See for example Paul Kennedy. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers - Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. London: Fontana Press, 1980, chapter six passim.

<sup>95</sup>See generally Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis*; Robert Gilpin. *War and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981; Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*; and Jacek Kugler, and A.F.K. Organski. "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation." In *Handbook of War Studies*, edited by Manus I. Midlarski, 171-94. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996.

<sup>96</sup>See for example non-realist arguments marshalled respectively in the 1980s to account for the persistence of a global free trade regime in the face of American hegemonic decline (e.g. Robert O. Keohane. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), as well as non-realist arguments articulated from the 1990s to account for NATO's persistence following the collapse of bi-polarity (e.g. Celeste A. Wallander. "Institutional Assets and Adaptability: Nato after the Cold War." *International Organization* 54, no. 4 (2000): 705-35).

merely reflect the interests of dominant actors such as the Church or the reigning imperial dynasty. Rather, these orders constituted the taken-for-granted normative and institutional matrix within which these actors crystallized. As such, the causal pathway assumed by cyclical theories must be reversed – far from *reflecting* the interests of dominant actors, international orders in each case worked to *constitute* these actors and their interests instead.

In making the foregoing observation, I do not wish to imply that positional power struggles are irrelevant to the fate of international orders. Positional power conflicts played out *within* decaying orders are undeniably important in both accelerating that decay and in exacerbating the chaos that immediately follows an order's collapse. Additionally, the relative power and influence of different actors is of critical importance in shaping reconstituted orders that emerge from the ruins of their predecessors - the order that succeeded Christendom, for example, would have looked very different had the Habsburgs prevailed over France and her Protestant allies in the Thirty Years War. These qualifications aside, the fact remains that international orders only collapse following decades of decay, a process that is in turn driven by developments that are generally not the product of conscious, deliberate human action. Moreover, when international orders collapse, they do not simply sweep away the accumulated privileges of declining powers. Rather, they dissolve the most basic institutions of international societies, as well as representing the comprehensive failure of the world-views that sustained them. The dissolution of a unified Christendom and the disintegration of the Sinosphere respectively represented not just the humbling of the Church and the Qing dynasty, but the discrediting of entire cosmologies as well. Ruptures of this magnitude simply cannot be explained by the parsimonious power transition approaches advanced by realist international scholars.



Cyclical power transition approaches to the transformation of international orders are also a poor empirical fit when applied to my case studies. In each of my cases, the most radically alienated anti-systemic forces were not revisionist states, but rather religious radicals whose material capabilities paled in comparison to those of the ostensible custodians of order. Neither Protestant confessional networks, the Taiping rebels, nor global jihadist terrorists compare favourably with their respective nemeses in raw power terms. But in both of my historical cases, these networks exercised a decisive influence in fatally undermining the old order, a trend that is manifesting itself also in the disproportionately destructive impact of global jihadism on the contemporary state system. By contrast, the most powerful custodians of order in each of my cases (Charles V's Habsburg imperium, the Qing dynasty, and the contemporary United States) possessed enormous strengths measured in terms of raw material capabilities, again wrong-footing power transition explanations for the collapse of international order.

There can be no doubt that positional power struggles are endemic to international orders, and that these power struggles work to further enervate them by accelerating their decay and exacerbating the chaos that follows in their wake. But to claim that revisionist states intentionally overthrow international orders in Herculean acts of statesmanship designed to remake the world in their own image is to misunderstand the character of international orders as systemic social constructs. International orders constitute the shared mental and institutional framework within which social interaction takes place between polities, with their collapse punctuating the terminal crisis of an entire world outlook. They collapse only after a protracted period of decay, with their continued viability during this time being threatened by indifference and neglect rather than hostility or overt subversion. Moreover, when international orders finally do expire, their ideological coherence is often shattered not

by Goliath but by David, not by revisionist great powers but by inchoate insurgent networks operating at the interstices of the existing order. For all of their beguiling parsimony, ‘rise and fall’ power transition theories cannot account for the transformation of international orders.

### 2.1.2 State Formation, Linear Process Theories, and the Collapse of International Orders

Power transition theories perceive international orders as top-down constructs, imposed by Great Powers in their fleeting moments of dominance to lock in and perpetuate their interests at a system-wide level. Conversely, an alternative ‘bottom-up’ perspective might imagine international orders as practical associations, collectively negotiated by rulers in parallel with domestic state-building projects to secure the realisation of essential social goods at systemic as well as unit levels. In place of recurrent cycles of Great Power turnover and the accompanying dramas of order collapse and reconstitution, a bottom-up perspective rather conceives of historical change in terms of a linear development from less to more efficient forms of domestic and international political organization. Seen through this optic, less efficient forms of international order do not collapse so much as fade away, with rulers collectively and incrementally sloughing off inefficient practices of international governance in the same manner that less efficient polity forms (e.g. city-states and city-leagues) were eventually sidelined in favour of the sovereign state.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>On the elimination of city-states and city leagues in favour of the more efficient polity form of the sovereign state, see generally Hendrik Spruyt. *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. For a sophisticated approach to the question of international systems change that emphasizes the predominance of accretive rather than revolutionary transformations over time, as well as tracing the secular tendency towards more complex modes of international governance, see generally K. J. Holsti. *Taming the Sovereigns: Institutional Change in International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

There are undoubted insights to be found in approaches of this kind. Both Christendom and the Sinosphere showed advanced signs of decay in the decades preceding their demise, with both systems increasingly failing to maintain order within environments convulsed by large-scale economic and geopolitical change. In acknowledging that international orders do not merely embody the interests of the powerful but rather work to safeguard the common interests of their members, it becomes possible to mount plausible arguments linking environmental changes (e.g. a technologically driven increase in violence interdependence) to a decline in the perceived effectiveness of international orders in securing their members' common interests. The resulting legitimacy deficit in the prevailing order may then be cited as the catalyst for institutional innovations that subsequently evolved to restore a modicum order within international societies.

The world's developmental trajectory since 1500 offers continuities that seem to support efficiency-driven linear process models. When considered over the broad arc of history, both Christendom and the Sinosphere present as archaic and decidedly inefficient international orders, swept away with the rise and spread of the modern sovereign state. Seen through this prism, processes of contracting and coercion in late medieval Europe forged a new form of polity in the sovereign state, which eventually proved itself more efficient in mobilizing capital and violence and more effective in commanding popular legitimacy than any of its contemporary rivals.<sup>98</sup> Through processes of Darwinian selection, the sovereign state saw off its competitors, forcing through its ascendancy a reorganization of political authority within Europe from a heteronomous to a sovereign state system.<sup>99</sup> From Westphalia onwards, the principles governing relations between rulers were then refined and perfected, enabling

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<sup>98</sup> On this process, see generally Tilly, *Capital, Coercion and ad European States*.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

sovereigns to consolidate their power domestically while containing international conflict within manageable bounds. The efficiency with which the European sovereign state system was then able to reconcile international pluralism with expansions in Europe's productive and destructive capabilities laid the foundation for European international society's triumphant global expansion. In so doing, it necessarily doomed irredeemably pre-modern non-European orders like the Sinosphere to inevitable destruction.<sup>100</sup>

While superficially plausible, linear process accounts are also unsustainable upon closer analysis. At the most fundamental level, one can contest the artificially thin conception of international order as a purely functional arrangement that sustains this line of argument. The realisation of common interests such as the security of life and property is of undeniable importance in driving the construction of international orders, and the perception that a given order is failing to achieve these functions is certainly conducive to the onset of a legitimisation crisis. But across the cases I consider, the more prosaic functions of international orders were joined with more historically and culturally contingent goals such as the pursuit of salvation through the Church, the maintenance of a Confucian cosmic and social order, or the promotion of popular eudemonism and human emancipation. Assessments of institutional efficiency, far from operating through the application of timeless and universal

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<sup>100</sup>The notion that Europe's pluralistic and intensely competitive geopolitical environment fashioned a range of institutional and military innovations that laid the basis for Europe's subsequent geopolitical expansion is well rehearsed in the literature on so-called Western exceptionalism; see generally Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, chapter one, pp. 20-38; William H. McNeill. *The Rise of the West - a History of the Human Community*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963; D.C. North, and R.P. Thomas. *The Rise of the Western World: A New Economic History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973; and Geoffrey Parker. *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500-1800*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. I am however yet to read a treatment of the 'rise of the West' that gives sustained treatment to the role of sovereignty as an ordering institution in providing the political stability in Europe necessary to facilitate the colonial powers' subsequent global expansion.

standards of rationality, were rather suffused with the substantive value orientations of agents operating within these historically and culturally specific environments. To take but one example, Christendom's dependence on feud as an acceptable method of aristocratic legal redress seems by current standards to be not only morally perverse, but also highly inefficient as a means of enhancing the security of agents' life and property. Within the cultural context of Christendom, however, a system-wide ideology of tri-functionality that celebrated the armed vocation of the nobility provided ample justification for the feud as a normal and morally acceptable mechanism for resolving disputes.<sup>101</sup> Endemic non-state violence did not by itself inspire late medieval rulers to consciously aspire for a more efficient international order. Rather, it was only after Christendom's cultural unity had been decisively shattered, and then only in the wake of Europe's devastating wars of religion, that Europe's rulers were forced by necessity to reconstitute an international order on the basis of sovereign principles.

The loss of legitimacy is indeed critical to the collapse of international orders, and the hardships endured *after* an order has disintegrated provide a crucial catalyst for the construction of a new order. But hard-headed assessments that a given order is inefficient at realising common interests, and that it must be reformed if those interests are to be achieved, are conspicuously absent in the cases I consider. The empirical record suggests not an organic process of linear evolution towards more efficient forms of order, but rather the periodic collapse of old orders, followed by a bloody and prolonged inter-regnum out of which a qualitatively different order eventually emerges. For this reason, claims that international orders are a systemic residue of processes of state formation, and that state formation may be nominated as the

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<sup>101</sup>See again generally Geary, 'Living with Conflicts in Stateless France.'

locomotive force driving the genesis and global spread of Westphalian international society, must be discounted.

A final problem with linear process theories concerns the complacency with which they implicitly regard the future of the global state system. The notion that the Westphalian state system emerged and expanded because of its greater efficiency *vis-à-vis* alternative orders is dangerous in that it encourages the view that the globalisation of the sovereign state system was foreordained, and that its future durability is assured. Even if one were to accept that endogenous processes of state formation undermined Christendom from the bottom up and mechanically bequeathed a Westphalian sovereign state system in Europe, the logic of the system's genesis was clearly different from that of its subsequent global expansion. The imposed character of the sovereign state in many parts of the developing world is evident today in the widespread prevalence of post-colonial state weakness and state failure. The acute institutional decay characteristic of many quasi-states, in conjunction with the ideological challenge posed by global jihadism and the material challenge posed by the widespread diffusion of destructive capacities to non-state actors, all speak to the fragility of the current world order. That instructive parallels can be drawn between the terminal crises of Christendom and the Sinosphere and the contemporary travails of the global state system seriously qualifies the deterministic triumphalism implicit linear process narratives.

### 2.1.3 Punctuated Equilibria Models of International Systems Change I: The Collapse of International Orders as the Product of Changes in Modes of Production or Destruction

In contrast to either cyclical power transition theories or linear process evolutionary theories, punctuated equilibria models of international systems change more accurately capture the dynamics of international order transformation as manifest in the cases explored in this inquiry. Given the holistic character of international orders and the protracted nature of the crises leading to their transformation, attempts to hitch the fate of international orders to tectonic transformations in underlying modes of production or destruction have definite appeal.

In recent years, Marxist IR scholars have advanced a range of valuable new insights demonstrating the embeddedness of international orders within broader structures of production, cognition, and destruction.<sup>102</sup> The value of Marxist approaches to the study of international orders is demonstrated clearly in Benno Teschke's analysis of the constitutive role played by transformations in social property relations in reconfiguring both units of political authority and the geopolitical orders within which they are embedded.<sup>103</sup> That the medieval, Absolutist and modern international systems in Europe displayed distinctive geopolitical logics is hard to contest. Likewise, it is also evident from Teschke's analysis that these different geopolitical logics were at least partially explicable through reference to changing logics of accumulation and concomitant shifts in dominant forms of social property relations.

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<sup>102</sup>See for example Justin Rosenberg. *The Empire of Civil Society: A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations*. London: Verso, 1994; and Benno Teschke. *The Myth of 1648 - Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations*. London: Verso, 2003.

<sup>103</sup> Teschke, *Myth of 1648*, *passim*.

What Marxist analyses of systems change indicate is that the transformation of international orders is at least partially derivative of system-wide shifts in their material foundations. This insight is further confirmed through a consideration of theories that focus on transformations in the mode of destruction as an engine of systems change. Both the Revolution in Military Affairs and the contemporary prominence of non-traditional security threats have spawned a growing literature on the changing nature of warfare.<sup>104</sup> While some scholars have restricted their focus to technologically driven changes in war-fighting techniques, more historically informed accounts have analysed contemporary developments through the lens of tectonic transformations in the nature of war as a socio-cultural institution. Thus, for example, Andrew Latham discerns distinctive feudal, modern and emerging post-modern forms of warfare, with organized violence being pursued for radically different purposes and being undertaken by historically distinctive collectivities in each of these epochs.<sup>105</sup> Permutations of this theme can be found also in the works of Kaldor, Cerny, and Martin van Creveld.<sup>106</sup> While none of these scholars can be accused of subscribing to mono-causal narratives, they nevertheless share a common focus in identifying the transformative significance of changes in the mode of destruction for the legitimation of political authority and the organizational configuration of domestic and international orders.

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<sup>104</sup>The literature on this topic is voluminous. See for example John Arquilla, and David Ronfeldt, eds. *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Crime, Terror, and Militancy*. Santa Monica: RAND, 2001; Robert Bunker. "Epochal Change: War over Social and Political Organization." *Parameters* (1997): 15-25; Lawrence Freedman. *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs, Adelphi Paper 379*. New York: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006; Thomas X. Hammes. "War Evolves into the Fourth Generation." *Contemporary Security Policy* 26, no. 2 (2005): 189-221; and Hirst, *War and Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

<sup>105</sup>Andrew Latham. "A Braudelian Perspective on the Revolution in Military Affairs." *European Journal of International Relations* 8, no. 2 (2002): 231-66.

<sup>106</sup>Philip G. Cerny. "The New Security Dilemma: Divisibility, Defection, and Disorder in the Global Era." *Review of International Studies* 26 (2000): 623-46; Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*; and Martin van Creveld. *The Transformation of War*. New York: Free Press, 1991.



Macro-structural accounts of systems change have much to offer in aiding our understanding of the transformation of international orders. Nevertheless, once again, while they offer valuable insights, they are nevertheless by themselves inadequate. The first and most obvious weakness of macro-structural accounts is their materialist bias. Existing macro-structural accounts neglect the crucial significance of ideational factors in accounting for processes of systemic change. While war-centric narratives are more catholic in their theoretical foundations, and are thus willing to trace correlations between dominant modes of destruction, political organization, and collective identification, the independent causal significance of transformations in collective identity in effecting transformations in social order is generally neglected. This observation obtains even more strongly in the case of Marxist accounts of systems change. While Gramscian analyses of the contemporary international system accord at least some independent significance to ideology, culture, and other ‘superstructural’ characteristics of the present world order, historically oriented accounts of the evolution of international systems more typically neglect the independent significance of ideational factors as drivers of change.<sup>107</sup> Thus, for example, in Teschke’s analysis of the emergence of Absolutist and modern geopolitical orders, no mention is made of either the Reformation or the French revolution as catalysts for systemic change, despite the pivotal significance of both of in transforming European international society.

At base, macro-social accounts remain heavily inflected with a materialist bias. This bias is problematic given that in my historical cases a critical catalyst for the destruction of international orders was the emergence of heretical religious movements that fatally undermined the normative complex of the old order. Certainly,

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<sup>107</sup>On Gramscian approaches to the problem of world order, see for example Robert Cox. "Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory." *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): 126-55.

shifts in the material foundations of both Christendom and the Sinosphere weakened the effectiveness and legitimacy of these orders. But it was the shattering of ideological unity and the ensuing breakdown of existing ordering mechanisms that triggered the phase shift from a chronic to an acute legitimation crisis in both cases. Neither the Reformation nor the Taiping rebellion can be easily reduced to epiphenomenal expressions of changes in the underlying mode of production or destruction. Unfortunately, this observation merely illuminates an additional weakness of macro-structural accounts, namely their tendency towards structural determinism and their relative neglect of agency. Macro-social accounts leave limited room for considering the active role played by agents in shaping the normative composition of international orders. In so doing, they neglect the processes through which coercive and authoritative power are tentatively reconciled to produce international orders, thus eliding also the dynamics through which these tentative reconciliations are then subsequently torn apart. Macro-structural accounts risk assuming a highly deterministic character, with successive international orders mechanistically reflecting and embodying the functional requirements of the larger social totalities of which they are a part. Seen through such an optic, the distinctive and pressing human dilemmas that are provisionally resolved through the construction of international orders – such as the reconciliation of force with legitimacy or the balancing of rulers’ autonomy with requirements of systemic stability – are in danger of being completely overlooked.

The Euro-centrism typical of macro-structural accounts of systems change further weakens their explanatory power, with the periodizations from which their categories are constructed most often drawing from the very particular experience of Western Europe. In basing supposedly universal claims on the European experience, macro-social accounts can divine universal correspondences where contingent

constellations in fact exist, thereby effacing the particularity of the European experience while generating erroneous causal claims about the general dynamics of systems change. This danger is for example illustrated the emphasis placed by ‘mode of destruction’ accounts on the importance of Europe’s military revolution as the catalyst for the emergence of the modern state and an international society predicated on the organizing principle of sovereignty. The importance of the military revolution in triggering the rise of a sovereign state system in Europe is undeniable. But the fact that a roughly synchronous military revolution merely strengthened the suzerain international order of the Sinosphere suggests that the causal linkages drawn between changing modes of destruction and changing international orders are contingent rather than universal.<sup>108</sup> Consequently, attempts to reduce the transformation of orders to mere symptoms of deeper transformations in modes of production or destruction must be regarded with scepticism.

#### 2.1.4 Punctuated Equilibria Models of International Systems Change II: The Collapse of International Orders as the Product of Transformations in Collective Identity

The notion that transformations in collective identity are pivotal in catalysing international systems change has been persuasively advanced in a range of constructivist studies. The empirical emphases and causal narratives advanced by authors such as Daniel Philpott, Rodney Bruce Hall and Mlada Bukovansky naturally vary. Philpott emphasizes the role played by heretical identities and ideas as mechanisms of contradiction producing ‘crises of pluralism’ that then catalyse the

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<sup>108</sup>On this point, see for example Nicola di Cosimo. "Did Guns Matter? Firearms and the Qing Formation." In *The Qing Formation in World Historical Time*, edited by Lynn A Struve, 121-66. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.

development of new international constitutions.<sup>109</sup> Conversely, Hall posits a causal pathway whereby transformations in co-constituted individual and collective identities produce a social dissonance between agents' interpretive frameworks and existing social orders.<sup>110</sup> This dissonance ultimately resolves itself in the formulation of new legitimating principles of global and domestic social order, yielding transformations in institutional forms of collective action and with them transformations in international order.<sup>111</sup> This perspective contrasts again with Bukovansky, who emphasizes the pivotal significance of contradictions in hegemonic international political cultures in establishing the normative and strategic terrain within which legitimacy contests between the Old Regime and proponents of counter-hegemonic legitimacy principles are played out.<sup>112</sup>

These differences in argument notwithstanding, the contributions of each of these scholars have definitively established the importance of ideational changes in explaining the constitution, operation and transformation of international orders. This ideational emphasis accords well with the conception of international orders advanced in this study, and the importance I ascribe to ideological shocks in precipitating the disintegration of these orders relies heavily on insights drawn from the constructivist tradition. Where my position differs from existing constructivist accounts lies in the more systematic links between material and ideational transformations that I stress in explaining the transformation of international orders. While constructivists have been careful not to argue for the complete sufficiency of ideational transformations in explaining systems change, their efforts to demonstrate the necessity of ideational

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<sup>109</sup>Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, p. 4.

<sup>110</sup>Rodney Bruce Hall. *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 47.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup>Bukovansky. *Legitimacy and Power Politics*, pp. 10-11.

changes in accounting for this process have often led to a relative neglect of material forces as catalysts of systems change. In this respect, constructivists are guilty of an idealist bias comparable to the materialism of the macro-structural accounts considered above.

That international orders founder with the irruption of subversive collective identities and the ensuing breakdown of their ideological unity is central to my argument. But ideological shocks such as the Reformation or the Taiping rebellion occur only following protracted processes of institutional decay, in which changes in the material environment render established governing frameworks less and less effective in maintaining order. Changes in collective identities are critical to the transformation of international orders, but ideational changes are of only secondary importance in bringing international orders to the edge of the precipice in the first instance. Material changes – and most especially increases in violence interdependence occasioned by technological change – are instrumental in corroding the effectiveness of the ordering institutions of international societies long before their collapse. It is only once these ordering institutions have been degraded, and the prevailing order has already suffered a pronounced loss of effectiveness and perceived legitimacy, that heretical movements can strip away the residual normative consensus underpinning international orders to such devastating effect.

Force and law, coercive and authoritative power, form the twin foundations of political order. As such, constructivists are correct to emphasize the importance of transformations in collective identity in explaining the breakdown of international orders. For without a basic consensus on the sources and content of morality and the character of legitimate political domination, agents lack a shared life-world, and effective communicative action – and thus the deployment of authoritative power internationally in the service of order – becomes impossible. But authoritative power

by itself is insufficient to maintain order. Coercive power, in the form of authorized practices of organized violence, is equally necessary if order is to endure. And changes in the material context within which coercive power is deployed can exert profoundly destabilizing consequences, rendering old methods of order enforcement ineffectual while empowering actors with new and unprecedented levels of disruptive and destructive power. Heresies in isolation can be suppressed, while ordering institutions can adapt to expansions in coercive capacities if given sufficient time to do so. However, it is when heresy and military innovation explosively intersect that international orders fail.

## **2.2 Explaining the Collapse of International Orders**

### **2.2.1 The Argument in Brief**

International orders collapse as a result of legitimacy crises occasioned by a combination of institutional decay, rising violence interdependence, and ideological shocks that shatter the normative consensus upon which international orders depend. The underlying causes of institutional decay vary with each case, and will be treated individually in my separate case studies. Conversely, ideological shocks and increases in violence interdependence play analogous roles across each of my cases in catalysing the transformation of international orders.

Ideological shocks subvert international orders by breaching the integrity of the normative complexes that help constitute these orders. Recall that international orders are partly composed of normative complexes consisting of identity-constitutive, ethical-prescriptive, and power legitimating norms. These norms integrate actors around shared identities and purposes, regulate behaviour through the articulation of

binding standards of rightful conduct, and justify and stabilize the relations of organized domination upon which international order rests. Ideological shocks destabilize orders by destroying the consensus embodied in these normative complexes. In place of shared identities and common purposes, ideological shocks polarize international societies between radically alienated opponents of the old order and mobilized supporters of the status quo. Where ethical-prescriptive norms previously worked to restrain violence between adversaries within manageable bounds, ideological polarization robs these norms of their constraining power. Opponents that might previously have been fought so that they could be brought to terms become absolute enemies falling outside the circle of moral obligation, who must be annihilated if order is to be restored. Finally, ideological shocks subvert power-legitimizing norms, with defenders of the old order confronting actors who repudiate the principled bases of organized domination in international societies.

In challenging the normative bases of international order, ideological shocks rob actors of the shared life-world needed to make communicative action possible and the deployment of authoritative power in the service of order practically effective. At base, the effectiveness of authoritative institutions depends upon the maintenance of consensus on the constitutional values that inform these institutions. This is because without this consensus, the capacity of authoritative institutions to attract agents' voluntary compliance with existing rules, norms, commands and laws is fatally diminished. In destabilizing the normative bases of international orders, ideological shocks paralyse authoritative institutions, thus fatally compromising agents' ability to contain conflict within manageable bounds.

Ideological shocks signal the shift from the chronic to acute phases of a legitimacy crisis, precipitating the collapse of order after a period of prolonged decay. Conversely, increases in violence interdependence are more incremental in nature,

accumulating in the decades prior to an order's collapse and steadily undercutting its capacity to contain conflict within manageable bounds. The ordering institutions of international societies emerge in the context of historically finite material conditions, and the efficacy of these institutions in maintaining order is dependent upon a perpetuation of these initial conditions. Paradoxically, however, the very increases in wealth accumulation and technological development that are made possible by the maintenance of order eventually yield material innovations that undercut its continued operation. As actors acquire novel and unprecedented capacities for disruption and destruction, existing ordering arrangements are strained, the efficacy and legitimacy of these arrangements is called into question, and international order is imperilled.

Increases in violence interdependence simultaneously expand and tighten the webs of coercive interaction between the constituent polities of international orders, thereby straining the capacity of ordering institutions to manage conflict. The development and diffusion of new means of destruction heightens agents' security anxieties, while the observed ineffectiveness of existing ordering arrangements corrodes their legitimacy and thereby diminishes their ability to maintain order. Although existing ordering institutions endure, their perceived disconnectedness from a radically altered geopolitical context makes support for their continued operation increasingly nominal. Increases in violence interdependence accelerate processes of geopolitical consolidation, in so doing paradoxically *integrating* international systems within tighter webs of coercive interaction, while simultaneously exposing the inadequacy of existing ordering institutions and thus paving the way for the *disintegration* of international societies.

Ideological shocks embody a *purposive* challenge by some actors to the legitimacy of the existing international order. Increases in violence interdependence conversely undermine the effectiveness of existing fundamental institutions,



prompting others to negatively assess the legitimacy of the old order on account of its weakening *performance*. Meanwhile, processes of institutional decay provoke yet others to demand reform of the old order based on *process*-based critiques of its legitimacy. The combination of ideological shocks, institutional decay, and increases in violence interdependence conspire to produce legitimacy crises that trigger the transformation of international orders. Moreover, while ideological shocks and increases in violence interdependence originate independently of one another and play different roles in catalysing the breakdown of order, the two intertwine and amplify one another's destructive effects once the order has collapsed. It is in the fatal confluence of expanded destructive means and unlimited ideological ends that conventional enmity gives way to absolute enmity and international order is destroyed.

### 2.2.2 Religious Insurgency and Violence Interdependence as the Engines of International Systems Change – The Argument in Greater Detail

In the preceding paragraphs, I have sketched the contours of my argument in broad terms, telegraphing the importance of both ideological shocks and technologically driven increases in violence interdependence as structural drivers for the collapse of international orders. With these preliminaries dispensed with, it is now possible to specify with greater precision the respective roles played by religious insurgencies and increases in violence interdependence as catalysts for international systems change.

*Render Unto Caesar? Religious Radicalism and the Transformation of International Orders*

The three international orders surveyed below were each convulsed by insurgencies grounded in religious ideological frameworks. This raises a fundamental question: how important is *religious* insurgency *per se* as a catalyst for the transformation of international orders? From the outset, I must clarify that the emphasis I accord to religious insurgencies should not be mistaken for a more general privileging of religious over secular ideological shocks as precipitants of change. Rather, all that I require is that international orders be shaken by ideological shocks that challenge their most basic constitutional norms. Certainly, there are characteristics of religious insurgencies that stand out as being particularly subversive. The programmatic emphasis on millenarian visions of redemption; the resort to a combative rhetoric and iconography suffused with images of violence; the recourse to repertoires of action in which purgative, annihilatory violence and themes of martyrdom and sacrifice are particularly conspicuous; even the capacity to inspire total commitment from insurgent actors – each have been suggested by scholars to account for the ferocity of religious insurgencies.<sup>113</sup> None, however, are the exclusive preserve of religious insurgencies, but have rather been manifest also in a range of nationalist and revolutionary movements throughout history.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>See for example the useful discussions contained in Mark Juergensmeyer. "The Logic of Religious Violence." In *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment, Readings and Interpretations*, edited by Sawyer and Howard: McGraw Hill, 2002; and David Rapoport. "Some General Observations on Religion and Violence." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3, no. 3 (1991): 118-39.

<sup>114</sup>That the tactical innovation of suicide bombing was in fact pioneered by secular nationalist separatist organization such as the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) emphatically demonstrates that secular ideologies are no less capable than religious ideologies in inspiring total commitment from their followers. See generally Robert Pape. "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (2003): 343-61.

The above qualification aside, the religious character of the ideological shocks in each of my cases remains, and demands explanation. Recalling one of my core assumptions – that political order depends on legitimate relations of organized domination– we must acknowledge that the cultivation of political legitimacy always demands a satisfactory negotiation of the relationship between the sacred and the mundane. This observation is particularly evident in my historic cases, where international orders were undergirded by Christian and Confucian cosmologies respectively. However, it is also manifest in the global state system, which by reason of its cultural diversity lacks overt spiritual moorings, but which subscribes in practice to a pluralistic conception of religion (as a formalized body of privately held beliefs) that bear the distinct imprint of the West’s post-Reformation experience.<sup>115</sup> Across all of my cases, the relationship between the sacred and the mundane has been the subject of continuous contestation, with agents resolving these tensions in culturally and historically distinctive ways. In Christendom from the eleventh century Papal Revolution onwards, the existence of separate but intertwined sacred and mundane realms was explicitly acknowledged, with the authoritative institutions of the former being privileged over those of the latter, but with the Church nevertheless providing the populace with elaborate religious justifications for submission to political authority.<sup>116</sup> In the global state system, by contrast, the sacred and the mundane are internationally regarded as separate realms, with religion conceived as a privately held body of beliefs having no direct bearing on questions of political obedience.<sup>117</sup> This

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<sup>115</sup>On the specificity of the post-Westphalian conception of religion and its origins in the particular historical experiences of post-Reformation West-Central Europe, see the excellent discussion in Scott M. Thomas. "Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously: The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Society." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2000), pp. 815-841. See specifically pp. 820-823.

<sup>116</sup>See generally Robert Folz. *The Concept of Empire in Western Europe - from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*. London: Edward Arnold, 1969, pp. 81-89.

<sup>117</sup>Thomas, 'Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously', p. 821.

contrasts again with the Sinosphere, in which the distinction between sacred and mundane was least well defined, with the emperor serving as the essential pivot linking the celestial and terrestrial worlds.<sup>118</sup>

The requirement that a political order be seen as legitimate is unavoidably complicated by the need to formulate a satisfactory relationship between the sacred and the mundane, and between the respective agencies of religious and political power.<sup>119</sup> All political orders are undergirded by ontological claims regarding the appropriate relationship between the spiritual and social worlds. Consequently, all orders are vulnerable to challenges that are anchored in a perceived dissonance between the cosmic and the temporal orders. The perception of a lack of harmony between the cosmic and the mundane provides agents with a principled rationale for subverting the existing order that is infeasible in character and potentially apocalyptic in its implications.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, the capacity for agents to reflexively appreciate potential inconsistencies between their religious and their political obligations tends to grow with time, as developments such as the spread of literacy empower them to critically consider existing political arrangements without the mediation of an orthodox priestly class.

Political orders, in being forced through legitimacy concerns to institutionalize a workable relationship between the sacred and secular realms, are thus vulnerable to religiously informed challenges from the outset. Beyond this generic vulnerability,

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<sup>118</sup>On this point, see specifically H. Lyman Miller. "The Late Imperial Chinese State." In *The Modern Chinese State*, edited by David Shambaugh, 15-41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. See specifically pp. 17-18. A useful comparison of the different ways in which the distinction between the sacred and the secular was negotiated in Latin Christendom and the Sinosphere can be found in Benjamin Schwartz. "The Chinese Perception of World Order, Past and Present." In *The Chinese World Order - Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, edited by John King Fairbank, 276-88. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968. See specifically pp. 279-284.

<sup>119</sup>For further discussion on this point, see Shmuel N. Eisenstadt. "The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of Clerics." *European Journal of Sociology* XXIII (1982): 294-314. See specifically pp. 305-308.

<sup>120</sup>On this point, see generally Juergensmeyer, 'The Logic of Religious Violence', pp. 149-152.

however, organized religions possess inherent characteristics that qualify them as seedbeds of subversive energy. In their writings on the nature of religious violence, both Mark Juergensmeyer and David Rapoport note a central paradox that is common to religions, specifically their systematic appropriation of violent imagery, motifs and language for the purposes of normative pacification.<sup>121</sup> Juergensmeyer argues that central to religion is the notion of order conquering chaos, and that beneath the appearance of disorder in the temporal world lies the higher reality of a transcendent cosmic order.<sup>122</sup> In seeking to communicate this core message to believers, religions rely heavily on violent language and imagery not only to symbolize the forces of disorder, but also to make real the cosmic struggle between good and evil that culminates in the triumph of order over chaos.<sup>123</sup>

The ubiquity of violent language and imagery within religions cannot be denied, and is evident for example in the prevalence of martial metaphors in the Abrahamic faiths, Christians' veneration of the crucifix – a Roman execution device – as their central icon, and Sikhs' recourse to the *khanda*, a double-edged sword, to symbolize their confrontations with spiritual and worldly foes.<sup>124</sup> In his seminal work *Violence and the Sacred*, anthropologist René Girard attempts to further explain this phenomena by contextualizing it in relation to religion's initial purpose, which was to mitigate violence among strangers in environments in which kin-based vendetta had ceased to be viable as a mechanism of order maintenance.<sup>125</sup> Girard argues that sacrificial rituals – at first involving real victims and only later entailing simulated

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<sup>121</sup>See generally Juergensmeyer, 'The Logic of Religious Violence'; and Rapoport, 'Some General Observations on Religion and Violence'.

<sup>122</sup>Mark Juergensmeyer. "Sacrifice and Cosmic War." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3, no. 3 (1991), pp. 108-110.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 109-111.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>125</sup>René Girard. *Violence and the Sacred*. Translated by Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977, p. 145.

bloodshed – served to deflect and displace violence beyond the community of the faithful, thereby contributing to social order.<sup>126</sup> Regardless of whether or not one accepts this explanation *in toto*, the intimate connection between religion, order and symbolic violence is important to note, if only for the ease with which polarized notions of good and evil and their associated imagery can be interjected into worldly political and social struggles.

While religion most frequently serves to sustain existing political orders, the pervasiveness of violent imagery and the Manichean division between good and evil that are characteristic of religion also lend themselves to interpretations that are also profoundly corrosive of authority. Not only does the perceived dissonance between sacred and mundane orders provide a particularly powerful justification for rebellion, but the cultural ‘tool-kit’ of violent religious imagery and language that is available to actors also licenses recourse to purgative violence as a means of enacting personal piety and effecting collective spiritual renewal.<sup>127</sup> The Manichean dichotomy between good and evil that is characteristic of religious visions lends itself to interpretations that closely approximate Schmitt’s notion of absolute enmity, a sentiment that is ultimately deeply corrosive of all forms of political order. Whereas the exercise of communicative action depends on the recognition of other agents as legitimate interlocutors, fundamentalist ideologies interject categories of absolute good and evil into social and political struggles, negating the possibility of negotiated solutions to these conflicts. Equally, the exercise of authorized practices of coercion to enforce order presupposes the existence of adversaries to be chastised and punished rather than reprobate enemies to be physically annihilated. The irruption of religious insurgencies both challenges the constitutional values of international orders, as well as shearing

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Juergensmeyer, ‘Sacrifice and Cosmic War’, p. 112.

away the thin crust of ordering institutions upon which the maintenance of political order ultimately depends.

Let me reiterate that it is not necessary for ideological shocks to be religious in character, and that religious visions have historically served to fortify political orders more often than they have subverted them. This qualification does not detract from the characteristics of religious insurgencies that, if not unique to them, nevertheless help to account for their destructive power. Ideologically, the re-framing of social and political contests as part of a larger cosmic struggle allows insurgent leaders to leverage off the grievances that naturally accumulate towards structures of organized domination in even the most stable orders.<sup>128</sup> Fundamentalist visions also carry the appeal of linking collective projects for spiritual renewal with the quest for individual salvation and self-actualization, thereby forging unusually tight linkages between personal identity and the larger spiritual and political objectives of the movement.<sup>129</sup> The challenges of popular mobilization are also mitigated by the egalitarian nature of most fundamentalist visions, which allow them to more easily transcend existing social and geographic cleavages and thus unify a heterogeneous following around categorical religious identities.<sup>130</sup> Finally, this capacity for rapid diffusion across multiple social groupings in turn permits insurgent actors to creatively tap into a

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<sup>128</sup>Eisenstadt, 'The Axial Age', p. 306.

<sup>129</sup>This insight is illustrated with unusual clarity in Michael Walzer's discussion of the linkages between the new ways of organizing and disciplining the self inspired by Puritan ideology and the impulses towards militant and ultimately revolutionary collective political action that Puritanism ultimately inspired in 17<sup>th</sup> century England; see generally Michael Walzer. "Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology." *History and Theory* 3, no. 1 (1963): 59-90; and Michael Walzer. *The Revolution of the Saints - a Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965.

<sup>130</sup>On this point with respect to the specific categorical confessional identities that destabilized the dynastic agglomerations of early modern Europe, see Daniel Nexon. "Religion, European Identity, and Political Contention in Historical Perspective." In *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, edited by Timothy Byrnes and Peter Katzenstein, 256-82. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. See specifically pp. 269-270.

diverse plethora of existing social networks, enabling the construction of hybrid clandestine infrastructures of considerable resilience.<sup>131</sup>

While a religious foundation is unnecessary for ideological shocks to precipitate the collapse of international orders, anti-systemic movements predicated on fundamentalist visions pose a particularly powerful threat to the maintenance of international orders. In Reformation Europe, the nineteenth century Sinosphere, and the contemporary state system, religious insurgencies began with the articulation of deep philosophical critiques of the old order that challenged its ontological foundations. In the wake of this philosophical challenge, the radicalization of religious opposition was accelerated by the availability of a cultural ‘tool-kit’ – in the violent imagery and rhetoric of Scripture – that permitted the construction of ideologies of total resistance to the old order. Following the partial or total breakdown of ordering institutions, the egalitarian nature of fundamentalist visions ensured them rapid social diffusion, while the tight linkages drawn between collective renewal and personal salvation gave these visions a particularly strong purchase over popular loyalties, ensuring a prolonged and bloody struggle for the reconstitution of international order.

For all the emphasis I accord to religious insurgency as a catalyst for the transformation of international orders, it must be stressed that their significance for my explanatory framework is limited, with their immediate destructive impact on old orders contrasting dramatically with their limited effect on the construction of succeeding international orders. Thus, the Reformation destroyed Christendom’s spiritual unity and plunged Europe into a century of chaos, but neither the competing visions of Calvinist revolutionaries nor those of ultra-Catholic reactionaries found systemic expression on the sovereign state system that succeeded Christendom.

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<sup>131</sup> See in particular chapter five below.



Similarly, the Taiping rebellion was comprehensively defeated, with its long-term effect being to hasten the decentralization of power from the emperor to regional elites, thereby hollowing out the empire, hastening the collapse of the tributary system, and thereby facilitating the further extension of a European-dominated sovereign state system into East Asia. Equally, while the long-term consequences of the global jihadist insurgency cannot be easily anticipated, the triumphant emergence of a transnational Caliphate over the ashes of ‘apostate’ regimes in the Islamic world appears a remote prospect. Paradoxically, the chief legacy of past religious insurgencies in both early modern Europe and nineteenth century East Asia has been the secularization of international orders. Whether or not these historical experiences provide clues as to the long-term future of the secular global state system is a question I will revisit in the concluding chapter of this inquiry.

#### *Violence Interdependence and the Transformation of International Orders*

In introducing my argument, I have already adverted to the significance of technologically driven increases in violence interdependence in degrading the conflict management capacity of international orders. In this limited capacity, it can be said that processes of technological driven geopolitical consolidation feed in to and exacerbate existing processes of institutional decay. If the significance of geopolitical consolidation was confined to its role as an accelerant of institutional decay, it would be sufficient to reduce it to but one of the multitude of changes that progressively unshackle international orders from their initial material moorings and thus pave the way for their eventual disintegration. As it stands, however, the effects of systemic increases in violence interdependence cumulatively ramify throughout the course of international orders’ disintegration, playing not only a corrosive and destructive role in

bringing old orders to an end but also a transformative and productive role in establishing the material context within which successor international orders cohere.

The significance of increase in violence interdependence as drivers of international systems change can be inferred from both the importance I ascribe to coercive power as a foundation of political order, as well as the embeddedness of all international orders within permissive order-enabling contexts that change over time. In his classic if premature eulogy for the Westphalian state system, John Herz observed that the very institution of sovereignty merely constituted the legal ratification of an underlying material reality, namely the existence from the early modern period of the ‘hard-shelled’ and impermeable territorial state.<sup>132</sup> Herz argued that the material foundation of the state system, and the root cause of its durability down to the twentieth century, was the establishment in early modern Europe of internally pacified and ‘hard-shell rimmed’ defensible units.<sup>133</sup> With the advent of weapons systems – pre-eminently thermonuclear weapons – that threatened the sovereign state’s permeability and thus diminished its viability as a security provider, Herz anticipated the waning of the Westphalian state system as the underlying material foundations that enabled its existence passed into history.<sup>134</sup>

It is not necessary to completely embrace Herz’s materialism to recognize the relevance of his insights for the transformation of international orders. Latin Christendom, the Sinosphere and the global state system all relied on the deployment of authorized practices of coercion to maintain order, practices that evolved in distinctive and ultimately transient material contexts. Similarly, the credibility of authoritative institutions and overarching organizing principles of political authority depended in all cases on their broad congruence with underlying geopolitical

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<sup>132</sup> John Herz. "Rise and Demise of the Territorial State." *World Politics* 9, no. 4 (1957), p. 475.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 487-489.

conditions. Across all of my cases, increases in violence interdependence served to radically alter these underlying conditions, placing immense – and in two cases intolerable – demands on existing ordering institutions.

In early modern Europe, the early modern military revolution dramatically increased Christendom's violence interdependence, testing to breaking point those ordering mechanisms that had evolved to mediate inter-polity conflict in the more relaxed geopolitical environment of the High Middle Ages. Equally, the viability of the Sinosphere's tributary state system was fatally corroded with the industrialization of warfare from the latter half of the nineteenth century. The incipient industrialization of warfare opened up a historically unprecedented power asymmetry between the empire and 'barbarians' beyond the emperor's orbit, curtailing the emperor's ability to project a stabilizing influence throughout the Sinosphere and thus crippling the efficacy and legitimacy of the authoritative and coercive institutions that maintained that order.<sup>135</sup> Finally, in the contemporary state system, the unprecedented diffusion of destructive and disruptive capacities to non-state actors that has been facilitated by globalisation is already eating away at the material bases of the nation-state's monopoly on legitimate violence. Admittedly, it would be misleading to draw too many parallels for the time being between emerging forms of transnational non-state violence and transformations of the magnitude inaugurated by either the military revolution or the nineteenth century industrialization of warfare. This caveat aside, the growth of transnational terrorism has already deeply unsettled the state system's ordering institutions, and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future, particularly

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<sup>135</sup>On the central importance of this 19<sup>th</sup> century global military revolution in coercively drawing in South and East Asian polities into a Western-dominated international political and economic system, see specifically Jeremy Black. "War and International Relations: A Military-Historical Perspective on Force and Legitimacy." *Review of International Studies* 31, no. Supplement (2005), pp. 130-131.

as globalization and technological diffusion continue to increase the likelihood of terrorists acquiring and deploying Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The dislocative effects of increases in violence interdependence are pivotal to my analysis of the transformation of international orders. Increases in violence interdependence precipitate seismic shifts in the geopolitical foundations of international orders, rendering ordering institutions ineffective, anachronistic, and increasingly illegitimate over time. As positional struggles for power and influence are not held in abeyance during periods of order collapse but rather persist inflamed by intense ideological antagonisms, growing violence interdependence increases the destructive means available to opponents and thus magnifies the carnage that follows the collapse of ordering institutions. In short, increases in violence interdependence are implicated at all stages of the downward trajectory of international orders, warping their material foundations, corroding the efficacy and legitimacy of their ordering institutions, and expanding the destructiveness of the intertwined positional and ideological struggles that rage in the aftermath of their collapse.

## **Conclusion**

In the previous two chapters, I have advanced some basic claims about the purposes of political order, its nature, and the causes of its dissolution. I began by arguing that political order is necessary if agents are to realise certain elementary social goals, and that political orders are also predicated on relations of organized domination that must be broadly recognized as legitimate if they are to endure for any length of time. Drawing from Machiavelli's metaphor of the centaur, I argued that political order is ultimately realised through a combination of authoritative and coercive power. Authoritative power, which attracts voluntary compliance from

members' recognition of the morally binding force of norms, rules, laws and commands, presupposes the existence of a shared 'life world' of unquestioned cultural givens, for it is precisely through processes of communicative action that authoritative power is deployed. Coercive power by contrast is necessary to enforce order in instances where agents choose out of either principle or opportunistic self-interest to defy existing rules, norms, laws and commands. In functioning political orders, authoritative and coercive power complement and mutually reinforce one another, with authoritative institutions enjoying greater efficacy given the existence of coercive institutions to enforce their writ, and authorized practices of violence enjoying greater legitimacy owing to their consonance with the shared values embodied in authoritative institutions.

Within international systems, I argued that order is produced through the operation of an order-producing normative complex and governing institutional framework, which is grounded in turn within a permissive order-enabling material foundation. Order-producing complexes integrate actors around shared identities and collective purposes, provide a shared standard of rightfulness with which to regulate actors' conduct, and articulate principled justifications for the structures of organized domination upon which international order relies. In keeping with my general argument, I emphasized the joint significance of authoritative institutions and authorized practices of violence as the key mechanisms for maintaining order internationally. The legitimacy of these fundamental institutions derives from their correspondence with the values encoded in order-producing normative complexes, while their effectiveness is strongly conditioned by their degree of congruence with their underlying material context.

Finally, I argued that international orders are transformed as a result of concatenating processes of ideational schism and increases in violence

interdependence playing out within environments already characterised by pronounced institutional decay. Ideological schisms subvert order by destroying the consensus on constitutional values upon which the exercise of authoritative power relies.

Meanwhile, increases in violence interdependence corrode the efficacy of existing ordering institutions by broadening the chasm between these institutions and a rapidly mutating geopolitical environment. The combined operation of these two forces undermines the authoritative and coercive bases of the old order, thrusting international systems into periods of chaos made worse by actors' pursuit of unlimited ideological ends with the assistance of radically enhanced destructive means. Such chaos persists until such time as a new reconciliation between authoritative and coercive power can be forged, and a new international order that is consonant with a radically transformed normative and material milieu can be constructed.

## CHAPTER THREE – THE ORIGINS, CONSTITUTION, AND DECAY OF LATIN CHRISTENDOM

*Religio vincula societatis* [Religion is the bond which holds society together]

‘And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place...’ – Deuteronomy 12:3

In 1577, six years after Philip II’s defeat of the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto, Pope Gregory XIII called Europe’s final crusade in an attempt to press home Christendom’s recent triumph over its Islamic nemesis.<sup>136</sup> From the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the institution of the Crusade had embodied Latin Christendom’s spiritual unity, as well as demonstrating the Church’s power to mobilize the military resources of the European nobility in the service of Holy War. While Jerusalem had long since been lost, the crusading spirit was far from dead as Europe entered the modern age. The Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453 had signalled the emergence of a powerful new threat to Christendom on her eastern doorstep, while the completion of the Spanish *Reconquista* in 1492 marked a parallel resurgence of Christendom in the western Mediterranean. By the latter half of the sixteenth century, the continuing proximity of the Turkish threat, combined with the religious fervour of the Counter-Reformation

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<sup>136</sup>On Gregory’s repeated failures after Lepanto to rally Christendom to a renewed war against the Ottoman empire, see Ralph Francis Kerr, ed. *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*. Vol. XIX - Gregory XIII (1572-1585). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1952, pp. 354-357 and pp. 369-375.

and the waxing of Spanish power all suggested scope for a renewed Holy War against the Ottomans.

That the pope ultimately failed to rally Christendom for a new crusade is illustrative of the final collapse of Christian unity and of Latin Christendom's disintegration as a viable international order by the late sixteenth century. Far from pressing home his advantage against the Ottomans after Lepanto, Philip instead made peace with the sultan in 1578 so as to pursue the more urgent task of crushing Calvinist rebels in the Spanish Netherlands. Similarly, France proved equally reluctant to answer the call of crusade while the monarchy's very survival was being threatened at home by sectarian rebellion. If faith remained the primary focus of collective identity in sixteenth century Europe, it was a faith that had become bitterly divided along confessional lines, with the duty to eradicate heresy taking absolute priority over obligations to wage Holy War against infidels. In Gregory's call to arms, one finds the last dying echo of Europe's medieval unity, and with the failure of his crusade, a final confirmation of the collapse of Latin Christendom.

In this chapter, I begin my inquiry into the collapse of international orders by reviewing Latin Christendom's genesis and consolidation in the High Middle Ages, before then examining the distinctive ordering mechanisms that helped constitute it as an international order. Having sketched Christendom's contours, I then proceed to an analysis of the processes of decay that were apparent within this order from the late fourteenth century. The Great Schism within the Church, the introduction of gunpowder into European warfare and the related commercialization of military power, the spread of printing and the subsequent growth of popular heretical movements such as Lollardy and the Hussite heresy – these were but some of the forces that steadily corroded Christendom's institutional and normative foundations down to 1500.



Whereas the genesis, constitution, operation and decay of Christendom form the focus of chapter three, Christendom's collapse and Europe's subsequent descent into chaos form the subjects of chapters four and five respectively. If at 1500 Latin Christendom was in an advanced state of decay, it was far from inevitable at this point that it would be succeeded by a sovereign state system. That Europe failed to replicate the pattern of early modern political development towards empire that was then dominant elsewhere in Eurasia demands explanation, thus it is to a consideration of Europe's prolonged crisis that I turn in chapter four. As anticipated in earlier chapters, my argument privileges military revolutions and ideological shocks – in this case the Reformation – as the primary catalysts for Christendom's collapse. Briefly stated, the introduction of gunpowder and the subsequent military revolution dramatically increased the violence interdependence of the European international system, thereby undermining the effectiveness of existing conflict management mechanisms at a time when the Reformation was irrevocably shattering Christendom's religious *cum* ideological unity. The combined impact of increased violence interdependence and ideological polarization precipitated in turn a chain of conflicts that ultimately destroyed the last vestiges of medieval heteronomy while also arresting the consolidation of an alternative suzerain international order organized under the sceptre of Habsburg power. It was only after Christendom had become irretrievably broken and the suzerain alternative of Habsburg empire had been foreclosed that a European international order organized around sovereign states became possible.

Chapter four details both the structural drivers of Christendom's disintegration, while also exploring the role played by the Habsburgs' multiple enemies in thwarting Christendom's potential reconstitution along imperial lines. In chapter five, the French Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years War are examined, both as conflicts that are representative of the ideological polarization and intensified military interaction that

followed the fall of Christendom, but also for their formative role in generating the normative and institutional innovations that eventually facilitated the construction of a new international order predicated on the organizing principle of state sovereignty. My analysis concludes with a reinterpretation of the significance of the Peace of Westphalia, understood here as a *modus vivendi* between rulers that restored to Europe the stability required for the subsequent decades-long reconstruction of a new international order along broadly Absolutist sovereign-territorial lines.

### **3.1 The Origins, Consolidation, and Ordering Mechanisms of Latin Christendom**

#### 3.1.1 Origins

The story of Latin Christendom's origins is one of failure, specifically the failure of Rome's heirs to reconstitute a viable supra-polity governance structure to succeed the Western Roman Empire. The collapse of empires in the third-fifth centuries CE was far from unique to Rome, and indeed from a Eurasian perspective, Byzantium's survival during this period is the exception rather than the rule. But whereas imperial structures were eventually re-established in the Indian sub-continent and in East Asia, Western Europe descended after the fall of Rome into a prolonged period of political anarchy, economic contraction, and cultural regression (marked by rapid de-urbanization and dramatic declines in literacy) from which it would not truly recover until the eleventh century.<sup>137</sup> Certainly, attempts to construct supra-local governance structures during the early medieval period were not entirely without success. The Carolingian emperors' fleeting attempts to revive the imperial dignity

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<sup>137</sup>On the differing trajectories of Western Europe and East Asia following the collapse of the Western Roman and Han empires in the ancient period, see Dominic Lieven. *Empire - the Russian Empire and Its Rivals*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, pp. 33-40.

kept the idea if not the actuality of empire alive in Western Europe, while under the aegis of the papacy the skein of a common Christian high culture was extended to Europe's northern and eastern peripheries.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, if the precursors to the papal-imperial *diarchy* of the High Middle Ages can be dimly discerned during this period, neither of these institutions were sufficiently robust as to sustain a viable order in the centuries following Rome's demise. Without the protection of an overarching imperial order, the long-distance trading networks that had flourished under Roman suzerainty withered, accelerating de-urbanization and attenuating Western Europe's cultural and commercial contacts with other civilizational centres.<sup>139</sup> Under the impact of sustained waves of barbarian invasions from the north, east and south, responsibilities for collective defence rapidly devolved to the local level. This process was accelerated in the tenth century with the collapse of royal and comital authority, and the cascading downwards of military and political power to the level of the castellany, or in some instances even down to the individual knight.<sup>140</sup> Across Western and Central Europe, an overwhelmingly illiterate peasantry eked out a subsistence existence within the parameters of localized, non-monetized economies, while control over organized violence remained radically dispersed among a predatory aristocratic nobility.<sup>141</sup> With the Carolingian empire dissolved and the papacy yet to assert its post-Hildebrand centralized authority over the Church, all forms of social power – ideological, political, military and economic – crystallized at the local level. As

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<sup>138</sup>On Carolingian concepts of empire, see generally Folz, *The Concept of Empire*, chapter one. On the spread of Christianity throughout Europe's northern and eastern peripheries, see Norman Davies. *Europe - a History*. London: Pimlico, 1997, pp. 275-290.

<sup>139</sup>On the de-urbanization of society in the Western half of the Roman empire during the late antique and early medieval periods, see generally Wolfgang Liebeschuetz. "The End of the Ancient City." In *The City in Late Antiquity*, edited by John Rich, 1-49. London: Routledge, 1992.

<sup>140</sup>Benno Teschke. "Geopolitical Relations in the European Middle Ages: History and Theory." *International Organization* 52, no. 2 (1998): 325-58, p. 351.

<sup>141</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 394.

Europe approached the millennium, centrifugal forces seemed to be inexorably in the ascendancy.

### 3.1.2 The Consolidation of Latin Christendom

Europe's fragmented social landscape in 1000 CE initially presents as an unlikely seedbed for the formation of any stable governance structure. However, from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards a cluster of social processes conspired to generate a distinctive international order based upon the organizing principle of heteronomy and undergirded by the unifying religious and cultural identity of Latin Christendom. Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, a range of transformative processes yielded Europe's elites access to a greater portfolio of power resources than had previously been available to them at any time since the fall of Rome. The years 1000-1250 witnessed a trebling of Europe's population, a demographic upswing made possible by a system-wide revival of economic activity that had begun from the late 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>142</sup> The breakdown of centralized political power following the Carolingian empire's demise facilitated both the growth of merchant towns in North-West Europe, as well as the establishment in the countryside of a system of banal lordship predicated on the intensified extraction of surplus from a newly enfranchised peasantry.<sup>143</sup> Academic opinion remains divided as to the relative causal priority that should be placed on the revival of urban-centred long-distance trade versus the feudal intensification of agricultural surplus extraction as engines of the economic revival.<sup>144</sup> However, there

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<sup>142</sup>R.I. Moore. "The Birth of Europe as a Eurasian Phenomenon." In *Beyond Binary Histories - Re-Imagining Eurasia to C. 1830*, edited by Victor Lieberman, 139-57. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002, p. 140.

<sup>143</sup>Poly and Bournezal, 'The Feudal Revolution', pp. 38-39. See also Teschke. *The Myth of 1648*, pp. 86-89.

<sup>144</sup>The disagreements among economic historians of medieval Europe are reflected in the approaches of social scientists concerned with international systems change in the medieval and early periods. Thus,

is consensus that the interaction of these processes, in conjunction with the diffusion of technological and organizational innovations that raised the overall productivity of the European economy, provided European elites with access to a growing pool of labour and potentially taxable wealth over time.<sup>145</sup>

This increase in the availability of material resources coincided with a process of elite consolidation and differentiation among Europe's lay and clerical elites. Under pressure to preserve their patrimonies in an environment of growing population pressures, Europe's nobility abandoned a system of partible inheritance in favour of one predicated on principles of agnatic (patrilineal) primogeniture.<sup>146</sup> Previous conceptions of family as one of loose clans of collateral kindreds gave way in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to a much more exclusive conception of family as patrilineal dynasty.<sup>147</sup> The widespread adoption of heraldic emblems and toponymic surnames by the nobility at this time reflected a growing aristocratic self-consciousness and sense of corporate distinctiveness from both the peasantry and the priestly class.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, the corporate identity of the clerics dramatically increased following the Hildebrand reforms and the successful establishment of papal dominance over the Church. In successfully asserting the supremacy of canon law within the Church hierarchy and prohibiting both simony (the sale of church offices) and nicolaism (the marriage of priests), Pope Gregory VII and his successors extricated the priesthood from entanglement within family politics of the local aristocracy.<sup>149</sup> In so doing, the Church

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whereas Hendrik Spruyt affords greater significance to the revival of long-distance trade in accounting for the economic revival, Benno Teschke conversely emphasizes that the economic revival was driven principally by developments endogenous to a feudal economy based upon intensified aristocratic exploitation of an enserfed peasantry. On this controversy and its relevance for their approaches to international systems change, see Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*, pp. 61-63; and Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>145</sup> On this point, see Spruyt, *Sovereign State and its Competitors*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>146</sup> Moore, 'Birth of Europe', p. 145.

<sup>147</sup> Teschke, 'Myth of 1648', p. 91. See also Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*. London: Edward Arnold, 1977, pp. 147-148.

<sup>148</sup> Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, p. 91.

<sup>149</sup> Berman, *Law and Revolution*, p. 108.

prevented the creeping usurpation of its landed assets by priests connected by marriage to local dynasties, while also forging out of the old priesthood a new transnational cadre of celibate officials whose sense of personal identity was now tethered exclusively to advancing the Church's salvation mission.<sup>150</sup>

As Europe grew in wealth and population and its elites became more organized and functionally differentiated (asserting respective monopolies upon military and ideological power), the availability of the 'social technologies' required to administer large-scale collective associations also increased.<sup>151</sup> The growth in trade and the operation of the Church hierarchy respectively required the routine coordination of market transactions and the conveyance of bureaucratic commands over long distances.<sup>152</sup> Both processes necessitated the creation of a greatly expanded class of literate administrators, trained from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards at the newly established universities emerging in urban centres such as Oxford, Paris, and Bologna.<sup>153</sup> In addition to generating a transnational class of clerical professionals capable of servicing the needs of merchants, the Church and the higher nobility alike, the growth of universities also permitted the systematization of knowledge in the fields of law, theology, and philosophy.<sup>154</sup> This process of systematization enabled growing elite-level cultural integration across Christendom, exemplified in the diffusion of the crucifix as the pre-eminent symbol of Christianity from the late 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>155</sup> However, just as importantly, the systematization of knowledge within European universities provided elites with a shared conceptual vocabulary through which to

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<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> The term 'social technologies' is taken from Stuart J. Kaufman. "The Fragmentation and Consolidation of International Systems." *International Organization* 51, no. 2 (1997), pp. 183-184.

<sup>152</sup> On the dramatic growth in the pool of trained clerics capable of executing these functions over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Joseph Strayer. *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 24-25.

<sup>153</sup> Davies. *Europe - a History*, p. 361.

<sup>154</sup> Moore, 'Birth of Europe', p. 149.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

articulate binding authority claims to critical audiences. Admittedly, conflicts such as the Investiture Contest demonstrated the inability of Church and emperor to peacefully resolve disputes over the scope of their respective authority claims. But the very ability of these parties to engage in such a polemic was indicative of Christendom's growing cultural and ideological cohesiveness in the late medieval period.

Demographic and economic expansion, elite consolidation and differentiation, and increases in the social technologies of administrative capacity and cultural integration each fed into a final albeit highly tentative process of political centralization in Christendom. This process was most precociously apparent in the Norman kingdoms of England and Sicily, before diffusing more gradually in France and Spain. If it is premature to speak of the emergence of the modern state by the fourteenth century, one can nevertheless argue for a much greater degree of systemic integration than had previously existed in the medieval period. From 1000 CE onwards, Latin Christendom had witnessed a sustained increase in its territorial reach, material wealth, institutional sophistication, ideological and cultural integration, and political centralization. As with all orders, Latin Christendom would prove ultimately ephemeral, beginning a long process of decay from the mid-fourteenth century onwards. Nevertheless, before this process may be considered, a more thorough investigation of Christendom's constitution and ordering mechanisms is in order.

### 3.1.3 The Problem of Order In Latin Christendom

At first glance, Latin Christendom appears endowed with structural characteristics that render the problem of realising order among its constituent polities particularly intractable. Turning firstly to the level of organizing principles, authority relations in Christendom were mediated by the organizing principle of heteronomy.

Authority in Christendom, far from being concentrated, singular and precisely circumscribed within a particular territorial jurisdiction, was rather fragmented, plural, and simultaneously operative within particular functional domains across multiple territories.<sup>156</sup> The extreme political decentralization characteristic of feudalism yielded a bewildering array of organizational forms, ranging from the Church through to urban commercial guilds and corporations through to embryonic feudal kingdoms. Each of these organizations in turn operated within the context of their own distinctive legal codes and norms of conduct (e.g. canon law, feudal law) intended to authoritatively regulate activity within a specified realm of social activity.<sup>157</sup>

The presence of multiplex, overlapping, mutually entwined power networks permeating the same territorial spaces provided ample scope for jurisdictional conflicts between different actors, of which the Investiture Contest between papacy and empire is merely the most notorious. In the absence of a final arbiter of disputes either at a systemic level (as in imperial formations) or at a unit level (as in the sovereign state), the conflicting authority claims of different actors rendered ideological controversy and even armed confrontation a perennial possibility. The fact that capacities for organized violence were so widely dispersed in medieval Christendom further sharpened the possibilities for conflict. The radically dispersed character of military power in medieval Europe was such as to warrant it as a system governed by the condition of ‘nullarchy’, referring to the absence of identifiable concentrations of coercive power of the kind found in either multi-polar or bi-polar sovereign state systems or in uni-polar imperial formations.<sup>158</sup> Within such an environment, recourse to violent self-help was not confined to rulers, but was rather a

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

<sup>157</sup> On the legal heterogeneity of medieval Europe, see generally Walter Ullman. *Law and Politics in the Middle Ages - an Introduction to the Sources of Medieval Political Ideas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

<sup>158</sup> The concept of nullarchy is taken from Deudney. ‘Regrounding Realism’, p. 31.



collective and routinely exercised prerogative of a warrior aristocratic class. Far from being in any way exceptional or aberrant, aristocratic recourse to violence was endemic, accepted and routine, contrasting starkly with modern conceptions of order informed by the ideal-typical nation-state exercising a monopoly over legitimate violence.

Both the presence of overlapping jurisdictional claims and the widely dispersed character of military power primed Christendom for conflict. This threat that was further compounded by the economy's overwhelmingly agrarian character, and by the centrality of seigneurial violence as a mechanism for wealth extraction and accumulation. Beyond the urban enclaves of commercial wealth derived from trade (located predominantly in the Low Countries and in northern Italy), wealth accumulation in Christendom relied primarily upon maximizing agricultural surplus, either through the introduction of more productive crops or cultivation techniques, or more typically through the intensified exploitation of the peasantry or the acquisition of additional territory through war.<sup>159</sup> In a low-productivity, predominantly non-monetized economy in which wealth inhered overwhelmingly in landed assets, a zero-sum logic of geopolitical competition prevailed among the aristocracy. War for the European nobility was undeniably a matter of status and honour. But it was also driven by harsh economic necessity, with material drives towards conflict becoming even more pronounced with the introduction of primogeniture and the consequent need for younger sons to carve out their own patrimonies at their peers' expense.<sup>160</sup>

A final contributor to disorder in Christendom was the presence of an elite culture of existential bellicosity, which valorised aristocratic martial valour for its own sake and provided a pervasive normative justification for noble violence. In addition to

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<sup>159</sup>Teschke, 'Geopolitical Relations in the Middle Ages', p. 340.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*

material motivations, aristocratic violence also fulfilled expressive functions deriving from the martial corporate identity of the nobility. The defence of individual and familial honour, the pursuit of glory, the prosecution of feuds, the enactment of chivalric virtues, the propagation of the Christian faith through the conquest of foreign lands – each of these were perceived as legitimate motivations for aristocratic violence.<sup>161</sup> This culture of aristocratic violence occupied an at times uneasy relationship with the religious foundations of Latin Christendom. But as ethically problematic as this culture might seem to modern sensibilities, it was far from marginal within Christendom. Instead, it stood as a central feature of the ideological landscape that legitimated, sustained, and promoted endemic armed conflict both within and beyond Christendom's borders.

#### 3.1.4 The Constitution and Ordering Mechanisms of Christendom

A heteronomous organizing principle, the dispersed character of military power, the presence of zero-sum geopolitical competition among aristocratic households, the valorisation of violence as an expression of noble identity – each of these features conspired to produce endemic low-level conflict in medieval Europe. These observations aside, Christendom's consolidation and expansion from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards nevertheless testifies to the existence of ordering mechanisms that contained conflict within tolerable bounds.

Arguably the most important of these mechanisms was the presence of ideological unity amongst Europe's elites, manifest in elites' subscription to common

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<sup>161</sup>On this point, see generally Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, p. 385; and also more generally Robert Bartlett. *The Making of Europe - Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950-1350*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, chapter four.

ideas about the purposes of collective association and the nature of social order. As with all international orders, the ideological glue holding Christendom together was comprised of three inter-related components, specifically identity-constitutive, ethical-prescriptive, and power legitimating normative structures. At the identity-constitutive level, Christendom was united in its commitment to spiritual salvation through the Church as the *raison d'être* of collective association. As the most sophisticated and ideologically self-conscious medieval authority structure, the Church succeeded in defining Europe's common high culture, instilling in the medieval imagination a conception of earthly existence as mere preparation for the Day of Judgement.<sup>162</sup> Medieval Europe was first and foremost a community of faith, with religion being understood not in the post-Westphalian sense as referring to a privately held body of abstract doctrine and beliefs, but rather as referring above all to an embodied community of believers.<sup>163</sup> The medieval *mappeamundi*, which depicted the world as the Body of Christ, with Christ's head next to paradise, his arms gathering the temporal world, and Jerusalem – navel of the world – at the centre, metaphorically captured in a most arresting manner the conflation of the temporal with the spiritual that was emblematic of the belief system undergirding Christendom's unity.<sup>164</sup> At a more concrete level, throughout Christendom, the ritual of the mass routinely confirmed the centrality of faith to medieval European identity, as well as reinforcing the perception that membership of the community was synonymous with membership of the universal Church. The cosmology and moral ontology of the Church were systematically communicated to the populace through the mass's re-enactment of

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<sup>162</sup>See generally Marc Bloch. *Feudal Society*. Vol. I - The Growth of Ties of Dependence. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 81-87.

<sup>163</sup>Thomas, 'Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously', p. 820.

<sup>164</sup>J.B. Harley, and David Woodward, eds. *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*. Vol. 1, *The History of Cartography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 310.

Christ's expiatory sacrifice as penance for man's sins, a sacrifice that made possible reconciliation between God and man and thus opened up the possibility of salvation.<sup>165</sup> Even more critically, the mass formed a vital social integrative function, with the individual's participation in communion (common union) symbolizing not only wholeness of Christ and his Church, but also the social solidarity of those united in their faith in Christ.<sup>166</sup>

The Church provided medieval Europeans with not only a shared collective identity and a shared understanding of the ultimate purposes of collective association, but also a common ethical framework as well. While there is no question but that the Church provided invaluable ideological support for the pervasive inequalities characteristic of the medieval world, the egalitarian and pacifist dimensions of the Christian message also found comprehensive expression in the Church's teachings. The notion that all people are made in the image of God and are therefore capable of salvation extended the bonds of moral obligation beyond the limits of family and friends, while the claim that acts of violence and injustice directly contradict the will and the revealed Word of the Heavenly Father exercised similarly powerful pacifying effects. The normative force of these prescriptions was evident for example in the Church's frequently successful efforts to mobilize moral and religious sanctions to restrain the worst excesses of seigneurial violence.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, even where the Church saw the need to reconcile Christian ethics with the realities of princely

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<sup>165</sup>On this point, see John Bossy. "The Mass as a Social Institution 1200-1700." *Past and Present* 100 (1983), p. 34.

<sup>166</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup>The Peace of God movement in medieval France and Spain constituted an early example of the Church's ability to jointly utilize its unique moral authority alongside peasant mobilization to forge new normative constraints on predatory aristocratic behaviour. See generally Thomas N. Bisson. "The Organized Peace in Southern France and Catalonia, Ca. 1140-Ca. 1233." *American Historical Review* 82, no. 2 (1977): 290-311. See also T. Head, and R.A. Landes. *The Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.

violence, it nevertheless exercised a powerful restraining influence through its development of a coherent and richly articulated doctrine of just war.

Christian ethics, as drawn from the Decalogue and the Gospel teachings and elaborated in Church doctrine, provided the basis of the normative restraints on violence that held Christendom together. The universality and the efficacy of these normative restraints were admittedly circumscribed by several factors. Externally, the ethos of Holy War that emerged with the Crusades posited a stark moral dichotomy between Christians and others, rehearsing on Christendom's bloody borders an ethic of religiously sanctioned annihilatory violence that would later punctuate the European Wars of Religion. Internally, the reach of Christian ethics was limited by the accommodations struck between Europe's lay and clerical elites, which found expression in the power-legitimizing structures of a social ideology of tri-functionality and an Augustinian political theology. Turning firstly to tri-functionality, this concept legitimated and sacralized the notion of society as a divinely conceived organic totality, with the pervasive inequality of feudal society being justified on the basis of its concordance with God's vision of a rigidly stratified world divided between clerics, warriors, and peasants (*oratores, bellatores, and laboratores*).<sup>168</sup> The concept of tri-functionality legitimized and perpetuated inequality by assigning to priest, knight and peasant the respective functional vocations of worship, combat in defence of the church, and cultivation of the land in support of priests and nobles.<sup>169</sup> The popular passivity and social immobility this concept engendered was further reinforced by the Augustinian justification for secular authority articulated by the Church. Juxtaposing the City of God with the City of Man, Augustine had conceived of the latter as a

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<sup>168</sup> On the centrality of the ideological construct of tri-functionality in dominant conceptions of social order in the Middle Ages, see generally Georges Duby. *The Three Orders - Feudal Society Imagined*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

repressive, remedial order, imposed on man as punishment for original sin.<sup>170</sup> While Augustine conceded the necessity of a secular order, given Fallen Man's inability to peacefully co-exist without its restraining influence, this endorsement clearly subordinated the imperfect order of man *vis-à-vis* the perfect order of God, a celestial order given earthly institutional expression in the Church.<sup>171</sup> In embracing Augustine's pessimistic justification of secular authority, the Church provided vital theological support for princely and aristocratic power, delegitimizing rights of rebellion by rendering popular submission to secular rulers a divinely ordained imperative.<sup>172</sup> However, at the same, the terms of this endorsement clearly affirmed the Church's supreme moral authority, thereby confirming the undiminished centrality of the Church's salvation mission as the animating purpose of all collective association.<sup>173</sup>

While Christendom was not immune from fissiparous tendencies, it was nevertheless endowed with a richly articulated normative complex that provided a coherent basis for the maintenance of order. The component ideals that made up this complex in turn found practical expression in a governing institutional infrastructure. At the apex of this framework stood the papal-imperial *diarchy*, with pope and emperor serving as the two pre-eminent custodians of order within Christendom. The papal-imperial *diarchy* constituted the highest expression of the awkward and at times extremely fractious *modus vivendi* between clerical and lay elites upon which order in medieval Europe relied. According to Church doctrine, both Church and Empire were divinely ordained institutions fulfilling distinct but complementary governance functions. The former was responsible for assuring humanity's submission to Christ

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<sup>170</sup> On this point, see Herbert Deane. *The Political and Social Ideas of Saint Augustine*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, p. 117.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

and securing the salvation of souls, while the latter was charged with securing the temporal order necessary for the Church to realise its mission on earth.<sup>174</sup> The emperor was thus accorded a special significance as the *primus inter pares* among secular rulers, although in keeping with its Augustinian political theology, the emperor's function was derivative of the Church's salvation mission, with the emperor held as being clearly subordinate to the pope.<sup>175</sup> This interpretation was inevitably challenged by imperial propagandists, who sought with very limited success to invoke ancient Roman precedents to sustain a more capacious conception of the imperial office.<sup>176</sup>

The tensions between papacy and empire eventually exercised a profoundly corrosive effect on the capacity of each to sustain order. However, for the duration of its existence, the papal-imperial *diarchy* provided a loose ordering framework for Christendom that embodied the synthesis of authoritative and coercive power that is constitutive of political order. Moreover, while the centrality of Church and Empire as ordering institutions should not be understated, one must also acknowledge the limited character of their authority claims. While both pontiff and emperor claimed throughout Christendom the right of *auctoritas* (the power to judge the legitimacy of lower office-holders and the legality of their actions), neither consistently sought to translate this claim into one of *potestas*, understood as the right and ability to enforce compliance with one's commands.<sup>177</sup> Instead, the systemic and at times quite notional authority claims of pope and emperor helped integrate a heteronomous order in which reserves of material wealth remained low, capacities for organized remained radically

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<sup>174</sup> On this point, see Folz, *The Concept of Empire*, pp. 81-89 *passim*.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

<sup>177</sup> On the distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas* as Roman legal concepts and the implications of this distinction for the shape of the international order of Latin Christendom, see the helpful discussion in Andreas Osiander. "Before Sovereignty: Society and Politics in *Ancien Regime* Europe." *Review of International Studies* 27 (2001), pp. 123-125.

dispersed, loyalties were multiple and overlapping, and social power crystallized at an overwhelmingly local level.

Throughout Christendom, social power resided predominantly in the Church as a bureaucratically administered authoritative interaction network, and also within the kinship and patronage networks of the nobility.<sup>178</sup> Unsurprisingly, the authoritative and coercive institutions through which order was maintained within Christendom bore strongly the imprint of these different power networks. The most important of Christendom's authoritative institutions was the system of canon law administered by the papal courts to mediate and adjudicate violent disputes among the aristocracy. Down to the sixteenth century, confirmation by religious oath served as the main constitutive act in the process of ratifying treaties between disputants, with signed paper documents (where they existed at all) serving merely as accessory guarantees for such agreements.<sup>179</sup> Christendom's religious unity and the Church's acknowledged supremacy in adjudicating spiritual matters provided a ready-made framework for mediating conflicts and safeguarding treaty commitments, thereby assuring the credibility of such commitments and maintaining a modicum of social order.<sup>180</sup> As the breaching of a religious oath was perceived as a sin in violation of canon law, breaches of oaths necessarily fell under the jurisdiction of papal courts.<sup>181</sup> By confirming the terms of a treaty through a religious oath, contracting parties agreed to submit to the jurisdiction of the papal courts, thereby exposing themselves to a range of spiritual penalties should they be found to be in breach of their commitments.<sup>182</sup> Given the very real political consequences that could flow from an adverse ruling - the

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<sup>178</sup>Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, p. 385.

<sup>179</sup>Lesaffer, 'Peace Treaties from Lodi to Westphalia', p. 24.

<sup>180</sup>On this point, see generally Walter Ullman. "The Medieval Papal Court as an International Tribunal." In *The Papacy and Political Ideas in the Middle Ages*, edited by Walter Ullman, 365-71. London: Variorum Reprints, 1976.

<sup>181</sup>Lesaffer, 'Peace Treaties from Lodi to Westphalia', pp. 24-26.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 126.



sanction of excommunication absolved vassals from allegiance to an excommunicated lord, thereby exposing them to the threat of dispossession, deposition, or even death – the threat of papal sanctions could restrain even those with little concern for their own spiritual welfare.<sup>183</sup>

Canon law and the accompanying system of papal jurisdiction worked in conjunction with a richly elaborated system of feudal law to maintain order within Christendom. Over the course of centuries of aristocratic inter-marriage, Europe's politics had become enmeshed in extraordinarily dense and complex webs of criss-crossing genealogical ties. Given the centrality of marriage and inheritance as mechanisms of property transference in medieval Europe, a common corpus of customary feudal law was necessary to mediate the disputes that inevitably arose within such a tightly integrated environment.<sup>184</sup> Critically, while the existence of feudal law provided a common medium within which feuding aristocrats could articulate their competing claims, neither the existence of feudal or canon law could prevent Christendom from being riven by endemic aristocratic feuding. That feuding remained commonplace in spite of the existence of both canon and feudal law would appear to speak to the inadequacy – perhaps even of the irrelevance – of authoritative institutions in contributing to the creation of order within Christendom. Nevertheless, such an impression would be misplaced given the role played by the institution of the feud itself as an authorized practice of legitimate violence, one that was seen to complement rather than contradict the ordering influence of the aforementioned authoritative institutions. In contrast to the modern opposition between private violence and public law, noble violence was often inseparable from litigation in an environment in which no centralized agency existed to promulgate and enforce a

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> On the development of feudal law as a pan-European legal institution, see generally Berman, *Law and Revolution*, chapter nine.

uniform legal code.<sup>185</sup> Feuding did not occur within a legal vacuum, but was rather informed by feudal laws pertaining to matters such as the rights and duties of vassals and the rules for the proper dispensation of landed property. As medievalist Philip Geary notes, nobles' purpose in engaging in feuds was rarely to achieve the total extermination of the opponent, but rather to seek legal redress, with the end goal being the renegotiation of a continuing social bond with the opposing party on more favourable terms.<sup>186</sup> Contrary to the situation obtaining in a Weberian nation-state enjoying a coercive monopoly, inter-noble 'self-help' in the form of feuding was not antithetical to existing legal structures. Rather, the feud formed an integral part of the legal structures themselves, at least among the aristocracy.<sup>187</sup>

The final contributor to order within Christendom flowed directly from the material context within which conflicts occurred. Simply stated, the poverty, the technological backwardness, and the institutional frailty of governance structures in medieval Europe placed strict upper limits on the scale and destructiveness of conflicts within Christendom. For much of the Middle Ages, the subsistence nature of the European economy foreclosed the possibility of diverting large numbers of men from agricultural pursuits for participation in military campaigns.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, even if economic constraints had permitted the temporary mobilization of large infantry hosts, the bureaucratic and logistical capacities necessary to train, arm, equip and deploy large-scale armies had withered with the fall of Rome.<sup>189</sup> The dilapidated state of European roads further slowed the pace of armed confrontations and limited their operational range, while the dispersed character of military power curtailed the

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<sup>185</sup> Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, p. 68.

<sup>186</sup> Geary. 'Living with Conflicts in Stateless France', p. 145.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 393.

<sup>189</sup> Richard Bean. "War and the Birth of the Nation State." *The Journal of Economic History* 33, no. 1 (1973), pp. 217-218.

ambitions of lords and vassals alike.<sup>190</sup> Given the dominance of shock cavalry in medieval warfare and the largely non-monetized nature of the economy, rulers had long been compelled to provide grants of land in exchange for promises of military services from the nobility.<sup>191</sup> The result was the formation of political systems in which rulers were not qualitatively much stronger than their most powerful subjects, and were consequently painfully dependent – for both fiscal and military aid - upon the fickle loyalties of their vassals when contemplating war. Admittedly, from the mid-fifteenth century, the violence interdependence of Latin Christendom began to rise markedly, signalling an imminent transcendence of the technological and physical limits on conflict that had previously prevailed.<sup>192</sup> Nevertheless, for much of the life of Latin Christendom, physical limitations on the scale and scope of conflicts did much to reinforce the efficacy of ordering institutions and the pacifying effects of ideological unity already described.

Like all orders, the international order of Latin Christendom (table 3.1 below) was far from perfect. Religious unity provided the normative cement necessary to hold Latin Christendom together, but the Christian imperative of non-violence co-existed uneasily with other constructs that conceded a necessary role to aristocratic violence in the defence of the Church and the maintenance of temporal order. Moreover, in an environment in which the corporate self-image of the nobility was tied to the demonstration of martial prowess, Christianity's pacifying effects could only be limited. Similarly, the ordering institutions centred round the Church and the feud were both inadequate and indispensable as structural dampeners of conflict. Treaties

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<sup>190</sup>Hirst, *War and Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 19.

<sup>191</sup>Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 393.

<sup>192</sup>These processes are discussed in some detail in William H. McNeill. *The Pursuit of Power - Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982, chapter three.

guaranteed by religious oath and enforced by the papal courts could be partially effective in securing the peace between disputants, but this peace was always likely to be provisional while such treaties were perceived as being neither binding upon a prince's successors, nor even necessarily binding upon the vassals nominally under his control, a condition that prevailed in Europe well into the sixteenth century.<sup>193</sup> Equally, the institution of feud may have been inseparable from processes of aristocratic litigation, but the mere fact that recourse to violent self-help was recognized as an ordering mechanism is demonstrative of the fragile character of order within Christendom. Finally, as we will shortly see, the very success of Latin Christendom in generating a modicum of order ironically permitted the acceleration of processes that would ultimately corrode the material limitations on conflict that were operative in the medieval period.<sup>194</sup>

### **3.2 The Decay of Latin Christendom, 1350-1500**

#### **3.2.1 The Crisis of the Papal-Imperial Diarchy and the Onset of Institutional Decay**

A consideration of Christendom's decay must begin by surveying the decline of the two institutions within Christendom claiming universal authority in the Middle Ages. While ostensibly complementary as the secular and sacred legatees of Roman universalism, Empire and Papacy remained locked in conflict throughout the Middle Ages in a struggle encompassing ideological, infrastructural and eventually even

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<sup>193</sup> Lesaffer, 'Peace Treaties from Lodi to Westphalia', pp. 15-21.

<sup>194</sup> This point is made with some eloquence in Karl W. Deutsch. "Medieval Unity and the Economic Conditions for an International Civilization." *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 10, no. 1 (1944): 18-35. See specifically p. 30.

**Table 3.1 The International Order of Latin Christendom, 1000-1350**

<b>Normative Complex</b>	<b>Governing Institutional Framework</b>	<b>Order-Enabling Material Context</b>
<b>Identity-Constitutive Norms</b> Salvation through the Church as <i>raison d'être</i> of collective association	<b>Ordering Framework</b> Heteronomous system of overlapping jurisdictions loosely governed by papal-imperial <i>diarchy</i>	<b>Aggregate Capacities for Production and Destruction</b> Feudal mode of production and aristocratic oligopoly over organized violence
<b>Ethical-Prescriptive Norms</b> Christian Ethics (including the just war tradition) as articulated by the Church	<b>Authoritative Institutions</b> - Mediation and enforcement of treaties through canon law and the papal courts - Feudal Law	<b>Mobilizational Networks</b> - Dominance of aristocratic patronage and kinship networks - Bureaucratic Church hierarchy
<b>Power-Legitimizing Norms</b> Social ideology of tri-functionality and an Augustinian political theology	<b>Coercive Institutions</b> Aristocratic feud as a legitimate means of legal redress ('peace in the feud')	<b>Violence Interdependence</b> Low concentration and low accumulation of coercive means [Low violence interdependence]

geopolitical dimensions. At the level of ideology, which found its most perfect expression in the Church's thirteenth century theory of papal monarchy, the Church claimed both temporal and spiritual supremacy over Christendom.<sup>195</sup> While the Empire's legitimacy was recognized, it was said to derive its importance from the emperor's position as the Church's defender on earth. This task was provisionally delegated to the emperor by the pope, and was deemed essential if the church was to successfully accomplish its more important objective of securing the salvation of souls.<sup>196</sup> This perspective contrasted sharply with the alternative interpretation of

<sup>195</sup>For a comprehensive summation of the theory of papal monarchy, see J.A. Watt. *The Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Thirteenth Century*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1965.

<sup>196</sup>The political import of the Papacy's subscription to a doctrine of spiritual supremacy over the empire was that it conferred upon the pope a right to call for the deposition of an emperor deemed to have been

Church-Empire relations propounded by imperial propagandists, who stressed the Frankish and Roman origins of the institution of empire, and claimed that the emperor derived his authority directly from God rather than through the mediation of the Church.<sup>197</sup> At the level of infrastructural conflict, the Church sought to assure its independence by confirming the right of the pope alone to control the appointment of bishops within imperial territories. This objective brought the church into direct conflict with the emperor, for whom control over the appointment of bishops was crucial both as a source of elite patronage (ecclesiastical appointments could be used to bind local notables more closely to the Imperial court), and also by dint of the critical role played by the literate clergy as local administrators within the imperial bureaucracy.<sup>198</sup> Finally, from the mid-12<sup>th</sup> to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the conflict between papacy and empire assumed a geopolitical dimension, as the Church tried to stave off a bid by the Hohenstaufen emperors to unite the German, Burgundian, and Italian kingdoms under the imperial sceptre. As such a project, if successful, might have threatened the Pope's status as temporal ruler of the Papal States in central Italy, thereby undermining the Church's autonomy from imperial authority, successive popes conspired successfully with the Hohenstaufens' enemies to prevent the empire's consolidation<sup>199</sup>.

With the death of Frederick II in 1250 and the subsequent neutralization of Frederick's heirs, the Papacy succeeded in irreparably weakening the empire as a potential nucleus of a broader Western European confederation. The structural

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delinquent in fulfilling his obligations to the church. Such a doctrine clearly compromised the autonomous power of the emperor, and was as such fiercely opposed by imperial propagandists from the Investiture Contest onwards, who attempted to argue that the emperor derived his power directly from God rather than via the institution of the papacy. See Folz, *The Concept of Empire*, pp. 110-112.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> Berman, *Law and Revolution*, p. 97.

<sup>199</sup> On papal fears concerning the potential threat to the Papal States posed by Hohenstaufen imperialism, see John A. Watt, "The Papacy," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Volume V, C. 1198-1300*, ed. David Abulafia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).. See specifically p. 130.

consequences of the Hohenstaufens' defeat were of inestimable importance for Europe's subsequent evolution. The early defeat of the Hohenstaufen project of imperial consolidation guaranteed the long-term persistence of a fragmented sovereignty regime along the great urban dorsal spine of Europe, opening up room for the emergence of a variety of institutional forms (e.g. city-states, city-state leagues) that would successfully resist incorporation into national states down to the nineteenth century.<sup>200</sup> In combining with the German princes to sabotage processes of imperial consolidation, the papacy prevented a central polity from coalescing around the great trading city-belt stretching from Northern Italy to the Baltic Sea. The long-term import of papal intervention in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was that subsequent German emperors were unable to effectively tap the massive surpluses locked up in capital containers such as the Italian city-states, thereby denying them the fiscal resources necessary to build up a hegemonic state capable of unifying the cultural and economic heartland of late medieval Europe.<sup>201</sup> Instead, with the road to capital-intensive empire building blocked,<sup>202</sup> European processes of state formation subsequently advanced most rapidly in areas beyond the central city-belt (e.g. Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy), that is, in areas outside of Europe's core

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<sup>200</sup>For a detailed description of the great urban dorsal spine of Central Europe and its influence on the sequencing of state formation on the Continent, see Peter Flora, Stein Kuhnle, and Derek Urwin, eds. *State Formation, Nation-Building, and Mass Politics in Europe: The Theory of Stein Rokkan, Based on His Collected Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 179. On the role played by the defeat of the Hohenstaufens in facilitating the consolidation of princely territorial jurisdiction within Germany and in opening up political space for the emergence of city-states and city-leagues in Europe, see Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors*, pp. 114-116.

<sup>201</sup>Interestingly, D.J.A. Matthews also hypothesizes that the preservation of a coherent empire in Western Europe may have provided Latin Christendom with a more effective framework through which to defend Eastern Europe from the confrontation with the Mongols beginning in 1241; given the profound influence exercised by the Mongol incursions on Eastern Europe's (and particularly Russia's) subsequent development, one cannot help but speculate on the possible trajectory of East-West relations that might have emerged had the Empire been able to assist in the manner raised by Matthews. See D.J.A. Matthews. "Reflections on the Medieval Roman Empire." *History - Journal of the Historical Association* 77 (1992): 363-90. See specifically p. 389.

<sup>202</sup>For a summation of the different pathways towards state formation witnessed in the European state system (*viz.*, capital-intensive, coercion-intensive, and capitalized coercion), see Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*, pp. 16-20.

zone of taxable wealth.<sup>203</sup> While not definitively assuring West-Central Europe's subsequent transition from medieval heteronomy to a modern sovereign state system, the Papacy's early defeat of Empire made such an eventual transition considerably more likely.

In the aftermath of the Empire's defeat, the Papacy enjoyed a fleeting period of supremacy that can retrospectively be read as a sort of Indian summer for the international order of Latin Christendom. In comparison with the ordering institutions of the modern international system, the authority of the Papal court within Christendom seems particularly impressive. The Papal court contrasted starkly with the modern International Court of Justice inasmuch as its jurisdiction was compulsory, it authoritatively explained, interpreted, and developed the law through the issuing of papal decretals, and it could reasonably anticipate – by dint of the unquestioned spiritual authority it exerted over all believers – the reliable enforcement of its decisions.<sup>204</sup> In an era in which Aristotelian concepts of the state as an autonomous corporate association had yet to be fully recovered, notions of territorial or state sovereignty remained unknown. To the extent the idea of sovereignty was apprehended at all, it attached to individual persons, whose membership within the universal Church necessarily left them subject to papal jurisdiction and hence vulnerable to papal sanctions.<sup>205</sup> At the height of its power, the Church routinely struck down the laws and customs of lesser powers, ordered the revision or annulment

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<sup>203</sup> On this great paradox of European development, whereby strong states emerged most rapidly at the periphery of the old empire, see Flora, P., *et al.*, *State Formation, Nation-Building, and Mass Politics in Europe*, p. 145.

<sup>204</sup> Walter Ullman. "The Medieval Papal Court as an International Tribunal." In *The Papacy and Political Ideas in the Middle Ages*, edited by Walter Ullman, 356-71. London: Variorum Reprints, 1976. See specifically p. 356.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 368.



of treaties, and even deprived kings and emperors of their powers through deposition or excommunication.<sup>206</sup>

From its mid-thirteenth century apogee, the papacy nevertheless soon began a process of decline that accelerated rapidly from the early fourteenth century. The Church's involvement in power politics during the anti-imperial struggle and its exploitation of its spiritual powers in the furtherance of its political objectives substantially diminished its spiritual authority in the eyes of many. Additionally, the Church's reliance on Western European kings – particularly the French King – to balance the emperor inaugurated a relationship of increasing dependence on secular powers that would reach its zenith during the Avignon papacies (the so-called period of Babylonian Captivity) from 1309-1378.<sup>207</sup> To a certain extent, the papacy's decline paralleled the ascendancy of late medieval kings, with the thirteenth century recovery of Aristotelian concepts of statehood providing the latter with invaluable ideological resources with which to justify their assertion of autonomy from papal authority. As the fourteenth century progressed, and the papacy experienced first the Babylonian Captivity and then the Great Schism (1378-1417), the efficacy of papal jurisdiction over Christendom waned. Notwithstanding their public lamentations over the polarization of Christian loyalties between two (and later three) popes, Europe's secular rulers exploited the Church's weakness during this time to further encroach on its prerogatives within their own territories.<sup>208</sup> The subsequent post-Schism division within the Church between defenders of papal supremacy and conciliarists (those insisting upon the pope's ultimate accountability to a general council of the Church) provided further scope for monarchical aggrandizement against the Church.<sup>209</sup> While

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<sup>206</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 362-364.

<sup>207</sup>Gordon Leff. "Heresy and the Decline of the Medieval Church." *Past and Present* 20 (1961), p. 38.

<sup>208</sup>Leff, 'Heresy and the Decline of the Medieval Church', p. 38-39.

<sup>209</sup>Martin Wight. *Systems of States*. London: Leicester University Press, 1977, pp. 131-134.

successive popes successfully quashed conciliarists' calls for internal reform, the cultivation of the conciliarist faction by secular rulers left the Church internally divided, further diminishing its capacity to fulfil its ordering functions within Christendom.<sup>210</sup>

### 3.2.2 The Growth of Dissent and the Weakening of Christian Unity

From the thirteenth through to the fifteenth centuries, Christendom witnessed the fracturing of the papal-imperial *diarchy* and with it, the enervation of two of Christendom's overarching ordering institutions. The possibility of imperial consolidation was abruptly terminated in the mid-thirteenth century, brought down by a coalition of actors working within and beyond the empire and coordinated by an activist and self-confident papal monarchy. The erosion of papal authority by contrast can be more readily likened to the effects of a progressive stroke, with division and inertia within the Church combining with the opportunistic defiance of secular rulers to steadily corrode the efficacy of papal jurisdiction within Christendom. By 1500 both papacy and empire were immeasurably weakened, a process that had been paralleled by a discernible loosening in the grip of Church orthodoxy over the medieval imagination. Recall that a major ordering mechanism within Christendom was elites' subscription to a common world-view, comprised of commitment to salvation as the over-riding purpose of collective association, adherence to a Christian code of ethics as defined by the Church, and acceptance of a social ideology of tri-functionality and an Augustinian political theology. This edifice was to remain intact

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<sup>210</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 134. Wight goes as far as to argue that Christendom was in effect headless by the mid-fifteenth century, and that there existed at this time sovereign states but not a sovereign state system. While I agree that Christendom was in an advanced state of decay by the mid-fifteenth century, I believe Wight overstates the case in this regard, for reasons that should become evident in the remainder of this chapter and the next two chapters.

down to the Reformation, but by then serious cracks had begun to appear in its foundations.

The challenges to Christendom's normative unity were both indirect and direct in nature. Indirectly, the recovery of classical knowledge – and specifically the recovery of Roman law and ancient conceptions of the political as a sphere of interaction potentially independent of religion – posed a potentially grave threat to the Church's ideological hegemony. Initially, the near-monopoly on literacy enjoyed by the Church enabled popes such as Innocent III to marshal classical legacies such as Roman law and imperial conceptions of power (the *plenitudo potestatis*) to the cause of promoting universal papal monarchy.<sup>211</sup> Over time, however, it was Europe's ruling families who more effectively appropriated the classical heritage to justify their admittedly tentative and halting centralization of political power. The Church's interpretation of political authority as a repressive, remedial order divinely ordained as punishment for man's sinfulness explicitly subordinated the temporal to the sacred. In this formulation, kings derived their power from the top down – that is, their power was explicitly the product of divine sanction, and the pope as Christ's vicar on earth could thus effectively adjudicate the legitimacy of its exercise.<sup>212</sup> By contrast, Aristotelian conceptions of the polis as an autonomous community – one brought into being by man's natural propensity towards sociability – suggested an alternative, 'bottom up' justification for political authority not tied to the Church's salvation mission.<sup>213</sup> In providing an alternative, secular conceptualization of political authority, the recovered classical heritage provided Europe's rulers with legitimating principles that reduced their ideological dependence on the Church, potentially undermining the ordering structure of Latin Christendom.

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<sup>211</sup>See generally Watt, *The Theory of Papal Monarchy*, pp. 97-105.

<sup>212</sup>Ullman, 'The Medieval Papal Court as an International Tribunal', p. 367.

<sup>213</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 366.

As it transpired, the recovery of Europe's classical heritage did not radically corrode Christendom's foundations. Ideologically and intellectually, the Church initially demonstrated a robust capacity for adaptation, proving capable of reconciling the ancients' stress on human reason with its own emphasis on divine revelation as early as the thirteenth century. Additionally, if Roman law and ancient conceptions of political power ultimately proved fungible, being accessible to royalist propagandists as well as to proponents of papal monarchy, this did not prompt the former to entirely abandon religious legitimations of kingly power. Rather, the classical revival increased the self-consciousness with which kings advanced their authority claims, providing them with the ideological resources necessary to re-negotiate rather than directly sever their ties to the Church.<sup>214</sup> That Renaissance thinkers were able to even formulate secular theories of politics is indicative of the fact that a sovereign European international society was imaginable by the late fifteenth century. Conversely, the hostility these theories often evoked attests to the continuing centrality of sacral forms of collective identity in Europe, and also to the mutually entwined character of religious and political power structures in Christendom as it stood on the cusp of dissolution.

In emphasizing nature over divinity, human reason rather than human sinfulness, and the polis over the Church as a focal point of human association, the classical revival presented as a slow-acting, indirect threat to Christendom's normative unity. A much more direct threat to this order was the growth of popular heretical movements in late medieval Europe. The forces driving the growth of popular heresy were manifold, but foremost among them was disillusionment with the Church owing

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<sup>214</sup> The concordats signed between the Church and the French and Spanish kings in the period immediately preceding the Reformation – agreements that kept these realms within Christendom while dramatically increasing the religious authority of both monarchs within their kingdoms – are emblematic of this process of renegotiation.

to its perceived worldliness, corruption, and neglect of its pastoral duties. The combination of monarchical centralization, intensified geopolitical competition, and the increasing financial demands of late medieval warfare had driven a creeping usurpation of the Church's prerogatives and material assets in many parts of Western Europe.<sup>215</sup> In response, the Church resorted to a range of expedients - from the sale of offices to the increased sale of indulgences – that momentarily relieved its financial situation while simultaneously eroding its moral authority over the longer term.<sup>216</sup>

While the pressures that compelled the Church to adopt such self-subverting financial expedients were beyond its immediate control, the Church's ability to manage challenges to its moral and spiritual authority was further weakened by its increasingly inflexible response to heterodox religious movements. Whereas earlier waves of lay religious fervour had been successfully canalized into monastic and mendicant orders under the Church's control, the Church proved unwilling from the thirteenth century onwards to countenance further accommodations with lay pietist movements.<sup>217</sup> Where previously the Church had demonstrated a capacity to assimilate potential challenges to its spiritual authority, the establishment of the papal inquisition at the height of the Church's power in the 1230s marked a shift from conciliation and co-optation to coercion as a preferred method of dealing with religious dissent.<sup>218</sup> Subsequently, the Church identified popular impulses for spiritual renewal with heresy even in instances where practitioners sought merely to enjoy a more immediate experience of the divine by emulating the austere lifestyle of Christ's

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<sup>215</sup> This was particularly evident in the case of the Hundred Years' War, where the financial exigencies of sustaining the conflict saw a sustained monarchical usurpation of Church powers and material assets on both sides of the English Channel. On this point, see Leff, 'Heresy and the Decline of the Medieval Church', p. 38.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>218</sup> On the broader institutional and social dynamics driving the Church towards an increasingly rigid and inflexible stance over time, see generally R.I. Moore. *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.

early followers.<sup>219</sup> The wisdom of such a strategy may always have been questionable, but as the Church's capacities to maintain its ideological hegemony waned in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it served only to radicalize religious dissenters and further heighten the likelihood of a systemic ideological challenge to the Church's authority.

The collision between the Church's ideological rigidity and an upsurge in popular piety in the late medieval period exposed the former to the risk of direct challenges to its legitimacy. This threat manifested itself most acutely in the Lollard and Hussite heresies that blossomed during the period of the Great Schism. Given the localized character of these heresies and their limited scope for cross-regional transmission in an era preceding the invention of the printing press, the immediate systemic consequences of these heresies were limited. Nevertheless, they merit attention, and not merely for their genealogical significance as forerunners of the Reformation. Unlike earlier movements that had emerged when the papacy was in the ascendancy, fifteenth century heresy blossomed in an environment of institutional weakness on the part of the Church. Throughout its evolution, a common faith had provided the ideological cement holding Christendom together. But as the fifteenth century advanced, processes of institutional decay within the Church called forth movements that signalled the potential transience of this unity.

### 3.2.3. The Money and the Gun – Material Transformations and the Decay of Latin Christendom

The institutional decay and incipient religious fragmentation of the late medieval period substantially reduced the effectiveness of Christendom's ordering

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<sup>219</sup> Leff, 'Heresy and the Decline of the Medieval Church', pp. 40-41.

mechanisms. This breakdown of order was further exacerbated by changes in Christendom's material foundations. Ironically, the very stability provided by Christendom's ordering institutions hastened material processes that would ultimately be implicated in its destruction. While initially restricted to long-distance trading circuits centred around urban enclaves and occasional trade fairs, the market economy increasingly permeated the Western European social fabric as the Middle Ages progressed, a development that was only temporarily arrested with the Black Death and the ensuing demographic catastrophe of the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>220</sup> Medieval improvements in metallurgical techniques increased the yields of central Europe's silver mines, raising the amount of specie money in circulation and thus further driving the commercialization of the economy.<sup>221</sup> This increase in the supply of specie money paralleled the further growth in long-distance trade in the thirteenth-mid fourteenth centuries occasioned by the emergence of a Eurasia-wide *Pax Mongolica*.<sup>222</sup> Both of these processes in turn stimulated the development of deeper credit markets (e.g. to finance naval construction and insurance), dramatically expanding the pool of liquid wealth in Western Europe available for borrowing, taxation, or outright confiscation.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>220</sup>Ruggie in fact argues that the Black Death accelerated processes of commercialization – and with it ultimately the medieval-to-modern transition to a sovereign state system – in the long term. Specifically, Ruggie argues that the shift in relative factor prices between land and labour occasioned by demographic contraction increased the relative bargaining power of serfs *vis-à-vis* landlords, altering the matrix of social constraints and opportunities in a way that was ultimately conducive to the development of a sovereign state system. Some historians have taken issue with conjecture about the systemic effects of the Black Death, arguing for the particularity and variability of different regional experiences. The broad generalization invoked by Ruggie regarding the systemic socio-economic consequences of the Black Death over the *longue durée* nevertheless continues to enjoy wide support, and is consistent with the argument advanced here. See Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity*, pp. 182-184. On the broader debate about the effects of the Black Death on Christendom's economic evolution, see William H. McNeill. *Plagues and Peoples*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976, pp. 183-184.

<sup>221</sup>McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*, p. 71.

<sup>222</sup>On the pivotal importance of the *Pax Mongolica* in facilitating a Eurasia-wide surge in long-distance trade, see Janet L. Abu-Lughod. *Before European Hegemony - the World System A.D. 1250-1350*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, chapter five.

<sup>223</sup>McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*, p. 72.

Occurring roughly contemporaneously with these developments, Christendom witnessed a series of changes in war-fighting technologies and techniques that would culminate in the 14<sup>th</sup> century introduction of gunpowder and the ensuing ‘gunpowder revolution’ of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Anticipating the early modern military revolution, some scholars have gone so far as to argue for the existence of a late medieval military revolution, with increased recourse to projectile weapons and infantry pikemen heralding the decline of feudal shock cavalry well prior to the introduction of gunpowder into European warfare.<sup>224</sup> It is not necessary to embrace the analogy between late medieval innovations and subsequent military revolutions to accept that European warfare was becoming progressively more decisive and more destructive as the Middle Ages waned. The introduction of gunpowder artillery dramatically – if only temporarily – shifted the advantage in warfare to the offence, enabling ambitious monarchs to rapidly reduce the fortresses of rebellious subjects.<sup>225</sup> Simultaneously, the growth of international credit markets enabled rulers to transcend the restraints of feudal warfare by recruiting mercenary armies, either with money drawn directly from loans or by drawing upon cash payments provided by vassals in exchange for the commutation of their military obligations.<sup>226</sup> Unsurprisingly, the commercialization of military violence manifested itself most precociously and most prominently in the wealthy city-states of northern Italy, before spreading unevenly throughout Christendom.<sup>227</sup> Its uneven geographical diffusion notwithstanding, the

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<sup>224</sup>For a general argument for the existence of a medieval Revolution in Military Affairs, see for example Clifford Williams. "‘As If a New Sun Had Risen’: England's Fourteenth Century RMA." In *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050*, edited by Macgregor Knox and Murray Williamson, 15-34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

<sup>225</sup>Bean, ‘War and the Birth of the Nation State’, pp. 207-208. See also William H. McNeill. *The Age of Gunpowder Empires 1450-1800*. Washington DC: American Historical Association, 1989, p. 6.

<sup>226</sup>McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>227</sup>*Ibid.*



systemic consequences of this process were both undeniable and inimical to Latin Christendom's survival.

Commercialization and military-technological change were both derivatives of the stability afforded by the order of Latin Christendom. Nevertheless, these processes together contributed to that order's dissolution through the increase in violence interdependence that they produced. What little order existed in medieval Europe owed to both religious unity and to authoritative institutions and authorized practices of legitimate violence, but it also stemmed from a material context that limited the destructive scale and destabilizing consequences of aristocratic violence. The poverty of medieval Europe, its technological backwardness, the localized level at which military, political and economic power crystallized – these constituted irreducibly material parametric constraints on violence that were essential to the preservation of order at a systemic level. Consequently, as the material foundations of Christendom shifted, as warfare became more decisive and more destructive, ordering mechanisms designed to function in a more benign material environment began to diminish in effectiveness. Simultaneously, the same conflict-producing elements that had earlier fuelled endemic feuding – an aristocratic culture of existential bellicosity, a wide dispersal of coercive resources throughout the social fabric, a noble preoccupation with territorial aggrandizement – continued to operate in a more combustible geopolitical context. Neither mammon nor the cannonball brought down Christendom. But the two working in combination did tighten and enlarge the web of coercive interactions the order was trying to contain. Alongside advanced institutional decay and growing ideological dissent, this increase in violence interdependence constituted the final degenerative macro-process eating away at the foundations of the *Respublica Christiana*.

### **3.3 The Decline of Christendom and Statements of Possibility at 1500**

By the early sixteenth century, it was evident that Christendom was in an advanced state of decay. The jurisdiction of the papal courts over international conflicts was appreciably weaker than it had ever been during the High Middle Ages. Additionally, the papacy had been compelled to conclude a range of concordats with Renaissance kings that effectively ceded to them supervisory control over the Church's activities within their territories.<sup>228</sup> Europe's princes continued to recognize the empire's nominal authority, as evidenced by the fiercely contested character of imperial elections. But the empire had long since ceased to function as a viable centralized political entity. The defeat of the Hohenstaufens in the mid thirteenth century, coupled with the long vacancy of the imperial office from this point down to the early fourteenth century, had irrevocably strengthened the position of the towns and petty princelings *vis-à-vis* the imperial centre.<sup>229</sup> In the future epicentre of the Reformation there thus lay an enfeebled imperial structure honey-combed by petty state-lets and trading entrepôts, lacking anything more than the merest semblance of centralized political power.<sup>230</sup> Meanwhile, beyond the empire, resurgent 'new monarchies' in England, France and Spain were exploiting gunpowder, the growth of international credit markets, and the commercialization of military violence to open up an insuperable distance between their own power and that of their vassals, anticipating the subsequent rise of sovereign states.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Ullman, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages*, p. 325.

<sup>229</sup> On this point, see F.R.H. Du Boulay. *Germany in the Later Middle Ages*. London: The Athlone Press, 1983, pp. 23-27.

<sup>230</sup> On this point, see G.R. Elton. *Reformation Europe, 1517-1559*. 2nd ed. London: Blackwell, 1999, pp. 7-8.

<sup>231</sup> Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*, p. 41.

Superficially, the foregoing portrait appears to present a picture not of Christendom's decay so much as its disintegration by 1500. The contrasting fortunes of papacy and empire on the one hand, and the Renaissance 'new monarchies' on the other, invite the view that by the sixteenth century centralizing monarchies were irrepressibly bursting through the rotten integuments of the old medieval order, signalling the *de facto* if not yet the *de jure* triumph of an embryonic European sovereign state system. Were such claims to be accepted at face value, the discussion of Latin Christendom's collapse could end here. As it is, a number of considerations invalidate this reading, necessitating a more detailed exploration of the forces responsible for Christendom's destruction.

The first observation that needs to be made is elementary, and concerns the distinction that must be drawn between decay and collapse. That Christendom's institutions, normative unity, and material foundations were being corroded prior to its disintegration is undeniable, and recognition that collapse came only after a prolonged period of decay is essential to understanding Christendom's eventual demise. But to extrapolate from decay to collapse is perilous precisely because such a move obscures the continuing vitality of system-integrating forces that remained strong down to the Reformation. Certainly, the fifteenth century witnessed a growth in popular heresies, but these movements did not fundamentally detract from the remarkable religious *cum* ideological unity that characterised Christendom. The contemporary maxim *religio vincula societatis* – 'religion is the bond of society' - captures the universally held assumption that religious unity was central to the maintenance of political and social order, and also integral to the very identity of early modern Europeans.<sup>232</sup> Far from

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<sup>232</sup>Heinz Schilling. "Confessional Europe." In *Handbook of European History 1400-1600 Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation Volume II: Visions, Programs, and Outcomes*, edited by Thomas A. Brady Jr., Heiko A. Oberman and James D. Tracy, 641-81. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995. See specifically p. 642.

diminishing in importance with the blossoming of the Renaissance, this religiously centred conception of collective identity had if anything been sharpened by the contemporaneous growth of Turkish power on Christendom's south-eastern flank.

Though greatly diminished in importance from the mid-thirteenth century, the institutions of canon law and the papal courts also continued to serve as essential adjudicatory structures within Christendom. Confirmation of treaties by religious oath remained the constitutive act in the process of treaty ratification down to the 1540s, and parties continued to agree to submit themselves to ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the event of an accused breach of treaty terms.<sup>233</sup> More generally, the Church continued to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction throughout Christendom, thereby preserving a pervasive legal influence throughout Western and Central Europe. In its position as Christendom's largest land-holder, the Church's material assets and accompanying jurisdictional authority pockmarked each of Europe's kingdoms and principalities.<sup>234</sup> However imperfectly it fulfilled its pastoral functions, the Church also continued to assume responsibility for moral education and policing at the village level, providing the only effective supra-local governing presence within most communities.<sup>235</sup> Finally, while monarchs steadily chipped away at the Church's assets and prerogatives, the sacerdotal conceptions of kingship they relied upon to legitimate their power remained intimately tied to the cosmology and political theology propagated by the Church.

In addition to religious unity, Christendom also remained integrated by the existence of an exceptionally dense web of trans-polity aristocratic genealogical ties, along with an accompanying corpus of feudal laws for regulating dynastic succession and property disputes. The growing violence interdependence of late medieval

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<sup>233</sup> Lesaffer, 'Peace Treaties from Lodi to Westphalia', p. 24.

<sup>234</sup> Ullman, *Law and Politics in the Middle Ages*, p. 45.

<sup>235</sup> Schilling, 'Confessional Europe', p. 642.

Christendom had increased the destructiveness of war without changing either its ultimate objects or the larger legal structures through which it was mediated. The existence of trans-polity aristocratic webs, the institution of proprietary dynasticism, and the persistence of dynastic strategies of territorial accumulation such as marriage, transfer and inheritance guaranteed a condition of perpetual low-level conflict within the European nobility.<sup>236</sup> Nevertheless, this very same inter-connectedness worked with the aristocracy's sense of a shared corporate identity to bind Christendom together.

While demonstrating signs of advanced decay, Latin Christendom was far from dead by the sixteenth century. Quintessentially 'medieval' features of this order continued to form part of Christendom's fundamental structure, belying narratives that project Christendom's demise as far back as the fifteenth century.<sup>237</sup> In addition to the significance of these medieval survivals, the archaic nature of the Renaissance monarchies must also be stressed. When judged relative to the frailty of feudal kingdoms, the centralizing initiatives of the fifteenth century Renaissance monarchs appear impressive. Conversely, when evaluated against the Absolute monarchies of the seventeenth century, the infrastructural power of the Renaissance monarchies presents as positively anaemic. While France had pioneered the development of standing armies, becoming the first kingdom to deploy such a force from 1445, authority and control over organized violence remained dispersed amongst the nobility as Europe approached the Reformation.<sup>238</sup> Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth

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<sup>236</sup>On the persistence of proprietary dynasticism in Europe down to the late eighteenth century, see generally Herbert H. Rowen. *The King's State: Proprietary Dynasticism in Early Modern France*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980. On the continuing salience of supposedly archaic dynastic patrimonial interests for the conduct of international relations throughout the early modern period, see Jeremy Black. *Kings, Nobles and Commoners - States and Societies in Early Modern Europe, a Revisionist History*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, pp. 68-69.

<sup>237</sup>For a variant of just such an argument, see for example Wight, *Systems of States*, chapter five.

<sup>238</sup>David Kaiser. *Politics and War - European Conflict from Philip II to Hitler*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 23.

centuries, the weakness of the crown was apparent from the fact that princes regularly concluded peace treaties with their powerful vassals that were in no way substantively different to those concluded with foreign princes.<sup>239</sup> Sovereigns exercised neither a monopoly on violence, nor a monopoly on representing their territories or entering into peace treaties with other princes.<sup>240</sup> The dependence of the crown upon the nobility to assist in governing the royal patrimony was reflected in their reliance on a plethora of practices – from tax farming to the sale of offices – that while temporarily expedient did little to enhance the crown’s long-term infrastructural power. To the extent that the ‘new monarchies’ represented an advance over existing political forms, they did so inasmuch as the Renaissance kings were able to more effectively centralize patronage than had their predecessors. Conversely, the construction of robust sovereign states governed by a rational-legal bureaucracy was still far off in the sixteenth century.

The point I seek to convey in illuminating the limitations of the Renaissance monarchies is that it is misleading to read the existence of a European state system back into the sixteenth century, and to conclude that the collapse of Latin Christendom had occurred at some indefinite time prior to this point. The centralizing new monarchies of Western Europe certainly constituted a powerful subversive influence within Christendom, and both profited from and contributed to the further corrosion of both papacy and empire. But to conceive of late medieval and early modern state formation as the locomotive driving the shift from medieval heteronomy to modern sovereign anarchy is empirically unsustainable.<sup>241</sup> While the latter half of the fifteenth century had seen a surge in state formation along Western Europe’s Atlantic fringe, these processes of state formation were if anything abating rather than accelerating by

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<sup>239</sup> Lesaffer, ‘Peace Treaties from Lodi to Westphalia’, pp. 15-16.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, p. pp. 138-141.

1500.<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, the new monarchies in the sixteenth century constituted merely one of a number of institutional forms – alongside city-states and city-leagues – extant at this time, and the unqualified triumph of the former as Europe’s modal political form was at this point far from guaranteed.<sup>243</sup> Each of these forms also continued to dwell in an environment constituted by a combination of feudal and canon law, a factor that further retarded the evolution towards the dominance of the sovereign state and the crystallization of a European state system.

The final observation of Christendom at 1500 that needs to be made concerns the trajectory not taken. Specifically, the possibility of Christendom evolving from medieval heteronomy to modern empire must be mentioned, if only to underscore the fluidity and indeterminacy of the environment in Western Europe at the eve of the Reformation. Throughout Eurasia, the sixteenth century witnessed a tendency towards commercial expansion and imperial consolidation under the banner of newly ascendant ‘gunpowder empires.’<sup>244</sup> In the Muslim world, the Ottomans, the Mughals, and the Safavids each exploited the power of gunpowder to subdue local potentates and construct sizeable empires across Eurasia’s Islamic crescent.<sup>245</sup> Similarly, the century also witnessed the further consolidation of imperial forms in both Muscovy and Ming China.<sup>246</sup> In Western Europe, the papacy had previously defeated a Hohenstaufen bid for imperial consolidation in the thirteenth century, consolidating a heteronomous international order that had persisted down to the modern era. In the sixteenth century, however, the vagaries of European dynastic diplomacy, the shock of renewed religious schism, and the looming Turkish threat again tantalizingly raised

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<sup>242</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup>On this point, see generally Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors*, chapters four through seven.

<sup>244</sup>McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 116.

<sup>245</sup>*Ibid.* See also more generally C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian - the British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*. London: Longman, 1989, chapter one.

<sup>246</sup>McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 116.

the prospect of a Christendom united under the imperial banner of Charles V. That such a possibility was even conceivable is suggestive of the fluidity of Christendom in a period in which the old international order had seriously decayed, but in which the lineaments of a new order were not yet clearly in prospect.

History teaches us that Western Europe would eventually transition from the heteronomous world of Latin Christendom to an Absolutist society of sovereign states. But for such a transition to occur, medieval survivals would need to be dissolved, alternative imperial possibilities foreclosed, and at least rudimentary ordering mechanisms for the emerging sovereign order constructed. The steady decay of Christendom that I have chronicled in this chapter provided the context out of which this evolutionary sequence emerged. But the road to a sovereign state system was far from straight. Before a new international order can emerge, its predecessor must first have collapsed, a process that necessarily entails enormous violence followed by a period of prolonged, chaotic disorder as power-holders scramble to construct new ordering institutions to fit radically changed material and ideal conditions. As the next chapter illustrates, Christendom would prove to be no exception to this rule.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE COLLAPSE OF LATIN CHRISTENDOM

#### Introduction

At the turn of the sixteenth century, Western and Central Europe remained integrated within the decaying but still discernible order of Latin Christendom. By the mid-seventeenth century, this order had been swept away, its place taken by an embryonic Absolutist system of sovereign states. The story of Christendom's dissolution and its succession by a sovereign state system is chronicled in the next two chapters. In this chapter, I limit my analysis to the period beginning with the Reformation's onset in 1517 and concluding with the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. My purposes in this chapter are twofold. Firstly, I aim to demonstrate *how* the ideological shock of the Reformation, working in conjunction with processes of geopolitical consolidation and institutional decay already evident from the late medieval period, served to fatally undermine Latin Christendom as an international order. Secondly, I seek to explain *why* Christendom's rulers were unable to effectively collaborate either to save Christendom from destruction or to contrive a viable alternative once it became clear that the old order was beyond redemption.

Whereas chapter four focuses on the immediate *causes* of Christendom's collapse, chapter five explores the systemic *consequences* of its collapse for Europe's subsequent political evolution. I argue Europe in the century following Christendom's demise reverted to a condition of 'immature anarchy' marked by poisonous sectarian division, pervasive civil and international war, and the partial or total breakdown of

centralized structures of political authority.<sup>247</sup> Far from laying the foundations of a sovereign international order, the combined forces of confessionalization and military revolution initially exerted profoundly centrifugal effects upon early modern Europe, inspiring a series of maladaptive responses from rulers that compounded rather than alleviated systemic disorder. Ultimately, the return to order was made possible only by a series of intellectual and cultural innovations forged during this bloody interregnum. Of these innovations, the articulation of notions of divine right sovereignty, the formulation of *politique* solutions to the problem of religious pluralism, and the generalization of norms of mutual recognition and non-intervention throughout Europe proved most critical in establishing the normative complex of a new order. It was only with the maturation of these constructs that Europe's rulers were able to fully reconcile themselves to the transformed ideal and material context yielded by religious schism and military revolution, thus permitting the establishment of a new order and with it an end to the disorder that prevailed in the century after Christendom but before sovereignty.

## **4.1 The Crisis Opens**

### **4.1.1 The Changing Strategic Landscape of Latin Christendom**

From the mid-fifteenth century down to the eve of the Reformation, a cluster of forces dramatically reconfigured Christendom's geopolitical landscape. The most basic of these forces, specifically the increase in violence interdependence, has already

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<sup>247</sup>On the notion of immature anarchy as a state of unregulated mortal conflict between different polities, and its distinction from a state of mature anarchy in which the benefits of political fragmentation are enjoyed without the accompanying instability, see Barry Buzan. *People, States and Fear*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983, pp. 96-101.

been mentioned. Recapitulating briefly, the introduction of modern artillery into European warfare signalled a transient but nevertheless critical shift towards offence dominance on the battlefield, corroding key parametric constraints on the scale and intensity of violence that had previously prevailed. Cannon batteries could now rapidly reduce fortifications that had previously appeared impregnable, a trend that generally enhanced the crown's position *vis-à-vis* the nobility and thus accelerated the centralization of political power.<sup>248</sup> The growth of professional foreign mercenary companies, disembedded from their original social context and often indifferent to the domestic political intrigues being played out within their host societies, served as the nuclei of embryonic standing armies that could be used for both domestic pacification as well as for external territorial aggrandizement.<sup>249</sup> Finally, the growth of international credit increased monarchs' capacity to field ever-larger armies, in so doing driving up the costs of war and thereby catalysing the further consolidation of power within a shrinking number of expanding political units.<sup>250</sup>

The transformative significance of the aforementioned trends should not be overstated. Technological changes in the fifteenth century did integrate Christendom's power-holders within an ever tighter and more expansive web of coercive interactions. But the cluster of institutional, organizational, and doctrinal changes associated with the early modern military revolution had yet to properly manifest themselves. Kings and nobles continued to enjoy an uneasy symbiotic relationship, with the nobility forming the leadership of hastily constructed, notoriously independent and often ramshackle and unreliable armed forces.<sup>251</sup> Similarly, the impetus towards political consolidation provided by the gunpowder revolution was arrested with the

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<sup>248</sup>Bean, 'War and the Birth of the Nation State', pp. 207-208.

<sup>249</sup>On this point, see generally V.G. Kiernan. "Foreign Mercenaries and Absolute Monarchy." In *Crisis in Europe, 1560-1660*, edited by Trevor Aston, 117-40. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.

<sup>250</sup>Bean, 'War and the Birth of the Nation State', p. 208.

<sup>251</sup>Kaiser, *Politics and War*, p. 21.

development of modern fortifications built in the *trace italienne* style, thereby preventing the emergence of a Western European ‘gunpowder empire’ and ensuring Europe’s return to a more indecisive mode of warfare as the sixteenth century advanced.<sup>252</sup> These observations notwithstanding, the increase in violence interdependence in late fifteenth century Christendom is undeniable, as is the quickening pace of political consolidation during this period.

In 1453, the strategic stalemate of the Hundred Years War between England and France was finally broken, with French cannon destroying the castles of the English king’s French vassals bringing the war to a successful climax for the Valois monarchy.<sup>253</sup> In the East, cannon operated and maintained by Christian mercenaries exerted a similarly powerful impact, enabling the Turkish sultan to conquer Constantinople in the same year.<sup>254</sup> 1477 witnessed the defeat of Charles the Bold of Burgundy and the partitioning of his patrimony between the Valois and Habsburg monarchies, further hastening the emergence of a bitter rivalry between the two dynasties.<sup>255</sup> Most spectacularly of all, in the fifty years between 1477-1527, the successful conclusion of a series of highly speculative marital alliances propelled the Habsburg monarchy to near hegemony in Western and Central Europe. At its furthest extent, the far-flung Habsburg matrimonial conglomeration would encompass approximately forty percent of Western and Central Europe’s population, incorporating all of the great financial centres of the West, as well as both the established silver mines of Central Europe and the vast silver and gold reserves of the New World.<sup>256</sup> The very size of the sprawling Habsburg patrimony ensured a

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<sup>252</sup> McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires*, p. 10.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

<sup>256</sup> Wim Blockmans. *Emperor Charles V 1500-1558*. London: Arnold, 2002, p. 36. In addition to Antwerp, Seville, and Augsburg, Charles’ Italian wars with France would additionally yield Milan (1525), Genoa (1528) and Florence (1530) to the Habsburg patrimony.

significant increase in Europe's strategic inter-connectedness, even if its far-flung nature would eventually work against its serving as the foundation of an imperial alternative to Latin Christendom.

The geopolitical consolidation of Christendom occurred against a backdrop of institutional decay already adverted to in the previous chapter. By 1500, the papacy had recovered from both the Great Schism as well as the conciliarists' subsequent efforts to institute reform of the Church by enhancing the authority of church councils at the expense of the papal monarchy. Far from reviving the Church, however, the papacy's suppression of internal calls for reform merely estranged it from the popular base of followers whose spiritual and pastoral needs the Church was increasingly failing to meet. By the early sixteenth century, aggrandizing monarchs were already undermining the Church's traditional exemption from royal taxation (most notably in France), while the papacy was neglecting the reform of the Church in favour of the pursuit of the papal monarchy's power-political interests in Italy.<sup>257</sup> Similarly, while the meteoric growth of Habsburg power revived medieval fears and hopes of universal monarchy, the institutional power of the imperial office remained limited. Certainly, the emperor's *auctoritas* – conceived as the right to judge the legitimacy of lower office-holders and the legality of their actions – continued to be widely recognized into the sixteenth century within the territorial confines of the empire. But the emperor's *potestas* – conceived as the right and ability to issue commands and enforce decisions within the empire – remained almost entirely notional.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> On the progressive erosion of the Church's exemptions from royal taxation and the eventual large-scale secularization of Church property even in countries that remained confessionally aligned to Rome, see Juan Gelabert. "The Fiscal Burden." In *Economic Systems and State Finance*, edited by Richard Bonney, 539-76. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. See specifically pp. 547-8.

<sup>258</sup> On the distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas*, see again Osiander, 'Before Sovereignty', pp. 122-123.

Latin Christendom thus entered the sixteenth century in an exceptionally fragile state, its stability being undermined by the combined forces of geopolitical consolidation and institutional decay. In an environment in which gunpowder, credit, and mercenarism had made warfare more costly, more violent and (temporarily, at least) offence-dominant, the institution of aristocratic feud no longer supported order but instead subverted it, providing rulers with a familiar and accepted rationale for their bellicosity in an environment in which feuds *qua* wars had become qualitatively more destructive than before. Equally, the interminable late medieval struggle for primacy between Church and Empire had left both institutions weakened, thereby diminishing the capacities of either emperor or pope to mobilize authoritative power in the service of order maintenance. Both the authoritative and coercive institutions through which order had been maintained in late medieval Christendom were declining into desuetude as the new century opened. Simultaneously, the rise of the 'new monarchies' on Christendom's Atlantic fringe, the Habsburgs' meteoric ascendancy, and the growth of Ottoman power on Europe's south-eastern flank called forth powerful new entities that unsettled Christendom's ordering framework in a multitude of different ways.

To the extent that a modicum of order prevailed in Western and Central Europe at all in 1500, it derived from the continuing integrity of Christendom's normative complex, a complex firmly anchored in Christendom's religious unity. Even after the material context out of which it had arisen had changed, even as its ordering institutions successively succumbed to processes of internal decay abetted and accelerated by these material changes, Christendom's ideological unity endured. It was only once this unity was shattered that Latin Christendom definitively collapsed.

#### 4.1.2 Ideological Schism and the Onset of Latin Christendom's Collapse

At first glance, Martin Luther presents as an unlikely agent of systemic transformation. An Austin friar and professor of theology, Luther was steeped in the intellectual tradition of the Church, and his ninety-five theses critiquing clerical abuses were initially intended to catalyse reform within the Church rather than precipitating irreparable schism.<sup>259</sup> Additionally, Luther neither challenged established claims that preparation for salvation constituted the *raison d'être* of collective association, nor did he question the prescriptive force of Christian ethics as an indispensable guide for human behaviour. These qualifications notwithstanding, Lutheran theology nevertheless posed a holistic challenge to the normative complex of Christendom, particularly as Luther's ideas matured in the face of official intransigence and attempts to persecute him as a heretic. At the most basic level, Luther repudiated power-legitimizing norms privileging the Church as the essential mediator between man and the divine, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the one supra-local governance structure common to all of Christendom. More fundamentally even than this, however, Lutheran theology disputed established norms governing the appropriate relationship between sacred and secular power structures, as well as anticipating a holistic reconceptualization of the very nature of religious worship and its relationship to the mundane world. An enormous literature has been written on the import of Luther's ideas for Europe's subsequent evolution, but for present purposes, it is sufficient to note the theological, political, and ontological dimensions of the Lutheran challenge.

Central to Luther's critique of the Church was his doctrine of justification by faith alone. Whereas the Church stressed the importance of good works, prayer, and

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<sup>259</sup>Elton, *Reformation Europe*, pp. 1-2.

fasting as means of securing one's salvation, Luther conversely argued that salvation was possible only by abandoning oneself to God's mercy and to the messages of the gospel. Having accepted the notion of God's omnipotence, Luther argued that it was blasphemous for humans to assume that they could through their own actions compel justification in the eyes of God.<sup>260</sup> Stressing Augustine's conception of man's essential sinfulness and his estrangement from the divine, Luther claimed that it was only through the gift of faith – a gift made possible by God's sacrifice of Christ – that man could again be reconciled with God and achieve salvation. Faith, rather than works, was the key to salvation, and faith in turn could best be cultivated by devoted study of Christ's message and His sacrifice as recorded in scripture.<sup>261</sup> Lutheran theology thus constituted a full-frontal assault not only upon clerical abuses, but also upon the whole moral economy of penances and indulgences underpinning Church theology.

As a corollary of his conception of justification by faith alone, Luther also rejected the intercessionary relationship between God and man that the Church had reserved for itself, arguing instead for the existence of an invisible priesthood of all believers linked directly to God by their faith in Him.<sup>262</sup> In attacking the idea that salvation was possible only through the Church, and with it the justification for the existence of a separate priestly caste to mediate between God and man, Luther assaulted the most basic power-legitimizing norms underpinning Christendom. Lutheran theology directly attacked the legitimacy of the only effective supra-local governance structure common to Western and Central Europe, while Luther's public burning of the canon law books in 1520 represented in the most symbolic way his denial of the Church's ecclesiastical jurisdiction.<sup>263</sup> In denying the authority of canon

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<sup>260</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>263</sup> On this point, see Harold Berman. "Religious Foundations of Law in the West: An Historical Perspective." *Journal of Law and Religion* 1, no. 1 (1983), p. 14.



law, Luther rejected a pivotal component of Christendom's common legal infrastructure, one that governed not merely matters pertaining to religious observance or family life, but that also mediated vertical relations between subjects and rulers and horizontal relations between rulers.

Given the interlocking character of religious and political power in early modern Europe, Luther's theological iconoclasm held weighty implications for the organization of political authority in Christendom. Official Church doctrine from Boniface VIII onwards centred on the organic unity of Christendom and emphasized the inseparability of the civil and ecclesiastical realms. The Church's doctrine of the Two Swords held that the Church was supreme in both ecclesiastical and the civil spheres, but that responsibility for the exercise of civil jurisdiction had been provisionally delegated by the Church to earthly rulers.<sup>264</sup> Opposing this vision of the civil and ecclesiastical as representing distinct but inter-locking realms, Luther articulated instead a doctrine of the Two Kingdoms. In view of Luther's conception of the church as a purely spiritual community, an invisible body of believers united in their faith in Christ rather than through their submission to a corporeal 'worldly' institution, a clearer distinction could be drawn between the celestial and the terrestrial than had existed previously.<sup>265</sup> In reconceptualizing the church as an invisible body of believers and divesting Rome of law-making powers, Lutheranism invited an identification of the institution of law as an institutionalized expression of the will of the ruler.<sup>266</sup> Equally, in denying the writ of canon law, Lutheranism struck at Christendom's legal canopy, working as a decomposition enzyme upon the tottering foundations of Christendom's heteronomous structure.

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<sup>264</sup>Watt, *The Theory of Papal Monarchy*, p. 66.

<sup>265</sup>Berman, 'Religious Foundations of Law in the West', p. 15.

<sup>266</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

Finally, the Reformation inaugurated by Luther contradicted the most basic ontological assumptions about the nature of spiritual and social life held by all Christians, rending a seam in Christendom's social fabric that eventually percolated to the level of the individual parish. Specifically, Lutheranism and its offshoots opposed a traditional conception of religion as magical, ritual and communal with a reconceptualization of religion cast in an ethical, intellectual, and individualistic mould.<sup>267</sup> In Church doctrine, the ritual of the Eucharist was held as the central constitutive experience of the Christian faith. The mass re-created and re-affirmed Christ's sacrifice on behalf of man, a sacrifice deemed cosmically necessary to repay the debt man incurred to God with his initial disobedience at the Fall.<sup>268</sup> With Christ's sacrifice, a restitution for man's disobedience was secured, making possible a reconciliation between man and God.<sup>269</sup> The ritual of the mass reaffirmed the bond between God and man made possible by Christ's sacrifice. In addition, it also performed a vital social and sacramental function. In entering into communion with other believers through participation in the Eucharist, Christians affirmed both their membership within the universal Church, and also the integrity and unity of the body social, encompassing both the living and the dead.<sup>270</sup>

The Eucharist – as the Church's central institution, was magical, in that it called for divine intervention into the social world through the priestly performance of a sacred rite; ritual, in that it centred around the formulaic performance of an established set of propitiatory acts; and communal, inasmuch as it centred around the collective remembrance and recreation of a sacrifice that secured salvation for both the

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<sup>267</sup> Philip S. Gorski. "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Ca. 1300 to 1700." *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000), p. 148.

<sup>268</sup> John Bossy. *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p 4.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> Bossy, 'The Mass as a Social Institution', p. 37.

living and the dead.<sup>271</sup> Official doctrine thus contrasted starkly with Luther's focus on justification by faith alone, his denial of the doctrine of substantiation and with it of the need for priestly intercession in the performance of the Eucharist, and his emphasis on individual prayer and the study of scripture as preferred means of drawing closer to God. In challenging the accepted interpretation of the mass, Lutheran theology compromised its indispensable function as both a mechanism of social integration and a collective means of affirming the unity of the body social. At a time when religion was popularly understood as referring not to a privately held body of beliefs but rather to a corporeally embodied community of believers, Protestant theology polarized Christendom around mutually exclusive and antagonistic confessional identities. The Reformation shattered the symbolic wholeness of the community of the faithful, affecting a rupture with the past that would eventually ramify throughout Christendom as a whole.

While beginning as a reformist critique of clerical abuses, the Reformation quickly mutated into a threat to Christendom's overarching normative complex. In addition to the challenge it posed to Christendom's constitutional values, however, the Reformation also carried with it profound and paradoxical institutional implications that further imperilled Christendom's perpetuation. At the systemic level, the effects of the Reformation were almost entirely disintegrative, with the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms striking like a sledgehammer against the brittle framework of canon law that had previously served as Christendom's mechanism for adjudicating international disputes. The order-maintaining capacity of canon law depended on a recognition of its validity and of the Church's unquestioned authority to interpret and apply it to individual cases. In providing actors with a principled justification for rejecting the

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<sup>271</sup>This point is drawn directly from Gorski, 'Historicizing the Secularization Debate', pp. 148-149.

Church's authority, Lutheranism fatally undercut the legitimacy and efficacy of canon law as a mechanism of conflict management.

Even more ominously, at the same time that it weakened one of Christendom's few remaining authoritative institutions, the Reformation also overlaid an already conflict-prone environment with intense religious *cum* ideological rivalries. It is worth emphasizing that the Reformation did not destabilize a hitherto pacified international system. Aforementioned processes of geopolitical consolidation had already led to a marked increase in the scale and intensity of conflict within Christendom, as evidenced in the interminable Franco-Habsburg struggle for hegemony on the Italian peninsula from 1494 onwards.<sup>272</sup> However, in polarizing Europe's politics along confessional lines, the Reformation destabilized bonds of collective identity that had previously exercised a modest pacifying effect on relations between Christendom's rulers. Certainly, the heightened dynastic competition for power and prestige that had punctuated Christendom's dying decades invites scepticism as to the restraining influence of religious unity upon rulers' conduct prior to the Reformation. Nevertheless, this scepticism is qualified once the radicalizing effects of confessional strife upon dynastic policies in the decades after the Reformation are taken into account. Christendom's moral breakdown, evidenced in the interjection of an ethos of Holy War into Europe's internecine conflicts, did not fully manifest itself until after the Habsburg bid to reconstitute Christendom along imperial lines had been thwarted. But this breakdown was prefigured and made possible by the prior splintering of Christendom into competing confessions, a process inaugurated with the coming of the Reformation.

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<sup>272</sup>On the Valois-Habsburg rivalry over Italy, see generally M.S. Anderson. *The Origins of the Modern European State System, 1494-1618*. London: Longman, 1998, chapter four *passim*.

In conjunction with its disintegrative effects on Christendom itself, the Reformation also exerted complex and contradictory effects on Christendom's constituent polities. On the one hand, Luther's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms provided a powerful legitimation for rulers' monopolization of law-making powers, thus strengthening moves towards political centralization in polities that adopted Lutheranism. Paradoxically, the clear-cut conceptual distinction between the civil and religious spheres articulated by Luther practically lent itself to the institutional de-differentiation of church and state.<sup>273</sup> For with the Church's ecclesiastical jurisdiction abolished, the prince assumed responsibility for exercising legislative, administrative, and judicial powers as they pertained to the temporal affairs of the church within his territory.<sup>274</sup> Similarly, the abolition of canon law entailed the secularization of laws pertaining to a vast range of matters – marriage and divorce, wills, property, common and religious crimes (e.g. heresy and blasphemy) that had previously been subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction.<sup>275</sup>

More generally, even within polities that remained loyal to the Roman Church, the Reformation precipitated a range of processes that superficially favoured the strengthening of monarchical authority. While Europe's rulers had long sought to identify their power with the maintenance of a divinely ordained social order, the religious schism provided them with further scope for religious legitimation by enabling them to present themselves as defenders of the 'true' faith, the indispensable earthly guardians of Christianity against the forces of heresy. The historian Heinz Schilling's observation of the Reformation period that '...the state became more sacral before it became more secular...' alludes to the tightening of the alliance between spiritual and sacred authorities that could be observed throughout Europe as the

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<sup>273</sup>Gorski, 'Historicizing the Secularization Debate', pp. 150-153.

<sup>274</sup>Berman, 'Religious Foundations of Law in the West', p. 18.

<sup>275</sup>*Ibid.*

century progressed.<sup>276</sup> Processes of confessionalization, whereby religious and lay authorities collaborated in the intensified supervision, social disciplining, and spiritual indoctrination of subjects, held out the prospect of strengthening the affective and institutional bonds between rulers and ruled, thereby dramatically augmenting rulers' infrastructural power over their subjects.<sup>277</sup> Once again, these processes of confessionalization were initially slow to develop in the years immediately following Luther's revelation, but their genesis is inevitably linked to the ideological shock introduced by the Lutheran heresy.

Offsetting these centripetal effects, the breakdown of Christendom's unity threatened Europe's polyglot composite monarchies with the centrifugal pressures of protracted confessional conflict. The centrality of religious uniformity to the integrity of Europe's polities becomes readily apparent when one considers the pronounced heterogeneity that otherwise defined them. Period specialists have described early modern kingdoms as composite monarchies in order to avoid the anachronistic assumptions of corporate unity would be evoked were they to be identified as sovereign states.<sup>278</sup> Early modern composite monarchies were comprised of a congeries of dispersed territories, each with their distinctive laws, language and customs, and each relating to their nominal dynastic suzerain on the basis of their own distinctive terms of incorporation.<sup>279</sup> Given this heterogeneity, subscription to a common faith provided one of the few mechanisms of integration within composite monarchies. Conversely, the crystallization of implacably opposed confessional

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<sup>276</sup>Schilling, 'Confessional Europe', p. 644.

<sup>277</sup>On this point, see for example Black, *Kings, Nobles and Commoners*, pp. 39-47. On the nexus between confessionalization, social disciplining and early modern state formation, see also generally Philip S. Gorski. *The Disciplinary Revolution - Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003. See specifically pp. 159-161.

<sup>278</sup>The classic statement of this position remains J.H. Elliott. "A Europe of Composite Monarchies." *Past and Present* 137 (1992): 48-71.

<sup>279</sup>*Ibid*, p. 51.

identities in different portions of rulers' patrimonies posed a grave threat to the continued integrity of their empires. Protracted religious conflict threatened to generate socially inclusive and territorially exclusive collective identities within each of the constituent territories of dynastic empires, favouring local power-holders over dynastic monarchs. With the outbreak of confessional controversy, monarchs faced the real risk of local power-holders in each of their territories adopting different and opposed confessional identities, making the prospect of achieving an empire-wide reconciliation between religious parties virtually impossible.<sup>280</sup>

In an era in which religious unity was held as being a *sine qua non* for the maintenance of political and social stability, the Reformation posed the danger of dissolving the most basic constitutive bonds holding society together. Lutheran theology challenged Christendom's most crucial power-legitimizing norms, contested the validity of established boundaries between the sacred and mundane, and deranged the operation of the mass as Christendom's central ritual of worship and social integration. The Reformation also denuded canon law of the legitimacy necessary for it to function as a mechanism of conflict mediation and adjudication, while overlaying existing dynastic conflicts with sectarian rivalry. Meanwhile, while processes of confessionalization would eventually provide rulers with a range of normative and institutional levers with which to consolidate their power, these centripetal effects were more than offset by the centrifugal effects of confessional polarization upon Christendom's fragile composite monarchies.

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<sup>280</sup>For an outstanding exposition of the subversive impact of categorical confessional identities upon the strategies of imperial rule favoured in early modern European dynastic agglomerations, see again generally Nexon, 'Religion, European Identity, and Political Contention in Historical Perspective', in Byrnes and Katzenstein, *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, pp. 256-282. See also Daniel Nexon, "Religion and the Fate of Empires in Early Modern Europe." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2004.

With the coming of the ideological shock of the Reformation, the last of the struts supporting Latin Christendom was gravely compromised. The Reformation threatened the normative underpinnings of Christendom's shared structures of conflict mediation and adjudication, and also imperilled the ideological cement holding Europe's fragile composite monarchies together. With its normative unity unravelling, its ordering institutions already in decay, and its underlying material structure already substantially transformed through processes of geopolitical consolidation, the international order of Latin Christendom in 1517 stood on the cusp of what would prove to be a terminal crisis.

#### **4.2. The Collapse of Latin Christendom and the Failure of the Imperial Alternative, 1517-1555**

The transition from a medieval *Respublica Christiana* to the modern state system was a transformation of such significance, both for Europe and subsequently for the world, that it is easy to retrospectively assume its inevitability. Nevertheless, a closer consideration of the transformative forces convulsing Europe in the sixteenth century demonstrates that an alternative developmental trajectory, from heteronomy to imperium, was if not likely then at least distinctly possible in the early decades of the Reformation. The rupture of Europe's spiritual unity precipitated by Luther in 1517 proved ultimately incapable of repair, and was eventually decisive in polarizing Europe's politics to such a degree that a return to order could only be realised through the establishment of sovereign state system. Nevertheless, at least down to the 1540s, a conviction existed among Europe's governing elites that a permanent reconciliation between Protestants and the Church was both desirable and possible. For while the Reformation constituted a direct assault upon the Church's theology and upon the



power-legitimizing norms that sustained it as the essential mediator between man and the divine, Protestants continued to accept both the ethical prescriptions of Christianity, as well as identity-constitutive norms prescribing preparation for salvation as the animating purpose of collective association. Protestantism originated as an internal critique of the Church that was reformist rather than revolutionary in its initial intent, even if it subsequently proved revolutionary in its implications. Additionally, Lutheranism in particular was politically conservative in character, owing to Luther's continuing subscription to the Augustinian political theology originally articulated by the Church.

While Protestantism emerged as an expression of extreme discontent and disillusionment with the Church, many of its early converts were not so radically estranged from the existing order as to make an eventual return to Church impossible. Equally, while there can be no question but that the Reformation tapped into genuine and intense popular desires for a more immediate experience of the divine, the Church had in previous centuries demonstrated an admirable capacity to canalize these sentiments into institutional vehicles (e.g. monastic and mendicant orders) that supported rather than undermined its spiritual authority.<sup>281</sup> This adaptive capacity in the face of popular discontent would receive renewed expression from the Council of Trent onwards. Once the Peace of Augsburg signalled the failure of Charles' bid for imperium and confirmed Europe's permanent religious division, the post-Tridentine Church proved eminently capable of reviving popular religious enthusiasm among Catholics, while also collaborating successfully with secular rulers to 'roll back' Protestantism across huge swathes of Europe in the seventeenth century.<sup>282</sup> That the

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<sup>281</sup>On this point, see Leff, 'Heresy and the Decline of the Medieval Church', p. 50.

<sup>282</sup>The magnitude of the Counter-Reformation's long-term success is reflected in the fact that whereas in 1590, approximately half the European land-mass was under the control of Protestant governments and/or culture, by 1690 this figure was only around a fifth, with the greatest Protestant reverses being recorded in central and south-eastern Europe in the wake of early Habsburg victories in the first half of

post-Tridentine Church was capable of substantially rolling back Protestantism in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at a time when confessional identities had become firmly entrenched in the popular consciousness, is at least suggestive of Christendom's *potential* capacity to have contained Protestantism far earlier through a combination of popular mobilization, institutional adaptation, and ideological accommodation.

The point of the foregoing observations is to illustrate that the religious and ideological unity that had previously sustained Christendom as an international order was not immediately and irretrievably annihilated with the outbreak of the Reformation. Despite the vituperative character of the theological debate that followed Luther's ninety-five theses, educated Europeans remained united in their subscription to a wide range of principles relating to the character of the spiritual and social world. In Habermasian terms, the common 'life-world' of shared values and cultural givens necessary to sustain authoritative institutions had yet to completely disintegrate. Additionally, while increases in violence interdependence had corroded the capacity of existing ordering institutions to effectively manage conflict, the dominant trend in early modern Eurasia was towards the reconstruction of regional orders through imperial consolidation. As we will shortly see, the underlying geopolitical circumstances of Christendom were such as to inhibit an easy replication of this Eurasian pattern. But this material impediment was partially offset by the vagaries of European dynastic diplomacy, which had produced in the Habsburg matrimonial conglomeration an entity of sufficient size and power as to make the possibility of Christendom's imperial reconstitution in the Reformation's wake an eminently imaginable prospect.

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the Thirty Years War; see Diarmaid MacCulloch. *Reformation - Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700*. London: Penguin Books, 2004, pp. 669-670.

The prodigious material resources of the Habsburgs, the diffuse but nevertheless real ‘soft power’ accruing from their possession of the imperial title, and the dogged determination of Charles V to effect Europe’s political and religious reunification must all be acknowledged when charting Europe’s course from heteronomy to sovereign anarchy. Considering the material foundations of the Habsburg imperium, it is worth recounting that the Habsburg patrimony constituted the largest single agglomeration of territories in Europe to have existed since the fall of Rome. At its peak, the Habsburgs’ European patrimony included the Low Countries, modern-day Spain, northern and southern Italy, the Habsburgs’ hereditary stem-lands in Austria and Switzerland, a swathe of territories in what is now Eastern France, and substantial holdings in Germany as well.<sup>283</sup> The Habsburgs under Charles V governed lands accounting for forty percent of Europe’s population, while also accounting in the Low Countries, northern Italy and southern Germany for all of Europe’s major financial centres and the lion’s share of its major trading entrepôts.<sup>284</sup> In addition to their European holdings, the Habsburg dynasty had also acquired substantial possessions in the New World, possessions that would in time yield massive infusions of bullion into the Habsburgs’ coffers. Militarily, the Habsburgs also possessed a precociously modern infantry-dominated army composed in the main of highly disciplined pikemen and arquebusiers; this army would ultimately constitute the renowned Spanish *tercios*, arguably the most formidable fighting force of the sixteenth century.<sup>285</sup>

In addition to their formidable material power, the Habsburgs also possessed the considerable ideological power and prestige associated with their possession of the imperial title. While the Hohenstaufens’ defeat had arrested imperial consolidation in

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<sup>283</sup>Blockmans. *Emperor Charles V 1500-1558*, p. 36.

<sup>284</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup>Elton, *Reformation Europe*, p. 23.

the thirteenth century, the Gelatian doctrine of the Two Swords – in which the emperor was invested with the responsibility of wielding coercive power in defence of the Church – continued to resonate in the sixteenth century, providing the emperor with prestige and at least nominal deference beyond the empire’s bounds.<sup>286</sup> Imperial institutions were admittedly weak, but the emperor’s *auctoritas* was widely recognized within the empire. Europe’s rulers grudgingly acknowledged the emperor’s status as *primus inter pares*, even if Roman law was increasingly invoked by rulers such as the kings of England and France to establish their untrammelled authority within their own patrimonies.<sup>287</sup> The very size of the Habsburg patrimony and the inevitable comparisons it drew with its ancient Roman predecessor triggered also revived interest in imperial schemes for organizing Christendom, a prospect that evoked both considerable hope and fear among Europe’s rulers.

To the Habsburgs’ prodigious portfolio of power resources must be added the leadership of Charles V, a monarch who approached the task of defending Christendom with unwavering resolve. Personally devout, Charles divined the hand of God in the Habsburg dynasty’s recent good fortune. The suddenness with which the Habsburgs had won their empire – in Europe through marriage, election, and inheritance, in the New World through discovery and conquest – suggested to Charles and his courtiers that their ascendancy was in some way providentially ordained.<sup>288</sup> That the dynasty’s rise occurred roughly contemporaneously with the breakdown of Christian unity and the waxing of Turkish power suggested a divine purpose in the Habsburgs’ blessings, namely to restore the unity of the Church and lead Christendom on a victorious crusade against the infidel.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>286</sup>J.H. Burns. *Lordship, Kingship and Empire - the Idea of Monarchy, 1400-1525*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, p. 100.

<sup>287</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>288</sup>On this point, see Elton, *Reformation Europe*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>289</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

In reality, the institutional frailty and disunity of the Habsburg imperium fatally compromised Charles' efforts to reconstitute Christendom in an imperial mould. This failure was to be further guaranteed by his rivals' willingness to sacrifice Christian unity upon the altar of dynastic self-interest. But given the threat posed by the Reformation to the maintenance of peace within and between Europe's polities; given further the Habsburgs' extraordinary endowments in hard and soft power resources; and given finally the fervour with which Charles was willing to commit these resources to the task of restoring Christian unity, the failure of Christendom to successfully shift from a heteronomous to an imperial international order demands explanation.

#### 4.2.1 The Vulnerability of Empire

Christendom's failure to reconstitute itself along imperial lines can be attributed to three causes, specifically the weaknesses internal to the Habsburg imperium itself, the existence of a surfeit of Habsburg enemies who were willing and able to exploit these weaknesses to derail all attempts at imperial consolidation, and the inability of emperor and papacy to effectively collaborate to maintain Christian unity. Charles was *unable* to effectively mobilize his vast resources to restore Christian unity, and Charles' enemies were *unwilling* to countenance Christendom's preservation if doing so entailed acceptance of Habsburg domination.

Turning firstly to the frailties of the Habsburg behemoth, the striking absence of common institutions underwriting the imperium must first be acknowledged. At no time in its existence did Charles' patrimony possess a common currency, a common

treasury, or a common governing bureaucracy.<sup>290</sup> The constituent territories of the imperium were each acquired through marriage, election or inheritance on their own distinct terms, with local power-holders retaining extensive fiscal, legal and social prerogatives and privileges.<sup>291</sup> Such privileges, often rooted in custom and institutionalized in representative bodies, severely restricted Charles' access to the latent wealth of his vast patrimony. Imperial attempts to encroach on these prerogatives typically met with hostility and organized resistance, up to and including violent rebellion.<sup>292</sup> The existence of a thicket of jealously guarded privileges proved no more pronounced than in the shatter-belt of the approximately one thousand distinct cities, ecclesiastical territories, and princely states comprising the empire itself. In the German-speaking portion of the Habsburg imperium, burghers and princes – including the seven Electors charged with electing the emperor – had long conspired to limit the authority of the imperial office so as to safeguard their own autonomy and consolidate power within their own possessions. Consequently, the empire lacked a centralized system of government, depriving Charles of the institutional framework needed to effectively mobilize his resources in pursuit of imperial ends.<sup>293</sup>

In the absence of common institutions around which collective loyalties could cohere, the Habsburg imperium remained irredeemably diverse, with the crown providing the only point of commonality shared by all of Charles' subjects. In this respect, the Habsburgs did not differ greatly from other composite monarchies in

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<sup>290</sup>*Ibid.* The promulgation of a uniform legal code for the empire stands out as Charles' only substantive achievement step towards developing a common institutional framework for governing his possessions.

<sup>291</sup>H.G. Koenigsberger. "The Empire of Charles V in Europe." In *The New Cambridge Modern History*, edited by G.R. Elton, 339-76. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. See specifically pp. 350-351.

<sup>292</sup>On this point, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam. "A Tale of Three Empires - Mughals, Ottomans, and Habsburgs in a Comparative Context." *Common Knowledge* 12, no. 1 (2006), p. 75.

<sup>293</sup>Koenigsberger, 'The Empire of Charles V', p. 348.

Europe. What did distinguish them from their rivals was the enormous and geographically dispersed character of their imperium. The sheer size of the Habsburg patrimony magnified the problems of disunity experienced by all early modern monarchies. As a result of this disunity, Charles consistently experienced difficulties in soliciting the political and financial support required to defend the monarchy against its adversaries. The lack of mutual identification between Charles' subjects ensured that when emergencies broke out in discrete territories within his imperium, the resources needed to confront these threats were provided belatedly and grudgingly – if at all – by subjects not immediately affected by the crisis.<sup>294</sup>

Imperial vulnerabilities deriving from institutional weakness and regional particularism were further compounded by more prosaic problems stemming directly from the gargantuan size and far-flung character of the Habsburg holdings. The very vastness of the Habsburg imperium imposed considerable command and control challenges for a polity in which major decision-making power remained concentrated in the Imperial Chancellery and more specifically in the figure of Charles himself.<sup>295</sup> The already fragile bonds of fealty linking Charles to local elites required regular renewal through imperial visitations, forcing the emperor to adopt a perpetually itinerant lifestyle at a time when the communications and transportation infrastructure then available was rudimentary.<sup>296</sup> The extent of the Habsburg domains and their geographic centrality also brought them into contact with a multitude of prospective regional enemies, enemies that feared the Habsburgs' power and could be tempted into coordinating their actions to jointly weaken Habsburg hegemony. This collaboration – however uneven and *ad hoc* – proved ultimately sufficient to irreparably weaken and

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<sup>294</sup>Blockmans, *Emperor Charles V*, pp. 28-30.

<sup>295</sup>Koenigsburger, 'The Empire of Charles V', p. 350.

<sup>296</sup>*Ibid.*

wound the Habsburg imperium, in so doing destroying Christendom's last hope of reunification.

#### 4.2.2 Positional Conflicts and Imperial Nemesis

For all of its strengths, the Habsburg imperium was a sort of geopolitical Frankenstein, a hastily assembled giant composed of a hodgepodge of different territorial appendages sewn together (in Europe at least) with the fragile threads of marriage, election, and inheritance. The frailties and fragility of the Habsburg imperium made the possibility of reconstituting Christendom along imperial lines unlikely from the outset. However, by the time of the Reformation, increases in violence interdependence had evolved in ways that further diminished this prospect. Within Christendom itself, the Habsburgs – unlike empire-builders elsewhere across Eurasia – had failed to command a monopoly on the gunpowder weaponry necessary to subdue regional potentates and enable the construction of enduring imperial formations. Across Western Europe in the latter half of the fifteenth century, the technology and expertise necessary to deploy fortress-destroying artillery pieces had rapidly diffused, enabling the consolidation of rival dynastic empires that could not be easily subordinated to Habsburg imperial designs.<sup>297</sup> Beyond Christendom, this technology had also diffused to the Ottomans, permitting the consolidation of a formidable, expansive and hostile Islamic gunpowder empire on the Habsburgs' southeastern flank.<sup>298</sup> Finally, by the 1520s, the window for successful imperial expansion was arguably closing in Christendom in any case, with the development of virtually

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<sup>297</sup>McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires*, p. 6.

<sup>298</sup>*Ibid.*



impregnable *trace italienne*-style artillery fortress returning European warfare to its former state of being costly, protracted, indecisive and typically defence-dominant.<sup>299</sup>

Structural considerations thus strongly conditioned against the possibility of Christendom's unity being preserved after its old heteronomous incarnation had decayed. But what guaranteed Christendom's final dissolution was the unwillingness of Europe's leaders to countenance a revived Christendom on Habsburg terms. The Reformation destabilized an environment that was already fraught by positional conflicts for power and prestige both within the empire proper and throughout Europe more generally. These rivalries were in no way suspended in the face of religious schism. Rather, the Habsburgs' enemies collaborated in the decades following the Reformation to divide and disperse Habsburg resources until the possibility of Christendom's *political* unification had become impossible. An unintended consequence of this manoeuvring was that the emperor was distracted and delayed from addressing the problems of religious dissent within the empire until such time that Protestantism had become so entrenched as to make Christendom's *religious* reunification also impossible. A comprehensive narrative of the Habsburgs' defeat is beyond the scope of this inquiry. Consequently, the following discussion is limited to identifying the main lines of opposition to the Habsburg imperium and the broad dynamics by which Christendom's enduring fragmentation was secured.

Of the opponents of Habsburg imperium, the most tenacious was the Valois monarchy of France. As Europe's largest single kingdom, Valois France stood after the vast Habsburg conglomerate as the only conceivable contender for hegemony in Western Europe.<sup>300</sup> Finding herself simultaneously encircled by Habsburg territories and desirous of expansion into Italy at the Habsburgs' expense, France under Francis I

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<sup>299</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>300</sup>Blockmans, *Emperor Charles V 1500-1558*, p. 37.

consistently pursued an anti-Habsburg policy for a combination of defensive and offensive reasons, but always with the Valois monarchy's dynastic self-interest at the fore.<sup>301</sup> In addition to this formidable opponent to the West, Charles was also forced to contend with the growth of Ottoman power in south-eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean, an expansion driven both by ambitions for territorial aggrandizement and also by a desire to establish control over the Mediterranean's lucrative trading routes.<sup>302</sup> The Ottoman empire's great size, its military dynamism, its capacity in conjunction with the North African Barbary corsairs to simultaneously engage the Habsburgs on multiple fronts each made it a valuable prospective ally for the Habsburgs' many enemies within Christendom, their religious differences notwithstanding.

The Valois and Ottoman power blocs constituted Charles' most formidable opponents, but to their number must be added also the steadfast opposition of Germany's princes – Catholic and Protestant alike – to the prospect of a renewed and strengthened empire, given that it was perceived that this could only occur at the expense of the princes' autonomy. The Reformation and the demands for confessional pluralism it engendered provided a further principled justification for the preservation of princely autonomy in German states and principalities that had converted to Lutheranism. But even without this religiously inspired justification, Germany's petty princelings perpetuated the centuries-long practice of exploiting the emperor's external woes to extort further concessions in exchange for promises of financial and military support. In the context of the Reformation, the intramural struggle for power between empire and principalities would conspire with the waxing of external threats

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>302</sup> The significance of Ottoman mercantile motives for expanding into the Mediterranean during the sixteenth century is accorded particular emphasis in De Lamar Jensen. "The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 4 (1985): 451-70.

to further hollow out imperial institutions, with the systemic side-effect of guaranteeing Europe's permanent religious division.

In the struggle to preserve Christendom's religious unity, the papacy occupied an unusual relationship *vis-à-vis* the Habsburgs, alternating in the roles of unreliable ally and opportunistic opponent. Given Charles' steadfast commitment to the maintenance of Church unity, the papacy's intermittent efforts to stymie Habsburg policy initially appear incongruous. Nevertheless, this sense of incongruity is partially mitigated once the long history of hostility that characterised papal-imperial relations from the High Middle Ages is acknowledged. Within the Italian peninsula itself, the occasional willingness of the papacy to truck with Francis I and other local Habsburg opponents can be attributed to fears for the Papal States' continuing autonomy should Charles secure unchallengeable hegemony within Italy.<sup>303</sup> Following Francis I's defeat at Pavia in 1525 and the imperial sacking of Rome in 1527, armed papal opposition to Habsburg power was largely forsaken. But the papacy continued in the 1520s and 1530s to resist Charles's calls for the establishment of a general council of the Church to reform its institutions and heal Europe's religious divisions, perceiving such initiatives as a latter-day manifestation of conciliarism and thus as a threat to the papacy's position as the unchallengeable head of the Church.<sup>304</sup> Despite sharing Charles's hatred for heresy, the papacy's Italian geopolitical interests and its hostility to outside calls for Church reform of the type advanced by Charles positioned it as an unlikely if intermittent opponent to the Habsburg cause.

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<sup>303</sup> Given its concerns to maintain the independence of the Papal States, 'freedom for Italy' remained the guiding principle of Papal foreign policy down to 1559, a policy that necessarily entailed a posture towards Charles' imperium that oscillated between wary neutrality and armed opposition during this period. See Delio Cantimori. "Italy and the Papacy." In *The New Cambridge Modern History*, edited by G.R. Elton, 288-312. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. See specifically pp. 289-290.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

The foregoing survey of the Habsburgs' opponents is far from exhaustive, omitting from consideration other important actors – most notably Henry VIII's England – that oscillated between pro and anti-Habsburg positions as circumstances and the changing vagaries of dynastic self-interest directed. Nevertheless, the main lines of opposition to the Habsburg imperium have been made clear. Within the empire itself, the emperor fought a losing battle against the attempts of local burghers and petty princelings, both Protestant and Catholic alike, to preserve and if possible expand their privileges at the expense of imperial authority. Across his western flank and above all on the Italian peninsula, Charles remained locked with the house of Valois in a fierce struggle for territorial aggrandizement and dynastic supremacy, a struggle in which the papacy's Italian interests frequently saw it align with France in an effort to avoid Habsburg domination. And in both the Mediterranean and in the Balkans, the Habsburgs were forced to fend off the incursions of an ascending and expansive Ottoman empire at the peak of its power. Given the extent of its simultaneous involvement in multiple positional conflicts of power and prestige, Charles' inability to achieve his political and religious goals is more easily understood.

In spite of sharing the Habsburgs' hostility to heresy, Francis I and later Henry II were at the van of opposition to the Habsburg imperium, with the clashing dynastic interests of the Habsburg and Valois royal houses embroiling them intermittently in war from 1494-1559. While it would be both anachronistic and also giving them too much credit to claim that the Valois kings consciously constructed an elaborate alliance system to contain Habsburg power, the *ad hoc* agreements they engineered did have the effect of fatally dispersing and diluting the Habsburgs' material strength at critical times. France's cooperation with Turkey – first initiated following Francis I's humiliating defeat and capture at Pavia in 1525 – appears to have originally been conceived as forming the south-eastern lynchpin of a broader strategy designed to

divert Habsburg attention and resources eastwards, in so doing enabling Francis I to re-take Milan and thereby strengthen his position in Italy.<sup>305</sup> Ultimately, French designs in Italy were never realised, and direct Franco-Ottoman diplomatic and military cooperation was more fitful and less consequential than might have been hoped for by either party. This observation notwithstanding, the very threat of possible coordinated Franco-Turkish action compelled the Habsburgs to divide their resources across multiple theatres, thereby weakening the Habsburgs' overall position by preventing them from bringing the imperium's strength decisively to bear against any of their enemies.<sup>306</sup>

In addition to dispersing and dividing the Habsburgs' material power, the threat embodied in French and Ottoman geopolitical pressures also distracted and delayed Habsburg responses to the growth of Protestantism within the empire. In 1526 and in the wake of the Turks' triumph in Hungary at the Battle of Mohacs, Charles was forced to guarantee the security of the Lutheran faith within the empire in exchange for aid against the Ottomans.<sup>307</sup> The Catholic German princes, distrustful of the papacy and keen for the moment to avoid the prospect of religious civil war within Germany, were equally able to demand a conciliar solution to the empire's religious tensions as the price for their assistance against the Turk.<sup>308</sup> In the short term, French and Ottoman pressures distracted the emperor from comprehensively dealing with the religious question in Germany, while simultaneously forcing him to grant concessions to the princes in exchange for their support against these threats. Such concessions

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<sup>305</sup>Jensen, 'The Ottoman Turks', p. 453.

<sup>306</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 459. Jensen makes the observation that the threat of Franco-Ottoman cooperation was more powerful in its consequences than the limited cooperation that did take place, and that the constraining effects of this threat for Habsburg policy in fact diminished over time as the practical limits of Franco-Ottoman cooperation became apparent.

<sup>307</sup>On this point, see generally Stephen A. Fischer-Galati. *Ottoman Imperialism and German Protestantism, 1521-1555*. New York: Octagon Books, 1972, p. 36.

<sup>308</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 44.

weakened the emperor *vis-à-vis* Lutheran and Catholic princes alike, diminishing the moral authority and institutional capacity of the imperial office further and making an imposed religious settlement ever less likely.

Given the severity of the French and Ottoman threats, it was not until 1546 that the emperor was able to afford full attention to the settlement of religious differences within Germany, by which time Lutheranism had become ineradicably entrenched within the empire. Making matters worse, the French sought to further weaken the empire by providing diplomatic and financial assistance to the Schmalkaldic League, the collective defence union established by an assembly of Protestant cities and principalities in anticipation of a possible religious war within the empire.<sup>309</sup> As with their alliance with the Ottomans, French attempts to exploit confessional divisions within Germany initially yielded less benefits than had been anticipated. Francis's persecution of French Protestants inevitably aroused the suspicions of their German co-religionists, complicating attempts to establish an alliance. The growth of confessional rivalry within France from the Affair of the Placards onwards (1534) also resulted in serious divisions within the French court over the legitimacy of treating with heretics. These divisions in turn produced indecision and led to a failure to support the Schmalkaldic League once war broke out within the empire in 1546-7, thus ensuring Charles' victory over the League.<sup>310</sup> Their religious differences with the Protestant princes notwithstanding, the French were subsequently able to exploit the princes' political goals of maximizing princely liberty *vis-à-vis* the emperor to their mutual advantage.<sup>311</sup> The French king Henry II's invasion of Metz, Toul, and Verdun

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<sup>309</sup>See generally D.L. Potter. "Foreign Policy in the Age of the Reformation: French Involvement in the Schmalkaldic War, 1544-1547." *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 3 (1977): 525-44.

<sup>310</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 543-544.

<sup>311</sup>The predominance of political over religious goals in motivating Maurice of Saxony and the other Protestant rebels in 1552 is emphasized in Ernst Bizer, R.R. Betts, and F.C. Spooner. "The Reformation in Difficulties." In *The New Cambridge Modern History Vol. II - the Reformation, 1520-1559*, edited by G.R. Elton, 161-225. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 185.

in 1552, coordinated with an uprising of the Protestant princes led by Maurice of Saxony, ultimately compelled Charles to accept the permanence of religious division within the empire, paving the way for the conclusion of the Augsburg Peace in 1555.

#### 4.2.3 Failures of Leadership – Role Strains in the Papal-Imperial *Diarchy* and Christendom’s Collapse

The intense geopolitical pressures imposed by Charles’ external enemies; the religious and political concessions extorted from the emperor by the German princes in exchange for their support; the willingness of these same princes to cooperate with the empire’s external enemies to maximize their own autonomy – each of these factors conspired to divide and disperse the empire’s resources and delay a resolution of religious controversies until the religious reunification of the empire was impossible.

However, what further guaranteed Christendom’s dissolution was the absence of cooperation between emperor and pope as the secular and spiritual heads of Christianity. As mentioned above, the papacy’s failure to support Charles’ bid to maintain Christian unity was motivated by a combination of geopolitical and institutional concerns. Geopolitically, the papacy’s conviction that Habsburg power threatened the security of the Papal States led the papacy to support Francis’ ambitions in Italy as a means of offsetting Charles.<sup>312</sup> Following the failure of successive anti-Habsburg coalitions in the 1520s and the 1527 sack of Rome by Habsburg forces, the papacy generally forsook armed opposition to the Habsburgs, deviating disastrously from this policy only briefly in 1555-8 under the pontificate of Paul IV.<sup>313</sup> Nevertheless, in keeping with both long-standing papal suspicions of imperial

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<sup>312</sup> On this point, see Elton, *Reformation Europe, 1517-1559*, pp. 50-53.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-194.

ambitions and also the papacy's hostility to any resurrection of conciliarism, the papacy proved reluctant to support Charles' efforts to restore Christendom's lost unity. Under the pontificate of Clement VII, the papacy proved intransigent in its resistance to imperial calls for a General Council to reform the Church.<sup>314</sup> The papacy's anti-conciliar sentiment, reinforced by their early underestimation of the threat posed to the Church by the spread of Lutheranism in Germany, worked against an early resolution of religious controversy within the empire.<sup>315</sup> Even following Clement's death and the belated realisation that a General Council was necessary, the papacy continued to place its interests ahead of the Church, delaying the council and then stymieing its progress until the gap between Catholics and Protestants was unbridgeable.<sup>316</sup> The papacy's withdrawal of its offer of troops to support the emperor in his struggle against the Schmalkaldic League, an action taken when the League possessed more troops and the outcome of the war was far from certain, constitutes a final example of the depth of distrust between pope and emperor, a distrust that further doomed Christendom's prospects for survival.

In the absence of the papacy's political support and moral leadership as the universally recognized head of the Church, Charles' bid to reconstitute Christendom under the Habsburg sceptre was bound to fail. Nevertheless, a consideration of the underlying reasons for this failure to collaborate gives us one final insight into the dynamics of Christendom's collapse. Both papacy and empire remained vital institutions in the sixteenth century, invested with considerable power and legitimacy and both deeply threatened by the prospective break-up of Christendom's spiritual unity. Both institutions nevertheless proved incapable of attracting the legitimacy necessary to effectively respond to the threat of systemic ideological schism when it

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<sup>314</sup>Cantimori, 'Italy and the Papacy', p. 290.

<sup>315</sup>Fischer-Galati, *Ottoman Imperialism and German Protestantism*, p. 98.

<sup>316</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.



presented itself. This failure can ultimately be sheeted home to the phenomenon of ‘role strain’, referring simply to the inability of actors to effectively manage the tensions and inconsistencies arising from their possession of multiple roles within the same social system.<sup>317</sup> In the instance of the papacy, the pope’s role as Christendom’s spiritual leader co-existed uneasily with his status as ruler of a second-tier power on the Italian peninsula, while in the case of the emperor, his role as the anointed secular Sword of the Church competed with his identity as the head of but one of many competing dynastic empires extant in early modern Europe.

In order to have discharged their responsibilities effectively, and thus secured the possibility of Christendom’s renewal after the shock of the Reformation, both pope and emperor would have needed to cooperate both with each other and with Christendom’s other powers. This challenge in turn would have required these actors to reconcile the perceived tensions in their different social roles as the respective spiritual and secular guardians of Christendom on the one hand, and self-interested worldly powers on the other. As it was, the papacy’s successful efforts to preserve the Papal States’ independence by corroding the power of the empire from the thirteenth century onwards profoundly inhibited the emperor’s ability to fulfil his divinely ordained role as Christendom’s protector once the Reformation broke. Equally, Charles’ self-interested insistence that religious reunification required Christendom’s political unification guaranteed the opposition of Christendom’s other rulers, generating a series of confrontations that both scotched Charles’ imperial plans and

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<sup>317</sup> On the notion of role strain, see Bruce Cronin. "The Paradox of Hegemony: America's Ambiguous Relationship with the United Nations." *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 103-30. See specifically pp.104-105. While Cronin developed the concept of role strain to capture the specific tension between the United States’ parochial interests as a great power and its international responsibilities as a hegemon, I would argue that his insights pertaining to role strain and the tensions it evokes are of more general application, and are evident also in the underlying reasons explaining the papal-imperial *diarchy*’s failure to preserve Latin Christendom in the face of the Reformation.

guaranteed Christendom's enduring division. In this failure to manage their respective internal role strains or to collaborate with each other, one witnesses the last failure of the quintessentially medieval papal-imperial *diarchy*, and with it, the passage of the international order of Latin Christendom into oblivion.

### **4.3 The Peace of Augsburg, the Failure of the Imperial Alternative, and the Collapse of Latin Christendom**

On September 25, 1555 the Peace of Augsburg was proclaimed within the empire, signifying an acceptance by emperor and estates of the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, and with it an acceptance of the empire's permanent religious division between Catholics and Lutherans. In the same year, Charles abdicated from his positions of responsibility, dividing his massive inheritance between his brother Ferdinand and his son Philip, and thus confirming both the permanent separation of the Spanish and Austrian Habsburg lines and the final end to his dreams of European imperium.<sup>318</sup> A combination of geopolitical consolidation, institutional decay, and growing ideological dissent had already fatally weakened Christendom in its late medieval heteronomous guise. With the onset of the Reformation, the residual normative unity of Christendom was finally shattered, but for a brief period there lay open the possibility of a reconstitution of Christian unity around the Habsburg imperium. Nevertheless, in retrospect, the failure of this imperial alternative seems both inevitable and over-determined. While possessing a material resource base greater than anything seen since the days of the Roman empire, the Habsburg imperium was far-flung and lacked either the sense of unity or the shared institutions necessary to mobilize these resources for the cause of preserving Christendom's unity.

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<sup>318</sup>Koenigsburger, 'The Empire of Charles V', p. 375.

Additionally, the enormity of the Habsburg possessions evoked fear and resentment among a multitude of enemies, whose combined efforts were sufficient to divide and disperse Habsburg energies and distract the emperor from the task of confronting the Lutheran heresy until the breach from Rome was irreparable. In an increasingly febrile atmosphere conditioned by dynastic rivalry and confessional division, the institutional weaknesses of the imperial office *vis-à-vis* the estates became further aggravated, while the centuries-long mistrust between pope and emperor prevented the emergence of an ideologically unified leadership capable of successfully reforming the Church and healing the religious schism.

The Peace of Augsburg marked the decisive collapse of West-Central European religious unity, and with it the redundancy of the legal framework of canon law that had previously mediated Europe's conflicts. This collapse was made possible by the actions of the Habsburgs and their enemies, but was undergirded by more fundamental structural changes relating to the growth in violence interdependence and the creeping breakdown of normative unity in Christendom, macro-processes that had long been evident and that would intensify further in the decades immediately following Latin Christendom's collapse. For while the Augsburg Peace represents the tombstone of Latin Christendom, it in no way signifies the birth certificate of a modern European state system. Instead, with the final collapse of Europe's religious unity, West-Central Europe was to be thrust into a brutal state of Hobbesian 'immature' anarchy, with polities unshackled from the constraints of a heteronomous order but yet to be corralled by the ordering mechanisms of a fully formed sovereign state system. Within this disordered systemic context, the same processes of growing violence interdependence and ideological polarization that had destroyed Christendom would soon accelerate rather than abate, plunging Europe into another century of division and bloodshed.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**ANARCHY WITHOUT SOCIETY – EUROPE AFTER**  
**CHRISTENDOM AND BEFORE SOVEREIGNTY**

**A False Dawn**

With the conclusion of the Peace of Augsburg and the signing of the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis four years later between the Valois and Habsburg crowns, the possibility of a return to some semblance of order in West-Central Europe momentarily presented itself. The Augsburg peace, in officially recognizing the empire's permanent religious division between Lutherans and Catholics, constituted an explicit acknowledgement that Christendom's spiritual unity was lost beyond recall. Equally, while the terms of Cateau-Cambrésis naturally favoured the Habsburg victors, the division of the Habsburg patrimony between the dynasty's Spanish and Austrian lines removed the immediate possibility of reconstituting international order in Western Europe in an imperial form. With the struggle between Europe's two mightiest crowns momentarily in abeyance, and with both dynasties united alongside a revived post-Tridentine Church in their determination to eradicate heresy, the prospects for stability seemed promising.

As it eventuated, the period between Cateau-Cambrésis and the Peace of Westphalia would prove one of exceptional violence and ideological ferment, with the prior breakdown of Christendom's spiritual unity and its ordering institutions paving the way for a protracted descent into Hobbesian anarchy. While the Augsburg Peace established an uneasy truce between Germany's warring confessions, elsewhere the hardening of confessional allegiances triggered a wave of religiously inspired revolts

from the 1560s onwards. In that decade alone, the spread of militant Calvinism fuelled revolts against monarchical authority in France, Scotland and the Low Countries, with English and Spanish rulers also being compelled to suppress rebellions by their respective Catholic and Muslim minorities.<sup>319</sup> Rulers throughout Europe struggled to balance the competing imperatives of enforcing religious conformity and maintaining civil peace, with this task made more difficult by the ease with which rebels could solicit support from opportunistic neighbouring rulers and internationally dispersed networks of co-religionists. The political and religious ambitions of the Habsburgs and the fears these ambitions evoked meanwhile sustained a resumption of international warfare made more destructive by the continuing unfolding of Europe's first military revolution. The culmination of these tendencies in the Thirty Years War – Europe's most bloody and devastating conflict prior to World War I – symbolized in the starkest possible manner the institutional and moral breakdown of order that afflicted Europe in the century after Christendom, but before the advent of a society of sovereign states.

Whereas the purpose of the previous chapter was to analyse the institutional disintegration of Christendom as a viable international order, this chapter is dedicated to an exploration of the moral breakdown of order that followed in Christendom's wake. An analysis of Europe's century of disorder is warranted because the chief drivers of Christendom's breakdown did not abate but rather dramatically intensified in the decades following Christendom's collapse. The extreme violence and intense ideological antagonism that are characteristic of a breakdown of normative consensus expressed themselves most acutely only *after* Christendom had definitively disintegrated and Europe stood bereft of ordering institutions. Consequently, a consideration of the century between Augsburg and Westphalia is valuable for two

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<sup>319</sup>J.H. Elliott. "Revolution and Continuity in Early Modern Europe." *Past and Present* 42 (1969), p. 37.

reasons. Firstly, it illuminates the magnitude of the disorder unleashed by Christendom's demise, and secondly it provides the context for understanding the intellectual and cultural innovations that made possible the eventual return to order under the umbrella of a sovereign international society.

The following analysis proceeds in three sections. Section one outlines the structural features of the European international system after 1560 that lent themselves towards protracted disorder, as well as the dislocative forces that actively fuelled this disorder. Section two considers the French Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years War as pivotal conflicts that encapsulated in their causes and course the broader symptoms of disorder characteristic of the period, as well as generating innovations that provided the intellectual foundations upon which a new international order was eventually built. Section three concludes with a review of Westphalia's significance as an embodiment of the larger series of compromises that reconciled Europe's rulers to the transformed ideal and material context bequeathed by the forces of Reformation and military revolution, thereby permitting a return to order after Europe's century of chaos.

## **5.1 The Centre Cannot Hold – Europe in the Immediate Aftermath of Christendom's Collapse**

### **5.1.1 The Immediate Structural Context**

Any comprehension of Europe's chaotic inter-regnum must begin with the recognition that Europe's polities at the time dwelled within an international system

but *not* within an international society.<sup>320</sup> Certainly, Europe's elites continued to subscribe to a common Latin-speaking high culture, although as the era progressed the printing press strengthened the development of vernacular languages and cultures and accelerated Europe's cultural fragmentation. Equally, Europe's polities remained ensnared within the transnational kinship webs of the nobility, while continuing commercial expansion had yet to radically transform the rigidly hierarchical and inegalitarian social structures characteristic of these polities.<sup>321</sup> Offsetting these structural continuities, the onset of the Valois-Habsburg wars had spurred the extension of the Italian institution of resident ambassadorial diplomacy to the trans-Alpine powers, establishing a rudimentary institutional framework upon which a European sovereign state system could potentially be built.<sup>322</sup> The sixteenth century had also seen monarchs' continuing arrogation of power to themselves, with rulers invoking the language and Roman legal concepts of the imperial office to support their claims towards jurisdictional supremacy within their own realms.<sup>323</sup>

Despite the increasing authority with which rulers asserted their supremacy within their own realms, and despite also the embryonic spread of a Continental network of resident ambassadors, neither the modern concept of sovereignty nor its accompanying principles of mutual recognition or non-intervention had been properly articulated by mid-century.<sup>324</sup> This under-articulation of the constitutive norms of a

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<sup>320</sup>On the vital distinction between an international system and an international society, see Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, pp. 13-16.

<sup>321</sup>Elliott, 'Revolution and Continuity in Early Modern Europe', pp. 54-56.

<sup>322</sup>On this process, see generally Garrett Mattingly. *Renaissance Diplomacy*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964. See also Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System*, pp. 52-55.

<sup>323</sup>G.R. Elton. "Constitutional Development and Political Thought in Western Europe." In *The New Cambridge Modern History*, edited by G.R. Elton, 478-504. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. See specifically p. 482.

<sup>324</sup>Anderson notes that even the spread of a system-wide network of resident ambassadors during this period was a far from smooth and uninterrupted process, with transnational religious antagonisms seriously disrupting the development of a modern diplomatic system for a generation after 1560. He also notes that the spread of a system-wide network of ambassadors, while beginning in trans-Alpine

sovereign state system might at first seem trivial. After all, it would superficially seem reasonable to suggest that the explicit articulation of such norms is secondary to state practice, and that for purposes of classification it is immaterial whether or not actors explicitly recognized such principles provided their conduct towards one another practically resembled what one would expect of actors dwelling in a sovereign state system. Unfortunately, this disregard for dissonances between norms and practice does not stand up to empirical scrutiny. Regardless of their superficial resemblances with modern sovereign states, Europe's composite monarchies did not interact with one another as sovereign states, but rather engaged in practices of systematic mutual intervention and reciprocal destabilization. In the decades following Christendom's collapse and the foreclosure of the Habsburg imperial alternative, it was the very failure of Europe's rulers to formulate coherent and mutually respected norms for co-existence that fuelled the endemic instability that defined the era. While mid-sixteenth century Europe was thus endowed with the institutional *forms* of a sovereign state system – in the form of aggressively centralizing 'state-like' entities and an expanding network of resident ambassadors – these forms lacked the necessary normative content (e.g. norms of mutual recognition, territorial exclusion, and non-intervention) needed for a sovereign international order to crystallize.

Despite its superficial resemblances to a sovereign state system, the sixteenth century European international system thus operated without a recognition of the bedrock principles of co-existence upon which a genuine sovereign state system is based. In the absence of such principles, new ordering institutions that were congruent with a sovereign state system and that might conceivably have replaced the defunct institutions of Christendom were unable to coalesce. Consequently, Europe's polities

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Europe in the early sixteenth century, was by no means complete in the early seventeenth century. See Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System*, p. 54.



found themselves suspended in a prolonged state of ‘immature anarchy’, wherein a structural condition of anarchy obtained but in which the European international system lacked even the most basic ordering institutions or principles of co-existence necessary to corral conflict within manageable bounds. This absence of ordering institutions and principles of co-existence would play an important facilitative role in enabling the endemic violence that bedevilled Europe during this period.

In addition to the absence of ordering institutions and codified principles to regulate co-existence at a systemic level, the fragility of Europe’s constituent polities also contributed to the highly conflict-prone character of international relations at this time. As their direct antecedents, it is unsurprising that Europe’s composite monarchies are often anachronistically characterised as modern sovereign states by international relations scholars. Nevertheless, despite the terminological inconvenience, I use the more generic term of polities here to describe the composite monarchies of this period, in deference to the distinctive structural characteristics that distinguished them from sovereign states. Of these characteristics, one of the most significant was the degree of mutual inter-penetration of composite monarchies owing to their enmeshment within transnational aristocratic kinship webs. Throughout the sixteenth century, Europe’s dynasties continued to be entwined within a complex continental web of genealogical ties, their relations undergirded by a shared corpus of feudal laws regulating rights to marriage, inheritance and (to a lesser extent) dynastic succession. By the very nature of proprietary dynasticism, this interlocking lattice of kinship ties horizontally integrated Europe’s composite monarchies in ways that find no analogue in the era of the territorially enclosed modern sovereign state. The great advantage of such inter-connectedness, as demonstrated in the Habsburgs’ sudden rise to near-hegemony, was the opportunity it provided for rulers to engage in processes of rapid dynastic territorial accumulation through mechanisms of marriage and

inheritance. The chief disadvantage of such a system was that cross-polity aristocratic kinship ties provided actors also with in-built influence vectors for destabilizing neighbouring rivals, as well as supplying ready conduits for the speedy transition of political shocks and subversive ideological influences between polities.

Europe's composite monarchies were also distinguishable in the relative weakness of governments' direct infrastructural power, a weakness that owed strongly to their embeddedness within an intensely stratified and inegalitarian social milieu dominated by the institution of aristocratic patronage. Throughout Europe, patronage networks linked wealthier and more powerful patrons with poorer and less powerful clients in asymmetrical relations of benevolence and obedience.<sup>325</sup> These networks – suffused with the rhetoric of friendship and kinship – formed primary loci of collective identification and mobilization for Europe's warrior aristocrats, and were only partially and imperfectly subject to monarchical influence. Writing on the internal balance of power between monarchs and the aristocracy in early modern polities, David Kaiser goes as far as to argue that 'aristocratic networks of influence and patronage were the basic units of early modern politics'.<sup>326</sup> Any order that monarchs were able to contrive within their kingdoms was provisional and dependent upon their ability to integrate the various aristocratic factions into their own patronage networks and balance with and against competing factions as the need arose.<sup>327</sup> Rather than governing above faction, monarchs governed through faction, relying on imperial strategies of divide and rule to maintain hegemony within their respective domains.<sup>328</sup> When these strategies failed, a possibility that was particularly likely whenever the

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<sup>325</sup> On the nature of patronage as a social institution, see generally Ernest Gellner. "Patrons and Clients." In *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, edited by Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury, 1-6. London: Gerald Duckworth and Co Ltd, 1977.

<sup>326</sup> Kaiser, *Politics and War*, p. 8.

<sup>327</sup> J.H. Elliott. *Europe Divided 1559-1598*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2000, p. 46.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

monarchy appeared to be weak, the risk of factional infighting and a rapid collapse of central authority loomed large.<sup>329</sup>

Finally, and despite monarchs' growing capacity to extract and mobilize the wealth of their kingdoms for use in war, the hastily constructed armies they deployed were typically assembled and commanded by notoriously autonomous nobles fighting chiefly to maximize their own power and prestige.<sup>330</sup> Even in Valois France, which had in 1445 been the first entity since the fall of the Roman empire to construct the nucleus of a standing army, the monarchy came nowhere close to enjoying a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within its territory. Instead, rulers were continuously forced to contend with over-mighty subjects and their attendant armed retinues, with monarchs pressed to alternatively employ either patronage or the countervailing power of other factions to rein in the higher nobility's political and territorial ambitions.<sup>331</sup> That the leadership of monarchs' armies was largely drawn from the ranks of the higher nobility further constrained the utility of royal armies as instruments of internal repression, thus severely limiting rulers' ability to coercively enforce their writ throughout their territories.<sup>332</sup>

The distinctive characteristics outlined above rendered early modern Europe's polities exceptionally fragile creations that bear only superficial resemblances to the sovereign states that succeeded them. As with sovereign states, composite monarchies faced the dangers of external attack, dangers made all the more acute both by the incipient military revolution and also by the susceptibility of Europe's distribution of territorial patrimonies to rapid and unpredictable change on account of the vagaries of

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<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>330</sup> Kaiser, *Politics and War*, p. 21. Kaiser goes as far as to argue that the aristocratic armies of the early modern period resembled nothing so much as 'joint-stock companies' over which the monarch exercised little direct command and control capacity.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*

dynastic marital diplomacy. In addition to this external threat, however, rulers were simultaneously forced to engage in internal power-balancing to maintain their ascendancy over aristocratic patronage networks, networks that intermittently challenged royal power, but that also served as the indispensable media through which rulers exerted indirect rule over their territories. Further complicating rulers' efforts to consolidate their power was the enmeshment of composite monarchies within transnational aristocratic webs described above, a characteristic that left these polities peculiarly exposed to subversive and destabilizing influences communicated through cross-polity kinship ties.<sup>333</sup>

Scholars have frequently favoured the billiard ball analogy in describing the allegedly self-enclosed and hard-shell rimmed character of the early modern sovereign state. Given its fragile composition, a more useful metaphor to describe the early modern composite monarchy might be to conceive of it as a ball of twine, a loose bundle of aristocratic social relationships held together by bonds of kinship, marriage and patronage. To further extend the metaphor, one can imagine cross-polity kinship ties as loose threads that if pulled by external enemies with sufficient force and dexterity could precipitate the catastrophic unravelling of targeted polities. The ball of twine metaphor is admittedly clumsy, but it nevertheless captures the frailty of early modern composite monarchies and their vulnerability to subversion, as well as illustrating the formidable strategic challenges faced by rulers in preserving their patrimonies and consolidating their power.

The frailty of European polities and the absence of systemic ordering institutions and principles of co-existence contributed to an exceptionally volatile strategic environment in the aftermath of Christendom's collapse. While Europe was

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<sup>333</sup>On this point, see for example Geoffrey Parker. "The Dutch Revolt and the Polarization of International Politics." In *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith, 57-82. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. See specifically pp. 58-59.

neither heteronomous nor imperial in its organization, neither had it stabilized as a viable sovereign state system at mid-century. Certainly, the spread of networks of resident ambassadors enabled rulers to contrive ever more elaborate tactical alliances and grand strategies for realising their dynastic ambitions.<sup>334</sup> But in the absence of agreed principles for co-existence, and in light also of the fragile nature of Europe's constituent polities, the situation remained fundamentally unstable. In light of these considerations alone, it may have taken an indefinite time for Europe to evolve into a functioning sovereign state system. However, with the further sharpening of Europe's religious divide and the progressive unfurling of a revolution in the Western way of warfare, the task of constructing a new international order became infinitely more complicated.

#### 5.1.2 Systemic Dislocative Pressures I - Confessionalization

Far from abating in the years after Augsurg, the normative breakdown of Christendom intensified in the century's second half, plunging the continent into a prolonged ideological conflict. The ideological uniformity that had once characterised Christendom had already broken down with the emergence of Lutheranism and later Calvinism, but the divisions between the confessions became more embittered, more intractable, and more institutionalized over time. Following its initially lackadaisical approach to reform, the Church at last embraced the need for action through a raft of doctrinal and institutional changes agreed at the Council of Trent. These reforms clarified the Church's theology, distinguishing it definitively from both Protestant heresies and also from a plethora of popular religious practices deemed inconsistent

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<sup>334</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57.

with the Church's teachings.<sup>335</sup> Armed with this new orthodoxy and strengthened by both internal institutional reforms and the formation of new religious orders (most notably the Jesuits), the post-Tridentine Church constituted a far more formidable vehicle through which to 're-Christianize' Europe than had previously existed.<sup>336</sup> Moreover, with the last sessions of the Council being conducted under the shadow of religious civil war in France, the Church became newly energized in its commitment to purging heresy from Christendom and advancing its salvation mission.

Following the victory of confessional pluralism in the empire and magisterial 'top down' reformations in Scandinavia, Lutheranism tended towards political quiescence, even as it remained steadfast in its theological estrangement from the Church. Conversely, Calvinism emerged from the 1550s onwards as a dynamic, well-organized and implacable enemy of Catholicism. To the established Protestant propositions disputing the theology and authority of the Roman Church, Calvin added the notion of predestination, arguing that only a very few souls were predestined for salvation, and that mortals had no way of knowing in advance whether they were among the saved or the reprobate.<sup>337</sup> Irrespective of whether or not they were to be saved, Calvin further insisted that all mortals were compelled to obey God's laws through their voluntary subjection to rigorous physical and spiritual discipline.<sup>338</sup> At an organizational level, Reformed churches were to be ruled and spiritual discipline enforced through local consistories jointly governed by Geneva-trained clerics and elders drawn from the congregation.<sup>339</sup> These consistories in turn would be linked to Geneva via an ascending hierarchy encompassing regional colloquys of pastors,

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<sup>335</sup>Elliott, *Europe Divided*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>336</sup>See generally MacCulloch, *Reformation – Europe's House Divided*, pp. 322-330 *passim*.

<sup>337</sup>Jean Calvin. *Calvin: Theological Treatises*. Translated by J.K.S. Reid. Vol. XXII, *The Library of Christian Classics*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1956, pp. 179-180.

<sup>338</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 30-1.

<sup>339</sup>Elliott, *Europe Divided*, p.76.

provincial synods, and national synods.<sup>340</sup> The rigidity and intensity of Calvinist doctrine, the intense self-discipline demanded of its adherents, the cellular organization of Reformed churches, and the implacable hostility of Geneva towards the idolatrous practices imputed by it to Roman church – each of these elements together rendered Calvinism a formidable adversary to the Church and its allied rulers.

The domestic and international political struggles of the mid-sixteenth century thus occurred against the backdrop of a poisonous ideological polarization between Rome and Geneva, with both poles demonstrating intense hostility towards Lutheranism as well. As noted earlier, the consolidation of confessional identities carried with it powerful and paradoxical consequences for Europe's rulers. Heinz Schilling's characterisation of the confessional age as the 'warm up' period for modernity emphasizes the nexus he perceives between confessionalization and state formation in the decades following the Peace of Augsburg.<sup>341</sup> Through this reading, modernization of the Catholic, Calvinist and Lutheran Churches (encompassing doctrinal modernization and proselytisation as well as organizational reform) became intimately connected with rulers' attempts to construct unified, disciplined societies of subjects.<sup>342</sup> This connection between confessionalization and state formation was manifest in the dramatic growth of church/state collaboration in the indoctrination, education and moral supervision of rulers' subjects during this period, a process that irrevocably tightened the affective and institutional bonds linking rulers and ruled.<sup>343</sup>

The confessionalization thesis has been criticized for its association with the structural-functionalist assumptions of modernization theory. Some period specialists have also questioned the theory's applicability for cases beyond the lands of the Holy

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<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> Schilling, 'Confessional Europe', p. 643.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 651-653.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.* See also Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution*, pp. 158-159.

Roman Empire.<sup>344</sup> These criticisms notwithstanding, the theory's recognition of the increased de-differentiation of church and state during the confessional age is both generally recognized and deserving of special emphasis. This is because the institutional de-differentiation of church and state encouraged throughout Europe an increasing identification of religious heresy with political treachery. Thus, while the increasing sacralization of political authority superficially enhanced the power of rulers, attempts to coercively impose confessional conformity invited resistance justified in explicitly religious terms. Where previously rebellious subjects were content to invoke the authority of established custom in justifying their defiance of rulers, the period after 1560 witnessed the formulation of radically novel theories of resistance that justified rebellion and even the deposition of established rulers as a divinely mandated imperative.<sup>345</sup> Even in cases where rulers favoured conciliation rather than coercion as the preferred means of dealing with religious dissenters, such policies frequently courted confrontation with the devout, thereby imperilling the social unity such policies had initially sought to preserve.

In spite of – or perhaps because of – the religious divisions opened up by the Reformation, faith remained the essential foundation of social unity and the indispensable buttress of political authority in the confessional age. Augustinian notions regarding the divinely ordained character of the temporal authorities resonated throughout the sixteenth century, as did the equation of religious uniformity with political and social stability. Religion continued to be conceived in relation to an

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<sup>344</sup>See for example the useful discussions in Jorg Deventer. "Confessionalisation' - a Useful Theoretical Concept for the Study of Religion, Politics, and Society in Early Modern East-Central Europe?" *European Review of History* 11, no. 3 (2004): 403-25; and also Thomas A. Brady Jr.

"Confessionalization: The Career of a Concept." In *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555-1700*, edited by John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand and Anthony . Papalás, 1-20. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

<sup>345</sup>See for example the characterisation of Calvinism and the Calvinist movement as being fundamentally revolutionary in character in Robert M. Kingdon. "International Calvinism and the Thirty Years' War." In *1648 -War and Peace in Europe*, edited by Klaus Bussman and Heinz Schilling, 229-35. Munster/Osnabruck: Westfälisches Landesmuseum, 1998.



embodied community of believers rather than referring to a privately held body of beliefs or doctrines. Consequently, religious dissent was perceived as an intolerable threat to both temporal peace and spiritual salvation.<sup>346</sup> The continuing centrality of faith to the legitimacy of kings and the unity of the body social thus ensured a polarization of sympathies and a breakdown of domestic and international order as confessional divisions sharpened in the years following Augsburg and Cateau-Cambrésis.

Ideologically, confessional conflict thus polarized Europe around competing confessional blocs, situating even localized conflicts within a broader narrative of spiritual struggle that resonated throughout the European international system. The fissiparous tendencies called forth by confessional division threatened the unity of kingdoms, the health of the body social, and the strength of man's relationship to God, disturbing temporal peace and imperilling both individual and collective spiritual salvation. Such was the magnitude of the perceived threat posed by heresy that the rhetoric of confessional conflict became rapidly suffused with the imagery and indefeasible religious imperatives of Holy War. Prior to the Reformation, Europeans had largely reserved the language and practices of total moral exclusion for infidels living beyond Christendom's borders, and, less consistently, for Jews living within Christendom. Europe's wars of religion by contrast were distinguished by the interjection of the Holy War tradition into relations across the sectarian divide.<sup>347</sup> Political and social conflicts between rulers and ruled and dynastic geopolitical competition continued to simmer during this period. But now the added overlay of

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<sup>346</sup>On the conception of religion as referring to an embodied community of believers, see for example Mack Holt. *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 2. See also Natalie Zemon Davis. "The Rites of Violence: Religious Violence in Sixteenth Century France." *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 51-91. See specifically pp. 57-65.

<sup>347</sup>On this point, see the excellent discussion in Norman Housley. *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400-1536*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 194-205 *passim*.

religious rivalries encouraged actors to conceive of these rivalries in absolute terms, imbuing them with a larger significance as the mundane expressions of a more profound cosmic struggle between the forces of God and Satan. To an already volatile environment, confessionalization added the accelerant of sentiments of absolute enmity, qualitatively heightening actors' security anxieties and further contributing to generalized disorder.

### 5.1.3 Systemic Dislocative Pressures II -The European Military Revolution

While processes of confessionalization introduced deep ideological antagonisms into the fabric of early modern international politics, the roughly coterminous unfurling of Europe's first military revolution dramatically increased the destructive scale of the ensuing conflicts. The role played by increases in violence interdependence in destroying Christendom has already been discussed in chapter four. As the sixteenth century progressed, Europe's geopolitical environment would be further transformed by a congeries of technological and organizational changes that built upon previous innovations, and that are collectively referred to by period specialists as the 'military revolution'.

Within the context of this inquiry, the early modern military revolution (c.1550-1660) is taken to refer to the following inter-related phenomena. At the technological level, the military revolution was punctuated by the ascendancy of artillery fortresses, massed musket-wielding infantry, and broadside-firing battleships as the chief instruments of violence within the European international system.<sup>348</sup> Organizationally, the military revolution manifested itself in a dramatic growth in the

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<sup>348</sup>Geoffrey Parker. *Europe in Crisis 1598-1648*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001, p. 48.

size of armies, as well as a pronounced shift in their character. With the military revolution, the ramshackle hosts of an earlier era gave way to permanent standing armies comprised of systematically drilled and disciplined soldiers trained and led by a professional officer class.<sup>349</sup> The unprecedented costs involved in establishing and maintaining such forces in turn forced shifts in rulers' strategies of resource mobilization, giving rise to the consolidation of permanent taxation and the development of sovereign debt as key features of government.<sup>350</sup> The pressures of intensified resource mobilization cumulatively generated radical revisions in the institutional structures mediating relations between rulers and ruled. These revisions typically produced dramatic and lasting increases in governments' extractive and administrative powers over subject societies.<sup>351</sup> Finally, at its end point, the military revolution contributed to the development of new legitimating frameworks for governments, with the enhanced powers of government finding domestic justification through reference to notions of sovereignty, and international legitimacy through reference to the imperatives of *raison d'état*.<sup>352</sup>

Considered over the long term, the military revolution contributed heavily to the centralization of political power in composite monarchies, the crystallization of identifiably modern states, and the birth of a European sovereign state system. Conversely, in the short to medium term the military revolution exerted immensely disruptive and decidedly ambiguous effects for Europe's rulers. At the systemic level, the immediate effect of increases in the cost, scale and destructiveness of warfare was to intensify actors' sense of vulnerability to external attack, thus elevating security

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<sup>349</sup>Parker, *The Military Revolution*, p. 43.

<sup>350</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>351</sup>Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, p. 453.

<sup>352</sup>On this point, see Hirst, *War and Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 58. See also Reinhart Koselleck. *Critique and Crisis - Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*. Oxford: Berg, 1988, pp. 18-24.

anxieties and further raising the likelihood of international war. Within polities, the mobilizational strains induced by the increased costs of war strained relations between rulers and ruled in an atmosphere already suffused with religious tensions.<sup>353</sup>

Additionally, given the weak infrastructural power of early modern governments, the costs of warfare invariably exceeded rulers' abilities to pay, forcing them to adopt short-term expedients that further magnified the socially dislocative effects of war.<sup>354</sup>

Thus, for example, in the Thirty Years War, rulers' tendency to field far larger armies than they could possibly support forced commanders to engage in the systematic plunder of occupied populations, thereby massively increasing the devastation wrought by the conflict.<sup>355</sup>

Finally, for all of their long-term centripetal consequences, the innovations wrought by the military revolution did not immediately favour rulers decisively over rebels. Thus, the intractability of France's Wars of Religion owed in part to the entrenched position of the Huguenot rebels, who were installed in a network of formidable rebel artillery fortresses concentrated in the country's South and West.<sup>356</sup> Similarly, it was the Dutch rebels that first introduced systematic drilling and the inculcation of a battle culture of forbearance into the training of infantrymen, innovations that enabled them to perfect infantry musketry volleys far earlier than their more powerful Spanish opponents.<sup>357</sup> Once it was consummated in the post-Westphalian period, the military revolution favoured political centralization and geopolitical consolidation. But during Europe's century of chaos, its effects were more

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<sup>353</sup>See for example Nexon, 'Religion, European Identity, and Political Contention in Historical Perspective', pp. 269-270.

<sup>354</sup>See for example Kaiser, *Politics and War*, p. 15; and also Frank Tallett. *War and Society in Early Modern Europe, 1495-1715*. London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 200-201.

<sup>355</sup>David A. Parrott. "Strategy and Tactics in the Thirty Years' War: The 'Military Revolution'." *Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 38, no. 2 (1985), p. 9.

<sup>356</sup>On this point, see Black, *Kings, Nobles and Commoners*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>357</sup>On this point, see McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*, pp. 128-136 *passim*.

uneven, tending to diffuse unprecedented destructive capabilities to rulers and rebels alike.

#### 5.1.4 Europe's Century of Chaos – A Reprise and a Preview

The foregoing survey of the forces that defined Europe's century of chaos has been necessarily extensive. I have argued that Europe in the aftermath of Christendom's demise possessed an international system – comprised of state-like entities and endowed with an expanding network of resident ambassadors – but not an international society. While Europe possessed many of the institutional precursors of what would later emerge as a modern state system, it lacked either the minimal ordering institutions or principles of co-existence necessary for a stable international order to emerge. Europe's composite monarchies remained embedded within transnational genealogical webs and beholden to the vagaries of dynastic marital diplomacy. Additionally, rulers' powers within their patrimonies were limited by the influence of aristocratic patronage networks only imperfectly subject to monarchical control. Within this unsettled environment, confessionalization and the military revolution added poisonous religious division and the diffusion of capacities for destruction on an unprecedented scale. It was in the context of this fusion of fanaticism and firepower that Europe's century of chaos unfolded. The literature on this period is voluminous and a comprehensive analysis of the era cannot be undertaken here. Instead, the French Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years War will be briefly considered, both to illustrate the dynamics of disorder that characterised the period, and also to illuminate the intellectual and cultural innovations that these conflicts called forth, and that laid the foundations of the Westphalian state system.

## **5.2 Into the Dark Valley – Europe’s Century of Chaos, 1559-1648**

### **5.2.1 The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1598 - The Main Lines of the Conflict**

On 28 June, 1559 King Henri II of France was mortally wounded in a celebratory joust to mark the conclusion of the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis. His death twelve days later, and the effective transfer of power to his widow Catherine de Medici and a shifting constellation of aristocratic factions, paved the way for France’s descent into decades of civil war and religious violence. Between 1562 and 1598, France was wracked by no less than eight civil wars fuelled by a mixture of aristocratic factional rivalry, religious fanaticism and international dynastic competition. Given the complex interplay of political and religious motives driving the protagonists, attempts to characterise the French Wars of Religion as being driven exclusively by matters of faith or faction are of limited value. Rather, the nature of these wars as expressions of Europe’s broader crisis demands an appreciation of the multiple and entwined motives that made these conflicts both so intense and so intractable.

That noble factional rivalries were so central to France’s religious wars is unsurprising given the centrality of aristocratic patronage networks as loci of loyalty and vehicles for collective action during the sixteenth century. At one level, the wars constituted a tri-polar struggle between the houses of Guise, Bourbon and Montmorency for power and for influence over Catherine de Medici and her sons, the rightful heirs to the throne. Each of the three houses maintained extensive patronage networks and independently disposed of great power in the regions they respectively dominated – the Bourbons in the South and West, the Guise in the East and in

Normandy, and the Montmorency in central France.<sup>358</sup> The monarchy's lack of infrastructural power made it heavily reliant on the assistance of the great families in projecting its writ throughout the kingdom. Equally, however, the prosperity and prestige of the great noble houses was partially dependent upon their proximity to royal power, given the king's status as *primus inter pares* and his position as the central dispenser of patronage.<sup>359</sup> During the prolonged period of royal weakness following Henri II's death, the three noble houses were thus locked in a bitter zero-sum competition for influence over Catherine and her sons. Equally, for the Valois heirs, the age was marked by repeated and forlorn attempts to reassert the crown's pre-eminence over the factions as a requisite for restoring lasting peace to the kingdom.

The situation in France after 1559 would have been volatile even without religious controversy, given the intensity of factional rivalry, the weakness of the crown and the ease with which the competing factions could recruit large numbers of soldiers recently demobilized following the end of the Italian wars. Nevertheless, the spread of Calvinism throughout France – and particularly among the higher nobility, forty percent of whom were at one point converts to the Huguenot cause – explosively intensified pre-existing factional divisions.<sup>360</sup> Under the leadership of the house of Bourbon, the Huguenots demanded the right to worship freely and in accordance with Calvinist doctrine, arguing that their religious non-conformity was in no way inconsistent with their duties of obedience to the crown. After the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew and the extermination of much of the Huguenot leadership, a

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<sup>358</sup> Elliott, J.H., *Europe Divided*, p. 44.

<sup>359</sup> Interestingly, the king's powers as a dispenser of patronage had significantly increased with the large-scale sale of offices to finance the Italian campaigns, a practice that would nevertheless in the long-term undercut the development of a functioning legal-bureaucratic apparatus of rule in France once Absolutism consolidated itself from 1660 onwards. On the Italian campaigns as a catalyst for the large-scale sale of offices, see Quentin Skinner. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought Volume Two: The Age of the Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 262.

<sup>360</sup> Robert Jean Knecht. *The French Wars of Religion, 1559-1598*. London: Longman, 1989, p. 14.

reconciliation with the crown no longer seemed imaginable, and Huguenot propagandists henceforth forged a theory of resistance to monarchical authority comprising an amalgam of customary, constitutionalist and religious justifications.<sup>361</sup> Opposing the Bourbons, the Guise household, incidentally enjoying a near-monopoly on appointments within the Gallican Church, led the struggle to enforce conformity and relentlessly pressured the king to fulfil his coronation oath of extirpating heresy from the kingdom.<sup>362</sup> From 1584, as it became obvious that Henri III would die without heir and that the crown would likely pass to the Huguenot Henri of Bourbon, ultra-Catholic Monarchomachs under Guise leadership themselves embraced the cause of resistance for the larger goal of keeping the kingdom free of heresy.

That sectarian hatreds overlapped with factional cleavages provides some insight into the nature of France's religious wars, but it should not be inferred that religious questions were of purely instrumental importance to the protagonists. On the contrary, the de-differentiation of church and state characteristic of the confessional age made questions of religious conformity of supreme importance not only to France's aristocratic warlords, but also to the broader populace as well. For while the formula *cuius regio, eius religio* had been officially imposed as a solution to the problem of religious pluralism only within the Holy Roman Empire, *de facto* recognition that spiritual uniformity was synonymous with political and social harmony obtained throughout Europe. For the Catholic majority, for whom faith constituted the essential glue holding society together, Huguenot non-conformity represented a spiritual pollutant that threatened the unity of the body social and

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<sup>361</sup>On Calvinist resistance theory, see generally Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, pp. 225-239.

<sup>362</sup>On the Guise households near-monopoly on appointments to the Gallican church, see Kaiser, *Politics and War*, p. 50.



demanded eradication.<sup>363</sup> Equally, sectarian hostility violently expressed itself also in localities where Huguenots managed to secure the ascendancy, their public advocacy of religious toleration notwithstanding. The religious passions that animated France's civil wars were intense, heartfelt and rooted in popular assumptions about the relationship between the sacred and the social worlds, and found their expression not merely in aristocratic factional warfare, but also in repeated waves of confessional cleansing aimed at restoring religious uniformity through the annihilation of heretical beliefs and heretical believers.

International dynastic competition constituted the third driver of France's civil wars. The drawn-out eclipse of its erstwhile peer competitor naturally benefited Habsburg Spain, and Philip II's sponsorship of the both the Guise faction and the militant Catholic League was motivated as much by a desire to perpetuate French weakness as it was to eradicate the Huguenot heresy.<sup>364</sup> Similarly, the limited support Elizabethan England afforded the Huguenots from 1585 was the product of equally mixed motives. With the French crown prostrate and the danger looming of a Spanish-influenced and League-dominated puppet regime establishing itself in northern France, support for the Huguenots was dictated as much by dynastic concerns to stave off Spanish hegemony as it was by sympathy for England's co-religionists.<sup>365</sup> The collapse of Valois France – hitherto one of Christendom's two superpowers -radically altered the strategic environment confronting Europe's rulers, opening up a power vacuum in the heart of Western Europe and amplifying Spain's power *vis-à-vis* other polities in so doing. In the absence of principles of non-intervention, dynastic geopolitical ambitions and anxieties thus combined with sympathy for co-religionists

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<sup>363</sup> On Catholic conceptions of Huguenots as spiritual pollutants to be ruthlessly eradicated, see Davis, 'The Rites of Violence', p. 57.

<sup>364</sup> Anderson, *The Origins of the Modern European State System*, p. 169.

<sup>365</sup> Elliott, *Europe Divided*, pp. 208-210. See also Susan Doran. *England and Europe in the Sixteenth Century*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1999, pp.95-101.

to draw external powers into a series of interventions that further prolonged France's agonies and exacerbated the ensuing carnage.

### 5.2.2 Herding Cats in a Tornado - The French Wars of Religion as an Expression of Systemic Disorder

The multiple motives that drove the French Wars of Religion illuminate the broader complexities underpinning Europe's century of chaos. Confessional conflict interwove with factional rivalries and international dynastic competition without either subsuming or being subsumed by these pre-existing conflict vectors. Considerations of factional advantage or dynastic aggrandizement were not banished from actors' strategic calculations by Europe's ideological polarization. But sectarian divisions did inject a level of venom into these conflicts that made attempts at mediation and reconciliation exceptionally difficult to effect. For the duration of the French wars, the Valois household sought unsuccessfully to manage these passions through oscillating strategies of coercion and conciliation directed towards the Huguenot minority. The failure of both of these strategies not only illustrates the weakness of central authority in France at the time, but also provides an insight into the nature of the larger environment within which Europe's wars of religion played out.

Throughout France's wars, the Huguenots pressed the king to grant them freedom to worship in selected Calvinist enclaves in exchange for their obedience, with these liberties to be underwritten by the maintenance of armed Huguenot strongholds within these safe havens. Catholics by contrast held equally firmly to the maxim *un roi, une foi, une loi*, and identified any concession to the Huguenots as an invitation to disunity and a betrayal of the king's sacred obligation to eradicate heresy. Given the irreconcilability of these positions, Catherine initially sought to transcend

sectarian positions by cultivating a bi-confessional basis of support for the crown based on the nobility's common bonds of traditional fealty to the monarch. However, from 1572 onwards, amidst continuing factional intrigue and in the shadow of growing Huguenot influence over the young king Charles IX, the Valois court lurched towards a strategy of repression that culminated in the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre. The massacre in Paris and accompanying pogroms throughout the country eliminated much of the Huguenot leadership, terrified thousands of converts into returning to the Catholic Church, and permanently arrested the spread of Calvinism throughout the higher nobility.<sup>366</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the crown's short-term tactical successes, the strategic goal of restoring peace to the realm remained unmet, with the newly radicalized Huguenots fighting on to extort enduring religious and political concessions from the crown in the 1598 Edict of Nantes.

The Huguenots' durability in the face of savage repression is explicable by reference to three factors that speak more broadly to the weakness of early modern polities and to the absence of international order in late sixteenth century Europe. Firstly, Huguenot resilience can be explained by reference to both the trans-polity character of their support base, as well as the mobilizational structures they were able to construct by synthesizing the strengths of aristocratic patronage networks with those of a bureaucratically organized and internationally oriented system of church government. From the outset, the Huguenots enjoyed ideological and organizational ties to confessional allies beyond France. Ideologically, the Huguenots drew their inspiration from the Godly Commonwealth established by Calvin in Geneva. A protestant French exile, Calvin's life-long mission was the evangelization of his homeland, and in the precociously developed printing industries of Geneva and Berne he found an ideal vehicle through which to direct a steady stream of theology and

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<sup>366</sup>Elliott, *Europe Divided*, p. 149.

propaganda to prospective converts in France. Throughout France's wars of religion, Geneva served as the Calvinist movement's spiritual and intellectual epicentre, a position that had been confirmed through the establishment there of an academy for training and despatching Calvinist missionaries as early as 1559.<sup>367</sup>

It was from missionaries trained at the Genevan Academy – many of them native Frenchmen - that the Huguenots derived much of their ecclesiastical and intellectual leadership. As part of a conscious strategy of proselytisation, the Academy had also successfully targeted for conversion members of the French high nobility, in the understanding that upon converting a noble would usually bring with him his networks of clients and dependents.<sup>368</sup> In pursuing this strategy, the Huguenots were able to construct a highly effective apparatus of rebellion that synthesized the ideological and intellectual power of an internationally trained cadre of clerics with the military power and experience of converted noble families. This dualistic character of the Huguenot leadership found its expression also in the hybrid organizational form of French Calvinist networks. The elaborate web of kinship ties and patron-client relationships within which Huguenot nobles were enmeshed provided a powerful source of political and military power that they routinely tapped throughout the Wars of Religion.<sup>369</sup> Overlaying this informal structure lay a structure of church government, developed under Geneva's guidance, that organized France's scattered Calvinists under a governance structure comprising a national synod, provincial synods, regional colloquies of pastors, and local churches with accompanying consistories.<sup>370</sup> This hybrid organizational structure - built upon a foundation of pre-

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<sup>367</sup> Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion*, p. 7. See also Robert M. Kingdon. Geneva and the Coming of the Wars of Religion in France, 1555-1563. Geneva: Droz, 1956, p. 93.

<sup>368</sup> Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion*, p. 14.

<sup>369</sup> On this point, see H.G. Koenigsberger. "The Organization of Revolutionary Parties in France and the Netherlands During the Sixteenth Century." *The Journal of Modern History* 27, no. 4 (1955), p. 337.

<sup>370</sup> Robert M. Kingdon. "The Political Resistance of the Calvinists in France and the Low Countries." *Church History* 27, no. 3 (1958), p. 222.

existing kinship and patronage networks and fortified by an internationally sponsored modular form of Church organization – provided the Huguenots with a formidable mobilizational infrastructure throughout France’s religious wars.

To the inherent organizational advantages mentioned above, the Huguenot cause was aided further by the absence of norms of non-intervention, and France’s pervasive permeation by aristocratic ties linking it to other polities. Both the lack of a norm of non-intervention and the interconnectedness of France to other polities ensured foreign involvement in France’s religious wars, including the provision of sympathy and support for the Huguenot cause. Thus, for example, from the 1570s, the Huguenots enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with Dutch Calvinist rebels revolting against Philip II in the Spanish Netherlands, with familial connections (by marriage rather than blood) between the Huguenot leader Coligny and the Dutch rebel leader William of Orange working to further fortify pre-existing religious sympathies between the two rebel movements.<sup>371</sup> Equally, both Huguenot and Dutch rebels also received intermittent assistance from Elizabethan England and Palatinate.<sup>372</sup> Such assistance was neither as comprehensive as devout Calvinists would have wished, nor was it provided purely in the spirit of confessional solidarity, with reasons of state playing at least as significant a role in Elizabeth’s assistance to the Huguenots as enthusiasm for the Protestant cause.<sup>373</sup> This qualification notwithstanding, international assistance in the form of soldiers, subsidies, sanctuary for exiles, and occasionally even direct military support was far from insignificant, and further fortified Huguenot resolve in the face of royal power.

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<sup>371</sup>Elliott, *Europe Divided*, p. 199.

<sup>372</sup>Graeme Murdock. *Beyond Calvin - the Intellectual, Political, and Cultural World of Europe's Reformed Churches*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp 48-51.

<sup>373</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

Finally, the Huguenots also benefited from the opening stages of the military revolution, which in France initially favoured rebels over rulers. Despite the advances in political centralization realised by Europe's renaissance monarchies, the aristocracy continued to exercise a collective monopoly on the use of violence in the sixteenth century, and great noble houses such as the Bourbons could summon significant coercive power by tapping in to their extensive networks of clients.<sup>374</sup> However, by the onset of the French wars, the nobility were additionally able to recruit and field larger armies than before by exploiting the burgeoning market for mercenary armies then extant throughout Europe. The commercialization of military violence originated in northern Italy in the fourteenth century, but by the mid-sixteenth century the market's epicentre had shifted to Switzerland and southern Germany.<sup>375</sup> The chief consequence of this development was that France's feuding private armies were no longer limited in size or destructive potential by the resources inhering in aristocratic kinship and patronage networks. Instead, resources indigenous to France could now be augmented by resources derived from an international mercenary market, thereby prolonging the conflict and magnifying its destructive consequences.

Not only did the ongoing commercialization of military violence indiscriminately aid rebels as well as rulers, but the Huguenots additionally benefited from the sixteenth century revolution in fortress design that had yielded the virtually impregnable *trace italienne* artillery fortress. Throughout the 'Huguenot crescent' of South-Western France, Calvinism endured after the St. Bartholomew's massacre in so small part due to the formidable defensive advantages conferred by the rebels'

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<sup>374</sup>Elliott, *Europe Divided*, p. 46.

<sup>375</sup>On Swiss and especially German domination of the market for infantry pikemen, see David Potter. "The International Mercenary Market in the Sixteenth Century: Anglo-French Competition in Germany, 1543-1550." *The English Historical Review* 111, no. 440 (1996), p. 24; and also Gilbert John Millar. "The Landsknecht: His Recruitment and Organization, with Some Reference to the Reign of Henry VIII." *Military Affairs* 35, no. 3 (1971), p. 98.

possession of a string of fortified towns and artillery fortresses.<sup>376</sup> The existence of this archipelago of fortified positions provided the Huguenots with critical territorial footholds, which in the most famous instance (La Rochelle) could be continuously supplied by sea with the help of an international network of sea-borne co-religionists.<sup>377</sup> Consequently, in spite of a string of indecisive battlefield victories, neither the monarchy nor the militant Guise faction could overcome the Huguenots entrenched positions, making outright military victory and the forcible imposition of confessional conformity throughout France impossible.

For the foregoing reasons, the strategy of repression failed to resolve France's domestic turmoil. Conversely, however, for similar reasons, a strategy of conciliation with the Huguenots also proved difficult to implement. For the duration of the conflict, the Catholic majority opposed any concession to the Huguenots as a concession to heresy and a sin against God. In Catholic propaganda, Huguenots were characterised as 'unclean' spiritual pollutants, to be cleansed from the body social through sacredly mandated purgative violence. Thus, a Leaguer propagandist enjoined his co-religionists to the indiscriminate slaughter of Huguenots, arguing that French unity could be restored only by 'cutting off this rotten member whose stench has infected, infects, and will infect, if it is not completely separated from the others...'<sup>378</sup> With the unity of the body social imperilled by heresy, Christianity's preoccupation with the struggle between the forces of God and Satan was now recruited to the task of legitimizing violence against confessional enemies. The institution of Crusade, an institution that had formerly deflected violence outwards from Christendom, was now turned inwards to devastating effect.<sup>379</sup> Previously, aristocratic violence within

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<sup>376</sup> Black, *Kings, Nobles and Commoners*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>378</sup> Dalia M. Leonardo. "'Cut Off This Rotten Member': The Rhetoric of Sin, Heresy and Disease in the Ideology of the French Catholic League." *Catholic Historical Review* 88, no. 2 (2002), pp. 252-3.

<sup>379</sup> On this point, see for example Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe*, pp. 196-198.

Christendom had been corralled, however imperfectly, by the constraints of just war doctrine and by the broader religious injunctions against violence articulated by the Church. But in the heat of confessional rivalry, these ethical constraints dissolved, to be substituted by an ethos of Holy War that mandated the use of unlimited violence against demonized and dehumanized confessional Others<sup>380</sup>.

The intractability of sectarian hostilities emboldened the Guise and their clients to implacably oppose all royal attempts to negotiate a *politique* compromise to the conflict. In effect, the divine imperative of opposing heresy provided an unassailable normative justification for noble defiance of royal authority. As with the Huguenots, ultra-Catholics additionally possessed independent capacities for mobilization that under-wrote their attempts firstly to thwart royal attempts at a *politique* compromise, and secondly to resist the prospective ascendancy of the Protestant Henry de Bourbon after the last Valois king died without heirs in 1589. In 1576, and again from 1584 onwards, this opposition to Calvinism assumed the form of the Catholic League, which drew its leadership from the Guise, but in its second incarnation broadened its social base to include members of the middle and lower classes.<sup>381</sup> Like the Huguenot networks, the League cohered around existing structures of collective action, specifically around aristocratic kinship and patronage networks but also around parish churches and the religious confraternities affiliated with artisans' guilds.<sup>382</sup> Unlike the Huguenots, however, the League's radicalism ultimately expressed itself in the formation in Paris of a precociously modern party apparatus, one that in the last of

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<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>381</sup> Knecht, *The French Wars of Religion*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>382</sup> Frederic J. Baumgartner. *Radical Reactionaries: The Political Thought of the French Catholic League*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1975, p. 41.



France's religious wars briefly instituted a theocratic reign of terror in the capital under the authority of a revolutionary Committee of Public Safety.<sup>383</sup>

Ultra-Catholics enjoyed along with their Huguenot adversaries a surfeit of international connections that strengthened their will and capacity to resist royal attempts to placate the Huguenots with concessions. Throughout its existence, the League drew its spiritual inspiration from Rome and remained heavily dependent upon the Spanish Habsburgs for financial and military support, a dependence that merely increased with the parallel growth in foreign sponsorship of the Huguenots by England, Geneva, and Palatinate.<sup>384</sup> The conclusion in December 1584 of the Treaty of Joinville between the League and Philip II, in which both parties resolved to assist one another in preserving the Catholic character of the French monarchy and in extirpating heresy from both France and the Spanish Netherlands, provides a particularly stark illustration of both the power of France's internationally allied religious factions and their accompanying private armies, and the inability of the French crown to effectively discipline same. With the death in 1589 of Henri III and the imminent succession of the Protestant Henri de Bourbon as his nearest legal heir, the alliance between French ultra-Catholics and foreign entities became only more pronounced, and manifested itself in sustained military interventions by Catholic powers to scotch Henri's disputed succession.<sup>385</sup> The facility with which local ultra-Catholics were so able to tap the resources of the international Counter-Reformation in prosecuting their conflicts

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<sup>383</sup>On the precociously modern and party-like organization of the Parisian branch of the League, see Koenigsberger, 'The Organization of Revolutionary Parties', p. 346.

<sup>384</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>385</sup>In addition to providing the League with massive financial subsidies, Spain directly supported it by landing forces in Brittany, invading Languedoc and launching no less than four offensives from the Spanish Netherlands against Huguenot forces stationed in northern France. Similarly, and again with the help of Spanish subsidies, the Duke of Savoy occupied parts of Provence, while the papacy sent an army of 10,000 soldiers to fight alongside the League in 1591-2. See Geoffrey Parker. "The Dutch Revolt and the Polarization of International Politics." In *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Geoffrey Parker and Lesley M. Smith, 57-82. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. See specifically pp. 63-64.

against both Huguenots and crown provides further insight into the obstacles impeding a *politique* solution to France's conflicts.

Given the notorious independence of France's well-armed and internationally allied aristocratic factions, and given also the chaotic international environment of confessional schism and dynastic intrigue within which France's civil wars unfolded, the task of reining in the factions and restoring monarchical power and civil peace to France can be likened to trying to herd cats in a tornado. To the challenges of governing through rather than above aristocratic faction confronted by all Renaissance monarchs, the Reformation and the military revolution added the centrifugal influences of unbridgeable confessional division and the diffusion of enhanced destructive capabilities to rulers and rebels alike. Added to this, the absence of norms of non-intervention and the presence of ties of blood and belief linking factional warlords to foreign allies ensured the rapid escalation, internationalization, and prolongation France's internal conflicts. With Christendom vanquished and the prospect of a Habsburg imperium also foreclosed, any successor order in Western Europe was always likely to take the form of a sovereign state system. Nevertheless, in order for this transition to occur, robust sovereign states would need to be built, a task that required the prior imagining of sovereignty as a social construct. The anarchic conditions confronting France's monarchs in the late sixteenth century hardly provided a propitious context for state building. But these very same conditions provided an ideal context for the development of the conceptual foundations upon which the Absolutist state would subsequently be assembled.

### 5.2.3 The Birth of Sovereignty and the end of the French Wars of Religion

With Henri of Bourbon's *politique* conversion to Catholicism in 1594 and his subsequent granting of limited toleration to Huguenots with the 1598 Edict of Nantes, France's seemingly interminable religious civil wars were brought to a close. While France did not remain free from internal religious violence in the seventeenth century, the French monarchy's new found strength proved sufficient to prevent a recurrence of the anarchy that had punctuated the dying decades of the Valois dynasty. Indeed, so comprehensively did France recover from the religious wars that within a century a concert of powers would only narrowly defeat Louis XIV's bid to secure a hegemonic position within the European state system. At the heart of this transformation in French fortunes lay a revolution in the conceptualization of religious and political power, one that would undergird the formation of a new order firstly within France and then subsequently throughout Europe as a whole.

The ideological revolution was of course Jean Bodin's formulation of a recognizably modern theory of state sovereignty. While royal propagandists had long drawn from principles of Roman law to assert that the king acts as emperor within his own realm, it was in Bodin's writings that modern notions of sovereignty first receive systematic expression. Bodin's notion that there can be no order without an orderer, and that that orderer must be absolute in their authority, was in hindsight an understandable response to the turmoil characteristic of the French wars. Nevertheless, the timeliness of Bodin's theory should not detract from either its novelty nor from its enduring significance. In the context of this inquiry, the implications of Bodin's theory for prevailing conceptions of the law, violence, and religion, and the relationships of each to monarchical authority deserve particular attention. Turning firstly to law, Bodin's conception of sovereignty was distinguishable by its emphasis on the

centrality of legislative power as the constitutive act that defines the sovereign.<sup>386</sup>

Whereas previous conceptions of monarchical power had placed great emphasis on the crown's adjudicatory function, Bodin instead invested law-making as the defining prerogative of the sovereign.<sup>387</sup> The sovereign in Bodin's theory was said to replicate in his law-making powers God's creative role in ordering the universe out of chaos by the exercise of divine command.<sup>388</sup>

Bodin's conception of law as sovereign command was critical as a principled attack on theories of mixed government that had been exploited by Huguenots and Leaguers alike in justifying rebellion against the crown. In investing sole legislative power in the Absolute sovereign, Bodin's theory wrong-footed the justifications previously advanced by feuding aristocrats in subverting the monarchy and plunging France into civil strife. While the sovereign was obliged to act within the confines of custom, divine natural law and the fundamental customs of the kingdom, the unprecedented arrogation of law-making powers to the crown under Bodin's theory necessarily carried weighty implications also for the control of violence within and beyond the kingdom. Bodinian sovereignty did not directly call for the monarch's monopolization of the means of violence, but the ordering function of the sovereign implied a harnessing of aristocratic violence towards the realisation of the sovereign's will. Given the crucial centripetal role assigned to the sovereign power by Bodin, neither feudal 'self-help' nor confessional 'Holy War' justifications for aristocratic violence could be admitted where such prerogatives clashed with the sovereign's

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<sup>386</sup>See for example Jean Bodin. *The Six Books of the Commonwealth*. Translated by M.J. Tooley. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956, p. 35, where Bodin characterizes law as a social institution as follows: 'Law is nothing else than the command of the sovereign in the exercise of his personal power'.

<sup>387</sup>*Ibid.* On this point, see also J.H. Burns. "The Idea of Absolutism." In *Absolutism in Seventeenth Century Europe*, edited by John Miller, 21-42. London: MacMillan, 1990. See specifically p. 27.

<sup>388</sup>On this point, see Nannerl O. Keohane. *Philosophy and the State in France - the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 70-1.

objective of maintaining political and social order.<sup>389</sup> In this regard, Bodinian sovereignty provided a crucial ideological justification for rulers' rationalization and centralization of coercive power once Europe's religious wars ended.

Finally, Bodin's theory of sovereignty opened the way for a *politique* reformulation of the relationship between religion and political authority. Bodinian sovereignty drew upon existing sacerdotal conceptions of kingship, stressing the divinely ordained character of the monarch.<sup>390</sup> However, in identifying the maintenance of social order as the sovereign's *raison d'être*, Bodinian sovereignty permitted a reassessment of the formerly automatic identification of religious dissent with political treason. Certainly, the *politique* thinkers who followed Bodin and who rationalized the crown's accommodation of the Huguenots in no way embraced religious toleration as a positive ideal, preferring to regard it instead as a regrettable (and hopefully temporary) expedient necessitated by the overriding requirement of securing the civil peace.<sup>391</sup> But in locating sovereignty in the will of the monarch and in identifying submission to the sovereign's will as the subject's primary moral obligation, Bodin at least admitted the possibility of the existence of the loyal and obedient heretical subject. In so doing, Bodin's theory of sovereignty anticipated the reconceptualization of religion – from an embodied community of believers to a privately held body of beliefs – that would ultimately enable the genesis of a sovereign state system and with it a resolution to Europe's century of crisis.

None of the foregoing is intended to imply that Bodin's theory was by itself was sufficient to bring an end to France's wars of religion. Still less do I seek to

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<sup>389</sup>On the significance of both customary and confessional justifications for rebellion against monarchical authority for the French Huguenots, see Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, pp. 325-326.

<sup>390</sup>Bodin, *The Six Books of the Commonwealth*, pp. 40-42. See also Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>391</sup>On this point, see for example William F. Church. *Richelieu and Reason of State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, p. 53.

suggest that Absolutist theory unproblematically begat corresponding practices and institutions.<sup>392</sup> In reality, monarchical sovereignty was only finally consolidated in France with the crushing of the Fronde, and even then it was only in the decades following the Fronde's suppression that the Bourbon kings were able to give Absolutist theory an imperfect institutional expression. Nevertheless, Michael Walzer's observation, that the state '...must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived...' remains apposite here.<sup>393</sup> With the formulation in France of a modern theory of sovereignty – a development that arose as a direct response to the chaotic turmoil of the French religious wars – the first lineaments of a successor international order for Europe begin to be discernible. Tragically, it would require a catastrophe of even greater magnitude before the construct of sovereignty could be fully elaborated and redeployed as an ordering arrangement at a systemic level.

#### 5.2.4 The Thirty Years War, 1618-1648

Much like the French Wars of Religion, the causes of the Thirty Years War have been the subject of considerable debate within the specialist literature. Traditional interpretations of the conflict stressed its German and religious character. The war was thus portrayed as essentially a contest between an aspiring Absolutist Counter-Reformation monarch (Ferdinand III) and a coalition of German princes fighting to preserve and if possible extend their religious and political liberties, with

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<sup>392</sup>The dissonance between the theory of Absolutism and its actual practice has been masterfully laid bare in Nicholas Henshall. *The Myth of Absolutism - Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy*. London: Longman, 1992. See also generally Black, *Kings, Nobles, and Commoners*.

<sup>393</sup>Michael Walzer. "On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought." *Political Science Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (1967), p. 194.

opportunistic outsiders weighing in on either side to advance their own agendas.<sup>394</sup> More recent analyses have conversely emphasized the European character of the conflict and accorded greater primacy to dynastic over religious motives in animating the protagonists. N.M. Sutherland has thus disputed the ‘fictitious unity’ of the Thirty Years war, going so far as to portray it as merely the most violent manifestation of a centuries-long struggle between France and Spain for European hegemony.<sup>395</sup> The literature on the ‘General Crisis’ of the seventeenth century provides yet a third interpretive lens for comprehending the conflict. This perspective emphasizes the common causes of Eurasia’s crises of authority in this period, stressing the importance of adverse climatological changes, reduced crop yields and over-population in catalysing political revolt throughout the Eurasian ecumene.<sup>396</sup> Although this last perspective is the most general in its application, it nevertheless serves as a useful reminder that the Thirty Years War constituted but one expression of a larger crisis that was hemispheric in its geographical scope.<sup>397</sup>

Fortunately, it is not necessary for the purposes of this analysis to adjudicate between these frameworks. In reality, the conflict was sufficiently complex that it can only be adequately understood by briefly canvassing all dimensions – German and religious, European and dynastic, Eurasian and climatological *cum* eco-demographic – that are emphasized in these contrasting narratives. Turning firstly to the German

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<sup>394</sup>On the German-centered character of traditional accounts of the conflict, see N.M. Sutherland. "The Origins of the Thirty Years War and the Structure of European Politics." *The English Historical Review* 107, no. 424 (1992), p. 587.

<sup>395</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 588.

<sup>396</sup>See for example the collection of essays, both critical and supportive of the ‘general crisis’ thesis, contained in Parker, (ed.), *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century*. Jack Goldstone’s interpretation of the underlying causes of revolution and rebellion in the early modern world is also consistent with this approach. See generally Jack Goldstone. *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

<sup>397</sup>Parker’s discussion of the eco-demographic underpinnings of crises across Eurasia, including a very useful map depicting outbreaks of war and rebellion during this period, offers a useful précis of the broad argument informing the ‘general crisis’ position. See Geoffrey Parker. *Europe in Crisis 1598-1648*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001, pp. 1-10.

dimension of the conflict, the clash between Ferdinand and the princes bears resemblances to the earlier struggle for power between Charles V and the princes waged almost a century earlier. This parallel is to be expected, given the continuing deterioration of imperial institutions in the decades following the Augsburg peace, together with the range of outstanding disputes flowing from that settlement. For while the Augsburg peace bought Germany over six decades of peace, it failed to resolve many of the religious and constitutional issues dividing the empire. Although the emperor retained nominal suzerainty over the approximately 1000 territories constituting the 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation', effective territorial jurisdiction (*landeshoheit*) resided with the burghers, bishops and princes of Germany's petty states and cities.<sup>398</sup> Admittedly, these petty states existed under a penumbra of shared imperial institutions – the Circles, responsible for regional defence; the Supreme Court, charged with adjudicating disputes between rulers; and the Diet, responsible for approving taxation and legislation for the whole empire.<sup>399</sup> But the effectiveness of these weak institutions had been further enervated with the accumulation of religious tensions in the empire after Augsburg. In recognizing the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*, the Augsburg peace had strengthened processes of confessionalization already extant in Germany's petty states, with popular loyalties and social practices becoming increasingly governed by the dogma, rites, norms and laws formulated and policed by integrated state-church complexes.<sup>400</sup> By the seventeenth century, categorical and mutually antagonistic Lutheran, Calvinist, and post-Tridentine Catholic identities had thus become deeply ingrained within

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<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>400</sup> On this process, see generally Schilling, 'Confessionalisation'; and also Wolfgang Reinhard. "Pressures Towards Confessionalization? Prolegomena to a Theory of the Confessional Age." In *The German Reformation - the Essential Readings*, edited by Scott Dixon, 169-92. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1999.



Germany's social fabric, impeding the operation of imperial institutions and imperilling the prospects for continued peace.

The interlocking processes of petty state formation, intensified social disciplining, and confessionalization facilitated by the Augsburg peace enhanced political and cultural integration within Germany's constituent territories, but at the expense of promoting further political and cultural disintegration within the empire as a whole. In this respect, the Augsburg peace contained the seeds of its own destruction, even without considering the emperor's refusal to extend toleration to Calvinism within the empire. From the 1600s onwards, the Catholic states' dominance of the Supreme Court and Diet – and their determination to use these instruments to protect the interests of Catholic subjects in Protestant territories – triggered further estrangement between the emperor and the Protestant princes.<sup>401</sup> Without adequate constitutional means of venting their grievances, the Protestants (under the leadership of Frederick of the Palatine) established a collective self-defence league – the Evangelical Union – in 1608, a move mirrored in 1609 by the formation of a counterpart Catholic League under the leadership of Maximilian of Bavaria.<sup>402</sup> From this point onwards, a renewal of religious war in Germany was already likely, an outcome that was further assured with the election of the Jesuit-trained Ferdinand III to the imperial dignity in August 1619. By the time of Ferdinand's election as emperor, the 'defenestration of Prague' – the initial catalyst for the war – had already occurred. With Ferdinand's election to the throne, the familiar collision between a centralizing emperor and an intransigent coalition of princes anxious to preserve or extend their religious liberties played itself out again, only with far greater intensity and for far longer than had been the case in the time of Charles V.

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<sup>401</sup>Parker, *Europe in Crisis*, p. 62.

<sup>402</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 63.

The intramural constitutional struggle between emperor and princes provided the immediate context for the war and its proximate trigger, but the conflict was entwined also within a larger international struggle between the Habsburg bloc and its rivals. Geoffrey Parker observes that by the early 1600s, the European political landscape had become polarized between a Counter-Reformation axis – dominated by Habsburg Spain and encompassing Madrid, Brussels, Munich, Vienna and Rome – and a heterogeneous coalition united by little more than their opposition to Habsburg power.<sup>403</sup> Once again in an echo of the past, France would ultimately emerge as the Habsburgs' most formidable rival. Nevertheless, this would occur only after a period of equivocation during Louis XIII's minority, and then only after the defeat of renewed Huguenot rebellions and Cardinal Richelieu's assertion of foreign policy dominance over the ultra-Catholic *devots* faction at Louis' court.<sup>404</sup> Alarmed at Ferdinand's initial triumphs over the German Protestants, first Denmark and then Sweden intervened in the German war both to defend Lutheranism and advance their own geopolitical interests in the Baltic basin and in Germany.<sup>405</sup> Finally, the Thirty Years War was punctuated by a resumption of the war between Spain and Holland, with the Dutch successfully harrying Spain both in Europe and in the New World.<sup>406</sup>

The motives of the Habsburgs' opponents during the war were manifold. For the French, dynastic power political interests clearly trumped any devotion to the cause of Catholicism, and the policies of Richelieu (and later, Mazarin) were firmly directed towards enhancing Bourbon power at the expense of their Habsburg rivals.<sup>407</sup> For the Scandinavian powers, the fear that Ferdinand might seek to roll back

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<sup>403</sup>Parker, 'The Dutch Revolt and the Polarization of International Politics', p. 66.

<sup>404</sup>Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>405</sup>Stephen J. Lee. *The Thirty Years War*. London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 14-15.

<sup>406</sup>Parker, 'The Dutch Revolt and the Polarization of International Politics', p. 68. See also Parker, *Europe in Crisis*, p. 111.

<sup>407</sup>On French motives and strategy in the Thirty Years' War, see Richard Bonney. "France's 'War by Diversion'." In *The Thirty Years' War*, edited by Geoffrey Parker, 129-37. London: Routledge, 1997.

Protestantism in Germany mixed with more prosaic geopolitical concerns in motivating their respective interventions into the German war.<sup>408</sup> In the case of Sweden at least, initially defensive considerations gave way to more ambitious plans for extending Sweden's political influence deep into Germany as the war progressed.<sup>409</sup> For the Dutch, Protestant sympathies with their German co-religionists were far from negligible, but the Hague's primary interest lay in weakening Spain and thus guaranteeing Holland's continued independence.<sup>410</sup>

On the Habsburg side, and in spite of their familial connections, the Spanish and Austrian Habsburg lines were by no means a united force. Ferdinand's interests lay squarely in Germany, and both his disposition and his Jesuit upbringing predisposed him towards intransigence when dealing with Germany's religious and constitutional problems.<sup>411</sup> Conversely, while the Spanish Habsburgs under Philip IV were sympathetic to Ferdinand's desire to advance the cause of the Counter-Reformation, their interests in the larger conflict were largely geopolitical. Foremost among Spanish priorities was the realization of an adequate settlement in the Low Countries, something that required the maintenance of Spain's lines of march and lines of communication between her north Italian possessions and the Spanish Netherlands (the so-called 'Spanish Road').<sup>412</sup> Given the Spanish Road's vulnerability to French interdiction and given also the road's passage along the empire's crumbling frontiers, the Spaniards possessed strong geopolitical motivations for securing Ferdinand's power within the empire. For with Habsburg power restored within the empire, the Spanish expected to be then better placed to sustain the vital umbilical cord linking the

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<sup>408</sup>Lee, *The Thirty Years War*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>409</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>410</sup>Parker, 'The Dutch Revolt and the Polarization of International Politics', pp. 71-73.

<sup>411</sup>On the centrality of religious motives in guiding Ferdinand's policies during the conflict, see R.J.W. Evans. "The Imperial Vision." In *The Thirty Years' War*, edited by Geoffrey Parker, 75-80. London: Routledge, 1997.

<sup>412</sup>Parker, *Europe in Crisis*, p. 140.

northern and Mediterranean portions of their patrimony, improving their chances of reclaiming Holland and thus preserving Spain's reputation and power.<sup>413</sup>

The Thirty Years War thus constituted a German religious and constitutional conflict embedded within a larger and more enduring struggle for power between the Habsburg family conglomerate and its many rivals. These inter-twined conflicts were themselves anchored within a larger hemispheric crisis of political authority, driven by institutional frailties intersecting with the climatological *cum* eco-demographic factors alluded to previously. Between 1450 and 1600, it is estimated that Europe's population may have doubled.<sup>414</sup> This demographic expansion reflected generally buoyant economic conditions throughout the Eurasian ecumene, and paralleled also processes of political consolidation manifest across the hemisphere during this period.<sup>415</sup> Conversely, from the late 1620s onwards the European economy experienced a severe cyclical downturn. This downturn was disastrously exacerbated by climatological changes (the so-called 'Little Ice Age') that brought declining temperatures, reduced harvesting times, lower crop yields and ultimately a reduction in Europe's food supply.<sup>416</sup> Coming at a time of pervasive conflict, when rulers were already lifting taxes and debasing currencies in an effort to mobilize a greater percentage of resources from stagnant or shrinking economies, this exogenous shock precipitated a chain of crises throughout Eurasia. In Europe alone, the 1640s witnessed revolts or revolutions in Scotland, Ireland, England, France, Portugal, Spain, Sicily, Naples, Austria, the Polish Commonwealth and Muscovy.<sup>417</sup> Further afield, the *celali* revolts in the Ottoman empire, the collapse of the Ming dynasty in China, the rebellion

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<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>415</sup> On the early modern period as a Eurasia-wide period of commercial growth and political consolidation, see Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, p. 16.

<sup>416</sup> Parker, *Europe in Crisis*, pp. 5-10.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

against Mughal power in India and even the Kyushu rebellion in Japan betray through their very synchronicity the broader Eurasian dimension of the crisis that roiled Europe at the time of the Thirty Years War.<sup>418</sup>

The impact of the Eurasian ‘General Crisis’ on the course of the Thirty Years War should not be overstated – the war began prior to the onset of the crisis, and the main impacts of the crisis were to further destabilize an already volatile environment. Nevertheless, the compounding effects of the ‘General Crisis’ were far from negligible, and their inclusion provides a broader context in which to examine the turmoil afflicting both Germany and Europe at this time. To summarize: the proximate catalysts for the Thirty Years War lay in constitutional and religious controversies within Germany, the origins of which lay in tensions between the imperial office and princely particularism left unresolved by the Augsburg settlement. This conflict in turn was located within a more protracted struggle between the Habsburgs and their adversaries for pre-eminence in Europe, a struggle made more bloody and more intractable by the absence of an international order in Europe for a century following Christendom’s collapse. The bloodshed and chaos generated by this conflict was itself amplified by roughly synchronous climatic *cum* eco-demographic changes of global scope, changes that interacted with existing institutional frailties and the pressures of war to trigger large-scale crises of authority across Eurasia.

The Thirty Years War can thus be characterised as a series of nested crises encompassing German, European, and Eurasian dimensions. A full comprehension of the conflict requires an acknowledgement of the forces operative at these micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. However, as the focus of this inquiry lies at the meso (i.e. European) level of analysis, the remainder of this discussion will concentrate on

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<sup>418</sup>*Ibid.*

the Thirty Years crisis as both an expression of the absence of international order and a catalyst for its eventual reconstruction.

### 5.2.5 The Thirty Years War as a Symptom of Systemic Chaos

This discussion is not the place for an extensive narrative of the course of the Thirty Years War, and the main contours of the crisis have already been sketched in their broad form.<sup>419</sup> Generally, however, the conflict can be divided into two halves. In the first half, battlefield victories predominantly accrued to the imperial side. The Bohemian revolt was quickly crushed, Frederick of Palatinate was evicted from Bohemia and dispossessed of the Palatinate, and the Danish intervention in support of Germany's Protestants was quickly vanquished.<sup>420</sup> The high tide of imperial power was marked by Ferdinand's 1629 Edict of Restitution, in which he demanded the restitution of all lands illegally taken from the Church since the Augsburg peace.<sup>421</sup> The indiscriminate enforcement of this edict against all Protestant states – regardless of whether or not they had remained loyal to Ferdinand throughout the preceding decade of violence – firmed the resolve of anti-Habsburg forces, encouraged foreign interventions in support of the Protestants, and thereby contributed to the Habsburgs' eventual containment and defeat.<sup>422</sup>

Under Gustavus Adolphus's leadership, the Swedes carved deep into southern Germany, realising greater gains than their enemies had feared or their allies had desired.<sup>423</sup> The Dutch meanwhile held the Spanish at bay and undercut their position

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<sup>419</sup>Lee's *The Thirty Years War*, which I have relied upon below, provides a very succinct and accessible narrative of the conflict.

<sup>420</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1-6.

<sup>421</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>422</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>423</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

abroad, further squeezing Habsburg finances and thus curtailing their military power.<sup>424</sup> Following a brief Habsburg resurgence at Nordlingen in 1634, the French directly entered into the conflict upon multiple fronts, further hastening the Habsburgs' defeat.<sup>425</sup> As German princes began to negotiate separate peaces with the occupying foreign powers, Ferdinand's position became untenable. When it was finally concluded in 1648, the Peace of Westphalia ended the Eighty Years War between Holland and Spain by officially recognizing the former's independence. It additionally ended the Thirty Years War in Germany, further institutionalizing religious pluralism within the empire, confirming the prince's liberties, and indefinitely postponing the consolidation of an Absolutist state in Germany. Most importantly, while it failed to settle the struggle between Bourbon France and Habsburg Spain, the Westphalian peace did mark a definitive conclusion to Europe's international wars of religion and the beginning of the Absolutist age.<sup>426</sup>

The Peace of Westphalia was of vital importance in creating the climate necessary for the reconstruction of an international order of sovereign states after a century of turmoil. Nevertheless, in order to apprehend the true significance of the peace, it is first necessary to revisit the chaotic milieu out of which it emerged. Like the French religious wars that preceded it, the Thirty Years War reflected in microcosm the broader absence of international order afflicting Europe after Christendom's collapse. The conflict, Europe's bloodiest prior to the two world wars,

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<sup>424</sup>Parker, 'The Dutch Revolt and the Polarization of International Politics', p. 68.

<sup>425</sup>Lee, *The Thirty Years War*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>426</sup>On this point, see generally Heinz Schilling. "War and Peace at the Emergence of Modernity - Europe between State Belligerence, Religious Wars, and the Desire for Peace." In *1648 - War and Peace in Europe*, edited by Klaus Bussman and Heinz Schilling, 13-22. Munster/Osnabruck: Westfalisches Landesmuseum, 1998; and also Johannes Burkhardt. "The Summitless Pyramid: War Aims and Peace Compromise among Europe's Universalist Powers." In *1648 - War and Peace in Europe*, edited by Klaus Bussman and Heinz Schilling, 51-60. Munster/Osnabruck: Westfalisches Landesmuseum, 1998.

occurred during a half century (1600-1650) of war and revolution, one in which Europe knew not one year without international conflict.<sup>427</sup>

In the absence of a shared framework for mediating and containing conflicts, the Thirty Years War demonstrated the same tendencies towards internationalization as had the French religious wars, only for a longer period and with a greater number of actors involved. In the absence of norms of territorial exclusion, mutual recognition and non-intervention, the conflict within Germany was not able to burn itself out, but was rather continuously fuelled and prolonged through fresh injections of troops and subsidies by foreign powers. Domestically, the institutional and social strains produced by war-time mobilization and eco-demographic crisis precipitated a chain of revolts and revolutions across Western Europe in the war's final decade, with Europe's governments buckling under the burden of sustaining ever larger armies engaged in continuous warfare. Meanwhile, within the empire itself, the collapse of viable governance structures is most starkly brought into relief by a consideration of the parasitism of the approximately 1500 private military entrepreneurs who sustained themselves through the systematic rapine and plunder of occupied populations.<sup>428</sup>

Most crucially of all, the war represented a breakdown in moral order, with ingrained sectarian hatreds interacting with the surge in private military violence to produce a style of warfare dominated by scorched earth tactics and the calculated use of terror and atrocity to subdue civilians. The 1631 sack of Magdeburg, in which three quarters of an estimated 30,000 inhabitants were slaughtered and most of its buildings

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<sup>427</sup>On the debate surrounding the demographic and economic impact of the Thirty Years' War on the lands of the Holy Roman Empire, see Christopher J. Friedrichs. "The War and German Society." In *The Thirty Years' War*, edited by Geoffrey Parker, 186-91. London: Routledge, 1997. The conservative estimate placed on German losses is 15-20% of the pre-war population (a loss proportionately greater than that experienced by Germany in World War II), rising to over half of the total population in some region; see pp. 188-189.

<sup>428</sup>On the role of German military enterprisers during the Thirty Years' War, see Geoffrey Parker. "The Universal Soldier." In *The Thirty Years' War*, edited by Geoffrey Parker, 171-86. London: Routledge, 1997. See specifically pp. 175-176.



razed by marauding imperial armies, constitutes but one instance of the pervasive and largely indiscriminate violence that characterised the Thirty Years War.<sup>429</sup> With chivalric norms long since fallen into desuetude, sectarian hatreds and the spirit of Holy War still live, and modern laws of war yet to be formulated, the violence that convulsed Europe during this period raged largely in the absence of effectively institutionalized ethical restraints. In the conflict's later stages in particular, the war in Germany became progressively unmoored from its original religious and political rationales, with increasingly autonomous military entrepreneurs devoting themselves exclusively to a form of institutionalized banditry against occupied civilians committed on a mass scale.

In the Thirty Years War, one thus finds the symptoms of Europe's overarching crisis of order – a surge in war and revolutions, the breakdown of existing authority structures, ideological schism and the collapse of constraints on the exercise of violence – manifesting themselves on an unprecedentedly large scale. As with the French Wars of Religion, the underlying sources of this turmoil can be found in the intersection of ideological polarization and increased violence interdependence, occasioned respectively by religious schism and military revolution. Similarly, the absence of an ordering framework to mediate and contain conflict between polities played an analogous role in the Thirty Years War as it did in the French Wars of Religion. Nevertheless, for all their commonalities, it would be misleading to read the Thirty Years War as simply a replication of the French Wars of Religion on a larger scale. For while ideological polarization and increased violence interdependence were pivotal in framing both conflicts, the roles played by these pressures were distinct in both cases. Similarly, while the absence of an ordering framework played a permissive role in enabling the prolongation of both conflicts, the mere fact that the Thirty Years

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<sup>429</sup>On the siege of Magdeburg, see Parker, *Europe in Crisis*, p. 161.

War was a general European conflict ensured that its structural consequences would prove more profound.

Turning firstly to the role played by confessional enmities in the Thirty Years War, religious controversies obviously remained central to the war's course and conduct. The war's origins in the Bohemian revolt lay in the regency government's encroachments on the religious and constitutional liberties of the Bohemian estates, and the estates' rebellion against the emperor was explicitly justified in religious as well as constitutional terms.<sup>430</sup> The combustible environment in Germany at the war's outset and the war's rapid spread can also be attributed to Germany's polarization into opposing Evangelical and Catholic military alliances in the decade immediately preceding the conflict.<sup>431</sup> International diplomatic alignments in the war's first decade were also heavily influenced by confessional sympathies. In the north, England, Holland and the French Huguenots formed a potentially potent anti-Habsburg bloc, while in the east, the Palatinate, Bethlen Gabor (prince of Transylvania) and Protestant minorities in the Habsburgs' hereditary lands formed an additional counter-weight to Habsburg power bound by confessional sympathies.<sup>432</sup> Similarly, the Counter-Reformation provided a powerful ideological bond reinforcing the kinship ties already linking the Austrian and Spanish Habsburg power-blocs. Finally, the persistence of intense religious antagonisms in Europe severely aggravated already acute security dilemmas between polities, contributing to the war's escalation and expansion. Thus, while Scandinavian fears of Ferdinand's plans to roll back Protestantism in Germany were undoubtedly exaggerated, they were nevertheless instrumental in drawing first Denmark and then Sweden into the war.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>430</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>431</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>432</sup>Parker, 'The Dutch Revolt and the Polarization of International Politics', p. 68.

<sup>433</sup>On this point, see generally Erik Ringmar. *Identity, Interest, and Action - a Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

However, while sectarian rivalries continued to resonate in the seventeenth century as they had in the sixteenth, one can nevertheless detect a diminution in both their intensity and their influence over early modern diplomacy in the latter period. Thus, for example, one does not find in the Thirty Years War the same synthesis of religious fanaticism, revolutionary terror, and proto-modern party organization that characterized either the Catholic League in France or the Water Beggars in Holland one generation previously.<sup>434</sup> The dehumanizing rhetoric and practices of moral exclusion characteristic of the French Wars of Religion continued to obtain during the Thirty Years War, but religious violence was no longer being linked to the advancement of quasi-revolutionary agendas as it had briefly been under the leadership of the Parisian League.<sup>435</sup> Equally, confessional sympathies continued to influence diplomatic alignments, as evidenced by the paralysis in French policy during the 1620s while the anti-Habsburg policies of the *politiques* were effectively stymied by the ultra-Catholic *devots* faction. Nevertheless, sectarian divisions had never deterministically shaped rulers' diplomacy, and their influence continued to wane during the Thirty Years War. France's embrace of *raison d'état* under Richelieu from the 1630s onwards bears superficial similarities with Francis' earlier dalliances with the Schmalkaldic League in the 1540s. But the subordination of religious to political objectives under Richelieu was more consistent, more systematic and undergirded by a much more robust and articulated intellectual framework (the discourse of *raison d'état*) than had previously been the case.<sup>436</sup> Domestically also, the prospect of

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<sup>434</sup> The activities of the English Puritans in the period of the Civil War and the Commonwealth provide perhaps the nearest seventeenth century parallel to the revolutionary religious parties of the preceding period; on this point, see generally Michael Walzer. *The Revolution of the Saints - a Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965.

<sup>435</sup> On the revolutionary character of the Parisian branch of the Catholic League during the French religious wars, see Koenigsberger, 'The Organization of Revolutionary Parties', p. 350.

<sup>436</sup> On this point, see James D. Tracy. *Europe's Reformations 1450-1650 - Doctrine, Politics, and Community*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006, pp. 164-167.

granting toleration to religious minorities had now been grudgingly accepted in a range of kingdoms, most notably France. The maxim *cuius regio, eius religio* continued to undergird rulers' legitimacy claims and call into question the loyalties of heretical minorities. But the idea of sacrificing religious unity for the sake of political unity was no longer unimaginable for Europe's leaders, and merely gained in traction as the war progressed.

Europe continued to be saturated by religious hatreds during the Thirty Years War. However, the fruits of France's religious wars – the ideological construct of Absolutist sovereignty and the demonstrated link between *politique* domestic and foreign policies and the strengthening of rulers' power – profoundly conditioned the conflict's course. Indeed, by the last decade of the war, religious motives had been almost entirely eclipsed by political motives in driving dynastic diplomacy, anticipating the Absolutist sovereign state system to come. Conversely, this mild tempering of Europe's religious hatreds was offset by the continuing expansion in the scale and destructiveness of European warfare. By the onset of the Thirty Years War, a plethora of transformations inaugurated by the military revolution were increasingly in evidence. Artillery fortresses, broadside-firing warships, and massed musket-wielding infantry had by 1618 diffused throughout Europe to become definitive weapons platforms of the age.<sup>437</sup> Equally, the size and costliness of armies had by then also dramatically increased. Thus, while the armies that had fought the Italian wars of the sixteenth century had rarely exceeded 30,000 men, armies of over 150,000 soldiers were common in the Thirty Years War.<sup>438</sup>

Ostensibly, the far larger armies fielded by the opposing sides appear to affirm narratives linking military revolution with political centralization and the waxing of

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<sup>437</sup>Parker, *Europe in Crisis*, p. 48.

<sup>438</sup>Parker, *The Military Revolution*, p. 24.

sovereign power. However, a closer consideration of the conflict reveals that such increases in army size did not necessarily reflect increases in rulers' capacity to finance and bureaucratically administer and control such forces. On the contrary, throughout the Thirty Years War, rulers routinely fielded far larger armies than they could possibly sustain, relying on private military entrepreneurs to recruit, administer, financially maintain and lead these armies in the field. Economies of scale dictated that it was far easier to garrison and systematically plunder occupied populations with larger rather than smaller armies, leading to the development of massive itinerant mercenary hosts led by quasi-autonomous aristocratic warlords.<sup>439</sup> The recruitment of largely foreign mercenaries on little more than the promise of plunder ensured a rapid breakdown in military discipline as the war progressed, with soldiers routinely subjecting civilians to theft, arson, torture and murder to maintain themselves.<sup>440</sup> Already weakened by famine and epidemics, peasants occasionally stood and fought against predatory mercenary hosts, but more frequently fled to neighbouring territories, thereby further enlarging conflict's radius of disruption.<sup>441</sup>

In the French Wars of Religion, the diffusion of destructive capabilities inaugurated by the military revolution had tended to reinforce the pre-existing dominance of aristocratic factions at the expense of a weakened crown, momentarily reversing the gains in political centralization achieved under France's Renaissance monarchies. Paradoxically, the immediate consequence of an incomplete military revolution in the French Wars of Religion was thus political regression, a return to an earlier era characterised by weak monarchy, over-mighty subjects and endemic aristocratic violence. Conversely, in Germany, the military revolution redounded

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<sup>439</sup>Parrott, 'Strategy and Tactics During the Thirty Years War', p. 18.

<sup>440</sup>On this point, see generally Quentin Outram. "The Demographic Impact of Early Modern Warfare." *Social Science History* 26, no. 2 (2002), pp. 253-256.

<sup>441</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 251-252.

primarily to the advantage of the 1500 small and large-scale military entrepreneurs fighting the war, yielding a qualitatively more radical fragmentation of political and military power for the course of the conflict. With a pan-European pool of commercial military talent from which to draw and in the absence of norms of non-intervention, Europe's rulers were free to continuously inflame the conflict in Germany through the deployment of armies larger than they could possibly afford to finance or continuously maintain themselves.<sup>442</sup> In an era in which rulers' administrative and mobilizational powers had yet to fully catch up with advances in the technologies and techniques of European warfare, the burgeoning market for military violence offered them a means for pursuing their dynastic ambitions at the expense (both literally and figuratively) of local populations. In reality, this expedient merely nurtured the development of a parasitic host of military entrepreneurs and economies of plunder, further accelerating the moral and institutional breakdown within Germany and compounding international disorder throughout Europe.

Despite their commonalities, The French Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years War stand as distinct expressions of systemic disorder. The absolute enmity borne of confessional schism featured heavily in both conflicts, but burned more intensely in the former than the latter. By contrast, the military revolution's centrifugal consequences were more evident in the Thirty Years War than in the French Wars of Religion, although again these tendencies were evident in both conflicts. What unites both cases is the role played by the absence of an international ordering framework in internationalizing and prolonging the respective conflicts. In the inter-regnum between Christendom's demise and the constitution of a sovereign state system, Europe's rulers dwelled in a condition of 'immature anarchy', in which the most basic principles of

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<sup>442</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 254. See also generally Munkler. *The New Wars*. Cambridge: Polity, 2005, chapter two *passim*.

co-existence had yet to be formulated – Europe at this time was in effect an anarchical system, but not an anarchical society. The combination of ideological polarization and enhanced destructive capacities characteristic of the era would have strained even a robust international order. But in the absence of any agreed framework for cooperation, Europe was condemned to a prolonged era punctuated by division, war, revolution, atrocity and death. It was only after a peace borne of mutual exhaustion that Europe’s rulers could formulate the principles upon which a successor order to Latin Christendom could finally be built.

### **5.3 Revulsion, Renovation and Reconstitution – The Peace of Westphalia and the Dawn of a New International Order**

International relations scholars have long regarded the Peace of Westphalia as the ‘majestic portal’ through which Europe made its transition from medieval universalism to the institutionalized particularism of the modern sovereign state.<sup>443</sup> In recent years, a raft of revisionist literature has demonstrated the limitations of this view, for quintessentially archaic features of Europe’s international order persisted down into the nineteenth century.<sup>444</sup> Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continued to be dominated by ramshackle composite monarchies governed through inefficient systems of aristocratic patronage.<sup>445</sup> Europe also remained

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<sup>443</sup>Leo Gross. "The Peace of Westphalia 1648-1948." *The American Journal of International Law* 42, no. 1 (1948), p. 28.

<sup>444</sup>See for example Andreas Osiander. "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth." *International Organization* 55 (2001): 251-87; and also Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*.

<sup>445</sup>On the archaic character of early modern European polities, Goldstone also notes the following: ‘...even circa 1700 almost nowhere in Europe can one find centralized, national states based on common linguistic or religious cultures. The dominant political formations at that date remain the multinational and/or multireligious empires (the United Kingdom, Denmark-Norway, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Prussia) and loose confederations (Switzerland, the United Provinces).’ See Jack A. Goldstone "Neither Late Imperial nor Early Modern: Efflorescences and the Qing Formation in World History." In

horizontally integrated by a web of aristocratic blood-ties after Westphalia, while proprietary dynasticism and their accompanying wars of succession persisted well into the eighteenth century.<sup>446</sup> Even following the horrors of the Thirty Years War, private military violence also remained endemic, with mercenaries and privateers providing a critical war-making resource for Europe's rulers in an age of limited warfare and even more limited state power.<sup>447</sup>

These qualifications aside, the Westphalian peace nevertheless remains of pivotal importance. For while it may not have instantly inaugurated the shift to a new international order yoked around a sovereign state system, Westphalia did provide the stability required for this order to be gradually constructed out of materials forged during Europe's century of chaos. The century following Christendom's demise was marked by terrific violence and destruction, but it equally yielded innovations that eventually formed the foundations of a new international order. Of these, the most readily recalled is the theory of Absolutism developed in the fires of France's Wars of Religion. Absolutist theory offered a new model of political obligation – sovereign command was to replace feudal contract as the essential mediating principle of government, with the imperative of obedience superseding older and more inchoate feudal and patronal ties of vassalage to the monarch.<sup>448</sup> In addition to its implications for relations between rulers and ruled, Absolutist theory was replete also with implications for the management of relations between rulers. Absolutist sovereignty provided a principled justification for the monarchical arrogation of power at the expense of external as well as internal actors. This was because the monarch's exercise of sovereignty presupposed immunity from external interference as much as it

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*The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time*, edited by Lynn A Struve, 242-302. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004. See specifically p. 254.

<sup>446</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*, p. 29.

<sup>448</sup>Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*, pp. 56-57.



required the obedience of domestic subjects. In exercising his sovereign prerogatives internationally, the monarch was equally to be unconstrained by the passions of his subjects. Consequently, ostensibly universalist obligations (e.g. to the maintenance of Christian unity) could be implied to be logically subordinate to adherence to the dispassionate logic of *raison d'etat*. While primarily addressed to the problem of securing order within polities, Absolutist theory logically presupposed shifts in the framework governing relations between rulers for it to be fully effective. During Europe's century of chaos, the norms of territorial exclusion, mutual recognition and non-interference that would subsequently constitute the inside/outside dichotomy of the modern state system could not yet materialize. But the development of Absolutist theory provided the intellectual framework out of which these norms could subsequently develop.

In addition to the intellectual innovation of Absolutism, processes of confessionalization represented a further precondition for the development of a new order. Religious schism destroyed the ordering framework of Christendom, but it also precipitated the consolidation of socially inclusive and territorially exclusive confessional identities within polities. Across Europe, lay and clerical elites collaborated to enforce religious orthodoxy and popular conformity to new standards of moral and spiritual discipline. New forms of church government brought with them expanded capacities for communal surveillance and social disciplining, as well as providing governments with the institutional wherewithal to inscribe confessional identities into the hearts and minds of governed populations.<sup>449</sup> Despite confessionalization's destabilizing effects during Europe's century of chaos, both the expanded institutional reach of rulers and the socially inclusive and territorially

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<sup>449</sup>See Black, *Kings Nobles and Commoners*, p. 39; Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution*, pp. 158-159; and more generally Reinhard, 'Pressures towards Confessionalization?'; and Schilling, 'Confessional Europe.'

exclusive collective identities that confessionalization spawned would provide a robust foundation for the consolidation of state power in the decades following Westphalia.

At the material and organizational level, the changes inaugurated under the military revolution also proved highly destructive in the medium term, but would also be implicated in the reconstruction of order following the Westphalian peace. The development of artillery fortresses, infantry musketry volleys, and broadside-firing warships qualitatively increased the destructiveness of European warfare following Christendom's demise, as well as imposing fiscal and administrative burdens that were beyond the capabilities of most European polities to manage. The changes wrought by the military revolution brought bankruptcy, bloodshed and rebellion in their immediate wake. Equally, however, these changes also eventually provided the material foundation for the establishment a new international order founded upon the 'internally pacified and hard-shell rimmed' sovereign states of Absolutist Europe.<sup>450</sup> The order-producing consequences of the military revolution required for their emergence a raft of institutional innovations (e.g. the establishment of more robust systems of taxation and public credit and the elaboration of bureaucratic structures of military command) that find isolated and incomplete expressions prior to Westphalia. However, it was really only in the decades after Westphalia, when rulers could embark on the project of state-building without fear of foreign intervention, that the institutional changes necessary to subordinate the military revolution to sovereign ends could at last be implemented.<sup>451</sup>

Finally, Europe's chaotic inter-regnum also witnessed the beginnings of an ontological transformation in conceptions of religion and its relationship to the body social. The absolute enmity that found expression in Europe's sectarian violence

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<sup>450</sup>Herz, 'Rise and Demise of the Territorial State', p. 483.

<sup>451</sup>On this point, see generally Jeremy Black. *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society 1550-1800*. London: MacMillan, 1991.

derived from a conception of religion that conceived of it as referring to an embodied community of believers to be defended at all costs against the disease of heresy. Processes of confessionalization initially fortified this conception of religion, begetting the rites of divinely ordained violence that helped define the age. However, while the association between religious dissent and political treason would resonate into the late seventeenth century and beyond, the revulsion evoked by Europe's religious wars helped initiate an epistemic shift in conceptions of the sacred. Modern conceptions of religion as a privately held body of doctrines and beliefs did not become institutionalized during Europe's century of chaos. Principled arguments in support of religious toleration matured only in the seventeenth century's more settled second half, and took far longer to be incorporated into the policies of governments.<sup>452</sup> Nevertheless, anticipations of this revolution can be found in the *politiques*' concession that religious unity could *in extremis* be sacrificed for the greater good of securing political unity. This recognition marked the beginnings of a 'privatization' of religion that would prove pivotal in reconciling religious diversity with the demand for order within and between Europe's polities.<sup>453</sup>

The century of chaos thus bequeathed a range of innovations – intellectual, institutional, material and cultural – that once re-assembled into a coherent whole would form the foundation of a new international order based upon a system of sovereign states. Both confessionalization and the military revolution were instrumental in plunging Europe's polities into over a century of violent turmoil. Equally, however, confessionalization bequeathed Europe's rulers with greater capacities for communal surveillance and more effective resources for social disciplining than they had enjoyed previously. Confessionalization further yoked

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<sup>452</sup>On this point, see generally Herbert Butterfield. *Toleration in Religion and Politics*. New York: Council on Religion and International Affairs, 1980.

<sup>453</sup>Thomas, 'Taking Religious Pluralism Seriously', p. 823.

subjects more closely to rulers through the inculcation of socially inclusive and territorially exclusive collective identities tied to integrated church-state complexes. In these ways, it thus smoothed the path for the intensified processes of state-building that followed the Westphalian peace. Similarly, despite its initially centrifugal consequences, the military revolution would eventually provide an enormous fillip to the centralization of political power. The standing armies, permanent navies and networks of frontier artillery fortresses that together constituted the ‘hard shell’ of the sovereign state matured in the Absolutist era, but found their origins in an earlier and more volatile age.

Both Absolutist notions of sovereignty and the development of a more ‘privatized’ conception of religion traced their origins to revulsion against the chaos engendered by confessionalization and the military revolution. These intellectual and cultural developments would also be critical to the development of a new international order. Although Absolutism would be rejected in many polities as a template for governing relations between rulers and ruled, its systemic implications –(e.g. principles of mutual recognition and reciprocal commitments to non-intervention in one another’s internal affairs) would win general acceptance. Absolutism – and more specifically, the principles for regulating co-existence between rulers that it presupposed – would provide the framework necessary to mediate relations between a plurality of power centres once the ideological cement of Christendom had dissipated. Equally, the transformed conception of religion – from body of believer to body of beliefs – formed a cultural precondition for the reconstitution of international order. While religious diversity would continue to be tolerated grudgingly if at all in Europe’s polities after Westphalia, the requirement of mutual recognition between sovereign states necessitated pragmatic acceptance of the reality of religious diversity internationally. For international order to be restored to Europe, the absolute enmity of

a polarized *respublica Christiana* would need to be replaced by a more conventional and contained enmity between sovereign states dwelling in anarchy. This would be truly possible only when undergirded by the transformed conception of religion first anticipated by the *politique* thinkers of the confessional age.

This brings us at last to the true significance of the Peace of Westphalia. The Westphalian peace was of crucial importance firstly because it provided a minimal set of principles for co-existence between polities dwelling in anarchy, thereby initiating a transition from the immature anarchy of the confessional era to the more mature anarchy of the Absolutist age. In the interim between Christendom's collapse in 1555 and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Europe's rulers had dwelled in an international system. After Westphalia, they dwelled in an international society. The modernity of Westphalia should not be overstated, for the provisions of the peace related firstly to constitutional arrangements within the empire, and were only subsequently expanded to encompass Europe itself.<sup>454</sup> This qualification notwithstanding, what the Westphalian peace did accomplish was to make explicit principles of international co-existence that had been presupposed in the theory of Absolutism. The Peace of Westphalia did not expunge war from the European international system, nor did it vanquish dynastic rivalries or sectarian hatreds. But in initiating the process of entrenching norms of mutual recognition internationally, the Westphalian peace provided the foundation for the containment of conflict within tolerable bounds, heralding the development of a new international order.

More fundamentally even than this accomplishment, the Peace of Westphalia also provided the systemic ideological brace behind which successful state-building – and thus the bottom-up reconstruction of international order – could eventually take

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<sup>454</sup>On this point, see Heinhard Steiger. "Concrete Peace and General Order: The Legal Meaning of the Treaties of 24 October 1648." In *1648 - War and Peace in Europe*, edited by Klaus Bussman and Heinz Schilling, 437-46. Munster/Osnabruck: Westfälisches Landesmuseum, 1998. See specifically p 437.

place. Confessionalization and military revolution provided powerful stimuli to the process of state-building, but only once caged by the innovation of Absolutist sovereignty, and only once the excesses of confessionalization had been limited by the evolution towards a more *politique* privatized conception of religion. The Peace of Westphalia, in establishing principles of mutual recognition and non-intervention, provided a systemic carapace behind which rulers could draw together these legacies of the confessional age and yoke them together in the form of sovereign states. In comparison to modern peace settlements such as Vienna or Versailles, Westphalia remains a modest settlement, containing few prescriptions regarding the institutional form that polities should assume. Conversely, in comparison to the age of disorder that preceded it, Westphalia's novelty is both profound and immediately apparent. In institutionalizing mutual recognition in place of absolute enmity, and in proscribing endemic interference in favour of non-intervention, Westphalia helped reconcile diversity and division with conventional enmity and co-existence. In so doing, it provided the anvil upon which the modern state – and with it – the modern sovereign state system – could subsequently be forged.

## CHAPTER SIX

# THE ORIGINS, CONSTITUTION, AND DECAY OF THE SINOSPHERE

‘You shall not deviate from our instructions, but you shall reverently obey and adhere to our imperial command. Heaven looks down on the earth below and the will and laws of Heaven are strict and severe. Our imperial words and codes are brilliant and effective. Always revere Heaven and the throne...’<sup>455</sup>

### **Introduction**

On July 19 1864, the city of Nanjing fell to Qing imperial forces, marking an end to the Taiping rebellion, history’s bloodiest ever civil war. From 1850 onwards, an army of holy warriors, numbering at times over a million strong, had fought to overthrow the imperial household and establish a theocratic Heavenly Kingdom in its place. Inspired by a failed candidate for the imperial bureaucracy who saw himself as Christ’s younger brother, the Taiping faith fused elements of Chinese folk religion with evangelical Christianity to energize a millenarian movement of exceptional resilience and ferocity. For almost fifteen years, the Taiping rebels paralysed the Qing dynasty, spreading from their initial base in Guangxi province to seize control of the ancient imperial capital of Nanjing, from where they briefly ruled a territory as large as France and Germany combined. By the time leader Hong Xiuquan died and

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<sup>455</sup>Imperial edict of the Chinese Wan Li, investing Toyotomi Hideyoshi with the title King of Japan, March 1 1595. Cited in Kenneth M. Swope. "Deceit, Disguise and Dependence: China, Japan and the Future of the Tributary System, 1592-1596." *The International History Review* XXIV, no. 4 (2002): 759-82. See specifically pp. 774-775.

imperial forces had massacred his remaining followers, the rebellion had cost the lives of at least twenty million imperial subjects. Additionally, in their desperation to crush the rebels, court officials had permitted a cascading downwards of military and fiscal powers to regional strongmen, which would ultimately prove fatal to the maintenance of central imperial authority. Coming at a time when the Qing dynasty was already weakened by fiscal crisis and accelerating Western colonial penetration, the Taiping rebellion effectively gutted the Chinese state. In so doing, it thereby fatally weakened the imperial core of the suzerain state system that had governed East Asia for the better part of the millennium, permitting the region's subsequent absorption into a European-dominated international society of sovereign states.

In the next two chapters, I will recount the origins, constitution, decay and eventual dissolution of the Sino-centric suzerain state system of East Asia. My analysis proceeds in six sections. In this chapter, I begin by sketching the origins, constitution and operation of the Sinosphere, focusing particularly on the form that it assumed following the establishment of the Manchu Qing dynasty in 1644. Having outlined the contours of the Sinosphere, I then proceed to an examination of the processes of decay that were afflicting the imperial core of the system in the lead-up to the first Opium war (1839-1842) and the subsequent onset of full-scale European encroachment into North-East Asia.

Whereas chapter six reviews the Sinosphere's decay, in chapter seven I concentrate instead on the concatenating crises that eventually destroyed it over the period 1842-1911. Section three considers the multi-faceted nature of the challenge that European expansion posed to the Sinosphere's material and ideological foundations, a challenge that encompassed military, economic, cultural and even religious dimensions. Section four concentrates on the origins, nature and course of the Taiping challenge to imperial authority, while in section five I detail the systemic



consequences of the Qing dynasty's Pyrrhic victory over the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. The Taiping rebellion constitutes the pivotal hinge episode in my narrative, before which a reconstitution of Chinese imperial authority was unlikely but still possible, and after which the contraction and collapse of the Sinosphere became inevitable. As in the case of Latin Christendom, it was violent religious radicals who effectively challenged the fragile ideological foundation upon which international order was based in nineteenth century East Asia, fatally undermining the Sinosphere and thereby condemning the region to almost a century of chaotic instability thereafter. Paradoxically, however, religious passion unintentionally also served as a conduit for the caging of political authority and popular loyalty within the confines of the sovereign state in fin-de-siecle East Asia, just as it had centuries previously in seventeenth century Europe. Consequently, in the concluding section of my discussion, I very briefly consider the role played by religious radicalism in serving as the mid-wife of modern nationalism in China and elsewhere in East Asia by century's end, a process that led – albeit fitfully and with great violence – from the wreckage of the Sinosphere to the new order of a regional sovereign state system.

### **6.1 The Origins, Constitution, and Operation of the Sinosphere**

Whereas division and fragmentation marked the history of Western Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire, the suzerain state system that developed in East Asia was forged upon the underlying unity of successive Chinese empires.<sup>456</sup> Like Western

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<sup>456</sup>The contrast between European fragmentation and East Asian unity should not, however, be overstated. Valerie Hansen has for example persuasively argued that the recurrent periods of chaos and disunity in Chinese history prior to 1600 were frequently marked by spurts of commercial growth and enhanced openness to outside cultural influences, rendering problematic accounts of Chinese history that place undue emphasis on the themes of imperial political unity and self-imposed isolation from foreign influences. See generally Valerie Hansen. *The Open Empire - a History of China to 1600*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000. Similarly, it should be noted that protracted periods of dynastic

Europe, China's experience in the middle centuries of the first millennium CE was one of political division following the collapse of the Han Dynasty in 220CE.<sup>457</sup> Unlike Western Europe, however, which never regained the political unity it had enjoyed under the Romans, empire remained the dominant mode of governance in China from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) down to the Qing Dynasty's final collapse in 1912.<sup>458</sup> From the early seventh century onwards, China's political unity, its unmatched wealth and population, and its cultural sophistication enabled it to serve as the core of a far-flung regional international order organized along suzerain lines.<sup>459</sup> Inevitably, the robustness of this regional order co-varied with the vagaries of Chinese cycles of dynastic ascension and decline. But when considered from a global (and particularly a Western) vantage point, what was remarkable about the Sinosphere is its striking stability over time, and the high consistency apparent in the normative structures and institutional practices that sustained international order in East Asia over the course of successive dynasties.

### 6.1.1 The Constitution of the Sinosphere – Introductory Remarks

Before considering the Sinosphere's structure in detail, I must first make two framing observations regarding its constitution. Firstly, of all the international orders considered in this study, the Sinosphere was by far the most hierarchical, both in its

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weakness in Chinese history were often marked by an abandonment of Chinese efforts to impose a suzerain world order on East Asia, with dynastic weakness compelling Chinese rulers to engage with other rulers on more or less equal terms within the framework of a rudimentary multi-state system. For a series of interesting discussions on the Sinosphere's reversion to something approximating a multi-state system during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279), see the collection of essays contained in Morris Rossabi, ed. *China among Equals - the Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983. I thank Allen Carlson for directing me to both of the above references.

<sup>457</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 72.

<sup>458</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>459</sup>An excellent description of this order is found in David Kang. "Hierarchy in Asian International Relations: 1300-1900." *Asian Security* 1, no. 1 (2005): 53-79.

constitutional principles and in its institutional forms. While Christendom was organized around a loose papal-imperial *diarchy*, in which Church and Empire checked each others' pretensions towards universal authority, no such qualification of the emperor's power existed in the Sinosphere. Instead, the emperor was conceived as the Son of Heaven, the apex of all spiritual and temporal power within the East Asian ecumene.<sup>460</sup> This ideological elevation of the emperor to such a vaunted status was structurally reinforced by the massive gulf in material power between the Chinese empire and its neighbouring tributary states. The asymmetry between the wealth and power of China and those of its tributary polities finds no direct parallels in either Christendom or the global state system, and along with China's cultural magnetism it helps strongly to account for the longevity and relative stability of the Sino-centric suzerain state system over which successive emperors governed.

Secondly, of the international orders considered in this study, the distinction between the sacred and mundane realms was least well articulated in the Sinosphere. In Christendom, while the sacred and mundane realms were of course intimately intertwined, the Gelatian doctrine of the Two Swords nevertheless ensured that they remained conceptually distinct, with supreme authority in each sphere being yoked under the complementary institutions of Church and Empire. In the global state system by contrast, the sacred and temporal realms are kept strictly separate – the system's animating ideals of popular eudemonism and self-determination are self-consciously ecumenical, while dominant institutional forms such as contractual international law are not anchored in any specific cosmology. This contrasts yet again with the Sinosphere, in which the emperor was conceived as the essential pivot linking the sacred and mundane worlds, with the realization of temporal order being contingent

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<sup>460</sup>On this point, see H. Lyman Miller. "The Late Imperial Chinese State." In *The Modern Chinese State*, edited by David Shambaugh, 15-41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. See specifically p. 17.

upon the emperor's governing in strict accordance with the moral imperatives of an impersonal cosmic order.<sup>461</sup> In their different ways, both Christendom and the global state system were dualistic in their composition, with the sacred and temporal realms being either structurally interwoven (Christendom) or alternatively structurally isolated from one another (the global state system). The sacred and temporal worlds were in the Sinosphere conversely structurally conjoined, producing a monism that strengthened the Sinosphere for much of its existence, but that also left it intensely vulnerable to millenarian challenges during periods of dynastic decline.

### 6.1.2 The Constitution of the Imperial Sinosphere

The normative complex that under-wrote the Sinosphere was infused by the values and ideals of Confucianism. Much like Saint Augustine, Confucius had written at a time of great political volatility, in which the early unity of the ancient Zhou dynasty had given way to a period of fractious conflict between China's increasingly independent constituent kingdoms.<sup>462</sup> Similarly, just as Augustine sought simultaneously to fortify and bridle the temporal powers of his day by tethering their legitimacy to the teachings of the Church, so too the teachings of Confucius were intended to strengthen temporal rulers by bringing their behaviour into closer conformity with the moral imperatives of the cosmos. These similarities in originating circumstances and political intentions notwithstanding, the philosophies articulated by Augustine and Confucius were nevertheless radically different. For Augustine, the

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<sup>461</sup>On this point, see Benjamin Schwartz. "The Chinese Perception of World Order, Past and Present." In *The Chinese World Order - Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, edited by John King Fairbank, 276-88. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968 See specifically p. 283.

<sup>462</sup>On this point, see Frederick Tse-shyang Chen. "The Confucian View of World Order." In *Religion and International Law*, edited by Mark W. Janis and Carolyn Evans, 27-49. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004. See specifically p. 29.

problem of legitimizing political authority was profoundly informed by his essentially pessimistic assessment of human nature, and also by his beliefs concerning the existence of a supreme law-giver in the form of an omnipotent God. The political theology he produced stressed the fact of man's essentially corrupt nature following the Fall, and the concomitant necessity of restraining human wickedness through the imposition of a remedial and authoritarian political order.<sup>463</sup> In Augustinian lights, temporal authority was an evil made necessary by man's initial defiance of God.<sup>464</sup> The injustices of earthly rulers were moreover construed as both a reflection of man's flawed nature, and also as a continuing earthly punishment for Original Sin.<sup>465</sup> This justification for temporal rule simultaneously acknowledged its necessity while stressing both its moral imperfection and its subordinate status to the Church, which remained the agency responsible for interpreting God's will and spreading His Word among the faithful.

In contrast to Augustine's belief in the existence of a transcendent and omnipotent divine lawgiver, Confucianism was conversely informed by a belief in the existence of an immanent and impersonal cosmic order.<sup>466</sup> Equally, whereas Augustine proceeded from a radically pessimistic assessment of a human nature forever tainted by Original Sin, Confucius and his followers instead stressed the perfectibility of human nature. For Confucians, humans were equally endowed with an innate moral sense, which it was the responsibility of rulers to cultivate through a combination of exemplary leadership and systematic moral indoctrination.<sup>467</sup> Unlike Augustinian political theology, Confucianism placed great importance on the moral

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<sup>463</sup>On this point, see Deane, *The Social and Political Ideas of Saint Augustine*, p. 117.

<sup>464</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>465</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>466</sup>Chen, 'The Confucian View of World Order', p. 27.

<sup>467</sup>On this point, see John King Fairbank, and Merle Goldman. *China - A New History*. Second enlarged ed. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 56.

qualities of the ruler himself, believing that his righteous conduct and proper adherence to prescribed ceremonies (*li*) could exercise a profoundly beneficial educative impact on the populace at large.<sup>468</sup> More broadly, Confucians believed that the ruler's righteous conduct and adherence to the proper ceremonies was necessary for the maintenance of cosmic as well as social order.<sup>469</sup> In Christendom, salvation was possible only through the Church, and the divine could be experienced only through the intercession of a celibate priestly caste. Accordingly, a ruler's moral failings were of little spiritual consequence for the faithful, however negatively they might impinge on believers' earthly existence. Conversely, for Confucians, the ruler's moral qualities were of supreme spiritual as well as earthly significance, with a failure to live in harmony with the moral imperatives of the cosmos inviting catastrophe for all.

The normative complex underpinning the Sinosphere was thus informed by a world-view that conflated the spiritual and mundane worlds, and worked to sustain a hierarchical order with an omniscient universal emperor at its pinnacle. At an identity-constitutive level, the purpose of collective association was to achieve a temporal state of peace, fairness and harmony (*ping*) in accord with the rhythms of a larger cosmic order.<sup>470</sup> For successive Chinese dynasties, the emperor was conceived as the Son of Heaven, and the ambit of his rule was *tien-hsia*, literally 'all under heaven.'<sup>471</sup> From this privileged position, the emperor presided over a social order conceived in organic and rigidly hierarchical terms, with actors embedded in fixed relationships of super- and subordination. Of these relationships, the most important

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<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>469</sup> John King Fairbank. "A Preliminary Framework." In *The Chinese World Order - Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, edited by John King Fairbank, 1-19. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968. See specifically p. 6.

<sup>470</sup> Chen, 'The Confucian View of World Order', p. 28.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

were the Three Bonds linking rulers and ruled, husbands and wives, and parents and children.<sup>472</sup> These bonds entailed actors' subscription to fixed roles involving specific duties that had to be assiduously fulfilled for social and cosmic order to be realised. The Confucian world-view was emphatically paternalistic and rigorously prescriptive in its constitution, and envisaged the ideal society as one in which ruler and ruled, husband and wife, and father and son were to be linked in vertical, mutually reinforcing asymmetric ties of benevolence and obedience.<sup>473</sup> At an international level, as we shall see, this pattern was to be replicated in the relations between the Chinese empire and its tributary polities, with the latter being expected to show the same level of deference and filial piety to the emperor as one would expect from a dutiful son towards his father.<sup>474</sup>

Where earthly preparation for eternal salvation constituted the *raison d'être* of collective association in Christendom, the Sinosphere was conversely organized for the purposes of realizing a state of peace, fairness and harmony in the social and cosmic spheres, which were deemed by Confucian scholars to be inextricably enmeshed. Similarly, whereas Christian ethics provided the primary means of normative pacification in medieval Christendom, in the Sinosphere it was the Confucian ethical code that fulfilled this function. In their distinctive ways, both Christianity and Confucianism were characterised by a series of tensions between the egalitarian and hierarchical threads running through their respective philosophies. Both ethical frameworks began from a position that stressed the moral worth of each individual, either by dint of their status as children of God or alternatively as creatures cosmically endowed with an intrinsic capacity to think and act as moral beings. In this

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<sup>472</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 19.

<sup>473</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>474</sup>On this point, see specifically Key-Hiuk Kim. *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order - Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860-1882*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, p. 7.

regard, at least, the ethical-prescriptive norms of Christendom and the Sinosphere were very similar, with variants of the Golden Rule conspicuously featuring in both systems.<sup>475</sup> At the same time, however, both ethical systems functioned within highly rigid and inegalitarian social milieux, a fact that necessitated very distinctive cultural accommodations with the prevailing social order.

In Christendom, as we have seen, the Church's ideological hegemony was exercised in a highly fragmented political environment, and one that was additionally characterised by high levels of corporate organization among merchant and aristocratic elites. As a result, the egalitarian message of Christianity was diluted by the accommodations it was forced to make, particularly with a bellicose noble class. Both the Augustinian political theology and the social ideology of tri-functionality that sustained Christendom reflected this uneasy compromise, as did the co-existence of Christian ethics with a plethora of legal codes (e.g. feudal custom and Roman law) that assigned particularized bundles of privileges to discrete social groups.<sup>476</sup> Conversely, in the Sinosphere, ethical obligations were framed far more comprehensively in the language of duties rather than reciprocal rights and responsibilities, reflecting the paternalism inherent in Confucian philosophy.<sup>477</sup> Additionally, rather than cohering within a social order marked by autonomously organized and functionally distinct estates and corporate groupings, the Chinese

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<sup>475</sup> Interestingly, while the Golden Rule is identified most closely with Christianity for most Westerners, Karen Armstrong reminds us that of all the ethical systems that developed out of the Axial Age, it was the Confucian tradition in which the Golden Rule was first formulated. See Karen Armstrong. *The Great Transformation - the World in the Time of Buddha, Socrates, Confucius and Jeremiah*. London: Atlantic Books, 2006, p. 208.

<sup>476</sup> On the heterogeneous character of the legal systems prevalent in feudal Europe, see G. Poggi. *The Development of the Modern State - a Sociological Introduction*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978, p. 86.

<sup>477</sup> Fairbank and Goldman, *China - A New History*, p. 51.



imperial order was fractal in its organization.<sup>478</sup> That is, instead of being distinguished by particularistic corporate claims, an empire-wide gentry elite was rather united in its commitments to securing the physical safety and material welfare of the peasantry, as well as supervising their moral instruction.<sup>479</sup> Consequently, the power-legitimizing norms that sustained the Sinosphere were far simpler than those undergirding Christendom. At the apex of the Sinosphere, a sacerdotal conception of kingship legitimized the emperor's suzerainty as the Son of Heaven over the East Asian ecumene.<sup>480</sup> Meanwhile, social relations were pervaded by a paternalistic Confucian world-view, which stabilized and perpetuated an intensely hierarchical order by emphasizing the centrality of asymmetric and familial bonds of benevolence and obedience between superiors and inferiors at all levels of social organization, from the individual household upwards.

At the institutional level, the Sinosphere was ordered around a suzerain state system centred yoked under the sacred authority of the Son of Heaven. Under the *Pax Sinica*, China was held to be the singular centre of civilization, and the emperor the supreme temporal and spiritual authority within the East Asian ecumene. In keeping with Confucian ideology, Chinese tributary states – including Korea, Annam (Vietnam) and Japan – stood in an explicit relationship of subordination to the emperor.<sup>481</sup> In stark opposition to the Westphalian state system that was to succeed it, relations between polities were conceived in moral rather than legal terms, with the same Confucian rhetoric of paternalism infusing traditional East Asian diplomacy as it

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<sup>478</sup> On the fractal character of imperial China's social constitution, see Roy Bin Wong. *China Transformed : Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997, p. 107.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>480</sup> Miller, 'The Late Imperial Chinese State', p. 17.

<sup>481</sup> Although it must be noted that the Ming Dynasty expelled Japan from the Sinosphere in 1621, after which it continued to have extensive economic relations with regional actors but no longer identified as a formal tributary of the Chinese emperor. See Kang, 'Hierarchy in Asian International Relations', p. 63.

did the emperor's relations with his subjects within China itself.<sup>482</sup> As was the case with many traditional composite empires, regional diplomacy within the Sinosphere was conducted along the lines of a 'rim-less wheel', with all interactions concentrated around the Chinese 'hub.'<sup>483</sup> China managed its relations bilaterally with each of its tributaries on different terms, while none of its tributaries independently engaged in routine diplomatic interaction with one another.<sup>484</sup> Critically, however, and in contrast to most classical empires, the Chinese emperor did little to interfere with the domestic authority of tributary rulers within their own territories.<sup>485</sup> While obliged to acknowledge the emperor's suzerainty through participation in ritual acts of obeisance (generally centred around the tribute trade discussed below), rulers such as the successive kings of the Yi Dynasty in Korea were generally free to govern their people without Chinese interference.<sup>486</sup> At the same time, however, the high culture of China's chief tributary polities was so heavily Sinicized, and China's material power so preponderant within the region, that direct intervention was largely unnecessary to secure Chinese goals within her tributary polities.

Within the over-arching umbrella of the suzerain state system, order was secured in the Sinosphere through recourse to the same careful admixture of authoritative and coercive power resources as that manifest in all of the international

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<sup>482</sup>Thus, in discussing Sino-Korean relations under the old order, Key-Hiuk Kim observes: 'Since relations between China and Korea were considered analogous to those between father and son or between elder and younger brother, they imposed on both parties moral rather than legal obligations...'; See Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*, p. 7.

<sup>483</sup>The rim-less hub model of empire, which largely reflects the model of traditional diplomacy in the Sinosphere, is characterised by the following features: (i) vertical interaction between core and periphery; (ii) minimal to no interaction between periphery and periphery; and (iii) an absence of multilateral interaction between the core and its satellite polities. See Alexander J. Motyl, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, pp. 121-122.

<sup>484</sup>On the lack of regular diplomatic interaction between tributary states (with the possible exception of Korea and Japan), see Yongjin Zhang, "System, Empire and State in Chinese International Relations." *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 5 (2001), p. 53.

<sup>485</sup>On this point, see for example Kang, 'Hierarchy in Asian International Relations', p. 57.

<sup>486</sup>*Ibid.*

orders considered in this study. Given its indebtedness to Confucianism, however, what is most striking about the Sinosphere is the self-consciousness with which authoritative and coercive power resources were distinguished from one another, as well as the conspicuous priority rhetorically accorded to the former in sustaining order throughout East Asia. Within Confucianism, a clear distinction was drawn between different forms of social power. At one end of the spectrum resided a form of power centring around *li*, a term referring to the traditional customs and rites performed by the Son of Heaven to communicate social norms to others, and in so doing maintain the order of the cosmos.<sup>487</sup> As stated previously, Confucians assigned great significance to the moral character of rulers, believing that in their proper conduct they could powerfully influence the behaviour of others through the force of example. In light of this thinking, traditional East Asian diplomacy was highly ceremonial and explicitly public and performative in its forms, with official interactions between China and its tributaries being saturated with religious and symbolic significance. Thus, for example, the coronation of new rulers in tributary states could be legitimized only by an imperial investiture mission, in which the newly appointed ruler would kowtow to symbols of imperial authority provided by the emperor's representatives.<sup>488</sup> This ritual not only legitimized the local ruler in the eyes of the local gentry, but also symbolically re-affirmed the relations of benevolence and obedience obtaining between the emperor and his vassal rulers. The tribute missions despatched by tributary polities to China provided yet another forum for the ritual affirmation of the

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<sup>487</sup>On the Confucian concept of the *li/fa* distinction between authoritative and coercive modes of power, see the interesting discussion in Chen, 'The Confucian View of World Order', p. 33. See also Adda Bozeman. *The Future of Law in a Multicultural World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 144-145.

<sup>488</sup>On the broad significance of investiture as an authoritative institution within the Sinosphere, see Truong Buu Lam. "Intervention Versus Tribute in Sino-Vietnamese Relations, 1788-1790." In *The Chinese World Order - Traditional China's Foreign Relations*, edited by John King Fairbank, 165-79. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968. See specifically p. 179.

emperor's suzerainty, with performance of the kowtow and the provision of gifts by the representatives of tribute states investing these trade missions with a profound political and spiritual importance.<sup>489</sup>

From a modern vantage point, the ceremonial forms of traditional East Asian diplomacy may seem both arcane and hopelessly archaic. But the temptation to dismiss them as merely some form of baroque and irrelevant artifice must be resisted, for doing so elides the fact that these practices were anchored in deeply held intersubjective beliefs about the nature of the social and cosmic order, and reflected the central importance contemporaries accorded to the maintenance of ideological orthodoxy in sustaining the Sinosphere. Having made this observation, I must add that the normative power centred around *li* was systematically supplemented, both within China proper and throughout its penumbra of tributary polities, by reliance on *fa*. In Chinese thinking, *fa* (regulations) referred to the recourse to the range of material rewards and penalties available to the Son of Heaven to induce compliance from those impervious to the force of ritually communicated virtue.<sup>490</sup> Moreover, while *li* was suffused with sacred significance and formed a major focus of Confucian scholarship, the 'two handles' of material inducements and exemplary coercion that constituted *fa* received at least as great an emphasis in ancient Chinese political philosophy.<sup>491</sup> At an international level, *fa* manifested itself most conspicuously in China's intermittent resort to armed force to maintain order within the Sinosphere. In some situations, this entailed the suppression of anti-systemic criminal elements (the most conspicuous of these being Japanese pirates), while in other cases it involved direct Chinese military intervention to protect tributary polities from predators originating from beyond the

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<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>490</sup> Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 55.

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*

Sinosphere.<sup>492</sup> In all instances, however, the emperor's resort to force was legitimized not by reference to a shared legal code, but rather by invoking the sacred charisma of the emperor by dint of his position as the Son of Heaven.

At the material level, the Sinosphere subsisted on a foundation of concentrated coercion and productive capacity qualitatively greater than anything comparable in late medieval Christendom. In fifteenth century Europe, the diffusion of firearms and modern artillery had irretrievably corroded Christendom's feudal base, and had subsequently helped to facilitate the transition to a Westphalian state system.<sup>493</sup> Conversely, the Sinosphere's experience was more consistent with that of most societies across greater Eurasia in the early modern period, with the spread of firearms and artillery working to strengthen and expand pre-existing imperial formations. In China's case, the 'general crisis' of the seventeenth century was resolved with the transition from the Ming to the Qing Dynasties, a process that occurred roughly contemporaneously with the birth of the Westphalian state system in West-Central Europe. From the early seventeenth century, nomadic Manchu pastoralists from the Asian Steppe had augmented their existing superiority in cavalry with the introduction of firearms and light artillery into their armed forces.<sup>494</sup> This adaptation, while not as immediately far-reaching as the European military revolution, was nevertheless sufficient to enable them to rapidly conquer China, as well as also facilitating the subsequent destruction of loyalist Ming rebels in the decades immediately following the Dynasty's collapse.<sup>495</sup> The Manchus then employed a combination of mobile

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<sup>492</sup>China's attempts to protect Korea from Japanese predation and Vietnam from French conquest in the late nineteenth century attest to the durability of China's commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities as regional suzerain even in the Sinosphere's last phase.

<sup>493</sup>See the discussion in Chapter Three above.

<sup>494</sup>This process is discussed in detail in Nicola di Cosimo. "Did Guns Matter? Firearms and the Qing Formation." In *The Qing Formation in World Historical Time*, edited by Lynn A Struve, 121-66. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.

<sup>495</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.

cavalry units, artillery, and Han Chinese infantrymen to add vast swathes of territory from the south and Southwest to their holdings, in so doing expanding China's borders to their furthest territorial extent by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>496</sup>

The stability provided by the Manchu gunpowder empire enabled an expansion of trade and the continued accumulation of wealth throughout East Asia over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Just as the consolidation of Christendom under the papal-imperial *diarchy* had permitted a surge in wealth accumulation and demographic expansion in eleventh century Europe, so too the protective carapace of Qing suzerainty enabled a similar process of growth in early modern East Asia. Within China itself, historians estimate that the empire's population more than doubled over the course of the eighteenth century, from 160 million in 1700 to 350 million in 1800.<sup>497</sup> Moreover, this demographic expansion was accompanied, at least up to 1750, by sustained increases in both land and labour productivity, which provided the population with a standard of living generally superior to that of most Western Europeans at mid-century.<sup>498</sup> This economic dynamism spurred the growth of trading networks throughout East Asia and beyond, with the bulk of intra-regional trend directed towards serving the voracious Chinese appetite for both staples as well as luxury goods. The growth of trade in turn fed into the increasing monetization of East Asian economies, aiding revenue extraction and stimulating the continuing centralization of political power throughout the Sinosphere's constituent polities.<sup>499</sup> Without the quantum leap in productive and destructive capacities bequeathed by the

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<sup>496</sup>On this point, see Evelyn S. Rawski. "The Qing Formation and the Early Modern Period." In *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time*, edited by Lynn A. Struve, 207-41. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004.

See specifically p. 218.

<sup>497</sup>Goldstone, 'Neither Late Imperial nor Early Modern', p. 259.

<sup>498</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 261. Goldstone notes the one exception to this generalization at 1750 would potentially have been south-east England, then in the early stages of industrialization.

<sup>499</sup>On this point, see Kang, 'Hierarchy in Asian International Relations', p. 67.

industrial revolution, the Qing empire and its tributaries remained vulnerable to the threat of external predation that eventually presented itself in the form of Western incursions from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. But such an observation unfairly diminishes the achievements of the Qing Dynasty, overlooking the exceptionalism of the Western experience after 1750. More fundamentally, however, it threatens to obscure the more basic fact that judging by any material measure of aggregated productive and destructive capacities, the Sinosphere was by far the most successful and sophisticated of all regional international orders in the early modern world down to the late eighteenth century.

Recalling briefly the theoretical framework informing this inquiry, I maintain that all social orders are composed of various networks yoked respectively around principles of kinship, patronage, contract and bureaucratic command. It is incumbent upon rulers to effectively work through these networks, marshalling and combining the normative and material resources that inhere in them, if they are to successfully maintain order both domestically and internationally. This observation is borne out by a consideration of the constitution of the Sinosphere. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a major foundation of the Qing Dynasty's success was the hybrid nature of their empire, with the conquering Manchus effectively tapping into and exploiting a broad spectrum of social networks to sustain, expand and manage the Chinese imperium. Within the sedentary Sinic core of the empire, the Manchus largely relied upon the operation of the long-established imperial bureaucracy to maintain order.<sup>500</sup> A dedicated corps of administrators projected and enforced the emperor's writ at the provincial level, while at the village level an indoctrinated Confucian

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<sup>500</sup>Evelyn S. Rawski. "The Qing Formation and the Early Modern Period." In *The Qing Formation in World-Historical Time*, edited by Lynn A. Struve, 207-41. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004. See specifically pp. 224-225. Rawski notes that while the Manchus retained the bureaucratic structures inherited from the Ming Dynasty, as an alien conquest dynasty they also introduced a series of innovations that increased the power of the imperial throne *vis-à-vis* the bureaucracy.

gentry-scholar elite assumed responsibility for the day-to-day tasks of governance.<sup>501</sup> In the Inner/Central Asian periphery, by contrast, the Manchus chose not to extend Confucian bureaucratic structures into recently conquered border territories, preferring instead to use their powers of patronage to govern indirectly through a series of local intermediaries.<sup>502</sup>

Given their status as a conquest dynasty, the Manchus also wisely chose to mitigate their dependence on a Han-dominated bureaucracy in the empire's Sinic core by maintaining extensive kinship ties between the imperial court and allied clans among the Manchu aristocracy.<sup>503</sup> This strategy provided the emperor with an independent power base bonded together by real and imagined ties of affect and kinship, and enabled successive Qing emperors to concentrate powers in the imperial office that far surpassed those of their Ming predecessors.<sup>504</sup> Finally, the Qing Dynasty perpetuated the Ming system of tribute trade in both Eastern and Central Asia. In so doing, it sought both to dictate the terms upon which foreigners interacted with the empire, and also to effectively guard against the prospect of alternative and potentially threatening power formations cohering within the interstices of developing commercial networks. The Dynasty's efforts to funnel commercial activities exclusively through the structures of the tribute system were only partially successful, a fact that is unsurprising given their limited capacities to supervise all trade, and given also the formidable impetus to regional commercial exchange provided by China's economic efflorescence during the opening century of Qing rule.<sup>505</sup> But considered in their totality, the Manchus' efforts to marshal diverse power resources

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<sup>501</sup>Wong, *China Transformed*, p. 107.

<sup>502</sup>Rawski, 'The Qing Formation and the Early Modern Period', pp. 225-226.

<sup>503</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 224-225.

<sup>504</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>505</sup>On the extent to which regional trade managed to slip the bonds of the tributary system, see Kang, 'Hierarchy in Asian International Relations', p. 65.



through the various social networks available to them were remarkably successful, enabling the empire's wealth, population and territory to grow continuously during the eighteenth century.

The final dimension of the Sinosphere that is salient to this investigation is the level of violence interdependence manifest within it in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As the material predominance of China *vis-à-vis* its tributary polities has already been mentioned, this aspect of the Sinosphere's order-enabling material foundation can be dealt with briefly. Simply stated, Qing China represented the most powerful and most enduring of the gunpowder empires that had developed from the sixteenth century onwards, and it was on the military predominance of the Qing Empire that order largely depended in East Asia. In the North-West, the ancient threat of invasion from nomadic pastoralists, which had historically constituted the greatest external threat faced by Chinese dynasties, had effectively been neutralized following the Manchu conquest of China in 1644.<sup>506</sup> Given their nomadic origins, the Manchus retained a mastery of mobile cavalry warfare, but supplemented this strength with modern artillery, Han bureaucracy and massed infantry to deter and defeat prospective challengers from the steppe. Manchu military strategy paid less heed to maritime threats from East Asia, a neglect that would ultimately doom the dynasty in the nineteenth century. But in the pre-steamship era of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europeans lacked the capacity to effectively project power throughout the region (much less project power along China's riverine arteries), and it was possible for the Manchus to confine them to limited coastal enclaves.<sup>507</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>506</sup>On the Qing Dynasty's subjugation of nomadic peoples and rival polities on its Inner Asian frontier in the eighteenth century, an enterprise that Rawski explicitly compares to the colonizing activities undertaken by the European powers in other regions, see Rawski, 'The Qing Formation and the Early Modern Period', pp. 218-221.

<sup>507</sup>On China's relations with Great Britain in the pre-steamship era, Daniel Headrick writes as follows: 'Like an elephant and a whale, China and Britain evolved in two different habitats. At sea, Britain was invincible and could destroy any Chinese fleet or coastal fort. China, on the other hand, was a land

Japan's self-imposed policy of isolation under the Tokugawa Shogunate removed from contention the one potential regional challenger to Chinese maritime supremacy over the East Asian littoral. With the threat of pastoralist invasion from the steppe eliminated, and the maritime threat from industrializing European and American outsiders yet to emerge, China enjoyed regional military supremacy beyond challenge. This military supremacy, combined with the stability provided by the Sinosphere's ideological hegemony and practices of tribute diplomacy, worked to sustain order throughout the region without serious challenge down to 1800.

The constitutional order of the Sinosphere is schematically presented in table form below (Table 6.1). The same caveats that applied to my discussion of Christendom's constitution also obtain here. International orders are constituted by an elaborate amalgam of normative, institutional and material elements that fit together imperfectly, and are beset by tensions and inconsistencies that are elided in schematic portraits such as the one advanced below. Equally, schematic outlines convey a sense of stability – even permanency – that belies the provisional and ultimately transient nature of international orders. These important qualifications notwithstanding, the following snapshot of the Sinosphere nevertheless provides a useful point of departure for an examination of the dynamics that eventually led to its destruction.

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empire with few interests beyond her shores and few cities along her coasts. As long as the Europeans were incapable of pushing their way inland, the Celestial Empire was invulnerable.' See Daniel R. Headrick. *The Tools of Empire - Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 45.

## 6.2 The Decay of the Sinosphere

### 6.2.1 Latent Vulnerabilities

For all of its longevity and its evident strengths, the Sinosphere was nevertheless beset with a range of latent vulnerabilities, the destabilizing consequences of which became increasingly manifest from the late eighteenth century onwards. The most basic of

**Table 6.1 The International Order of the Sinosphere, 1644-1850**

<b>Normative Complex</b>	<b>Governing Institutional Framework</b>	<b>Order-Enabling Material Context</b>
<b>Identity Constitutive Norms</b> Achievement of a temporal state of harmony ( <i>ping</i> ) in concordance with cosmic order	<b>Ordering Framework</b> Suzerain state system governed by the Chinese emperor as Son of Heaven	<b>Aggregate Capacities for Production and Destruction</b> Proto-capitalist mode of production organized within the framework of centralized gunpowder empire
<b>Ethical Prescriptive Norms</b> Confucian Ethics	<b>Authoritative Institutions</b> Ritual enactment of shared identities ( <i>li</i> ) through investiture missions and tribute trade	<b>Dominant Mobilizational Networks</b> Dominance of imperial bureaucracy and centralized imperial patronage networks
<b>Power Legitimizing Norms</b> Sacerdotal conception of emperor and Confucian norms of asymmetric benevolence and obedience	<b>Coercive Institutions</b> Imperial resort to judicial sanctions and violence ( <i>fa</i> ) to rectify error and restore cosmic order	<b>Violence Interdependence</b> High concentration and low accumulation of coercive means [moderate violence interdependence]

these vulnerabilities was the extremely loose nature of the suzerain order over which China presided, and the great dependence of this order upon the continuing strength of

the Chinese empire. During periods of dynastic ascendancy and consolidation, the modest character of China's authority claims over its tributary states assured local rulers a high level of autonomy, thus working to minimize resistance to Chinese hegemony. Unlike Christendom, the Sinosphere lacked a transnational bureaucratic authority structure that was in any way analogous to the medieval Church. Neither was the Sinosphere knitted together by same kinds of thick crosscutting webs of aristocratic kinship ties that bound together Christendom's constituent polities. In the absence of an intrusive transnational bureaucracy against which to compete for authority, material privileges, or popular allegiances, the Sinosphere's rulers were generally happy to participate in Chinese practices (e.g. the tribute trade, investiture missions) that promised to enrich them while also fortifying their internal and external legitimacy. Furthermore, the absence of thick crosscutting kinship ties among the Sinosphere's aristocratic elites eliminated an important potential transmission vector for localized ideological challenges, thus insulating the Sinosphere from the rapid spread of heterodox movements and ideologies of the kind that had eventually destroyed Christendom. Finally, China's unrivalled economic and military predominance during periods of dynastic strength radically raised the costs of confrontation with the Celestial Empire, thereby effectively deterring would-be aggressors and anti-systemic actors from launching challenges against the prevailing international order.

In times of dynastic weakness and decline, by contrast, East Asia's Sino-centrism ensured that domestic instability within China rapidly translated into a deterioration of order well beyond the empire's borders. This strong co-variance between dynastic cycles of decline in China and regional instability was evident for example in the final decades of the Ming Dynasty in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. During this period, the Japanese ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi

launched an attack on Korea that was motivated as much by an aspiration to assert equal status with the Ming emperor as it was by a desire for territorial aggrandizement.<sup>508</sup> While imperial forces managed to repel Japan and further strengthen China's bonds with its Korean tributary in the process, the conflict nevertheless heavily drained the imperial treasury, thus hastening the dynasty's eventual decline and fall to Manchu conquerors in 1644.<sup>509</sup> Perhaps even more fundamentally, however, the convoluted diplomatic manoeuvrings that accompanied China's early efforts to secure Japan's peaceful withdrawal from Korea revealed the fragility of the consensus underpinning the Sinosphere's diplomatic structure. Ambiguity remains as to whether Hideyoshi's demand to be recognized as an equal of the Chinese emperor was reflective of an ignorance of the Sinosphere's constitutional norms, or whether he was alternatively seeking to actively revise these norms through the use of force.<sup>510</sup> What the protracted negotiations between Chinese, Korean and Japanese envoys nonetheless clearly illustrated was the openness of these norms to contestation, particularly at times when the Celestial Empire was weak or distracted by internal rebellions. Consequently, although it was undeniably important as a mechanism for regional order maintenance and the empire's domestic legitimation, China's tributary system was susceptible to re-interpretations by tributary rulers that deviated – sometimes substantially – from the rigid bonds of benevolence and obedience favoured by the imperial court.

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<sup>508</sup>On this point, see Swope, 'Deceit, Disguise, and Dependence', p. 766.

<sup>509</sup>To convey a sense of the scale of the conflict, Hideyoshi's invasions from 1592 to 1598 are said by some to have inflicted more destruction, hardship and misery on the Korean people than the Korean War of 1950-1953. See *Ibid.*, p. 758.

<sup>510</sup>Although Swope characterises Hideyoshi's campaigns as 'a revisionist attempt to break the [tributary] system apart', his own meticulously detailed analysis of the diplomacy surrounding the conflict does nevertheless convey a strong sense of the Japanese leader's ignorance of many of the Sinosphere's most fundamental constitutional norms. See *Ibid.*, p. 757.

While serious in its long-term implications, the existence of a gap between prescription and practice in the operation of the Sinosphere comes as no surprise, and is illustrative of the kinds of imperfections that trouble all international orders. In China's case, however, departures from prescribed norms were particularly problematic given the great emphasis accorded to the maintenance of ideological orthodoxy as a prop for imperial power. The conflation of the sacred and secular realms in imperial ideology provided ruling dynasties with a great source of strength during times of peace, with the divinely ordained character of the Chinese political order conferring upon it a powerful sense of permanence and divine legitimacy. However, in times of dynastic decline, the conjoining of the sacred and secular realms conversely encouraged actors to interpret the empire's political troubles in spiritual terms. Consequently, failures in governance were often popularly conceived as signifying that the emperor's Mandate of Heaven had been withdrawn, and that the imperial household must consequently be overthrown. For this reason alone, China's absolute insistence that foreigners conform to the rites and practices of the tributary system is understandable, given that a failure of 'barbarians' to observe these rites constituted an explicit challenge to the Confucian order, one which threatened the emperor's authority domestically as well as internationally. More generally, the religious legitimation of imperial authority ensured that oppositional movements within Chinese society also cast their grievances in similarly absolute and eschatological terms. Thus, while barbarian invasion from the Asian steppe historically constituted the most common external threat to successive Chinese dynasties, the threat of millenarian rebellion from within constituted the greatest domestic danger to the perpetuation of imperial authority.

The fragility of the tributary system during periods of dynastic decline and the internal threat of millenarian rebellion together constituted the two great historical

sources of structural vulnerability within the Sinosphere. In the era of the Qing Dynasty, however, these vulnerabilities were overlain by a third and more historically contingent weakness, namely the widespread hostility of the Han majority towards their culturally alien and ethnically distinct Manchu conquerors. For while the Manchus followed the path trod by previous steppe conquerors of China, becoming progressively sedentarized and Sinicized following their victory over the Ming Dynasty, they nevertheless retained a distinctive corporate identity that marked them out as separate from and superior to the Han majority. Although efforts were made to cultivate indigenous collaborators, and the Manchus relied heavily on the state bureaucracy and the scholar-gentry to maintain order throughout their imperium, conquerors and conquered remained divided from one another. In southern China in particular, this division manifested itself not merely as diffuse resentment, but assumed a self-consciously political form in the emergence of armed secret societies dedicated to the overthrow of the Manchus and the restoration of the Ming Dynasty.<sup>511</sup>

Elsewhere within the Manchus' expanding patrimony, Ming loyalist sentiments did not pose such a problem for authorities, but the cultural distance between the Manchus and their subjects nevertheless remained a potent source of potential friction. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the Qing Empire rapidly expanded. This process of territorial expansion necessarily led to the incorporation of an enormous range of culturally and religiously diverse communities into the empire, necessitating attendant adaptations in Qing techniques of administration and legitimation. Whereas the Manchus were content to work through existing governance structures in the sedentary Han metropole, in the sparsely populated annexed

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<sup>511</sup>For a historical genealogy of the immediate predecessors of anti-Qing 'secret societies' in southern China, see generally David Ownby. *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996, chapter one ('Brotherhood Associations in Southeast China Through the Lin Shuangwen Rebellion').

territories of the north and the west they chose instead to govern through the Lifan Yuan (Ministry of Dependencies), in conjunction with reliance on local intermediaries.<sup>512</sup> Additionally, rather than merely replicating Confucian ideology in the outer provinces, the Manchus inserted themselves into local cosmologies wherever possible, falling back on an ideology of universal kingship when subjects' spiritual beliefs precluded such a possibility.<sup>513</sup> Although Qing imperial techniques of administration and legitimation compared favourably in terms of sophistication when compared to the contemporaneous activities of their European counterparts elsewhere, the mere fact of their occupation nevertheless generated potentially destabilizing undercurrents of resentment, even in non-Han areas of the empire.

The foregoing survey of the Sinosphere's latent vulnerabilities is necessary if we are to properly comprehend the dynamics of its collapse in the second half of the nineteenth century. This is because each of the aforementioned vulnerabilities became violently exposed from the 1840s onward, contributing to the Sinosphere's seemingly sudden contraction and collapse over the course of the following few decades. Nevertheless, as with Christendom before it, the acute phase of the Sinosphere's legitimation crisis was preceded by chronic processes of decay that were much more incremental and long term in their essential character. The Sinosphere collapsed as a result of an explosive conjuncture between these internal processes of decay and the onset of the Western challenge, thus it is to a consideration of these processes that we must now turn.

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<sup>512</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 149. See also Rawski, 'The Qing Formation and the Early Modern Period', pp. 225-226.

<sup>513</sup>Rawski, 'The Qing Formation in the Early Modern Period', p. 226.



## 6.2.2 Processes of Internal Decay

Like Christendom before it, the Sinosphere in many ways became a victim of its own success, with the rapid demographic and commercial expansion of the mid-Qing period seeding the Chinese social landscape with tensions that would eventually prove highly inimical to the maintenance of order within the empire. Despite the Qing Dynasty's impressive territorial expansion during the eighteenth century, the population of the empire grew so rapidly that the land-population ratio diminished continuously over time.<sup>514</sup> The introduction of New World crops such as sweet potatoes and maize enabled the cultivation of marginal lands, thus forestalling the risk of widespread famine.<sup>515</sup> But declining per capita acreage of land, combined with intermittent poor harvests, ensured that increasing numbers of peasants were forced into bankruptcy.<sup>516</sup> Thus compelled to leave the land, many drifted towards work in non-agrarian sectors, others became vagrants, while others still joined a growing pool of itinerant bandits and urban gangs.<sup>517</sup> Given that the Manchus (with the exception of Manchuria) imposed few effective barriers to internal migration within their empire, population pressures in densely populated regions could be partially relieved by peasant migration to more sparsely settled territories. However, in the absence of revolutionary advances in agricultural productivity, such expedients only temporarily alleviated the empire's accumulating demographic pressures. Worse still, migration towards less settled areas inevitably engendered tensions between migrants and

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<sup>514</sup>Susan Mann Jones, and Philip A. Kuhn. "Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion." In *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10 - Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 107-62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. See specifically pp. 108-110.

<sup>515</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>516</sup>Ho-Fung Hung. "Early Modernities and Contentious Politics in Mid-Qing China, C. 1740-1839." *International Sociology* 19, no. 4 (2004), p. 482.

<sup>517</sup>*Ibid.*

established communities, particularly in those cases where this social cleavage was compounded by ethnic differences between migrants and the native population.<sup>518</sup>

In addition to demographically induced social tensions, creeping processes of institutional decay also beset the Qing Empire by the late eighteenth century. These processes were manifest most keenly in the central state's declining capacity to match the paternalistic promise of imperial ideology with effective delivery of government services to the majority of the population. The Qing state's declining capacity was explicable at least partially as a legacy of the emperor Kangxi's decision in 1713 to permanently fix his subjects' tax quotas in perpetuity.<sup>519</sup> While the emperor's edict was politically astute at the time of issue, his successors' willingness to maintain this edict over the following decades contributed to a steady decline in the real value of state revenues, thanks to the continuous inflation induced by robust commercial expansion over the eighteenth century.<sup>520</sup> The decline in real revenues had predictable consequences for state capacity. The government gradually withdrew from governance functions, such as stockpiling food in state granaries to moderate food prices and thus ensure the masses' food security, which had earlier been central to the dynasty's cultivation of popular legitimacy.<sup>521</sup> Corresponding with the decline in state activism, the central state also tolerated - and in some cases tacitly encouraged - local office-holders' efforts attempts to make good the shortfall in central revenues through the arbitrary imposition of additional taxes at the municipal and provincial levels.<sup>522</sup> Both the atrophying of central government and the spontaneous growth of arbitrary taxation at the local and provincial levels nurtured the growth of widespread corruption, a

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<sup>518</sup>Jones and Kuhn, 'Dynastic Decline and the Roots of Rebellion', pp. 108-109.

<sup>519</sup>Hung, 'Early Modernities and Contentious Politics', p. 483.

<sup>520</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>521</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>522</sup>*Ibid.*, pp, 483-484. I

phenomenon that in turn fed back into a vicious cycle of diminishing governmental capacity and escalating popular disillusionment.

Demographic expansion, accumulating social tensions, and diminishing governmental capacity and legitimacy had all featured in prior cycles of dynastic decline in Chinese history. These problems were joined at the eighteenth century's end by the eruption of violent ideological dissent, which took the form of a series of rebellions that broke out in China towards the end of the Qianlong emperor's sixty year reign. Of these rebellions, the most protracted and destructive was the millenarian White Lotus revolt, which shook parts of northern and central China from 1796-1804. The revolt is of interest partially because it reflected a familiar dynamic in Chinese history, whereby disillusionment with government became channelled into a violent millenarian movement whose leaders urged spiritual and social renewal through the overthrow of the ruling dynasty. In addition to its continuities with past periods of dynastic decline, however, the White Lotus rebellion is also relevant as a harbinger of the Taiping rebellion and the Qing dynasty's subsequent slow-motion breakdown after 1850.

A hybrid movement, the White Lotus rebellion tapped into the widespread anti-Manchu sentiment among the Han majority, while also locating its call to restore the deposed Ming Dynasty within the prophetic tradition of the White Lotus religion. Subscribing to a Manichean offshoot of Buddhism, adherents of the White Lotus faith venerated the Eternal Mother, the universal progenitor from whom all humans had originated, and from whom they had become progressively estranged upon their entry into the temporal world.<sup>523</sup> Like many millennial sects, White Lotus practitioners interpreted contemporary social strife as constituting a symptom of humanity's

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<sup>523</sup>On the cosmology of the White Lotus movement, see Susan Naquin. *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, pp. 9-12.

estrangement from the divine. Similarly, they also emphasized familiar millennial themes concerning the transient nature of the temporal world and the imminent approach of the apocalypse. The looming collapse of the Qing Dynasty would be accompanied by devastation on a truly cosmic scale, with the Eternal Mother visiting horrifying punishments on the non-believers. Thus it was prophesied: ‘for an entire day and night, a black wind will rise up and blow, killing countless people, leaving mountains of white bones and oceans of blood.’<sup>524</sup> Predictably, a somewhat happier fate awaited believers in the Eternal Mother. For them, salvation would be provided through the intercession of the Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future who would spare them from annihilation and secure their reunion and reconciliation with the Eternal Mother.<sup>525</sup>

The foregoing comments provide an admittedly brisk overview of the White Lotus vision, and one that moreover implies a potentially misleading homogeneity in the diverse beliefs that drove various heterodox sects to participate in the rebellion. In reality, period specialists have been at pains to highlight the heterogeneity of the dispersed devotional congregations that took part in the revolt, both in terms of their organizational form and ideological content.<sup>526</sup> Indeed, some have even gone so far as to argue that the very designation of ‘White Lotus’ should be rejected, given that the rebels themselves abjured this label, and given also imperial bureaucrats’ habit of applying the label indiscriminately to all sectarian groups who opposed the ruling dynasty.<sup>527</sup> The millenarian character of rebel grievances and goals notwithstanding, it is also worth emphasizing that the immediate impetus for the rebellion was eminently pedestrian in nature, arising from popular hostility towards tax exactions in a

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<sup>524</sup>Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>525</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>526</sup>On this point, see generally Barend ter Haar. *The White Lotus Teaching in Chinese Religious History*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992.

<sup>527</sup>See for example *Ibid.*, pp. 289-290.

mountainous frontier region that was already notorious for its weak administration.<sup>528</sup> These important qualifications aside, the White Lotus rebellion is nevertheless relevant to this inquiry for three reasons. At the most prosaic level, the rebellion reflected the depth of popular hostility towards the ruling dynasty, and the frailty of governing institutions in the face of sustained guerrilla warfare. Despite the fragmented and largely uncoordinated nature of sectarian resistance, it took the beleaguered imperial forces the better part of a decade to defeat the rebellion. The costs of suppression were also immense, draining the imperial treasury of the equivalent of five years' revenue, and in so doing eliminating the budget surplus built up under the Qianlong emperor's long reign.<sup>529</sup>

Besides its immediate material costs, the rebellion also inflicted severe reputational damage on the Qing Dynasty, with the rebels' protracted resistance shattering the myth of Manchu military invincibility and thus giving courage to the empire's multiplying internal and external enemies.<sup>530</sup> In a pattern that would be repeated on a radically larger scale fifty years later, the White Lotus resistance inspired rebellions in other parts of the country, in so doing further compounding the empire's internal woes.<sup>531</sup> More revealingly still, the rebellion was demonstrative of a larger characteristic of the late imperial era, namely the proliferation of clandestine or semi-clandestine social networks that evaded governmental control, and that could potentially be harnessed for subversive or even revolutionary purposes. Despite the empire's best efforts, 'White Lotus' devotional congregations persisted in northern

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<sup>528</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 190.

<sup>529</sup>Bruce A. Elleman. *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989*. New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 10.

<sup>530</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 191.

<sup>531</sup>The most notable of these rebellions were the Miao rebellion of 1795-1806, and the Eight Trigram Sect revolt of 1813. The former rebellion was largely driven by the aboriginal population's resentment of the creeping usurpation of their land and power by encroaching Han settlers, and as such lacked the overtly sectarian character of the White Lotus rebellion. Conversely, the Eight Trigram Sect was an offshoot of the White Lotus movement, with the 1813 uprising demonstrating the movement's persistence years after their alleged suppression by imperial forces.

and central China in the decades following the crushing of their eponymous rebellion, their sectarian tradition of rebellion informing subsequent anti-government insurgencies down into the twentieth century.<sup>532</sup> In Taiwan and the south-eastern provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, meanwhile, the late eighteenth century also saw the growth of ‘secret societies’, including the so-called Triads. While presenting mainly as a criminal rather than an explicitly political threat to the Qing Dynasty, the Triads nevertheless subscribed to a conservative Ming restorationist ideology, and were involved in fomenting and organizing a rebellion in Taiwan as early as 1787.<sup>533</sup> In the far south-western edges of the empire, finally, the Muslim province of East Turkestan also presented challenges for the Qings. Having only recently been conquered by the Chinese, the province remained connected to the neighbouring Central Asian khanate of Kokand through overlapping ties of faith, kinship and trade. Now exiled in Kokand, Turkestan’s former rulers retained great influence in the province on account of their leadership of a Sufi brotherhood that straddled the fuzzy border between the two territories. This brotherhood and the saintly families attached to it would eventually provide the primary mobilizational vehicles through which successive jihads would be launched against the Qings in Turkestan during the nineteenth century.<sup>534</sup>

In addition to its material and reputational costs, the White Lotus rebellion was thus also symptomatic of the growth throughout the empire of clandestine and semi-clandestine social networks during a period of rising social and political disorder.

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<sup>532</sup>While White Lotus repertoires of rebellion, including the practice of magical rites of invulnerability, informed subsequent rebellions in North China in particular in the twentieth century (specifically the Boxer rebels and the Red Spears), Elizabeth Perry has argued convincingly against earlier suppositions claiming a direct ideological or organizational ancestry between White Lotus practitioners and later rebel movements. See generally Elizabeth J. Perry. *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1980.

<sup>533</sup>Ownby. *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China*, p. 5.

<sup>534</sup>On this point, see Joseph Fletcher. "Ch'ing Inner Asia." In *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10 - Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 35-106. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

From the Sufi brotherhoods and saintly families of Turkestan, through the scattered White Lotus congregations in northern and Central China and the Triads of the southern Maritime Provinces, the ruling dynasty's declining capacity and legitimacy was mirrored in the spread of secretive and potentially subversive networks throughout the empire's length and breadth. Given the immense size of the Manchu imperium and the limited state capacities for surveillance in a pre-industrial era, it would have been unreasonable to have expected the central state to have continuously monitored (let alone effectively controlled or even dismantled) all or indeed even most of these groups. Nevertheless, the government's immediate response to the White Lotus rebellion in particular served to further dilute its already degraded monopoly on force within the empire, thus further weakening the dynasty's grip on power.

In the rebellion's early stages, the poorly equipped and ill-disciplined imperial forces proved unable to effectively deal with the rebels' hit and run tactics, and were continually frustrated by the rebels' ability to either withdraw to their mountainous redoubts or else melt back into the local civilian population following their attacks.<sup>535</sup> Unable to effectively engage with the enemy, the government adopted a range of tactics that would become thoroughly familiar to subsequent generations of counter-insurgency practitioners. Central to the government's strategy was a policy of 'strengthening the walls and clearing the countryside.'<sup>536</sup> This policy entailed the comprehensive registration, concentration, and sequestration of civilians within strategic hamlets, with a view towards insulating them from the insurgents' influence while simultaneously starving the insurgents of popular material and moral support. Given the strong links between the rebels and the local population, the *t'uan-lien* system (literally: 'grouping and drilling') was designed as much for purposes of

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<sup>535</sup>Philip A. Kuhn. *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970, pp. 40-41.

<sup>536</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 190.

facilitating internal social monitoring and control as it was for defending against external threats.<sup>537</sup> However, lest the system be mistaken for a successful assertion of the state's bureaucratic powers over the populace, it must be added that an essential part of the *t'uan-lien* system was the establishment of popular militia, to be financed and led by the local gentry. Consequently, while the *t'uan-lien* system was conceived as an adjunct of state power and clothed in the protective camouflage of bureaucratic language, in effect it represented a form of nobility-led private military mobilization.<sup>538</sup>

Whereas previously the elite Manchu cavalry and the state armed forces had been the primary loci of military power within the empire, the *t'uan-lien* system inaugurated a process of military devolution that would be radically magnified during the rebellions of the mid-nineteenth century. Personalistic ties and cash payments substituted for bureaucratic command as the integrative glue holding the local militias together, with the emergence of these militias signifying a partial reversal of the rationalization and centralization of organized violence that had occurred during the Qing Dynasty's first century.<sup>539</sup> In hindsight, the establishment of a system of local militia to combat the White Lotus rebels may have been unavoidable, given the weakness of imperial forces and given also the limited effectiveness of the mercenaries who were also hired (at ruinous expense) to crush the insurgency.<sup>540</sup> But for all of their ostensible commitments to the maintenance of Confucian orthodoxy, the advent of the militias also represented a destabilizing diffusion of military power along two vertical axes – from the central state to the localities, and from the

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<sup>537</sup>On this point, see Philip A. Kuhn. "The T'uan-Lien Local Defense System at the Time of the Taiping Rebellion." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967), p. 227.

<sup>538</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>539</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>540</sup>On the great financial cost of employing mercenaries to defeat the White Lotus rebels, and the political dangers involved given the mercenaries' dubious and mercurial loyalties, see Kuhn, *Rebellion and its Enemies*, p. 50.



conquering Manchus to the conquered Hans. More worryingly still for the ruling dynasty, the militia system could not simply be rolled up following the defeat of the rebellion. Instead, given the state's persistent fiscal weakness and the unabating accumulation of social pressures accruing from continued population growth, the dynasty was forced to accept the *t'uan-lien* system as a vital component of the empire's internal security apparatus. In this way, the White Lotus rebellion indirectly catalysed the dispersal of armed force within the empire, further fracturing the institutional bases of Manchu hegemony and thus white-anting the imperial core of the Sino-centric world order.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

To briefly recap, the Sinosphere in the late eighteenth century was subject to three major structural vulnerabilities. Firstly, the order's extreme reliance on China's material and ideological power reserves rendered it highly susceptible to breakdown during periods of dynastic decline. The power vacuum engendered by downturns in the dynastic cycle in turn invited regional challengers such as Japan to reinterpret China's tributary diplomacy in ways that contradicted the rigidly hierarchical cosmology underpinning the Sinosphere. Secondly, given that the Celestial Empire acknowledged no distinction between the domestic and international realms, and given also that imperial Confucianism explicitly conflated the sacred and temporal spheres, external challenges to the tributary system ran the risk of further corroding popular belief that the emperor retained the Mandate of Heaven. In such circumstances, the ruling house remained vulnerable to the threat of internal sectarian rebellion, as popular dissatisfaction with an ailing dynasty found expression in calls to depose the emperor in favour of a new ruler capable of regaining Heaven's Mandate and thereby

restoring cosmic and temporal order. Lastly, this internal threat became even more acute in those periods of Chinese history when the empire was ruled by foreign (i.e. non-Han) dynasties, and when xenophobic sentiment could thus combine with popular discontent and sectarian religious zeal to fuel rebellion against the Son of Heaven.

As the senile Qianlong emperor finally expired in 1798, the Qing Dynasty was showing unmistakable signs of accelerating decline. In a technologically stagnant environment with limited scope for further increases in agricultural productivity, continuous demographic and commercial expansion was increasingly running up against ineluctable physical and ecological constraints. Simply stated, the empire was running out of the arable land needed to sustain its ever-expanding peasant population. While China was fortunate at this moment to be spared Malthusian correctives of the magnitude that had swept Christendom in the mid-fourteenth century, the absence of empire-wide famines or plagues ensured steadily declining per capita acreage, increasing peasant indebtedness and bankruptcy, and increasing popular recourse to adaptive strategies (e.g. banditry or internal migration) that further fuelled social and political instability. Like Christendom before it, China was also experiencing widespread institutional decay, manifest in the form of declining central state revenues and activism, together with a concomitant growth in the powers of arbitrary and corrupt local officials.

Faced with both growing social tensions and declining governmental effectiveness and capacity, sections of the population became increasingly receptive to sectarian calls to overthrow the Qing dynasty. Whereas lay pietist movements within pre-Reformation Christendom had generally shied away from calls to overthrow the temporal authorities, in China sectarian rebels refracted the holistic cosmology of the ruling dynasty in their own conjoined impulses towards political and spiritual

renewal.<sup>541</sup> The dynasty's responses to the resulting sectarian rebellions in turn accelerated the diffusion of military power towards local Han gentry-officials, cultivating the growth of orthodox private militias to counter heterodox clandestine networks such as the White Lotus rebels. Imperial policies thus both reflected and reinforced an emerging dynamic of private military mobilization, yoked respectively around the poles of heterodox clandestine networks and officially sanctioned and ideologically orthodox gentry-led militias. In this way, late Qing policies partially reversed the centralization and bureaucratic rationalization of violence that had accompanied China's absorption of the first 'military revolution' in the mid seventeenth century.

By the end of the Qianlong emperor's reign, definite cracks were beginning to appear in the imperial edifice. However, while it is tempting to retrospectively discern the seeds of the Sinosphere's collapse in the convulsions of the late eighteenth century, such an interpretation can only be advanced with caution and with appropriate qualifications. Undeniably, centrifugal forces were at work within the empire by century's end, but it is worth noting that large-scale public disorder had yet to penetrate the empire's densely populated economic heartland around the middle and lower Yangtze regions during this period. *Fin de siecle* conflagrations like the White Lotus rebellion and the Miao revolt undoubtedly posed serious threats to imperial rule. But these threats tended to remain localized, and tended also to crystallize in remote and recently settled frontier areas, such as the mountainous tri-border area between Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Hubei that formed the geographic epicentre of the White Lotus rebellion. Although the demographic and institutional drivers of dynastic decline were

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<sup>541</sup>For an interesting discussion of the contrast between the lay pietism of late medieval Christian sects with the activist political posture of Chinese sectarian rebels, see Frederic Wakeman Jr. *Strangers at the Gate - Social Disorder in South China, 1839-1861*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, pp. 123-125.

prevalent throughout the empire, it was on the fringes and remote badlands of the Qing imperium rather than within the Han metropole that organized hostility towards the dynasty first manifested itself. Despite the great costs and debilitating institutional legacies spawned by imperial attempts to suppress these rebellions, the empire's economic heartland remained secure at this time, enabling the imperial household to retain a misplaced optimism in the dynasty's prospective longevity.

At the systemic level also, the international order of the Sinosphere appeared to remain superficially intact at the turn of the century. The cultural scaffolding of Confucian orthodoxy remained firmly in place throughout East Asia at this time, and while the empire was rotting from the inside, this had yet to be reflected in the growth of opportunistic predation by either pirates or rival states at the international level. Moreover, while private military mobilization was incrementally raising violence interdependence within the empire, analogous processes had yet to manifest themselves throughout the East Asian ecumene. Despite the Qing Dynasty's internal decline, the Celestial Empire over which it presided remained the economic hub, military giant, and political apex of the region. For the moment at least, China's primacy remained beyond challenge, and its diplomatic practices of tribute trade and investiture continued to function effectively. In the absence of systemic ideological challenges or destabilizing changes in the Sinosphere's material base, a centuries-old international order continued to prevail, even as the system's contemporary custodians began to falter in their management of their own internal challenges.

Two vignettes, drawn from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, illustrate the Sinosphere's resilience and its vulnerability at century's end. The first concerns China's successful management of a localized succession conflict within her southern tributary of Annam (Vietnam). Between the period 1788-1790, the Qing emperor effectively used a combination of military intervention and his powers of

investiture to manage and ultimately resolve a conflict between the incumbent king of Vietnam and a pretender to the throne.<sup>542</sup> Throughout the conflict, Qing policy oscillated between the two contenders. Initially, China provided refuge to the fleeing incumbent and sent an expeditionary force to help restore him to the throne.<sup>543</sup> Later, this policy was reversed, with the emperor deciding that the incumbent had indeed lost the Mandate of Heaven, and that it was necessary to use his powers of investiture to legitimize the pretender's succession to the throne.<sup>544</sup> What is important about this anecdote is less the outcome of the conflict itself, and more the fact that all parties to the dispute openly acknowledged China's suzerainty and powers of investiture and intervention as legitimate.<sup>545</sup> What is more, in the aftermath of the dispute, Vietnam's tributary missions to China dramatically increased, with the ceremonial and diplomatic bonds between suzerain and vassal actually intensifying rather than diminishing over subsequent decades, even as the Qing Dynasty grew weaker rather than stronger over time.<sup>546</sup>

The second vignette concerns the Chinese emperor's rejection of a foreign visitor's entreaties to establish trading relations with the Celestial Empire in 1817. The stranger had travelled from a distant land, and from a remote part of the world well beyond the Sinosphere that had recently been embroiled in war and revolution. Consequently, while he brought goods from his homeland in apparent observance of the requirements of tributary diplomacy, he remained unfamiliar with the rituals expected of a visiting vassal, and stubbornly refused to perform the kowtow at the imperial court. In light of this failure to observe the appropriate norms of the

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<sup>542</sup>The following vignette is taken from Lam, 'Intervention versus Tribute in Sino-Vietnamese Relations', pp. 165-179 *passim*.

<sup>543</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 169.

<sup>544</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>545</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>546</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

Sinosphere, the emperor unsurprisingly refused either to meet with the visitor, or to grant him the trading privileges afforded to more loyal vassals. The emperor's subsequent reprimand to the visitor's distant sovereign, communicated by imperial edict and indicative of the supreme confidence worthy of the Son of Heaven, is worth quoting directly: 'You live at such a great distance from the Middle Kingdom that these Embassies must cause you considerable inconvenience. Your envoys, moreover, are wholly ignorant of Chinese ceremonial procedure, and the bickering which follows their arrival is highly displeasing to my ear. My dynasty attaches no value to products from abroad; your nation's cunningly wrought and strange wares do not appeal to me in the least, nor do they interest me. For the future, O King, if you will keep your subjects in order and strengthen your national defences, I shall hold you in high esteem, notwithstanding your remoteness. Henceforth, pray do not trouble to dispatch missions all this distance; they are merely a waste of time and have their journey for nothing. If you loyally accept our sovereignty and show dutiful submission, there is really no need for these yearly appearances at our Court to prove that you are indeed our vassal. We issue this mandate to the end that you may perpetually comply therewith.'<sup>547</sup> In the face of this intransigence, Lord Amherst and the other representatives of the British East India Company had no choice but to withdraw. The next time the British sought trading privileges from the Celestial Empire, they would prove less easy to rebuff.

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<sup>547</sup> Chinese imperial edict, quoted in James M. McCutcheon. "'Tremblingly Obey': British and Other Western Response to China and the Chinese Kowtow." *Historian* 33, no. 4 (1971), pp. 570-571.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### HEAVENLY KINGDOM, IMPERIAL NEMESIS – THE TAIPING REBELLION AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE SINOSPHERE

‘Both in Heaven and on earth is the Heavenly Kingdom of the Divine Father. Do not imagine that it refers solely to the Heavenly Kingdom in Heaven. Thus the Great Elder Brother formerly issued an edict foretelling the coming of the Heavenly Kingdom soon, meaning that the Heavenly Kingdom would come into being on earth. Today the Heavenly Father and the Heavenly Elder Brother descend into the world to establish the Heavenly Kingdom...’<sup>548</sup>

#### **Introduction**

As it entered the nineteenth century, the Sinosphere superficially presented as a robust international order. While the Qing Dynasty was showing signs of deterioration, China remained East Asia’s undisputed hegemon. Internally, the imperial household had succeeded in suppressing various internal rebellions by 1813, while internationally the British East India Company’s entreaties to secure greater trading privileges with China had also been easily rebuffed. In spite of accelerating institutional decay and mounting popular disaffection with the ruling dynasty, the Manchus retained sufficient reserves of authoritative and coercive power to suppress or repel their diverse rebel and ‘barbarian’ antagonists, while also securing broad international adherence to the prevailing norms and practices of the East Asian suzerain state system. Critically, in

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<sup>548</sup>Hong Xiuquang, leader of the Taiping rebellion and self-proclaimed younger brother of Christ, cited in Wakeman Jr, *Strangers at the Gate*, p. 125. The terms ‘Heavenly Father’ and ‘Elder Brother’ respectively refer to the Christian God and to Jesus Christ.

the century's opening decades, the challenges of internal rebellion and foreign harassment could also be managed as distinct and separate threats, having no real bearing on one another. Unfortunately, the discrete character of China's various internal and external challenges would not endure. Instead, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the empire's resources were stretched almost to breaking point as sectarian rebellion and external predation catastrophically converged. From a population of approximately 410 million in 1850, China's population is estimated to have fallen to approximately 350 million by the time the last of the mid-century rebellions was finally suppressed in 1873.<sup>549</sup> Beyond the enormous physical and human toll inflicted by these conflicts, their chief institutional legacy was to further accelerate the cascading downwards of military and fiscal power to regional strongmen, fatally compromising the dynasty's subsequent 'self-strengthening' program of defensive modernization.<sup>550</sup> More broadly still, the confluence of millenarian rebellion and Western encroachment terminally destabilized the normative foundations of the Sinosphere, contributing to its subsequent obliteration and absorption into an international society of sovereign states.

This chapter continues the narrative of systemic decay, decline and dissolution begun in chapter six, and focuses predominantly on the concatenation of mid-nineteenth century crises that effectively gutted the imperial core of the Sinosphere. Section one sketches the broad nature of the Western threat to the Sinosphere, denoting the conjunction of normative and material transformations that enabled Western powers to forcibly open China to increased foreign trade from the Opium War (1839-1842) onwards. Sections two, three and four respectively focus on the origins, evolution and subsequent suppression of the Taiping rebellion, the most

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<sup>549</sup>Figures cited in Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 216.

<sup>550</sup>On this point, see for example James E. Sheridan. *China in Disintegration - the Republican Era in Chinese History, 1912-1949*. New York: The Free Press, 1975, p. 18.



protracted, damaging and ideologically subversive of the revolts that shook the Qing Dynasty in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Section five discusses the systemic consequences of China's mid-century crisis, detailing the delegitimation, corrosion and breakdown of China's system of tributary diplomacy from the 1860s onwards. The discussion concludes with a brief consideration of religious rebellions in China and Korea (its erstwhile tributary) at century's end. Paradoxically, these religious rebellions arose in resistance to the encroaching Western-dominated system of states, but also served as the unintended midwives of nationalism in both countries, thereby indirectly aiding the state system's long-term consolidation in the East Asian region.

## **7.1 Barbarians at the Gates – Opium, Gunboats and the Cross in the Opening Phase of Western Encroachment into the Sinosphere**

### **7.1.1 The Advent of Gunboat Diplomacy and the Growth of Violence Interdependence in East Asia**

In the late eighteenth century, a series of interlocking transformations began to unfurl in the Atlantic state system. These transformations, encompassing revolutionary changes in modes of political legitimation, wealth accumulation, and state administration, would within a century propel the Western world to a historically unprecedented position of global dominance. The popular sovereignty revolution, the industrial revolution, and the nineteenth century revolution in state power together bequeathed a radically new type of state-society complex in the form of the modern nation-state. From the 1850s onward, the emerging nation-states of North-Western Europe proved capable of concentrating and mobilizing authoritative and coercive

power resources to a degree unmatched either by the Absolutist monarchies that preceded them, or by the decaying agrarian empires with which they were by then grappling for control of Eurasia. This quantum leap in social power eventually opened up a huge asymmetry of power between Western and non-Western powers, enabling the forcible incorporation of the world into a single international system by 1900. The nature of these interlocking revolutions and their global geopolitical consequences will be elaborated in greater detail in later chapters. For now it is sufficient to note that the revolutionary changes that would drive the West's global ascendancy were still in their early stages in the first half of the nineteenth century. Consequently, while Europeans were capable of militarily defeating the Chinese by the 1840s, neither the true extent of their growing supremacy nor the revolutionary implications of this new power imbalance were fully apparent at the time, either to the Europeans or to the Chinese.

In the East Asian theatre, the British East India Company's introduction of iron steam-ships provided the metaphorical forceps the British needed to pry China open to foreign trade. As I have noted in chapter six, China was suffering from both institutional decay and growing ideological opposition to Manchu rule (manifesting itself in the form of peasant sectarian rebellions) towards the end of the Qianlong emperor's reign. Additionally, processes of domestic military and fiscal decentralization were already underway. Unlike Latin Christendom at a similar stage of decay, however, systemic increases in violence interdependence throughout East Asia were limited up to 1800, owing in no small part to the lack of continuing military innovations emanating from the Sinosphere's Chinese core. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, this situation began to change with the accelerating intrusion of Western commercial pressures along China's south-eastern maritime provinces. Westerners had maintained a continuous commercial presence in the region

that dated back to the sixteenth century.<sup>551</sup> However, their demands for increased access to Chinese markets had previously been moderated, both by their lack of desired commodities (excepting precious metals) with which to trade in exchange for Chinese goods, and also by their inability to compel Chinese acquiescence to greater trading privileges through force of arms. China was at this stage both too economically self-sufficient to be tempted and too militarily strong to be coerced into granting increased trading privileges to the ‘red-haired barbarians.’

In the years leading up to the Opium War, however, neither of the above conditions continued to obtain. Within Britain itself, the growing prosperity begotten by the industrial revolution led to an increase in demand for precious commodities from China, most particularly Chinese tea. Given China’s lack of interest in British textiles or manufactures, Chinese tea could only be paid for with scarce precious metals such as gold and silver. For the British, this unhappy situation began to improve after 1820, as growing Chinese demand for opium provided them with a tradeable bulk commodity that could profitably be exchanged for Chinese tea, thereby staunching the eastern flow of Britain’s bullion reserves.<sup>552</sup> From this point onwards, a triangular trade flourished between India, China, and Britain – opium was cultivated on the East India Company’s (EIC’s) Indian plantations, to then be exchanged for Chinese tea, which was then exported onwards to Britain.<sup>553</sup> Britain’s gains from the opium trade were substantial. Not only did the trade promise to resolve Britain’s

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<sup>551</sup>The Portuguese were the first Westerners to arrive in China in 1514. Apparently being regarded by the Chinese authorities as ‘a harmless sort of people’, they were granted permission to establish the first Western trading post in China in Macao in 1557. See Mark Mancall. *China at the Center - 300 Years of Foreign Policy*. New York: The Free Press, 1984, pp. 72-73.

<sup>552</sup>On the rapid growth in Chinese demand for opium from the 1820s onwards and its massively deleterious impact on China’s world balance of payments, see Frederic Wakeman Jr. "The Canton Trade and the Opium War." In *The Cambridge History of China Volume 10 - Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 163-212. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. See specifically pp. 172-173.

<sup>553</sup>On this point, see Daniel R. Headrick. *The Tools of Empire - Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 44.

perennial trade deficit with China, but opium also yielded one seventh of the total revenue of British India in the nineteenth century, in effect serving as a crucial fiscal strut propping up the consolidation and subsequent expansion of the sub-continental core of Britain's overseas empire.<sup>554</sup> For the Chinese, by contrast, the opium trade exacerbated social disorder in the Maritime Provinces, as well as further stimulating the growth of criminal and potentially subversive elements such as the Triads and other Han Chinese secret societies. Chinese officials also correctly blamed the opium trade on China's rising outflows of silver. Thanks to China's bi-metallic currency system, in which peasants' land taxes were paid in copper but assessed and transmitted to the central government in silver, the rising relative value of silver to copper resulted in an increase in peasants' real tax burden without yielding any compensatory increase in the central state's income.<sup>555</sup> In the minds of Chinese officialdom, the opium trade was thus linked via its mediation through the imperial fiscal system to growing popular distress and disaffection with the government, a perception that contributed along with the trade's more obvious evils to the government's decision to ban the trade and consumption of opium in 1836.<sup>556</sup>

In light of the great commercial and political importance of the opium trade to Britain's expanding empire, the Chinese opium ban was always likely to introduce further friction into an already fraught Sino-British relationship. Given Britain's longstanding ambitions to circumvent China's extensive restrictions on trade, and given also China's countervailing determination to minimize foreign contacts through

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<sup>554</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>555</sup>Wakeman Jr, 'Canton Trade and the Opium War', p. 178.

<sup>556</sup>Wakeman notes that were purely domestic reasons for the changing ratio of exchange between silver and copper, including the declining production of the Yunnanese copper mines and the central government's subsequent decision to circumvent this problem by minting more coins and thus debasing the currency. He nevertheless emphasizes that the opium trade's drain on Chinese silver reserves remained the *perceived* cause of the problems, thus contributing to the government's decision to ban the opium trade. *Ibid.*, p. pp. 178-179.

a strict enforcement of those very same restrictions, the subsequent slide towards war was perhaps inevitable. However, while both sides were from the outset confident of victory, neither the British nor the Chinese could possibly have anticipated the revolutionary repercussions that would flow from China's eventual defeat in 1842. The course of the Opium War itself has been explored in numerous studies, its precise details need not detain us here.<sup>557</sup> What is relevant to this inquiry is a brief consideration of the exact causes of China's defeat, which lay primarily in Western technological innovations that broke the military deadlock that had formerly confined the Western trading presence to the coastal enclave of Canton.

From the first military revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the countries of Western Europe had acquired an unrivalled advantage in naval warfare through their development of broadside-firing battleships. However, while this growing naval supremacy enabled Western Europeans to gradually establish control over strategic sea-lanes, up until the nineteenth century their colonial presence in the Old World was largely restricted to networks of fortified coastal enclaves dispersed across the Afro-Eurasian littoral.<sup>558</sup> European naval power was not matched by European land power sufficient to overawe robust imperial mega-states such as China. Given Europeans' historic inability to project military power into the Eurasian interior, the Chinese could for a long time regard them as a manageable irritant on a par with Japanese pirates, rather than perceiving them as a serious strategic threat.

This longstanding military deadlock collapsed with the British East India Company's introduction of compartmentalized iron steamships into Chinese littoral waters in 1840. Whereas deep-draught sailing ships were restricted to coastal

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<sup>557</sup>Although for an interesting interpretation of the Opium War as merely the first episode of a single protracted inter-systemic conflict (the Twenty-One Years' War) between the Empire and an expanding world-capitalist Oikoumene led by the United Kingdom, see Mancall, *China at the Center*, pp. 113-118.

<sup>558</sup>On this point, see William R. Thompson. "The Military Superiority Thesis and the Ascendancy of Western Eurasia in the World System." *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999), pp. 147-148.

harassment of Chinese forces, shallow-draught steamships such as the *Nemesis* were capable of navigating China's complex network of estuaries and shallow channels, and were also capable of snaking up its riverine arteries deep into the Chinese interior.<sup>559</sup> This capability, together with the *Nemesis*' complement of mobile cannons, enabled her to destroy Canton's defending junks and forts at will in the opening stages of the conflict.<sup>560</sup> More fundamentally, the newly acquired ability to traverse China's internal river systems enabled the British to score the decisive victory of the conflict. In June 1842, the British fleet entered the Yangtze River, destined for the Manchu garrison town of Chinkiang, a city lying at the intersection of the Yangtze and the Grand Canal.<sup>561</sup> Given that the Grand Canal was the principal north-south trade route along which rice was transported from the southern rice-bowl provinces to the capital of Peking, the seizure of Chinkiang effectively cut the Chinese empire in half, thus compelling the Chinese to sue for peace in July.<sup>562</sup>

The introduction of the gunboat into European colonial warfare increased violence interdependence within East Asia in a manner that fundamentally altered the Sinosphere's underlying material foundations. Prior to the First Opium War, a gigantic agrarian gunpowder empire had dominated the East Asian security environment, its rulers' focus fixed principally on deterring land-based threats emanating from the nomadic northern steppe. After the First Opium War, however, the Sinosphere's strategic centre of gravity began to shift decisively away from the northern steppe, and towards the Western Pacific. Following the forced opening of China to foreign trade in 1842, the gunboat featured conspicuously in subsequent Western campaigns to secure commercial and political dominance in the region. The arrival of Commodore Perry's

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<sup>559</sup>Headrick, *The Tools of Empire*, p. 50

<sup>560</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>561</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>562</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

ships in Japan in 1853, the Second Opium War (1856-1860), the Second and Third Anglo-Burmese Wars (1852-1853 and 1885), and the French conquests of Tonkin (1873-1874) and Annam (1883) each testified to the novel power projection capacities rapidly accruing to the Western maritime powers as a result of industrialization.<sup>563</sup> From mid century onwards, the Western powers' abilities to project power globally would be further enhanced due to technological innovations (e.g. the telegraph), improved knowledge systems (e.g. improved coastal mapping techniques), and organizational adaptations (e.g. the Royal Navy's development of a trans-continental network of coaling stations).<sup>564</sup> These revolutionary changes guaranteed that the strategic initiative thus irretrievably slipped away from China after the First Opium War. More crucially still, they delivered regional preponderance towards a precocious host of 'barbarian' maritime powers, whose origins from beyond the Sinosphere left them unfamiliar with and contemptuous of the region's diplomatic norms and rituals. Beyond the immediate material dislocation induced by the West's maritime ascendancy, it would be this attitude of dismissive disregard for the Sinosphere's constitutional norms that would eventually prove most subversive to the maintenance of the established East Asian international order.

### 7.1.2 Civilizations Clashing, Cosmologies Colliding - The Ideological Impact of China's Defeat in the First Opium War

Despite its far-reaching impact, the Treaty of Nanjing, which formally resolved the First Opium War in August 1842, contained continuities with past diplomatic practice for both the British and the Chinese negotiators. In negotiating an end to the

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<sup>563</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>564</sup>Jeremy Black. 'War and International Relations', p. 131.

conflict, China agreed to the opening up of foreign trade in five treaty ports, and additionally ceded to Britain the barren island of Hong Kong in perpetuity.<sup>565</sup> The key treaty provisions governing the new arrangements included: (1) extra-territoriality (foreign consular jurisdiction over foreign nationals); (2) an indemnity; (3) a moderate tariff and direct foreign contact with Chinese customs collectors; (4) most-favoured-nation treatment; and (5) freedom of trade with all comers.<sup>566</sup> For the British, the powers of extra-territorial jurisdiction extracted from the Chinese paralleled similar concessions previously granted to Westerners in both the Ottoman Empire and also in the Muslim states of North Africa.<sup>567</sup> The British regarded extra-territorial application of British law as essential in non-Western states, both to grant traders the commercial certainty provided under British contract and property law, and also to protect Westerners from the alleged arbitrariness and cruelty of indigenous criminal legal codes.<sup>568</sup> Other concessions, ranging from the standardization of China's tariff regime through to the application of most-favoured-nation provisions, admittedly reflected Britain's material interests as the world's leading trading nation and sole industrial power. At the same time, however, these concessions also reflected a deeper conviction in the ameliorative influence of free trade, conceived not merely as an engine of prosperity and peace, but also as a contributor to the moral elevation of nations as well.<sup>569</sup>

Equally, for the Chinese, the concessions contained in the Treaty of Nanjing were perceived as far from revolutionary. On the contrary, these concessions for the most part echoed earlier arrangements made with other 'barbarians' aggressively

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<sup>565</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 201.

<sup>566</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>567</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>568</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>569</sup>On Europeans' identification of freedom of trade as a constitutive marker of 'civilized' countries, see Gerritt Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 138.



seeking access to Chinese markets, as demonstrated for example in the concessions granted to the Central Asian khanate of Kokand at the conclusion of hostilities along China's East Turkestan border in 1835.<sup>570</sup> From a Western (or more specifically, Westphalian) perspective, the granting of extra-territorial jurisdiction to foreigners marked a serious dilution of a host state's domestic sovereignty, potentially signifying its *de facto* subordination to the imperatives of contracting states. Chinese officials by contrast deemed it preferable for foreigners to govern and police themselves within clearly demarcated enclaves, having previously applied a similar regime to resident Arab traders as far back as the thirteenth century.<sup>571</sup> In the same vein, the most-favoured-nation provision was interpreted not as a capitulation to Western demands, but rather as a gesture of imperial benevolence and munificence fully in keeping with well-established practices of 'barbarian management.'<sup>572</sup> As the traditional cultural and economic centre of civilization within the region, the Chinese had historically acquired a great deal of experience in pacifying and subduing less developed neighbouring polities through the granting of selective trading concessions. Such concessions had in the past reliably mollified foreigners, who had been generally content to reciprocate by conforming to the mandatory rituals of obeisance expected by the Chinese emperor in exchange for his generosity.<sup>573</sup> In light of this past experience, the imperial court's failure to properly apprehend the full import of the West's initial encroachments – while lamentable – is nevertheless understandable.

Unfortunately for the imperial household, while the Chinese took the Treaty of Nanjing to represent a definitive settlement of the Western barbarian question, the

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<sup>570</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 198.

<sup>571</sup>Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, p. 200. Abu-Lughod notes that regular commercial exchanges were occurring between the Arabs and the Chinese as far back as the eighth century CE, and cites documents indicating China's management of a 'treaty port' system involving the supervision of substantial resident Arab commercial settlements by the thirteenth century.

<sup>572</sup>Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, p. 201.

<sup>573</sup>*Ibid.*

Westerners conversely regarded the Treaty as a baseline for continuing negotiations, a legal *point d'appui* which could subsequently be used to leverage more generous trading concessions from the Chinese.<sup>574</sup> Underlying this mutual misperception was a far more radical dissonance in the respective world-views informing Western and Chinese conceptions of international order. Recapitulating briefly, the Sinosphere was hierarchical in its conception, moral in its essential character, and deliberately flexible and ambiguous with respect to its key mechanisms of operation. It was hierarchical, inasmuch as the Son of Heaven presided over the cosmic and social order, and was thus placed in a position of explicit superiority and authority in relation to other polities. It was moral, in that the emperor was bound to vassal states through asymmetric bonds of benevolence and obedience that were conceived in explicitly moral and familial terms. And it was deliberately flexible and ambiguous, in that the tribute trade system allowed the emperor to buy off barbarians when China was weak, and control or limit their access to Chinese markets when China was strong, at all times overlaying the barbarians' commercial activities with rituals of obeisance that symbolically affirmed a Sino-centric cosmic and political order.<sup>575</sup>

Conversely, Western conceptions of international order were egalitarian in their conception, legal in their essential character, and conceived in such a way as to limit ambiguity and codify contracting parties' relationships as precisely as possible.<sup>576</sup> Conceptually, Western international law from the late eighteenth century onwards increasingly emphasized notions of sovereign equality, explicitly

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<sup>574</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>575</sup>Horowitz additionally notes that the tributary character of East Asian diplomacy, in which tributaries frequently received larger gifts than they themselves gave to their nominal suzerains, lent tributary diplomacy open to differing interpretations about the meaning of specific transactions by the respective parties. This arguably endowed it with a constructive ambiguity and flexibility lacking in the more rigidly legalistic mode of Western diplomacy that succeeded it. See Richard S. Horowitz. "International Law and State Transformation in China, Siam and the Ottoman Empire During the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of World History* 15, no. 4 (2004), p. 478.

<sup>576</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 450-452.

contradicting the hierarchical assumptions upon which international order was based in East Asia.<sup>577</sup> In place of the paternal moralism characteristic of East Asian diplomacy, Westerners conceived international relationships as being mediated through a depersonalized, formal, rationalized corpus of international law.<sup>578</sup> Finally, rather than abiding by the flexibility and ambiguity that marked the Sinosphere's system of tributary trade, Westerners demanded that contracting parties' rights be explicitly codified in treaty form.<sup>579</sup> To the extent that scope existed for a revision of parties' rights and responsibilities under the Western conception of international order, it could be secured only through a renegotiation of said treaties, which was in turn frequently driven by the stronger party's insistence and the weaker party's acquiescence.

From a Chinese perspective, the Western conception of international order was therefore inherently subversive and even blasphemous, denying as it did the hierarchical essence of diplomatic practice in the Sinosphere, and also calling into question the emperor's status as the Son of Heaven. Moreover, while the tribute trade system could accommodate periodic declines in Chinese military power *vis-à-vis* culturally backward barbarians, it could only do so in circumstances where foreigners were still willing to at least publicly acquiesce to the symbolic re-affirmation of the broad cosmology underpinning imperial authority. In the face of Western intransigence, by contrast, traditional Chinese mechanisms of accommodation and appeasement were rendered ineffective. Making matters worse still, the Western emphasis on sovereign equality soon proved highly selective in its application to non-European polities. Both the Enlightenment and the French and American revolutions had worked to destabilize the Absolutist nexus between cosmos and polis, and had

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<sup>577</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 452.

<sup>578</sup>On this point, see generally Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>579</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

consequently contributed to the growth of a more secularized and egalitarian international legal system within the West in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Paradoxically, however, from 1800 onwards, the West's collective ascendancy over Asia and Africa was increasingly reflected in the formulation of a 'standard of civilization' that explicitly posited the superiority of Christian over non-Christian nations, and provided legal justification for the subordination of 'barbaric' and 'savage' nations to Western hegemony.<sup>580</sup> Over the course of the nineteenth century, religion would eventually be supplemented and then ultimately surpassed by race as the primary lens through which civilizational difference was conceptualized in the West. The examples of Japan and Siam also demonstrate that not all polities in the Sinosphere were destined for foreign subjugation, and that the 'standard of civilization' could be enabling as well as constraining for those polities that successfully undertook rapid modernization in the face of the Western threat. Nevertheless, the basic reality remains that the First Opium War marked the intrusion of a new conception of international order into the Sinosphere, one that recoded the classic distinction between civilized and barbarian states, and thereby radically inverted the political and cosmic hierarchy upon which international order in East Asia had hitherto been based.

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<sup>580</sup>Horowitz, 'International Law and State Transformation', pp. 452-453. Interestingly, Horowitz notes that the secular character of Western international law in the nineteenth century should not be overstated, going so far as to argue that the 'standard of civilization' was strongly associated with a hierarchical ordering of 'civilized' Christian over 'non-civilized' non-Christian countries. On the 'standard of civilization' more generally as a feature of European international society in its relations with the colonial and semi-colonial worlds in the nineteenth century, see generally Gong. *The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society*.

## **7.2 The Western Encroachment, Evangelical Christianity, and the Birth of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Movement**

### **7.2.1. The Taiping Rebellion – The Enabling Context**

Defeat in war has served as a catalyst for domestic upheaval in many instances throughout history, and China in the years following the First Opium War proved to be no exception to this generalization. Given the foreign character of the Manchu government, the emperor's capitulation to Western demands at Nanjing inevitably exacerbated Han resentments towards the ruling dynasty, further nurturing Ming restorationist sentiment among China's heterodox criminal and sectarian networks. The Manchus' defeat in the Opium War, coupled with continuing governmental decay and rising criminality and social unrest in China's coastal provinces, also added to the widespread perception that the dynasty had lost the Mandate of Heaven, and was set on a course of irreversible decline.<sup>581</sup> Both anti-Manchu sentiment and the belief that the government had lost its Heavenly Mandate constituted iterations of familiar themes in Chinese history, which had reliably recurred during previous cycles of dynastic decline. But in the wake of the Opium War, the government's loss of prestige was compounded by the intrusion of a set of beliefs that fundamentally challenged the cosmology sustaining the Sinosphere as an international order. The official dimension of this challenge, in the form of the 'standard of civilization' underpinning the system of unequal treaties, has already been discussed. However, the encroachment of Western diplomatic norms was accompanied also by a more diffuse and unofficial

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<sup>581</sup>On the growth of popular xenophobia in Canton after the First Opium War and its role as a harbinger of future revolutionary anti-Manchu sentiment, see Wakeman Jr, *Strangers at the Gate*, pp. 77-78.

challenge to the Sinosphere's integrity, in the growth of Christian missionary activity following the Opium War.

While the Treaty of Nanjing contained no explicit provisions guaranteeing Western missionaries rights to proselytize throughout China, the treaty provisions relating to extra-territoriality nevertheless indirectly boosted the missionary effort.<sup>582</sup> This is because these provisions afforded missionaries the necessary legal protection to proselytize within a country in which Christianity had been officially proscribed since 1724 as a heterodox and potentially subversive foreign doctrine.<sup>583</sup> Despite the missionaries' best efforts, the bulk of the Chinese population would for a range of reasons eventually prove impervious to the Christian message. Nevertheless, Chinese officialdom's longstanding hostility towards Christianity would soon be vindicated, for the missionary movement introduced to southern China a set of ideas that radically challenged Confucian orthodoxy. These ideas will only be mentioned here in passing, for it was only once they were adapted and indigenized by Chinese converts that they truly acquired their revolutionary character. Stated briefly, whereas Confucianism projected an unreservedly hierarchical and familial conception of social order, Christianity conversely emphasized the equality of all humans under the Heavenly Father, and provided only qualified and ambiguous justification for political and economic inequalities in the earthly world.<sup>584</sup> Similarly, whereas imperial state ideology conflated the temporal and spiritual realms, Christianity expressly emphasized their distinct character, advancing a transcendent rather than an immanent

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<sup>582</sup>On this point, see Paul A. Cohen. "Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900." In *The Cambridge History of China Volume 10 - Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 543-90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. See specifically p. 550.

<sup>583</sup>*Ibid*, p. 563.

<sup>584</sup>On this point, see Philip A. Kuhn. "The Taiping Rebellion." In *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 264-317. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. See specifically p. 277.

conception of the divine.<sup>585</sup> Finally, whereas Confucian orthodoxy openly deified the emperor as the Son of Heaven, Christianity reserved divine status for the Holy Trinity, and condemned all attempts to deify earthly rulers as idolatry.<sup>586</sup>

### 7.2.2 Hong Xiuquan and the Origins of the Taiping Ideology

The subversive nature of Christianity's key tenets antagonized both Chinese state officials and the gentry elite, who stoked popular xenophobia and anti-Christian superstitions in a largely successful effort to staunch the religion's spread among the peasantry.<sup>587</sup> Nonetheless, given both the fervour of the foreign missionaries and their immunity from official prosecution, the conversion of some Chinese was unavoidable. One of these converts was Hong Xiuquan, a failed candidate for the imperial bureaucracy who would go on to become the chief prophet and supreme leader of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement. Hong's first indirect exposure to Christianity came in 1836, when he came into possession of a pamphlet written by another Chinese convert entitled *Good Works to Admonish the Age*.<sup>588</sup> A confusing synthesis of Bible extracts interspersed with the author's own commentary on contemporary Chinese society, *Good Works* provided Hong with an at best distorted and idiosyncratic introduction to Christian theology, and was in any case quickly filed away and ignored

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<sup>585</sup>See for example Joseph R. Levenson. "Confucian and Taiping "Heaven": The Political Implications of Clashing Religions." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4, no. 4 (1962), p. 440.

<sup>586</sup>On the contrast between Confucian and Taiping Christian political theologies, see *Ibid.*, pp. 445-446.

<sup>587</sup>The exceptionally dehumanizing and often highly salacious character of the anti-Christian propaganda disseminated by the gentry in the late Qing period is described in Cohen, 'Christian Missions and Their Impact', pp. 569-570. To cite but one bizarre but creative accusation levelled at Christians: 'Fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers, behave licentiously with one another, calling it 'the joining of the vital forces'. They say, moreover, that if such things are not done, fathers and sons, as well as brothers, will become mutually estranged...hard as it may to believe, some of our Chinese people also follow their religion [Christianity]. Are they not really worse than beasts?' Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 570.

<sup>588</sup>Jonathan D. Spence. *God's Chinese Son - the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 30.

by the recipient after a cursory perusal.<sup>589</sup> Following his third failure to secure entry into the imperial bureaucracy the following year, Hong became delirious and suffered a mental breakdown. During this time, he experienced a series of visions, including one in which his internal organs were removed by demons and replaced with new ones, another in which he was introduced to a golden-bearded man who was identified as his father, and yet another in which Hong fought demons alongside a heavenly elder brother.<sup>590</sup> Upon Hong's fourth failure to pass the imperial exams in 1843, he revisited the long-neglected *Good Works* pamphlet, after which he reinterpreted his earlier visions as a divine revelation calling on him to overthrow the Manchus and establish the Christian God's Heavenly Kingdom on earth. In 1847, Hong further clarified his vision through a brief period of religious instruction under an American Protestant missionary based in Canton. By this stage, however, the essential elements of the Taiping ideology, a hybrid combination of Protestant evangelical Christianity and Chinese folk millenarianism, had already been consolidated. In abbreviated form, its key features are presented below.

Both Taiping adherents and their Confucian detractors identified the Taiping movement as being essentially Christian in its overall character. This characterization was far from unwarranted, given that Protestant Christian texts and motifs formed the foundation and original source material for much of Hong Xiuquan's vision. In keeping with mainstream Christian teaching, Hong preached that there was only one God, a Heavenly Father who had sent his son Jesus Christ into the world to redeem the sins of mankind. Hong's God was also the God of the Ten Commandments, the self-sufficient moral and legal code to which God's followers were to adhere if they

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<sup>589</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>590</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 47-50.



wished to enter into paradise.<sup>591</sup> The rite of baptism, strict observation of the Sabbath, the rejection of Confucian hierarchy in favour of an emphasis on humans' equality before God, and an uncompromising repudiation of idolatry were all characteristics of the Taiping faith that tied it back to its Protestant missionary origins.<sup>592</sup> Importantly, however, the Taiping faith also placed disproportionate emphasis on the more Manichean and apocalyptic themes of evangelical Protestantism. Thus, the Sinologist Eugene Boardman writes that the '[the] gentler features of the Christian faith seem to have been entirely absent...' from the Taiping faith.<sup>593</sup> This is perhaps unsurprising given that *Good Words*, Hong's original introduction to Christianity, began with the story of Adam and Eve's fall from grace and concluded with graphic descriptions of the Last Judgment, according little if any attention to Christ's Sermon on the Mount.<sup>594</sup> However, it is also demonstrative of the fact that the Taiping revelation took shape in an environment in which expectations of dynastic decline were already rife among the Han majority, and in which millenarian visions of apocalypse and redemption formed an indelible part of China's spiritual landscape.

For all of its Christian influences, the Taiping faith was emphatically hybrid in its construction, constituting an indigenization of Christianity that appeared both subversive to orthodox Confucian Chinese and heretical to mainstream Western Christians. By far the most straightforwardly subversive element of Hong's revelation was his condemnation of the imperial neo-Confucian ideology as idolatrous in its elevation of the emperor to divine status.<sup>595</sup> Like many Han Chinese, Hong harboured

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<sup>591</sup>On the traditional Christian components of Taiping religious beliefs and practices, see Eugene P. Boardman. "Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion." *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1951), p. 123.

<sup>592</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>593</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>594</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>595</sup>On this point, Thomas H. Reilly. *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom - Rebellion and the Blasphemy of Empire*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004, pp. 92-94.

an abiding antipathy for the Manchus. However, his absorption of the Christian conception of an anthropomorphized Heavenly Father provided Hong with a powerful new rationale for challenging the very foundation of the imperial office itself. In openly opposing the deification of the Chinese emperor, Hong conformed to the tenets of mainstream Christianity, although his calls to overthrow the reigning dynasty departed from the public message of the Protestant missionary movement. However, in religiously justifying his revolutionary political program to his followers, Hong radically departed from mainstream Christianity. In an unconscious reflection of the Confucian orthodoxy that he so resolutely opposed, Hong fundamentally misinterpreted the Christian notion of the Heavenly Kingdom. Whereas Christianity stressed the distinctiveness of the City of Man and the City of God, Hong echoed the holistic conflation of the spiritual with the temporal that was characteristic of Confucian orthodoxy, conceiving the Heavenly Kingdom as being both earthly and social as well as ethereal and spiritual in nature.<sup>596</sup> In accounting for contemporary China's perceived moral and political decline, Hong argued that the Chinese had abandoned their ancient worship of a single and all-powerful God, and that emperors from the Qin Dynasty onwards had perpetuated China's continuing estrangement from God by claiming the title of Son of Heaven.<sup>597</sup> As the second son of the Heavenly Father and the younger brother of Jesus Christ, it was Hong's divine mission to overthrow the Manchu dynasty in an apocalyptic war between the children of light and the children of darkness, after which he would then establish God's Heavenly Kingdom on earth.<sup>598</sup> While he abjured claims to personal divinity in keeping with Christian orthodoxy, Hong thus located himself within the Heavenly family. More

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<sup>596</sup>On this point, see specifically Philip A. Kuhn. "Origins of the Taiping Vision: Cross-Cultural Dimensions of a Chinese Rebellion." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19, no. 3 (1977), p. 356.

<sup>597</sup>Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, p. 93.

<sup>598</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 110-113.

fundamentally, he appropriated the most eschatological themes of Christianity and situated them within traditional Chinese narratives of dynastic decline, creating a hybrid faith that enjoined fanatical, total armed opposition not merely to the Manchu dynasty, but to the entire Confucian social order itself.<sup>599</sup>

### 7.2.3 The Society of God Worshippers and the Social Origins of the Taiping Rebellion

Hong was first exposed to Christianity while visiting Guangdong's capital of Canton. This is unsurprising, given that Canton was at the time the focal point for Western trade with China, and was thus the primary conduit for enabling Sino-Western religious and cultural exchange. Nevertheless, it was in Guangdong's hinterland, in the mountainous backwaters of the neighbouring province of Guangxi, where the Taiping religion first found popular purchase. Given the more general failure of Christianity to win Chinese converts, a consideration of the specific constellation of social conditions that facilitated the growth of the Taiping movement in Guangxi is essential to an understanding of the course and dynamics of the subsequent rebellion.

In many respects, the social problems afflicting Guangxi in the aftermath of the First Opium War were far from exceptional, but rather reflected the more general malaise then afflicting the empire. Like many other provinces, Guangxi was experiencing growing social unrest and criminality as a result of a range of generic structural pressures, including over-population, growing peasant landlessness and vagrancy, an increasingly regressive taxation system, and a corrupt and moribund

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<sup>599</sup>Franz Michael. *The Taiping Rebellion, History and Documents - Volume I: History*. University of Washington Press: Seattle, 1966, p. 4. Michael goes so far as to characterize the Taiping movement as totalitarian in its aspirations to completely remake Chinese society, a point to which I will return in greater detail below.

local bureaucracy.<sup>600</sup> In the face of rising banditry and an increase in conflict over dwindling land resources, the region had also witnessed the growth of local gentry-led defence units and militias, even as the more desperate or opportunistic of the peasantry simultaneously threw their lot in with the ubiquitous Triads and other self-help secret societies.<sup>601</sup> Further aggravating an already tense security situation, Britain's victory in the Opium War and subsequent piracy-clearing operations around the Pearl River Delta displaced many pirates upriver, funnelling them up the West River and into Guangxi.<sup>602</sup> Being separated from other parts of China by natural mountainous borders, the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi together constituted a single economic unit.<sup>603</sup> But while Guangdong provided the portal through which Western religious doctrines flowed into China, it was in Guangxi's tense and conflict-laden social milieu that Hong found his adherents, and was able to construct his holy army.

Within Guangxi, the Taiping faith first gained popularity among the Hakkas (literally 'guests'), an ethnic minority that the government had encouraged to migrate into Guangxi in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to relieve population pressures in neighbouring Guangdong.<sup>604</sup> While they were culturally Sinicized, the Hakkas nevertheless retained a distinctive ethnic identity. Not only did they preserve their own dialect, but the Hakkas also preserved their own customs as well. Hakka women were not forced to bind their feet, but rather worked in the fields.<sup>605</sup> As they did not bind their feet, other Chinese men found Hakka women unattractive, thereby ensuring a continuing intermarriage among the Hakkas that preserved their

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<sup>600</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>601</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18. See also Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>603</sup>Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 18.

<sup>604</sup>Philip A. Kuhn. "Origins of the Taiping Vision: Cross-Cultural Dimensions of a Chinese Rebellion." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19, no. 3 (1977), p. 361. Parenthetically, Franz Michael notes that nomads originating from Central Asia had earlier forced the Hakkas into southern China as a result of their invasion of northern and central China. See Franz Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 19.

<sup>605</sup>Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, p. 25.

distinctiveness from the surrounding population.<sup>606</sup> While Hakkas in Guangxi were held in higher regard than local indigenous tribal peoples such as the Miao, the more established and more Sinicized Punti Chinese settlers did nevertheless resent their presence. As recent arrivals to Guangxi, the Hakka subsisted either as tenants under the yoke of ethnically different landlords, or alternatively eked out an existence as homesteaders on the region's more marginal lands.<sup>607</sup> Moreover, whereas more established Punti settlers cohered around localized lineage structures and frequently clustered in single-surname villages, the Hakkas' ability to mobilize in defence of their interests was weakened by their more fragmented kinship and settlement patterns.<sup>608</sup> As population pressures increased, feuding between the Hakka and other ethnic groups also escalated. This further worsened the Hakkas' collective condition, leaving them susceptible to the message of salvation Hong Xiuquan's earliest followers brought to Guangxi from 1844 onwards.

Guangxi at the dawn of the Taiping movement was a volatile, over-populated, and weakly governed frontier region, where a kaleidoscope of different ethnic groups uneasily co-existed, and where non-state violence – in the form of lineage feuds, ethnic conflict, and organized criminal activity – was endemic. As a culturally assimilated but socially disorganized ethnic grouping, the Hakkas were particularly vulnerable to predation. Lacking the social cohesion and ready access to lineage wealth of the more established Punti settlers, the Hakkas found it difficult to mobilize in defence of their interests.<sup>609</sup> At the same time, being at once culturally Sinicized but collectively distinct by virtue of their dialect and customs, the Hakkas lacked the symbolic vocabulary through which ethnic grievances could be conceptualized, let

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<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>607</sup> Kuhn, 'Origins of the Taiping Vision', pp. 361-362.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 363-364.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

alone openly articulated.<sup>610</sup> In accounting for the Hakkas' enthusiastic reception of the Taiping faith, it is therefore worth noting that the new religion provided the Hakkas with both a symbolic vocabulary with which to conceptualize their shared grievances, as well as a shared organizational vehicle (in the form of the God Worshipping Society) through which collective action was now possible.<sup>611</sup> The fact that both Hong Xiuquan and his earliest disciples were themselves Hakkas also helps to account for the Hakka minority's special receptivity to the Taiping message, as does the fact that many Hakkas were already landless (having been driven by their homes by ceaseless feuding) and therefore available to join the vast peasant host that would become the Taiping Heavenly Army.

In explaining the rise of the Taiping movement, Philip Kuhn explicitly emphasizes the parallels between the social reality of ethnic conflict in Guangxi and the Manichean world-view and redemptive promise of the Taiping religion, writing: 'The fact was the polarization of society between hostile ethnic groups. The metaphor was a starkly metaphysical description of a world polarized between the saved and the damned.'<sup>612</sup> While this observation pithily captures the fit between the Hakkas' vulnerable position within Chinese society and the apocalyptic appeal of the Taiping faith, it is worth reiterating the multiple causes underlying the movement's genesis, ranging from the broader structural dynamics of dynastic decline through to the distinctive combination of lawlessness, ethnic heterogeneity, and openness to foreign cultural and religious influences that characterized the Guangxi and Guangdong regions. It is also worth stressing that while the Hakkas formed the bulk of the movement's early membership, at no time did they exclusively dominate it, and at no time did the Taiping leadership ever conceptualize it as a specifically Hakka

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<sup>610</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>611</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>612</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 366.

movement.<sup>613</sup> Indeed, it was precisely the ideological universalism of the Taiping faith and its accompanying imperial ambitions that distinguished it from the contemporaneous local tribal and sectarian rebellions that also shook the empire in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Other rebels sought merely to protect communal interests, or at best to revise the terms of their relationship with the Son of Heaven. The Taipings sought nothing less than to bring heaven to earth.

### **7.3 Thy Kingdom Come – The Rise and Demise of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace**

#### **7.3.1 From Iconoclasm to Revolution – The Taipings’ Long March from Thistle Mountain to Nanjing**

Despite the intensity of its religious hostility towards the Confucian social order, the Taiping movement’s mutation from a local sectarian grouping to an empire-shaking revolutionary army was a highly contingent affair, being driven as much by chance and by the personalities of the movement’s original leaders as by the structural drivers of revolt already outlined. While Hong Xiuquan’s religious vision was obviously central to the movement’s initial success, his role in the organization and recruitment of members to the Society of God Worshippers was fairly minimal. With Hong based predominantly in Guangdong in the early stages of the movement perfecting the Taiping ideology, it was left to his indefatigable close friend and convert Feng Yun-Shan to recruit followers and begin building the new church in the inaccessible area of Thistle Mountain in Guangxi. By the time Hong arrived in Guangxi in August 1847, the Society of God Worshippers had grown rapidly in

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<sup>613</sup>Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 40.

numbers, with the church headquarters at Thistle Mountain being linked to a multi-village network of local congregations in neighbouring districts.<sup>614</sup> The combination of economic hardship and escalating communal tensions between the Hakkas and the Punti had considerably swelled the God Worshippers' ranks. Moreover, while conflicts over land and inter-clan feuding continued to punctuate the Hakkas' relationship with their neighbours, this already tense environment was further aggravated by the God Worshippers' violent iconoclasm, which increasingly manifested itself in their destruction of idols erected by Guangxi's various communities in veneration of local gods.<sup>615</sup> The iconoclastic zeal with which the God Worshippers attempted to destroy the 'demons' worshipped by their neighbours not only brought them into greater conflict with surrounding communities, but also both prefigured and made much more likely their inevitable confrontation with the forces of the imperial government.<sup>616</sup>

By the time the God Worshippers resolved to openly revolt against the government in July 1850, the movement's leadership had already become dangerously fragmented. Although Hong Xiuquan retained his spiritual pre-eminence in the movement as Christ's younger brother and the bearer of the divine mission, he relied on Feng Yun-Shan as his chief organizer and administrator. Moreover, while the relationship between Hong and Feng remained close, the absence of both men from Thistle Mountain during a crucial period in the lead-up to the revolt had enabled other leadership contenders to emerge. Of these, the most ambitious was an illiterate charcoal-burner named Yang Hsui-ch'ing, who along with his chief lieutenant Hsiao-Ch'ao-kuei claimed independent spiritual authority as the respective spokesmen of

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<sup>614</sup>Philip A. Kuhn. "The Taiping Rebellion." In *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10: Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 264-317. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 270.

<sup>615</sup>Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', p. 273.

<sup>616</sup>*Ibid.*



Jehovah and Christ.<sup>617</sup> Both men periodically entered into trances where they purported to speak directly in the voice of the Heavenly Father or the Elder Brother, and the pretensions of both towards having claims to independent access to the divine eventually fatally divided and weakened the Taiping movement.<sup>618</sup> In the immediate term, however, their ecstatic style of worship drew in more recruits to the Society of God Worshippers, while Yang's outstanding military skills contributed greatly to the Taiping army's initial triumphs over government forces.<sup>619</sup>

It was during the Taiping army's two-and-a-half year sweep from the Guangxi hinterland to the ancient imperial capital of Nanjing that the key ideological and institutional characteristics of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom were first elaborated. In July 1850, the God Worshipping congregations of Guangxi were assembled at the town of Chin-t'ien. Having abandoned their homes and pooled all of their saleable goods in a common treasury, the God Worshippers were formed into a 'united military camp', which was soon merged with an eclectic assemblage of other groups – ranging from indigenous Miao tribesmen and break-away pirate and Triad groups – that had also decided to throw their lot in with the rebels.<sup>620</sup> From July 1850 down to Hong's initial proclamation of the Taiping Kingdom of Heavenly Peace on January 11, 1851, the Taiping leaders concentrated on forging their vast host into a disciplined and fanatically indoctrinated armed force. As God's children, the rebels addressed each other as brother or sister.<sup>621</sup> This egalitarianism that extended towards the pooling of all wealth into a single treasury, in recognition of the fact that all wealth was God's property, and was to be marshalled and distributed by God's anointed prophets in

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<sup>617</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 271.

<sup>618</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 273.

<sup>619</sup>Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 42.

<sup>620</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>621</sup>Erik Zürcher. "Purity in the Taiping Rebellion." In *The Quest for Purity - Dynamics of Puritan Movements*, edited by Walter E.A. van Beek, 201-15. Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988. See specifically p. 207.

pursuit of the Taipings' mission of redemption.<sup>622</sup> Throughout the Taiping ranks, a rigorously puritanical moral regime was enforced. The consumption of alcohol, opium, and tobacco was prohibited upon pain of death. Men and women were segregated into single-sex military units, and a rule of absolute chastity was enforced even among married couples, again upon pain of death by beheading.<sup>623</sup>

The discipline and raw fanaticism of the Taiping soldiers served them well against the poorly paid and generally incompetent Qing imperial forces. In their campaigns from Guangxi and through the middle Yangtze region to Nanjing, the Taiping commanders utilized the advantages of speed and the great size of their peasant host to overwhelm imperial forces. Cities where the rebels faced concerted resistance were often bypassed for the sake of maintaining strategic momentum, although others rapidly surrendered or capitulated after putting up only token resistance.<sup>624</sup> Throughout the Taipings' campaigns, the rebels actively sought to proselytize among the local population and mobilize additional holy warriors for the fight against the Manchus. In soliciting popular support, the Taipings attempted to tap into Han xenophobic sentiment, denouncing the ruling dynasty as 'Tartar dogs' that must be punished for their oppression and humiliation of the Chinese people.<sup>625</sup> Crucially, however, this political appeal was never allowed to subordinate the

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<sup>622</sup>Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>623</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 45-46. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Michael notes that the rule of absolute chastity was enforced only selectively, with the Taiping leaders remaining free to establish harems of their own. He also notes that practical considerations of military discipline played at least as great a role as theological concerns in justifying the separation of the sexes into different villages and military units, and that this segregation was also justified as a temporary measure to obtain only for the duration of the conflict with the Manchu 'demons.'

<sup>624</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>625</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 59. It is nevertheless worth noting here in passing the dangers of too readily exaggerating either the coherence of 'Han' identity or the degree of correspondence between nineteenth century anti-Manchu xenophobia and later manifestations of modern state-sponsored Chinese nationalism. For a recent reminder of the dangers of reifying categories of 'ethnic' identity in comprehending the dynamics of Chinese history, see the collection of essays on contained in Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton, eds. *Empire at the Margins - Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. My thanks again to Allen Carlson for directing me to this reference.

Taipings' religious message. Consistently, the Taipings identified the Manchus and their supporters as demons, who had defied God's laws by blasphemously sacralizing the imperial office and the imperial person.<sup>626</sup> For the Taipings, the struggle to topple the Manchus was merely an earthly manifestation of a larger cosmic struggle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. Consequently, inhabitants of towns that the Taipings had resolved to conquer, and that put up a determined resistance, were themselves identified as 'demons', and summarily massacred en masse following the Taiping victories.<sup>627</sup> These acts of annihilatory piety during the initial Taiping campaigns, which faithfully reflected the Taipings' apocalyptic belief system, provided a foretaste of the combination of puritanism and terror that would mark Taiping rule following the Heavenly Kingdom's establishment in Nanjing on 19 March 1853.

### 7.3.2 The New Jerusalem – The Nature and Characteristics of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom

With the conquest of Nanjing, the seat of imperial government during Ming times, the Taipings confirmed their imperial pretensions and in so doing solidified their reputation as the pre-eminent threat confronting the Qing Dynasty. Upon taking Nanjing, the Taipings promptly renamed it the Heavenly Capital. This was a deliberate allusion to the New Jerusalem, and one that telegraphed the Taipings' apocalyptic aim of establishing the Heavenly Kingdom on earth in the form of a theocratic universal monarchy.<sup>628</sup> From Nanjing, the Taipings ruled the greater part of the middle and

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<sup>626</sup>Reilly, *The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>627</sup>Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 62.

<sup>628</sup>Erik Zürcher. "Purity in the Taiping Rebellion." In *The Quest for Purity - Dynamics of Puritan Movements*, edited by Walter E.A. van Beek, 201-15. Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988. See p. 206.

lower Yangtze regions, dominating China's major riverine artery and with it, the most urbanized, populous and economically productive regions of the empire.<sup>629</sup> Given their inveterate ideological hostility towards the Confucian gentry, the Taipings inevitably failed to secure the gentry's support for implementing their revolutionary agenda in the countryside, and were only slightly more successful in implementing their divine mandate within the Heavenly Capital. The effort of trying to sustain two massive offensives against imperial forces further drained Taiping resources, distracting them from the task of properly institutionalizing Hong's vision within Taiping territories. These qualifications aside, a brief description of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom is necessary in order to establish the depths of its estrangement both from the declining imperial order of the Sinosphere, and from the encroaching Western-dominated society of sovereign states.

In terms of its political constitution, the Heavenly Kingdom represented a strange combination of continuities and discontinuities with the Chinese imperial tradition. Whereas Neo-Confucianism anchored imperial legitimacy within the concept of the Mandate of Heaven, the Taipings conversely invoked the authority of a Biblical God to legitimize their establishment of God's Heavenly Kingdom on earth. This alternative legitimizing ideology reflected a transcendent conception of the divine, which appeared to differ fundamentally from the impersonal and immanent conception of the divine that informed the imperial tradition.<sup>630</sup> However, while Hong Xiuquan and his most powerful lieutenants repudiated the Chinese emperor's title of Son of Heaven and abjured any direct claims towards divinity themselves, they did nevertheless also cultivate a sacred aura of legitimacy around themselves in their proclaimed status as the mouth-pieces through which God conveyed His commands to

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<sup>629</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>630</sup>Levenson, 'Confucian and Taiping "Heaven"', p. 440.

humanity.<sup>631</sup> While the Taiping rebels did not deify their political leaders, they did sanctify them in asserting their status as the conduits linking the sacred and temporal worlds, and thus did echo core elements of the established imperial ideology. This parallel is unsurprising, given that Hong had effectively indigenized Christian themes of apocalypse and redemption by situating them within Chinese political narratives of dynastic decline and renewal. Also unsurprising is the reproduction of the rituals and forms of court life in the Heavenly Capital, which were designed to further cultivate the perception that the Taiping pretenders did in fact constitute the legitimate locus of imperial authority, both within China and beyond.

Despite the Taipings' absolute enmity for the Qing Dynasty and its 'idolatrous' legitimating ideology, the Heavenly Kingdom thus betrayed trace elements of China's imperial tradition, both in its sanctification of political authority, and in its aspirations to substitute one form of universal monarchy for another. Conversely, the Taipings' revolutionary program radically and comprehensively repudiated almost every aspect of the existing social order. Its precociously sophisticated bureaucracy notwithstanding, the Chinese mode of state-society relations generally comported with the model of ideological universalism and institutional localism characteristic of most pre-industrial empires. Being at once inculcated with Confucian values and yet embedded within village-level social networks, the scholar-gentry served as the bulwark of imperial authority throughout the empire, acting in their capacity as local administrators and civic leaders as the indispensable lynchpin linking the universal with the local worlds.<sup>632</sup> Conversely, and in keeping with their millenarian aspirations, the Taipings sought to revolutionise the existing model of

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<sup>631</sup>On this phenomenon, and the fratricidal consequences that followed once rivals' competing claims to access the divine became entwined in political struggles in the Taiping court, see Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 78.

<sup>632</sup>Wong, *China Transformed*, p. 112.

state-society models by dispensing with the imperial Confucian system of ideologically integrated indirect rule, and replacing it with a pyramidal organizational structure that vertically integrated the Heavenly Kingdom from top to bottom. Under the Taiping schema, the population was to be organized into base groups ('platoons') of twenty-five families each, with each family obliged to provide one man or woman for service in the Heavenly Army, and the base groups to be collectively supervised by a 'sergeant', who would simultaneously serve as their military, civic, and spiritual leader.<sup>633</sup> All land was to be expropriated from landlords and allotted in varying portions to each man, woman, and child, while all agrarian surplus was to be accumulated in local 'Heavenly Storehouses.'<sup>634</sup> While the twenty-five families would function as the basic unit of social organization, they would be hierarchically integrated into 156-family units ('armies'), each led by a general, which would each be integrated in turn within the broader pyramidal structure of the Heavenly Kingdom.<sup>635</sup>

While the Taiping vision was implemented only imperfectly outside of the Nanjing region, the magnitude of Taiping aspirations to transform society has led at least one scholar to characterise the movement as being totalitarian in the scope of its ambitions.<sup>636</sup> Within the Heavenly Kingdom, the distinction between civil and military authority was completely collapsed, with Chinese society to be re-cast as a mobilized army of believers dedicated to the fight against the Manchu 'demons.'<sup>637</sup> Additionally, whereas Confucian norms legitimized inequalities between landlords and tenants, the Biblical egalitarianism of the Taipings produced the 1854 Agrarian Reform Law,

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<sup>633</sup>Zurcher, "Purity in the Taiping Rebellion", p. 207.

<sup>634</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>635</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>636</sup>Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 190.

<sup>637</sup>On the militarized character of the Taiping vision, see S.P. MacKenzie. *Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era - a Revisionist Approach*. London: Routledge, 1997, p. 79.

which promised to overturn existing property relationships in the countryside in favour of instituting a form of theocratic proto-communism.<sup>638</sup> The Taipings' ruthless enforcement of religious homogeneity also departed profoundly from the status quo. Although Neo-Confucianism had sustained the *ancien regime* as its official ideology, the Qing Dynasty had nevertheless respected China's religious diversity, and had charged the scholar-gentry with responsibility for supervising and supporting locals in their worship of the plethora of local deities that populated the Chinese pantheon.<sup>639</sup> The Taipings by contrast rejected any possibility of co-existence with other religious traditions, and instead enforced the systematic destruction of local shrines and temples, and violently suppressed all non-Taiping religious practices throughout their territories. Finally, even the patriarchal family, the very foundation of the Confucian model of social order, did not escape revision. Although they might appear progressive to the contemporary observer, reforms such as the banning of foot-binding and concubinage and the establishment of places for women in the Taiping bureaucracy were deeply subversive at the time, undermining the gender norms and conceptions of the family then dominant within Chinese society. Similarly, the re-organization of villages into twenty-five family platoons occurred without heed for pre-existing patterns of lineage settlement. Both the segregation of villages by gender and the enforcement of norms of absolute chastity also had predictably catastrophic consequences for the population wherever they were enforced.

From their precociously totalitarian attempts to re-engineer state-society and civil-military relations, through to their policies on property, religion and the family,

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<sup>638</sup>Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', pp. 278-279.

<sup>639</sup>On the role of the scholar-gentry in supervising local religious rites and practices, see John King Fairbank. "Introduction: The Old Order." In *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10 - Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 1-34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. See specifically p. 13.

the Taipings envisaged a total purification and transformation of the spiritual and social worlds. However, in their conception of China's relations with other countries, the Taipings remained stubbornly orthodox, adhering to the Sino-centrism characteristic of the late imperial Sinosphere. Despite their ideological antagonism towards the Manchu court, the Taipings shared with their adversaries an outlook that conceived of China as the singular centre of civilization. Thus, while the Taipings were forced by their faith to concede that God had sent his first Son to the barbarian state of Judea to redeem humanity, the Taipings nevertheless affirmed their Sino-centrism in positing Hong Xiuquan as God's second son, and also in their conception of China as the seat of God's prophesied Heavenly Kingdom. In keeping with this outlook, Hong regarded Western Christians with a mixture of benevolence and condescension. Visiting foreign delegates to the Taiping court were consequently warmly greeted as fellow Christians, but were nevertheless also expected to render due deference and obedience to Hong Xiuquan in his capacities as both God's Chinese son, and also as the ruler of His Heavenly Kingdom.<sup>640</sup> This promise to perpetuate the hierarchical international order of the Sinosphere represented a thread of continuity linking China's rebels and rulers at the peak of the rebellion. Unfortunately for both sides, the very intensity with which they prosecuted their struggle against one another helped to accelerate that order's impending demise.

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<sup>640</sup>This attitude of benevolent condescension is conveyed in the tone of the following Taiping missive to visiting British dignitaries to the Taiping court in Nanjing in on April 28, 1853: 'Whereas God the Heavenly Father has sent our Sovereign down to earth, as the true Sovereign of all the nations of the world, all people in the world who wish to appear at his Court must yield obedience to the rules of ceremony. They must prepare representations, stating who and what they are and from when they come, after previous presentation of which only an audience can be accorded them. Obey these commands.' Quoted in Spence, *God's Chinese Son*, p. 195. Unsurprisingly, the subsequent meeting between the British and Taiping representatives failed to yield a British commitment to the Taiping cause.



## **7.4 The Defeat of the Taiping Rebellion and the Collapse of the Heavenly Kingdom**

Following their meteoric ascendancy in the middle and lower Yangtze regions in the early 1850s and their attempted institutionalization of the Heavenly Kingdom in Nanjing, the Taipings experienced a protracted and bloody decline into oblivion from the period 1856-1864. At the most prosaic level, this defeat was occasioned by basic military blunders committed after the Taipings' capture of Nanjing in 1853. The decision to divide Taiping forces into two forces, charged respectively with the tasks of securing the Taipings' western flank and advancing north to seize the imperial capital of Peking, fatally dispersed the Taipings' military strength.<sup>641</sup> In the absence of sufficient troops to sustain either of these major offensives, the Taiping onslaught faltered. This loss of strategic momentum in turn gave both government and loyalist gentry forces the time needed to regroup, enabling them to progressively roll back Taiping forces and eventually encircle and destroy the movement in Nanjing in 1864.

Beyond the specific military blunders mentioned above, however, three more fundamental reasons deriving from the nature of the movement itself decisively contributed to its defeat. From the outset, the Taiping movement had been characterised by both an ecstatic form of worship, and also by an extensive reliance on a charismatic mode of leadership in which rebel leaders' political authority flowed directly from their claims to have unmediated access to the divine. Initially, Hong Xiuquan's self-proclaimed status as God's Chinese son provided the Taipings with a powerful rallying point, with Hong serving as the earthly embodiment of God's will, and the agency through which both China and the world would finally be redeemed.

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<sup>641</sup>Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, pp. 72-73. See also Mackenzie, *Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era*, p. 86.

However, with the early fragmentation of the Society of God Worshippers in the lead-up to the rebellion, other armed prophets had surfaced, also claiming to speak in the voice of either Jehovah or Jesus Christ. Consequently, by the time the Heavenly Kingdom was established at Nanjing in 1853, Hong was merely the Taipings' *primus inter pares*, functioning as the largely titular 'sovereign' of a regime in which real political and military power lay with four *wangs* (kings).<sup>642</sup> Each of these *wangs* retained their own armed retinues in the capital, and at least two also regularly entered into trances where they issued commands allegedly flowing directly from the Heavenly Father or from Jesus Christ.<sup>643</sup> Thus, while the protean, charismatic components of the Taiping vision provided an immensely powerful catalyst for rebellion, these very same features also prevented the establishment of a coherent government apparatus once the Taipings seized power in Nanjing. In Weberian terms, the very nature of the movement prevented a transition from a charismatic to a legal-rational mode of domination. With Hong unable to monopolize spiritual authority in the Heavenly Kingdom, the stage was set for a brief but bloody confrontation between opposing court factions in 1856. The resulting fratricidal slaughter of an estimated 20,000 rebels in the imperial capital killed off the most dangerous pretenders and momentarily strengthened Hong's position, but it ultimately failed to yield the more coherent and stable leadership structure the movement required if it was to achieve victory over the Manchus.<sup>644</sup>

In addition to its debilitating dependence on charismatic modes of domination, the extreme doctrinal exclusivity of the Taiping movement also greatly contributed to its eventual downfall. This was primarily because the Taipings' insistent dogmatism prevented them from effectively cultivating and maintaining alliances with other

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<sup>642</sup>Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', pp. 275-276.

<sup>643</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 294.

<sup>644</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 295.

groups seeking to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. Thus, while some Triad groupings momentarily gravitated towards the Taipings in the early stages of the rebellion, the Taipings' rigid insistence that prospective allies convert to Taiping Christianity and submit to its rigid puritanical code quickly scotched any possibility of collaboration between the two forces.<sup>645</sup> More generally, the Taiping cause was damaged by their unwillingness to ideologically accommodate anti-Manchu elements by stressing proto-nationalist rather than primarily religious themes in their propaganda. The Taipings' fragmented leadership structure notwithstanding, rebel leaders remained surprisingly uniform in their ideological inflexibility and lack of pragmatism when it came to appealing to prospective allies. Taiping dogmatism effectively served as a self-imposed firewall, which prevented the rebels from effectively coordinating their strategy with the multitude of concurrent anti-Manchu revolts roiling other provinces during the period of the Taiping rebellion.

This self-defeating dogmatism also manifested itself in the Taipings' strained dealings with Westerners. Although initially intrigued by the Taipings on account of their supposedly sincere commitment to Christianity, Western visitors to the Heavenly Court were quickly alienated by the heretical components of Taiping ideology, and were even more aggrieved by Hong Xiuquan's claims towards universal spiritual and political dominion.<sup>646</sup> The Western countries' early commitment to a strict policy of neutrality with respect to the Manchu-Taiping struggle was further weakened as it became more and more evident that the Taipings were unable to constitute a functioning government in the territories under their control.<sup>647</sup> Despite the initial hopes of individuals on both sides, the possibility of a Taiping-foreigner alliance was foreclosed by the Taipings' failures to meet the legitimacy standards of either Western

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<sup>645</sup>Boardman, 'Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion', p. 116.

<sup>646</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>647</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 117.

missionaries or Western diplomats. Despite a last ditch effort by one of the few pragmatic advisors at the Taiping court to modernize Taiping practices of governance, the Heavenly Kingdom remained estranged from the West for the duration of its existence, with Western mercenaries eventually playing a small but significant role in securing the Taipings' eventual defeat.<sup>648</sup>

In addition to their early military blunders, their inability to move beyond charismatic modes of domination, and the self-imposed limits to alliance building imposed by their doctrinal exclusivity, the Taipings' revolutionary character also ensured the failure of their movement. Simply stated, the totalistic nature of Taiping aspirations to redeem Chinese society earned them powerful enemies, who finally proved capable of mobilizing against the rebellion once it became clear that the imperial forces themselves could not effectively crush the rebels. In their earnest desire to cleanse both themselves and the world of evil, the Taiping rebels declared war against the entire Confucian social order. The extreme institutional frailty and unpopularity of the Manchu regime provided the movement with both its enabling pre-conditions, while also providing the necessary window of opportunity in which they could attempt to realise their apocalyptic vision. However, while the central government was faltering, elements of the Confucian scholar-gentry regrouped to establish the new military formations that would ultimately crush the rebellion. Given the chasm between Confucianism and Taiping Christianity, it was impossible for the Taipings to tap into the energy and skills of China's traditional governing class, and thus also impossible for them to effectively establish their rule beyond the fortified cities over which they held sway. Equally, with the social order upon which their privileges were based being threatened with extinction, the predominantly Han

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<sup>648</sup>See generally Richard J. Smith. *Mercenaries and Mandarins - the Ever-Victorious Army in Nineteenth Century China*. New York: KTO Press, 1978.

Chinese gentry had little hesitance in setting aside their anti-Manchu sentiments and marshalling their power to resist the Taiping onslaught.<sup>649</sup>

On July 19, 1864, the Heavenly Capital fell to besieging imperial forces. In his reports to the imperial court, the loyalist general Zeng Guo-fan succinctly captured the appropriately apocalyptic end of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom: ‘On the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup>, Tseng Liang-tso ...and others searched through the city for any rebels they could find, and in three days killed over 100,000 men. The Ch’in-huai creek was filled with bodies. Half of the false *wangs*, chief generals, heavenly generals, and other heads of battle were killed in battle, and the other half either drowned themselves in the dykes and ditches or else burned themselves. The whole of them numbered about 3,000 men. The fire in the city raged for three days and nights...Not one of the 100,000 rebels in Nanking surrendered themselves when the city was taken, but in many cases gathered together and burned themselves and passed away without repentance. Such a formidable band of rebels has rarely been seen from ancient times to the present.’<sup>650</sup>

While Taiping remnants would fight on for another two years, both the Heavenly Kingdom and the fanatical faith that had sustained it were effectively destroyed with the fall of Nanjing. But while the Taiping faith would never revive, the indirect systemic consequences of the rebellion, for both China and for East Asia more generally, would be of enduring and profound significance.

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<sup>649</sup>Mackenzie, *Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era*, p. 88-89.

<sup>650</sup>Cited in Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, p. 174.

## **7.5 Armageddon's Wake – The Systemic Consequences of the Taiping Rebellion and its Suppression**

The Taiping rebellion constituted the bloodiest of a wave of rebellions that convulsed China in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, and one of the most immediately devastating consequences of its outbreak was the stimulus it provided to other rebellious elements throughout the Qing Empire. At the time of the Taiping rebellion, secret-society activities increased in the Pearl River delta, the Yangtze delta, and the North China plain.<sup>651</sup> The Nien rebellion (1850-1868) in northern China, the southwest Muslim rebellion in Yunnan (1855-1873), the north-west Muslim rebellion in Shensi and Kansu (1862-1878) and the Miao rebellion in Kweichow and Hunan (1855-1873) each roughly coincided with the Taiping rebellion, and the collective burden of suppressing these revolts placed massive strains on the imperial government.<sup>652</sup> Moreover, while for reasons already outlined the Taipings cooperated only sporadically with other rebel groups, the Taiping rebellion indirectly stimulated other revolts against the Manchus in a variety of ways. On the one hand, the Taipings' rapid early successes against the Manchu armies reinforced an impression of dynastic weakness, which had already been steadily rising following the dynasty's defeat in the First Opium War. Much like the White Lotus rebels in the late eighteenth century, the Taipings' military successes encouraged negative assessments of government capabilities and legitimacy that in turn stimulated further violent challenges to central rule.

In addition to the inspiration the Taipings provided to others disaffected with Manchu misrule, the fiscal and military strains imposed by the rebellion further

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<sup>651</sup>S.Y. Teng. *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 356.

<sup>652</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 400-401.

contributed to the lateral spread of civil unrest throughout China's provinces. As the most populous and economically developed regions of the Qing Empire, the lower and middle Yangtze regions had provided the imperial treasury with a large proportion of its total revenues. With the loss of these territories to the rebellion, and the reduction also in land taxes recoverable from the areas of South China affected by the insurgency, the central government resorted to a range of extraordinary measures in its financing of the war effort.<sup>653</sup> By far the simplest of these measures was an increase in the land tax in other provinces within the empire. While probably unavoidable in view of the empire's straitened circumstances, this move further compounded popular economic distress in these provinces, and thus stoked additional resentment towards the ruling dynasty.<sup>654</sup> Similarly, desperate short-term expedients such as the debasement of the currency also momentarily alleviated the government's war-financing difficulties, only to further increase inflationary measures and thus exacerbate the popular discontent fuelling the empire's crisis of authority.<sup>655</sup> The military imperative of redeploying imperial forces garrisoned in supposedly peaceful provinces to fight the Taiping rebels also amplified governmental vulnerabilities throughout the empire, providing further temptations for the disaffected to revolt in these provinces while the government's back was turned. Faced with declining prestige, an incipient fiscal crisis, and an overstretched and poorly resourced military, the dynasty became locked in a vicious cycle of declining governmental capacity and legitimacy and spiralling domestic unrest. Moreover, while the empire's fortunes improved following the crushing of the Taiping rebellion, the damage inflicted by the mid-century revolts – estimated to have cost a total of up to sixty million lives in the

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<sup>653</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 401.

<sup>654</sup>Yeng attributes the causes of the rebellion of the Miao tribe against the Manchus (1855-1872) at least partially to popular distress engendered by tax increases driven by the need to suppress the Taiping rebellion. See Yeng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers*, pp. 366-367.

<sup>655</sup>Kuhn, 'The Taiping Rebellion', p. 290.

period 1850-1875 – was of nevertheless of such a vast scale as to gravely and permanently weaken the empire’s material foundations.

Beyond the immediate devastation caused or inspired by the Taiping rebellion, the mid-century crisis triggered deeper and more enduring changes to the structure of Qing rule. Specifically, the mid-century rebellions inaugurated a shift of military, fiscal and political power away from the central government, and towards provincial governors and governors-general. The Taipings’ triumphant breakout from Guangxi and conquest of the middle and lower Yangtze regions sharply exposed the inadequacies of the Eight Banners and the Army of the Green Standard, and provided a further fillip to the growth of the semi-private orthodox militias that had initially developed in response to the White Lotus threat at the turn of the century.<sup>656</sup> This trend became most pronounced in Hunan, where the first of the provincial new model armies was constructed under the leadership of the loyalist general Zeng Guo-fan. Since its establishment, the imperial Green Standard army had been organized in such a way as to explicitly discourage the development of personal bonds of loyalty between higher and lower officers, for fear that such bonds might weaken the government’s control over the military.<sup>657</sup> Faced with the challenge of forging a viable army out of a diverse ensemble of different mercenaries, militias and other irregular units, Zeng abandoned this tradition. Instead, he chose to capitalize on bonds of kinship and patronage and self-consciously build upon pre-existing lineage and native-place relationships in order to ensure the army’s coherence and combat effectiveness.<sup>658</sup> In the financing of the new regional armies, Zeng and his allies proved equally innovative, introducing an *ad valorum* tax (*likin*, literally a thousandth)

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<sup>656</sup>On the growth of these orthodox militia from the White Lotus rebellion onwards, see generally Kuhn, *Rebellion and Its Enemies*.

<sup>657</sup>Kuhn, ‘The Taiping Rebellion’, p. 287.

<sup>658</sup>*Ibid.*



on goods in stock or in transit, and also upon certain goods such as tea in their place of manufacture.<sup>659</sup>

While Zeng's Hunan army was disbanded following the suppression of the Taiping rebellion, ongoing rebellions such as the Nien revolt necessitated the continued use of regional new model armies to suppress insurgents, and the Manchu government was unsuccessful in recovering its monopoly on military force following the conclusion of hostilities.<sup>660</sup> The mid-century rebellions thus sharpened and qualitatively accelerated changes in the distribution of power within China that had been manifest from the rebellions of the turn of the century. The dispersal of power, both from centre to provinces and from Manchus to Han, perilously weakened the Qing Dynasty's grip on power, as well as amplifying the centrifugal tendencies that would culminate in China's descent into warlordism and anarchy in the early twentieth century.<sup>661</sup> The innovations introduced in suppressing the rebellions also paved the way for the emergence of military service in the new regional armies as a vehicle of social mobility, partially supplanting participation in the centrally controlled civil service as the preferred path-way to social advancement for ambitious sons of the lower gentry.<sup>662</sup> Compounding this trend, the emphasis placed on kinship and patronage in the new model armies, while useful in ensuring unit coherence and combat effectiveness, nevertheless also portended a partial unravelling of the government's caging of organized violence within the confines of the imperial bureaucracy.

With their grip on power being so tenuous within the borders of their own empire, it was unsurprising that the Qing Dynasty proved incapable of maintaining the

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<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>660</sup> On this point, see generally Teng, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers*, pp. 394-399.

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 400.

<sup>662</sup> Immanuel C.Y. Hsu. *The Rise of Modern China*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 251-252.

international order of the Sinosphere when it was exposed to sustained external attack. The conjunction of internal and external threats, succinctly captured in the Chinese phrase ‘internal disorder and external calamity’, was a familiar enough motif in Chinese history during downturns in the dynastic cycle.<sup>663</sup> However, in the mid-nineteenth century, both the magnitude and character of the threat constellation facing the Qing Dynasty was qualitatively different to anything that had come previously. For just as the Taipings’ early victories encouraged revolts in other provinces within the empire, so too did they encourage renewed external predation by China’s foreign adversaries. But whereas previous external challengers in East Asian history had merely sought to reposition themselves favourably within the existing hierarchy of the Sinosphere, the Western powers sought overturn the system entirely. Frustrated by China’s unwillingness to enforce the treaty provisions that concluded the First Opium War, and taking advantage of the court’s preoccupation with crushing the Taiping rebels, an Anglo-French expeditionary force wrested further commercial and diplomatic concessions from the beleaguered emperor after sporadic fighting over the period 1858-1860. In addition to forcing China open to Western merchants and evangelists, the Second Opium War was fought with the explicit objective of forcing China to join the modern state system.<sup>664</sup> For the Westerners, the establishment of permanent diplomatic envoys in the imperial capital was essential, if for no other reason than to ensure that the provisions of the unequal treaties signed with the emperor were fully observed. For the Chinese, the implied equality with barbarians that ambassadorial diplomacy embodied constituted not only an assault on the emperor’s prestige, but more fundamentally contradicted the entire panoply of norms

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<sup>663</sup>See generally Smith, *Mercenaries and Mandarins*.

<sup>664</sup>On this point, see John King Fairbank. "The Creation of the Treaty System." In *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 10 - Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 213-63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. See specifically p. 252.

and institutions upon which the order of the Sinosphere was based. Weakened by the ravages of the Taipings, unable to match the naval firepower of the industrializing West, and suffering the indignity of foreign occupation in the imperial capital, the Qing Dynasty was nevertheless compelled to capitulate on October 24, 1860.

### **7.6 Restoration and Retreat – Religion, the Sinosphere, and Systemic Collapse in an Age of Nation-States**

The Taiping rebels failed completely in their goal of establishing God's Kingdom on earth. But in subjecting the tottering Qing Dynasty to a revolutionary assault at a time when it was already facing foreign encroachment, the Taipings did succeed in gravely weakening the Chinese Empire. This process in turn portended the hollowing out and eventual collapse of the Sinosphere. Paradoxically, many of the initiatives that the Qing Dynasty undertook for the purposes of self-preservation contributed to the Sinosphere's dissolution, even as they worked to sustain the empire itself. Following its capitulation to Western demands, the Chinese government established the *Zongli Yamen*, a proto-typical foreign office that facilitated China's entry into a Western-dominated sovereign state system.<sup>665</sup> At the same time, the Manchus actively solicited Western foreign military assistance to suppress the Taiping rebels, and sought also to reconstitute government finances on the basis of revenues derived from the Maritime Customs Office, an institution that was designed, operated and maintained by Westerners.<sup>666</sup> The resulting Anglo-Qing condominium, which encompassed diplomatic, military, and fiscal initiatives mentioned above, enabled the dynasty to survive the mid-century crisis, and gave it the breathing space necessary to

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<sup>665</sup>Mancall, *China at the Center*, pp. 172-174.

<sup>666</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 174-176.

undertake an ambitious if ultimately inadequate ‘self-strengthening’ program of defensive modernization.<sup>667</sup> But in so starkly exposing the Manchus’ dependence on barbarians for support, the initiatives underpinning the Qing Restoration also inverted the entire civilizational hierarchy on which the Sinosphere was predicated. In so doing, they exposed the Sinosphere’s increasingly archaic status in an age in which the Western imports of nationalism and industrialized warfare were inexorably in the ascendancy.

Despite a momentary revival of imperial fortunes within China proper following the suppression of the mid-century rebellions, the late nineteenth century witnessed a further acceleration of centrifugal processes in East Asia. The most conspicuous of these was the continuing growth of violence interdependence in the region, a trend that was already pronounced in the 1870s, but which had intensified dangerously by century’s end. The 1870s witnessed challenges to China’s territorial integrity in both the north-west and the south-east, with Russian and Japanese incursions in Xinjiang and Taiwan respectively threatening the ruling dynasty’s tenuous hold over its most far-flung possessions.<sup>668</sup> In both instances, Qing officials demonstrated admirable diplomatic dexterity in peacefully fending off these advances.<sup>669</sup> Similarly, China’s intensified efforts to establish direct rule over these frontier regions – thus satisfying the requirements of effective occupation then operative under Western international law – also illustrated the dynasty’s willingness to adapt to the expanding global state system when China’s territorial integrity was under threat.<sup>670</sup>

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<sup>667</sup>On self-strengthening and its failure, see Fairbank and Goldman, *China – A New History*, pp. 217-221.

<sup>668</sup>Mancall, *China at the Center*, pp. 138-141 and pp. 151-153.

<sup>669</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>670</sup>*Ibid.*

Nevertheless, this strategy of defensive adaptation to the requirements of Western international law sat uneasily with China's simultaneous attempt to maintain a system of tributary diplomacy with traditional tributaries such as Annam and Korea. On the one hand, China sought to participate on equal terms in a rapidly globalizing sovereign state system, in which the hierarchical cosmologies of multi-ethnic empires were increasingly being sidelined in favour of ideals of popular eudemonism and national sovereignty. On the other hand, however, China sought to preserve its status as the suzerain of an explicitly hierarchical regional international order, which relied for its operation on actors' common subscription to precisely the kind of inegalitarian cosmology now being edged out by an encroaching sovereign state system. Throughout the 1880s, this tension between two modes of international order became increasingly unsustainable, and by the decade's end, both Annam and Korea had been forcibly detached from the tributary system, thus effectively abolishing the last tributary ties holding the old Sinosphere together.<sup>671</sup>

By the close of the nineteenth century, the international order of the Sinosphere had been effectively dismantled. Additionally, by this time, the dynasty's inadequacies had become so pronounced and the level of regional geopolitical rivalry so intense that even the core objective of preserving China's territorial integrity against foreign aggressors was no longer attainable. China's humiliating defeat in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895 brutally exposed the weakness of the Qing Dynasty, stimulating a 'scramble for concessions' by colonial powers anxious to shore up their strategic and commercial interests in the region.<sup>672</sup> Moreover, while the official territorial partition of China was averted (with the exception of Japan's seizure of Taiwan), the century

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<sup>671</sup>On the dismantling of the Sinosphere, see generally Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order*.

<sup>672</sup>Mancall, *China at the Center*, pp. 158-160.

ended with huge swathes of Chinese territory under foreign occupation.<sup>673</sup> With East Asia's traditional hegemon effectively reduced to a semi-colonial status and the world on the cusp of a massive naval arms race, the region became a focal point for accelerating Great Power rivalry, setting the stage for the series of wars that wracked the Western Pacific in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, within China itself, the Manchus' ability to resuscitate imperial power was stymied by a combination of crushing war indemnities and a pervasive loss of popular legitimacy occasioned by defeat in the Sino-Japanese war and the post-war imposition of foreign occupation.<sup>674</sup> Just as defeat in war, foreign predation, and festering anti-Manchu sentiment had provided fertile ground for rebellion in the wake of the Opium Wars, so too did this concurrence of 'internal disorder and external calamity' recur at the turn of the century.

In the wake of the Sino-Japanese war, China was shaken by successive waves of rebellion that culminated in the Qing Dynasty's final dissolution in 1912. The most infamous expression of popular discontent during this period, the Boxer Rising, bore many resemblances to previous anti-Manchu sectarian rebellions. Like previous risings, the Boxer movement arose in a region (Shandong province in northern China) plagued by poor governance, over-population, and increasing resource scarcity, in this case amplified by a series of natural disasters that befell northern China in the late 1890s.<sup>675</sup> Similarly, and again much like its historical predecessors, the Boxer movement cohered around a loose secret society network, rumoured to have itself evolved out of the Eight Trigrams Sect that had plagued Manchu authorities almost a century earlier.<sup>676</sup> The Boxers claimed to possess certain magical powers, including

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<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

<sup>675</sup> Joseph W. Esherick. *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 173-181.

<sup>676</sup> Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, pp. 390-391.

invulnerability to swords and guns, and also initially subscribed to a millenarian and anti-Manchu restorationist agenda. Unlike their historical predecessors, however, the Boxers enjoyed a degree of tolerance and eventually even overt sponsorship from the local authorities.<sup>677</sup> In time, they were even weaned of their anti-Manchu sentiments to ally with the imperial court in an ultimately futile attempt to expel the foreigners and exterminate their local (and predominantly Christian) collaborators.<sup>678</sup> Most critically of all, alongside more familiar sectarian themes of restoration and millenarianism, the Boxers' vehement xenophobia also incorporated more novel themes of anti-colonialism and proto-nationalism. In this respect at least, the Boxers can most usefully be compared not to previous sectarian rebellions throughout Chinese history, but rather to other roughly contemporaneous religious *qua* nationalist rebellions in Korea, the Philippines and elsewhere.<sup>679</sup> These movements sought unsuccessfully to resist the growing encroachment of a Western-dominated global state system. But in evoking themes of national solidarity, mediated though they were through indigenous spiritual frameworks, these various 'revolts against the West' also paradoxically signified the concurrent spread of nationalist sentiments throughout the world. An audacious reading of the Boxers and their counterparts elsewhere in East Asia would thus cast them as the mid-wives of nationalism throughout the former Sinosphere, and as heralds of the consolidation of a modern system of sovereign

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<sup>677</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>678</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 395.

<sup>679</sup>On the Korean Tonghak rebellion of 1894 as a religious *qua* nationalist movement, see for example Benjamin B. Weems. *Reform, Rebellion, and the Heavenly Way*. Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 1964. On the Santa Iglesia movement in the Philippines, which similarly incorporated millenarian Christian and folk themes with a proto-nationalist hostility towards first Spanish and then American occupiers, see for example Ikehata Setsuho. "Uprisings of Hesukristos in the Philippines." In *Millenarianism in Asian History*, edited by Ishii Yoneo, 143-74. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 1993. See specifically 151-157. Esherick has also suggested the scope for limited comparisons between the Boxers and the Ghost Dance and Maji-Maji rebellions in the South-Western United States and German-governed Tanganyika respectively, although these last two movements cannot truly be regarded as being nationalistic in their underlying character and Esherick does not impute nationalistic sentiments to these last two movements. See Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pp. 316-317.

nation-states. A less bold but perhaps more sustainable interpretation would instead accent their transitional and essentially janus-faced character, one face turned backwards towards the receding world of the Celestial Empire and the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the other turned forwards towards the coming nationalist world of Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, and Mao Tse-Tung.

From their conquest of China in 1644, the Manchu conquerors had struggled against the hostility of the Han majority and recurrent tendencies towards provincialism and rebellion to carve out the richest and most successful of the Old World gunpowder empires. Simultaneously, the Manchus had inherited and maintained an elaborate suzerain international order that had provided unrivalled stability and prosperity to the peoples of East Asia down to the mid-nineteenth century. This order had been predicated on a cosmology that elevated the emperor to the status of Son of Heaven. It had also been sustained by a deeply ritualistic style of tributary diplomacy that sought to re-affirm the emperor's supreme authority, while minimizing the Chinese people's exposure to potentially subversive outside influences. For the Qing Dynasty, the imposition of strict controls over contacts between Chinese and the outside world was a vital pre-requisite for the maintenance of order, domestically as well as internationally. Conversely, for Western merchants and missionaries, who coveted the prospect of greater access to Asian markets and souls, the tributary diplomacy of the Sinosphere stood as an arcane and intolerable barrier impeding the spread of commerce, Christianity, and civilization. Where one party regarded the Sinosphere as a form of insulation protecting the centre of civilization from the subversive influences of the barbarians, the other regarded it as the most egregious outgrowth of Oriental barbarism and despotism, its very existence an affront to Western 'standards of civilization.'



With hindsight, it is evident that Manchu fears concerning the subversive consequences of increased contacts with the outside world were well-founded, for East Asia's integration with the global state system and China's internal disintegration were ultimately intimately connected with one another. This paradoxical combination of integrative and disintegrative dynamics was no more evident than through a consideration of the origins of the revolutionary coalition that finally destroyed the Chinese empire. Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance, which provided the intellectual leadership of the 1911 revolution, consisted primarily of a diaspora network of overseas Chinese students who had chosen to study abroad to acquire the skills necessary to overthrow the Manchus and inaugurate a nationalist revolution in China.<sup>680</sup> Himself a Christian who had spent much of his youth in Honolulu, Sun-Yat-sen worked tirelessly from the 1890s onwards to mobilize financial and political support for a nationalist revolution among the burgeoning diaspora communities of overseas Chinese that had emerged throughout East Asia in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>681</sup> From Honolulu to Singapore to Tokyo, Sun Yat-sen steadily cultivated an overseas support base for the revolution, even as continuing emigration from China laid the structural foundations for a new East Asian economic order built around intersecting and transnationally dispersed Chinese family business networks.<sup>682</sup> Meanwhile, within China itself, the decentralization of military and fiscal power to the provinces that had begun with the Taiping rebellion continued to intensify, the dynasty's efforts at military modernization accelerating rather than ameliorating this

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<sup>680</sup>On the role of the Revolutionary Alliance in helping to catalyse the revolution of 1911, see Michael Gaster. "The Republican Revolutionary Movement." In *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 11 - Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part II*, edited by Denis Twitchett and John King Fairbank, 463-534. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. See specifically pp. 484-506.

<sup>681</sup>Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, pp. 455-458. See also Takeshi Hameshita. "The Intra-Regional System in East Asia in Modern Times." In *Network Power - Japan and Asia*, edited by Peter Katzenstein and Takashi Shiraishi, 113-35. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997. See specifically pp. 132-135.

<sup>682</sup>Hameshita, 'The Intra-Regional System in East Asia', pp. 134-135.

process.<sup>683</sup> With the revolutionaries' successful infiltration of the New Army, these two dynamics – a diaspora nationalist mobilization borne of global economic integration, and provincial militarization symptomatic of internal disintegration – were finally conjoined in the revolution of 1911.

With the abdication of the last Chinese emperor on February 12 1912, two hundred and sixty eight years of Manchu rule finally ended.<sup>684</sup> Over the course of the preceding century, both the empire and the international order that it sustained had experienced a crisis of legitimacy encompassing institutional decay, foreign invasion, millenarian rebellion, and nationalist revolution. Like Latin Christendom before it, the Sinosphere faltered as a result of a fatal conjuncture of institutional decay, ideological shocks, and system-wide increases in violence interdependence. By the onset of their respective crises, both the papal-imperial diarchy and the Qing dynasty had been seriously weathered by processes of internal corrosion that seriously diminished their ability to manage conflict within and between political communities. Similarly, in both instances, the authoritative institutions of canon law and tributary diplomacy failed as their ideological and material foundations fell away. In Christendom, however, nemesis came from within, the Reformation shattering Europe's religious unity and inspiring an Absolutist counter-reaction that eventually yielded a European sovereign state system. In the Sinosphere, by contrast, the suzerain state system faltered under the combined impact of external assaults and internal rebellion. The Taiping rebellion, the Boxer rising and the secular nationalist revolution of 1911 each represented different responses to the encroaching Western-dominated state system, their leaders appropriating diverse ideas from the foreigners even as they each sought to restore China's traditional pre-eminence over the barbarians. The rebels' intentions

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<sup>683</sup>On the emergence of elements of the New Army as revolutionary actors, see Gaster, 'The Republican Revolutionary Movement', pp. 507-512.

<sup>684</sup>Cambridge History, Volume 11 part 2, p. 523.

notwithstanding, each borrowing tended to reinforce the intertwining trends of regional integration and domestic disintegration. This trend would persist after 1911, with China forced to endure four more decades of warlordism, revolution and foreign invasion before central government was effectively re-established on the mainland. However, with the abdication of the last Son of Heaven, the greatest of the early modern gunpowder empires had passed, its demise fittingly heralding the onset of a century marked by the end of empire and the globalization of the Westphalian state system.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE ORIGINS, CONSTITUTION, AND DECAY OF THE GLOBAL STATE SYSTEM

#### Introduction

On Christmas day, 1991, the Soviet Union was formally dissolved, marking in its demise the apparent triumph of the nation-state as the world's dominant form of political community. Over the course of the twentieth century, the political organization of the world was transformed as four successive waves of imperial disintegration facilitated the universalization of the nation-state as the world's accepted model of legitimate statehood.<sup>685</sup> Superficially, the universalization of the nation-state appeared to represent the culmination of European international society's centuries long expansion, with the legitimacy concepts and fundamental institutions first forged in the Atlantic state system at last acquiring global reach. In its final years, the Soviet Union's imperial constitution, command economy, and authoritarian political superstructure had appeared to condemn it as a geopolitical dinosaur, with its demise seeming epitomize the inexorable ascendancy of national self-determination, market capitalism, and republican sovereignty as the constitutional principles of a global international society.<sup>686</sup>

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<sup>685</sup>These successive episodes of imperial disintegration were as follows: (1) the dissolution of the Manchu Chinese, German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman empires either immediately before or following WWI; (2) the defeat of the Nazi, Japanese and fascist Italian empires in World War II; (3) the dismantling of European colonial empires from 1945-1975; and (4) the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

<sup>686</sup>The classic statement of this optimistic post-Cold War perspective remains Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.

The liberal triumphalism that attended the Soviet Union's collapse was already a fading memory by the turn of the millennium, but with the attacks of 9/11 and the ensuing war on terrorism, the global state system's underlying frailty was spectacularly exposed. Al Qaeda's assaults on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon struck respectively at two iconic symbols of global capitalism and bureaucratically administered state military power. Additionally, they also represented a violent repudiation not only of American hegemony, but also of the deeper constitutional principles underpinning global international society. The post-Westphalian reconceptualization of religion as referring to an abstract body of beliefs rather than to an embodied community of believers; the post-revolutionary transition from sacred to popular legitimations of state sovereignty; even the post-imperial universalization of the nation-state as the world's modal form of political community – each of these aspects of world order constituted the ultimate targets of the global jihadist insurgency.

The following two chapters are devoted to an examination of the jihadist challenge to world order, as well as to the larger processes of systemic decay that initially brought it into being, and that will likely persist after its eventual defeat. The discussion proceeds in seven sections. In chapter eight, I begin by tracing the global state system's origins, before then describing its constitutional principles and fundamental institutions. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the processes of systemic decay out of which the jihadist challenge has emerged. Having outlined the state system's origins, constitution, operation and decay in chapter eight, I proceed to a more focused analysis of the character and likely consequences of the global jihadist insurgency in chapter nine. Section four outlines jihadism's philosophical underpinnings, stressing its uncompromising incompatibility with the constitutional principles of the global state system. Section five articulates the intersection of

national, regional, and global forces within which the jihadist insurgency germinated in the 1970s-1990s. In section six, I situate the post 9/11 global confrontation between the jihadists and the United States within my broader narrative of systemic decay. I conclude with an analysis of the strategic mis-steps of the United States and its allies in their struggle against jihadism, arguing that these mis-steps are attributable to the international community's inability to comprehend jihadism within the context of the broader constellation of challenges now threatening the state system's long term viability.

## **8.1 The Origins of the Global State System**

### **8.1.1 The Nineteenth Century Origins of the Global State System**

The global state system's origins can be traced to the unfolding of four overlapping macro-processes originating in Europe's long nineteenth century (1789-1914). These processes were the advent of the popular sovereignty revolution, the emergence of industrial capitalism, the revolution in state power (henceforth referred to as the administrative revolution), and the rise of the 'new' imperialism. The first three of these processes established the ideal, material and institutional conditions needed to facilitate the birth of a global state system, while the last process advanced this outcome by forcibly integrating the world's polities into a single geopolitical space for the first time.

From the American Revolution through to the Congress of Vienna, the Atlantic state system had been shaken by a seismic shift in prevailing conceptions of political legitimacy that would eventually exert globally transformative effects. The sovereign state system that had evolved following Europe's Wars of Religion had cohered

around a value complex derived from a highly inegalitarian social milieu, in which monarchy, aristocracy and church together formed the primary organizational foci around which collective life revolved.<sup>687</sup> Monarchical power was legitimized in explicitly paternalistic terms, with the power of the sovereign ruler conceived as an earthly replication and complement to the divine authority of an almighty God.<sup>688</sup> Irrespective of the post-Reformation re-conceptualization of religion from body of believers to body of beliefs, monarchical power remained wreathed in a sacred aura throughout the Absolutist era, with the king's powers said to derive directly from his status as one of 'God's lieutenants' charged with governing his subjects in accordance with divine law.<sup>689</sup> Consistent with its conception of society as a divinely ordained and hierarchically structured order, Absolutist theory was necessarily authoritarian in its emphasis on the nature of law as sovereign command, one that warranted subjects' unconditional obedience with the edicts of the king.<sup>690</sup> In an environment dominated by subsistence agriculture and in which the atomising effects of market relations had yet to properly percolate beyond Europe's cities, the patronal outlook of the landed aristocracy provided a further structural reinforcement to the rigidly hierarchical constitutional values upon which the *ancien regime* was sustained.<sup>691</sup>

The ideas that fuelled the popular sovereignty revolution challenged every core element of the Absolutist order.<sup>692</sup> Whereas divine right Absolutism emphasized a top-down theory of sovereignty, with the monarchy's powers to rule said to have been

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<sup>687</sup>On this point, see generally Burns, "The Idea of Absolutism."

<sup>688</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>689</sup>Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>690</sup>On the Absolutist conception of sovereignty as legislative command, see Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, pp. 97-99.

<sup>691</sup>On the distinctive moral culture of patronal social systems, and their distinctiveness from those characterized by centralized bureaucracies and effectively operating market economies, see Gellner, 'Patrons and Clients', p. 4.

<sup>692</sup>See generally Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics*; Jacques Godechot. *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century 1770-1799*. New York: The Free Press, 1965; and Hall, *National Collective Identity*, especially chapters six and seven.

conferred by God, the revolutionaries stressed a bottom-up theory of sovereignty that legitimized state power by reference to its presumed concordance with the will of the governed.<sup>693</sup> *Demos* replaced *cosmos* as the fountainhead of political legitimacy, with the old order's emphasis on the divine and transcendent sources of state power being challenged by a republican insistence upon mundane and immanent sources of authority, specifically those of human reason and the popular will. In republican lights, reason was to replace revelation as the foundation of political order, with consent replacing command as the basic constitutional principle underwriting legislative authority.<sup>694</sup>

Despite its initially successful suppression in Europe, the popular sovereignty revolution nevertheless bequeathed emphases on self-determination, popular eudemonism, and human emancipation that would prove irrepressible in the long term.<sup>695</sup> Aiding the diffusion of the popular sovereignty revolution was the second great macro-process of the nineteenth century, the emergence of industrial capitalism. With the coming of the industrial revolution, the societies of Western Europe and North America witnessed a quantum leap in their productive and destructive capacities on a scale unprecedented in human history. The invention of the railroad, the steam engine and the steam-ship knitted societies together in ever denser and broader networks of commercial exchange, while innovations such as the steam-driven mill and the invention of the bureaucratically organized modern factory created qualitatively more intensive concentrations of mechanical and human productive

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<sup>693</sup>R. R. Palmer. *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800*, Volume 1. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959, p. 114.

<sup>694</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>695</sup>On the initially successful suppression of republicanism in Europe, followed by Europe's increasing polarization along democratic and authoritarian lines from the 1830s onwards, see Alan Cassels. *Ideology and International Relations in the Modern World, The New International History Series*. London New York: Routledge, 1996, chapter three.



power than had previously existed.<sup>696</sup> These innovations dramatically raised the wealth-generating capacities of host societies, while also permitting a parallel increase in the scale and spatial reach of forces of destruction.<sup>697</sup> The revolutionary increase in productivity affected by industrialization progressively freed up ever larger reserves of men for potential mobilization into states' armed forces, while advances in transportation and communication (spearheaded respectively by the railroad and the telegraph) permitted states to concentrate and project armed force more rapidly and over greater distances than ever before.<sup>698</sup>

More importantly even than these technological and organizational innovations, however, industrialization progressively transformed the social composition of Western societies by drawing an ever larger percentage of the population into anonymous relations of market exchange. In so doing, it promoted either the dissolution of existing networks of patronage and kinship, or more commonly their subordination and re-articulation within the parameters of a market economy and a rational-bureaucratic state apparatus.<sup>699</sup> With the spread of industrial capitalism, organized violence was largely expelled from the social relations of production and concentrated instead within the policing and military institutions of the state, in so doing promoting a formal separation of the political/public and economic/private spheres.<sup>700</sup> Simultaneously, the accelerated urbanization spurred by industrialization hastened a homogenization of cultures within states, a process that was further entrenched towards the end of the nineteenth century through the introduction of compulsory state-sponsored education and the advent of mass media

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<sup>696</sup>On this process, see for example Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, pp. 137-147.

<sup>697</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 222-227.

<sup>698</sup>*Ibid.* See also Hirst, *War and Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p. 28.

<sup>699</sup>On this point, see for example Christopher Dandeker. *Surveillance, Power and Modernity - Bureaucracy and Discipline from 1700 to the Present Day*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, p. 100.

<sup>700</sup>Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, p. 191.

such as mass circulation newspapers.<sup>701</sup> Despite their halting and gradual spread, the technological, organizational, and social changes accompanying industrialization progressively consolidated the imaginative grip of the nation upon the popular consciousness, thereby further nurturing the ascendancy of ideologies identified with the popular sovereignty revolution.

The popular sovereignty and industrial revolutions that swept nineteenth century Western Europe and North America have both been justly recognized by generations of social scientists for their transformative effects. Less frequently acknowledged has been the equally revolutionary increase in state capacity that defined the epoch. Throughout the long nineteenth century, Europe's polities experienced a revolution in their mode of administration that both complemented and reinforced synchronous transformations in their terms of legitimation and capacities for organized production and destruction. Just as the Absolutist state had constituted an advance over the Renaissance monarchies that had preceded it, so too the emerging nation-states of the nineteenth century embodied a qualitative improvement in administrative capacity over their Absolutist predecessors.<sup>702</sup> For all of their superficial modernity, Absolutist states had lacked direct infrastructural power over the bulk of their population, with monarchs relying on a system of indirect rule through local aristocratic intermediaries to maintain peace and order throughout their territories.<sup>703</sup> Far from constituting uniformly administered and centrally governed domains, Absolutist states had remained pockmarked by private seigneurial jurisdictions, their pretensions towards rational administration pervasively

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<sup>701</sup>See generally Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 35-39.

<sup>702</sup>Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, p. 173.

<sup>703</sup>See for example Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism*.

compromised by institutionalized concessions to church, aristocracy, and local custom.<sup>704</sup>

By contrast, the nation-state realised levels of political centralization and administrative reach of which even the most ambitious of Absolutist monarchs could only have dreamed. The mechanization of means of transportation and later the development of electronic media such as the telegraph enabled states to more deeply penetrate societies than had previously been possible, facilitating the collection and storage of a greatly expanded corpus of information about governed populations.<sup>705</sup> Relatedly, the development of statistics and the birth of the social sciences permitted society to be rendered far more legible to rulers than before, inspiring a concomitant expansion in government ambitions to engage in wholesale projects of social engineering for the benefit of the governed.<sup>706</sup> The unfolding shift from Absolutist to republican modes of sovereignty provided a powerful ideological justification for this expansion of state activities to promote popular welfare, while the greatly enhanced pools of taxable wealth made available by the industrial revolution provided states with the material wherewithal to do so. In this way, the popular sovereignty and industrial revolutions combined with the less conspicuous administrative revolution to bequeath formidable new state-society complexes, with the combination of democratic legitimation, industrial wealth, and expanded administrative surveillance and control endowing the state with historically unmatched capacities for internal resource mobilization and external power projection.<sup>707</sup>

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<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>705</sup> Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, p. 173.

<sup>706</sup> On this point, see generally James C. Scott. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, Yale Agrarian Studies. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998.

<sup>707</sup> On this process, see Amir Weiner. "Introduction: Landscaping the Human Garden." In *Landscaping the Human Garden - Twentieth Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, edited by Amir Weiner, 1-18. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. See specifically pp. 2-3.

The combined impact of the popular sovereignty, industrial, and administrative revolutions was to markedly increase the power of states over their own societies, while simultaneously opening up a radically expanded asymmetry of power between the West and the non-European world.<sup>708</sup> This power asymmetry culminated in the final macro-process considered here, specifically the ‘new imperialism’ that integrated the world into a single geopolitical space in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The final surge of European imperialism completed longstanding processes of Western imperial expansion. These processes dated from the fifteenth century at least, and had received a major fillip in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with Europe’s first military revolution and the ensuing consolidation of European naval supremacy *vis-à-vis* non-European societies.<sup>709</sup> Critically, the predominantly naval character of European military supremacy had placed serious upper limits on Western empire-building projects in Eurasia and Africa prior to the mid-late nineteenth century. While European innovations in ship-building and fortification had permitted the establishment of a string of fortified coastal trading settlements in Southern and Eastern Asia prior to this point, European capacities to project power into the Eurasian interior had previously been limited, and had been further curtailed by the robust land-based military power of indigenous gunpowder empires.<sup>710</sup> Similarly, in Africa, the armed resistance of local potentates had combined with natural epidemiological barriers to inhibit European imperial expansion into the interior.<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>708</sup>Dandeker, *Surveillance, Power and Modernity*, p. 89; and Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, p. 226.

<sup>709</sup>McNeill, *The Global Condition*, pp. 113-116.

<sup>710</sup>Black, ‘War and International Relations’, p. 130.

<sup>711</sup>On this point, Thompson contrasts the experience of the European conquerors in the New World, where local susceptibilities to disease facilitated European colonial expansion, with European experiences in Afro-Eurasia, where European susceptibilities to disease tended to inhibit rather than assist projects of imperialism. See Thompson, ‘The Military Superiority Thesis’, p. 151.

By the last third of the nineteenth century, however, the technological, organizational and scientific bounties of the industrial and administrative revolutions had corroded the last remaining barriers to European expansion. With the diffusion of the railroad and the steam-train, Europeans were at last able to effect the political, economic, and military penetration of the Eurasian and African heartlands.<sup>712</sup> The roughly synchronous invention of the telegraph and the development of a trans-continental network of submarine telegraph cables permitted the rapid conveyance of market transactions and bureaucratic commands across the globe, thereby further facilitating European imperial expansion, while the administrative revolution within Europe found its global echo in the construction of more intrusive state apparatuses throughout Europe's maritime empires.<sup>713</sup> Meanwhile, in the African interior, even the previously immutable epidemiological barriers to European conquest were ultimately overcome (or at least reduced to manageable levels) through advances in Western medicine.<sup>714</sup>

The specific dynamics by which different non-European polities succumbed to Western colonial penetration varied, with the steady decomposition of the Ottoman and Qing empires contrasting with the fairly rapid absorption of large numbers of African polities following the European carve-up of the continent at the Congress of Berlin. Additionally, in some isolated instances (e.g. Siam, Afghanistan), non-European rulers were able to take advantage of European imperial rivalries to evade the indignity of colonial subjugation entirely. But neither the varying dynamics of Western expansion in Eurasia and Africa nor the anomalous instances in which polities escaped the grasp of empire detracted from a larger reality, namely that by the

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<sup>712</sup>Black, 'War and International Relations', p. 131.

<sup>713</sup>On the growing importance of the telegraph in knitting the world together into a single geopolitical space during this period, see generally Daniel R. Headrick. *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

<sup>714</sup>On this point, see for example McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, p. 284.

century's end, the peoples of the world had for the first time in history been integrated into a single global international system.

### 8.1.2 The Thirty Years' Crisis, the Decline of the West and the Genesis of the Global Sovereign State System

From a global vantage point, the dominant *motif* of the nineteenth century had been the West's meteoric ascendancy over other civilizational centres, with the century witnessing the envelopment of non-European polities throughout Eurasia and Africa by a Western-dominated global international system. The collective dominance the West enjoyed over other civilizational centres at this time was anomalous when situated within the broader history of East-West relations. Additionally, the subordination of non-Europeans within the framework of empire sat uneasily with the supposed universality of the ideals of the popular sovereignty revolution. As the twentieth century progressed, this structural contradiction between empire and popular sovereignty would be sharply exposed, eventually resolving itself through the establishment of a global sovereign state system. But the structural contradiction between imperialism and popular sovereignty was by itself insufficient to produce this change. Rather, just as a global international system had first emerged as a by-product of the imperialism enabled by Europe's inter-locking popular sovereignty, industrial, and administrative revolutions, so too the transition to a global sovereign state system emerged only after a radical contraction in the power of the Western European metropole. Ironically, this contraction in power was in turn driven by a series of overlapping crises centring round the very same macro-processes that had sustained Europe's ascendancy to world hegemony in the first instance.

The shift from divine to popular legitimations of political authority; the exponential increase in humankind's productive powers wrought by industrialization; the equally prodigious growth in the state's powers of administration, policing and surveillance – each of these trends had appeared in 1900 to hold out the prospect of dramatically improving the moral and material condition of humanity. Nevertheless, each of these macro-processes contained nightmarish potentialities, which were all realised in the first half of the twentieth century. Turning firstly to the ideological dimension of the crisis, the period 1914-1945 saw both the obliteration of the last vestiges of the *ancien regime* in Europe, as well as the onset of a global contest between regimes incarnating different variants of the popular sovereignty revolution. From the perspective of an investigation into the origins of a global sovereign state system, the pivotal year of the Great War was 1917. In this year, the Tsarist autocracy collapsed, the United States entered the war, and a systemic ideological polarization crystallized between the alternative universalisms of Wilsonian liberal internationalism and Soviet Bolshevism.<sup>715</sup> Both Wilsonian liberalism and Bolshevism claimed to embody the animating ideals of the popular sovereignty revolution, specifically those of individual and collective self-determination, popular eudemonism, and the promotion of human emancipation.<sup>716</sup> Equally, both claimed universal validity, with their respective advocates seeking to re-make the entire world in accordance with the tenets of their ideology. Most fundamentally for present purposes, both ideologies were explicitly anti-colonial in character. In the war's aftermath, the United States retained its Pacific colonial possessions, while the Bolsheviks were unsparing in their resort to arms to bring the bulk of the Romanov patrimony into their new Soviet empire. These departures from principle in their own

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<sup>715</sup>On this point, see Geoffrey Barraclough. *An Introduction to Contemporary History*. London: C.A. Watts & Co. Ltd, 1964, pp. 113-114.

<sup>716</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

spheres of influence notwithstanding, both polities remained deeply opposed to European colonialism, on the basis of both ideological conviction and hard-headed calculations of strategic self-interest.<sup>717</sup>

By 1918, an internal schism between liberal and socialist iterations of the popular sovereignty revolution that had simmered in Europe from 1848 onwards had been projected onto a global plane. Furthermore, with the establishment of the League of Nations, the ideal of national self-determination had been institutionalized as a constitutional principle of the international system, further undercutting the legitimacy of the colonial empires. In the war's immediate aftermath, the chief state sponsors of liberal and Bolshevik internationalism both turned inwards, partially limiting the subversive impact of their ideologies in the short term.<sup>718</sup> But this momentary reprieve for the colonial empires was offset by the immense material damage inflicted upon the European heartland by the advent of industrialized total warfare. Both the American Civil War and the Russo-Japanese war had provided early glimpses of the vastly destructive nature of industrial warfare. Additionally, both conflicts had also demonstrated the unpredictable and hugely dislocative social and political consequences for belligerents that could flow from the prolonged mass mobilization of citizens required to prosecute total war. But the battlefield destruction and socio-political dislocation of these precursor wars paled in comparison to the material devastation and social disruption experienced in Europe during and immediately after World War I.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>719</sup> On the material devastation and casualties wrought by WWI, see Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 359-360. See also Michael Geyer. "The Militarization of Europe, 1914-1945." In *The Militarization of the Western World, 1914-1945*, edited by John R. Gillis, 65-102. London: Rutgers University Press, 1989.



Surpassing in importance even the unprecedented human and material cost of World War I, the advent of industrial warfare produced three developments that further hastened the transition to a global sovereign state system. Firstly, the conflict destroyed the fragile international trading and financial order that had evolved in the *belle époque* of globalisation.<sup>720</sup> Having entered the conflict as the world's largest creditor nation, Britain emerged as one of the world's largest debtors.<sup>721</sup> A punitive reparations regime meanwhile retarded Germany's political and economic rehabilitation, while the United States refused to assume responsibility as the world's new lender of last resort, thus paving the way for continuing global economic instability and the revival of Great Power conflict in the 1930s.<sup>722</sup> Secondly, the intense pressures of mass mobilization associated with prosecuting prolonged war in the industrial age imposed formidable centrifugal strains on multi-ethnic empires. For the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Romanov empires, these pressures proved fatal, leading to the dissolution of these conglomerations and their eventual succession (in two out of three instances) by a fissiparous arc of unstable newly independent states.<sup>723</sup> Even for the French and British empires, which momentarily grew rather than contracted in the post-war period, the extensive wartime mobilization of colonial resources exerted centrifugal effects by nurturing the political self-consciousness of peripheral elites. Finally, the wartime dislocation of extensive core-periphery financial links hot-housed processes of peripheral economic development throughout the non-European world. In so doing, the war eroded the virtual monopoly on industrial capitalism the Western

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<sup>720</sup>On the collapse of the old *laissez-faire* global economic order and states' failed attempts to reconstitute components of it in the post-war period, see for example Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957, chapter two.

<sup>721</sup>Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 363.

<sup>722</sup>On Britain's inability to underwrite a functioning global financial order after World War I and the United States' unwillingness to perform this role, see generally Charles Poor Kindleberger. *The World in Depression, 1929-1939*. Rev. ed, *History of the World Economy in the Twentieth Century*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex ; Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1987.

<sup>723</sup>See generally Aviel Roshwald. *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914-1923*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2001.

world had enjoyed prior to this point, while also simultaneously nurturing the growth of politically active new constituencies in the colonies (e.g. organized labour) that proved generally hostile to colonial rule.<sup>724</sup>

With the advent of industrial total warfare and the emergence of a global ideological polarization between exponents of different variants of the popular sovereignty revolution, the normative and material bases of Europe's collective world hegemony were severely undermined. These trends merely accelerated with the revival of global Great Power conflict in the 1930s, only to be joined by a third destabilizing development, this one stemming from the nineteenth century revolution in state power. Prior to 1914, liberals and socialists alike had celebrated the discovery of the masses as the ultimate source of the state's authority, as well as hailing also the dramatic expansion in the state's infrastructural capacities for directly intervening into social life to promote popular welfare. Despite the progressive potentialities posed by these developments, however, the growth of what Zygmunt Bauman has labelled the 'gardening state' also portended darker possibilities, which were made horribly manifest from the 1930s onwards with the harnessing of state power to totalitarian projects of social transformation.<sup>725</sup> Writing on the mentality informing these projects, Amir Weiner notes that both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union shared a dualistic perception of the masses. Their ideological differences notwithstanding, both regimes perceived the masses as at once the ultimate source of the state's legitimacy, as well as also being a raw material to be sculpted by the state into a more orderly and more perfect society.<sup>726</sup> In both states, the latter task was to be accomplished through the systematic cataloguing, mapping and categorization of the population, followed by the

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<sup>724</sup>On this point with specific reference to the Dutch East Indies, see Takashi Shiraishi. *An Age in Motion - Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912-1926*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 90.

<sup>725</sup>Zygmunt Bauman. "Modernity and the Holocaust." In *Genocide: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Alexander Hilton Laban, 110-33. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, p. 110.

<sup>726</sup>Weiner, 'Introduction: Landscaping the Human Garden', p. 2.

filtering and elimination of toxic elements (either racial or class enemies) through the state's ruthless application of prophylactic violence.<sup>727</sup>

The Soviet Gulag, the Nazi Holocaust and Imperial Japanese atrocities in East Asia together revealed the terrifying magnitude of the crimes that unbridled totalitarian 'gardening states' were capable of perpetrating. In so doing, these regimes inadvertently catalysed developments that further hastened the global state system's emergence. For while Soviet atrocities went unrecognized and unpunished after World War II, the crimes of the Axis powers furthered delegitimized empire as a means of organizing relations between different political communities. The revulsion evoked by the Holocaust in particular also further discredited 'scientific' racism, a construct that had previously played a critical role in intellectually and morally justifying the 'new' imperialism to Western audiences.<sup>728</sup> Whereas international law had previously recognized a hierarchical trichotomy of civilized, barbarous, and savage nations, Axis war crimes illuminated the moral bankruptcy of the racist assumptions upon which these categories relied. Both the creation of the new international offence of 'crimes against humanity' and the passage of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflected a transition towards a more cosmopolitan international legal culture, one that explicitly attributed to individuals a raft of inalienable rights that accrued to them by dint of their status as human beings, without regard to their ethnic or racial background.<sup>729</sup> The largely hortatory status of the UDHR notwithstanding, this growth

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<sup>727</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 11-13. With specific reference to the Soviet Union, see Peter Holquist. "State Violence as Technique - the Logic of Soviet Totalitarianism." In *Landscaping the Human Garden - Twentieth Century Population Management in a Comparative Framework*, edited by Amir Weiner, 19-45. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

<sup>728</sup>Although in the Anglophone world at least, it is necessary to note that the intellectual justifications for scientific racism were already being comprehensively discredited well before the Holocaust. See generally Elazar Barkan. *The Retreat of Scientific Racism: Changing Concepts of Race in Britain and the United States between the World Wars*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

<sup>729</sup>For an argument that posits a tight inter-relationship between the rise of a universal human rights regime and post-war decolonization, see generally Christian Reus-Smit. "Human Rights and the Social Construction of Sovereignty." *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 4 (2001): 519-38.

of cosmopolitan legal norms effected a moral flattening of international society in the longer term, corroding the normative foundations of the European empires and thus speeding the evolution towards a global sovereign state system.

In 1914, the European powers had stood at the apex of a global international system that was dominated by the institution of empire, having been catapulted to this privileged position courtesy of the inter-locking popular sovereignty, industrial, and administrative revolutions that had begun to transform their societies during the nineteenth century. Between 1914 and 1945, Europe's position changed fundamentally, as first the continent and then the world were engulfed by a thirty years' crisis in which the devastating potentialities of these inter-locking revolutions were fully realised. By the end of the crisis, the popular sovereignty revolution had reverberated well beyond its Atlantic epicentre, its internal schisms refracted onto a global stage in the form of a systemic conflict between liberal and Bolshevik internationalism. The industrial revolution had spawned an equally revolutionary transformation in the intensity and destructiveness of warfare, with the desolation and socio-political dislocation unleashed by industrial total warfare accelerating processes of imperial dissolution throughout Eurasia. Finally, the horrific excesses of pathological 'garden states' made possible by the administrative revolution were prompting a seismic shift in the international legal landscape, with the hierarchical 'standard of civilization' increasingly giving way to a cosmopolitan international legal culture oriented to the universal promotion and protection of human rights.

By 1975, a mere three decades again after the conclusion of the thirty years' crisis, the European maritime empires had been largely dismantled, and the sovereign state universalized as the world's modal form of political unit. Over the course of a single lifetime, the global international system had been transformed. In 1900, an explicitly hierarchical international order reserved the privileges and protections of

sovereign recognition for ‘civilized’ nations, while the disenfranchised majority remained tied to the metropolitan powers in varying degrees of subordination. Conversely, by 1975, the institution of the sovereign state had been universalized, with the obligation to grant self-determination to colonial peoples having by then become entrenched in international law as an infeasible moral imperative. Thirty years forward once again, and the abolition of colonialism remains a cause for celebration, but the passage of time has revealed fragilities in the global sovereign state system that were unacknowledged in its infancy. But before these weaknesses may be considered, a more extensive review of the global state system’s constitution is first required.

## **8.2 The Constitution and Operation of the Global Sovereign State System**

### **8.2.1 The Normative Complex of the Global Sovereign State System**

Any analysis of the constitution of the contemporary international order must begin with an acknowledgement of three essential characteristics that differentiate it from both Christendom and the Sinosphere. Firstly, unlike either Christendom or the Sinosphere, which only ever prevailed within culturally or geographically discrete domains, the contemporary international order is literally global in its reach. Secondly, as a consequence of its global reach, the global state system is defined not by any underlying cultural unity, but rather by the homogeneity of its institutional forms, of which the rational-bureaucratic sovereign state is the most basic element. Finally, unlike its historical predecessors, the global state system lacks any overt cosmological foundations. On the one hand, this de-coupling of constitutional principles from any cosmological foundations has been both essential and unavoidable, given the irrepressible cultural and religious diversity of the polities making up the global state

system. On the other hand, the secular foundations of the contemporary world order are suffused with understandings of religion that strongly derive from Western Europe's very distinctive post-Reformation and post-revolutionary experiences. Consequently, the present world order remains acutely vulnerable to challenge by those agitating for an alternative formulation of the relationship between the sacred and the mundane worlds.

Its cultural diversity notwithstanding, the global state system is oriented around a constellation of identity-constitutive values that together condition conceptions of the ultimate purposes of collective association. In place of the medieval Christian concern for preparing for eternal salvation, or the Confucian preoccupation with the maintenance of cosmic harmony, the contemporary world order is distinguished by its elevation of the explicitly profane concerns of enhancing the happiness, autonomy, and freedom of individuals and nations as forming the collective *raison d'être* of government.<sup>730</sup> While concerns for promoting popular eudemonism were never entirely absent from traditional evaluations of governmental legitimacy, it has only been with the globalization of the popular sovereignty revolution that this goal has been elevated as forming the over-riding purpose of government.

In addition to its emphasis on promoting popular eudemonism, the global state system is also informed by an abiding commitment to advancing the cause of individual and collective self-determination. In contrast to the explicitly hierarchical and inegalitarian orders of Latin Christendom and the Sinosphere, the global state system's constitutional principles are insistently egalitarian in character.<sup>731</sup> This

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<sup>730</sup>On this point, I am again greatly indebted to Christian Reus-Smit's conception of both the moral purpose of the modern state and its impact on the design of the fundamental institutions of international society. See Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, pp. 127-129.

<sup>731</sup>Thus for example, Article 2.1 of the Charter of the United Nations states explicitly: 'The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members'. *Charter of the United Nations* [cited November 2 2007]. Available from <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>.

emphasis on the enhancement of individual and collective capacities for self-governance is rooted in both the Enlightenment principles informing the popular sovereignty revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the anti-racist and anti-imperialist norms that took hold globally in the post-World War II movement towards decolonization.<sup>732</sup> At the most basic level, the emphasis accorded to self-determination flows as a logical corollary to the Enlightenment's insistence upon the reliability of human reason over divine revelation as a guide for the conduct of temporal affairs. In severing the sacred cord that had previously connected the *polis* with the *cosmos*, Enlightenment thinkers delegitimated religious justifications for the institutionalized political and economic inequalities of the *ancien regime*.<sup>733</sup> Complementing this negative indictment of Old Regime values, many thinkers further advanced the claim that the human capacity for reasoning endowed citizens with both the mental ability and the moral right to determine their own destiny.<sup>734</sup> In the twentieth century, the moral flattening of international society that had begun with this revolution was completed with the discrediting of pseudo-scientific racist justifications for colonialism, and the ensuing development of global norms mandating rights of self-determination for all colonial peoples.

To the extent that one can isolate identity-constitutive norms within a milieu as culturally diverse as the global state system, these norms pertain to a near-universal consensus upon the centrality of popular eudemonism and of individual and collective self-determination as the legitimating imperatives of modern government. This emphasis on the promotion of temporal happiness and the maximization of human

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<sup>732</sup>Reus-Smit, 'Human Rights and the Social Construction of Sovereignty', pp. 529-533.

<sup>733</sup>On this point, see generally Karen Armstrong. *A History of God - from Abraham to the Present: The 4000-Year Quest for God*. London: Vintage, 1999, p. 339.

<sup>734</sup>On post-revolutionary Europeans' rejection of the notion of God as a 'celestial Big Brother' on grounds that such a conception of the divine placed humans in a state of unworthy servitude, and was thus incompatible with notions of human dignity, see *Ibid.*, pp. 403-404.

capacities for individual and collective self-determination is reflected also in the state system's ethical-prescriptive norms, which are self-consciously cosmopolitan in character and are institutionalized in the form of a rights-based moral regime that purports to be universal in its application. Recapitulating earlier comments, the ethical-prescriptive norms of the global state system were forged largely in response to the atrocities perpetrated by the Axis powers during World War II. The Axis powers had subscribed to caste-based ethical systems that assigned special moral significance to ethnic and racial differences, with the world conceived as a hierarchy of 'superior' and 'inferior' races locked in ceaseless existential struggle.<sup>735</sup> By contrast, the ethical-prescriptive norms that took hold in the post-war period are encoded within a rights-based framework in which individuals are assigned a core set of rights owed to them by dint of their status as human beings. The enactment of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the establishment of 'crimes against humanity' as an offence under international criminal law; the more recent establishment of an International Criminal Court claiming universal jurisdiction – each of these developments reflect the institutionalization of ethical-prescriptive norms anchored in a cosmopolitan liberal outlook.

Once again, the contrast between these norms and those of historical international orders is instructive. Where the ethical-prescriptive norms of Latin Christendom and the Sinosphere were thickly embedded within distinctive cultural traditions, derived their validity from their alleged concordance with divine laws, and were inflected with patronal and inegalitarian values, the norms of the global state system are officially disembedded from a particular cultural tradition, are secular and ecumenical in character, and are suffused with the egalitarian values characteristic of

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<sup>735</sup>On this point, see for example Michael Burleigh, and Wolfgang Wippermann. *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945*. Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.



rights-based moral cultures. The state system's egalitarian principles are further reflected in its power-legitimizing norms. The global state system is emphatically egalitarian in its maintenance of a regime of international legal equality between its constituent members. International law retains its obligatory character in the global state system, but in keeping the significance accorded to norms of individual and collective self-determination, states' obligations to obey are held to derive ultimately from the presumed grounding of international law in the consent of the contracting states.<sup>736</sup> Similarly, both citizens' obligations to observe domestic laws and governments' prerogatives to rule free from external interference are legitimized through reference to the perceived concordance between the laws of the state and the consent of the governed.<sup>737</sup> Admittedly, the egalitarian principles of the state system sit awkwardly with the institutional concessions (most notably the assignment of veto powers to the P5 members of the UN Security Council) granted to Great Powers to ensure their interest in maintaining the present international order. But these pragmatic accommodations are exceptions to the rule, and contrast dramatically with the pervasively hierarchical power-legitimizing norms that sustained both Christendom and the Sinosphere.

### 8.2.2 The Governing Institutional Framework of the Global Sovereign State System.

As with all orders, the global state system subsists on a combination of authoritative and coercive practices which are themselves channelled through a core set of fundamental institutions. Consistent with the egalitarian values that sustain it, the key loci of authoritative power within the contemporary world order are formally

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<sup>736</sup>Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p. 130.

<sup>737</sup>*Ibid.*

equal, territorially bounded, and domestically supreme sovereign states. Unlike either Christendom's composite monarchies or the Sinosphere's tributary kingdoms, contemporary sovereign states are not situated within hierarchically ordered and formally recognized transnational authority structures – to repeat Waltz's dictum, in the present order, 'None [are] entitled to command; none [are] required to obey'.<sup>738</sup> With the spread of the popular sovereignty revolution, the post-war international system witnessed a paradoxical dynamic wherein authoritative power became at once dispersed between polities while simultaneously being concentrated within them. On the one hand, decolonization entailed the dismantling of empires and the consequent cascading of the right to rule down to the level of the individual polity.<sup>739</sup> On the other hand, the globalization of the popular sovereignty revolution provided a powerful rationale for the intensified concentration and centralization of authoritative and coercive power *within* polities by activist governments claiming to rule in the name of the people. The end result has been both a formal levelling of authority structures within international society, as well as a sharpening of the conceptual divide between an international realm governed by the logic of anarchy, and a domestic realm governed by the logic of hierarchy.

Lacking the divine justifications for hierarchy evident in either Christendom or the Sinosphere, the global state system nevertheless possesses a range of authoritative institutions devoted to the cultivation of cooperation and the containment of enmity between member states. Naturally, these institutions bear the imprint of the egalitarian principles they are intended to sustain, and are generally designed with a view towards complementing and augmenting rather than undermining state sovereignty. Of these authoritative institutions, the most conspicuous is the United Nations, a permanent

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<sup>738</sup>Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 88.

<sup>739</sup>On this process, see generally Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, chapters eight to twelve.

universal conference of states designed to promote international peace and security while also advancing the purposes and ideals of the popular sovereignty revolution. The intimate association between the ideals of the popular sovereignty revolution and the institutional design of the UN is evident for example in both the importance it accords to public deliberation between member states and its institutionalization of the ‘one country, one vote’ principle. In contrast to either Christendom or the Sinosphere, where authoritative institutions were accorded legitimacy on account of their presumed concordance with cosmic and transcendent sources of authority, authoritative institutions such as the UN derive their legitimacy instead from their perceived concordance with mundane and immanent sources of authority, specifically the collective will of the member states.<sup>740</sup> Similarly, whereas authoritative power was exercised in Latin Christendom through the Church’s interpretation and enforcement of divinely inspired canon law, and in the Sinosphere through the emperor’s ritual enactment of rites believed to maintain temporal and spiritual harmony, in the global state system authoritative power is instead exercised through the systematic forging and mobilization of consensus between juridically equal sovereign communities.<sup>741</sup>

The central importance accorded to consensus within the UN is consistent with the legitimacy principles informing the more fundamental institutions within which the UN is embedded. Following Christian Reus-Smit, I nominate multilateralism and contractual international law as the primary institutions through which authoritative power is mobilized and channelled internationally within the contemporary world order.<sup>742</sup> Furthermore, I endorse Reus-Smit’s related claim that these fundamental institutions are sustained by a conception of law as reciprocal accord, and that they

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<sup>740</sup>On the contractarian essence of modern international law and its related fundamental institutions, see generally Christian Reus-Smit. "Politics and International Legal Obligation." *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003), p. 616.

<sup>741</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>742</sup>Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, pp. 131-132.

gradually took shape as a systemic outgrowth of the rise of republican government within sovereign states from the nineteenth century.<sup>743</sup> Nevertheless, while the legitimacy principles of the popular sovereignty revolution provide the primary normative basis of authoritative power within the global state system, they are not the sole basis upon which authoritative power relies. Rather, the global state system is also infused with the values of a rationalized world culture originating from the Enlightenment and the subsequent nineteenth century administrative revolution.<sup>744</sup> While multilateralism and contractual international law form the fundamental cooperative institutions of the state system, international cooperation is practically realised through the operation of specialized rational-bureaucratic agencies such as the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions. The authority of these institutions in turn derives from the perception that their policies are guided by the expert knowledge of technocratic elites, and that the rational application of this knowledge will produce desired outcomes for the international community. The dual origins of the state system's authoritative institutions, in both the popular sovereignty and the administrative revolutions of the nineteenth century, have introduced a tension between democratic and technocratic legitimacy principles, one that in practice complicates but does not decisively stymie collective efforts to maintain order internationally.<sup>745</sup>

Notwithstanding the internal tensions between the democratic and technocratic bases of international institutions, the exercise of authoritative power through these institutions remains vital for maintaining world order. Nevertheless, the maintenance

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<sup>743</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>744</sup>On this point, see generally John Meyer. "The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State." In *Studies of the Modern World-System*, edited by Albert Bergesen, 109-37. New York: Academic Press, 1980.

<sup>745</sup>On this tension between democratic and technocratic bases of legitimacy with specific reference to the World Trade Organization, see generally Daniel C. Esty. "The World Trade Organization's Legitimacy Crisis." *World Trade Review* 1, no. 1 (2002): 7-22.

of order in the global state system is equally dependent upon recourse to authorized practices of organized violence. This dependence is most evident in the system-wide expectation that sovereign states will exercise monopolies on organized violence within their respective territories. In the contemporary state system, the maintenance of a monopoly on organized violence has been elevated as forming a crucial, even constitutive characteristic of the nation-state. The considerations informing this expectation have been both normative and functional in character. Normatively, the spread of republican government from the nineteenth century bequeathed new expectations that the state owed an obligation to protect the citizen *qua* sovereign from physical attack.<sup>746</sup> As the long nineteenth century progressed, this imperative was increasingly realised through the dramatic growth of the state's policing and surveillance capacities, the advent of mass conscript citizen armies, and the progressive delegitimation and elimination of non-state practices of violence such as privateering and mercenarism.<sup>747</sup> Functionally, the trend towards coercive monopoly has been reinforced by states' commitment to collectively suppressing activities (e.g. piracy and terrorism) deemed inimical to the common interests of the international community.<sup>748</sup>

Sovereign states, purporting to possess a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within their territories, constitute the foundations upon which the maintenance of international order ultimately depends. For all of the undoubted

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<sup>746</sup>Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, Sovereigns*, p. 148.

<sup>747</sup>*Ibid.* See also Deborah Avant. "From Mercenary Armies to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War." *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000): 41-72; Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, pp. 229-231; Macgregor Knox. "Mass Politics and Nationalism as Military Revolution: The French Revolution and After." In *The Dynamics of Military Revolution 1300-2050*, edited by Macgregor Knox and Wilson Murray, 57-73. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; and Barry R. Posen. "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power." *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 80-124.

<sup>748</sup>See generally Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*. See also Donald J. Puchala. "Of Pirates and Terrorists: What Experience and History Teach." *Contemporary Security Policy* 26, no. 1 (2005): 1-24.

importance of authoritative institutions such as the UN, the efficacy of these institutions presupposes the comprehensive disarmament and pacification of governed populations by sovereign states. In a world lacking any central and supreme locus of recognized authority, the maintenance of order depends upon rulers' capacity to centralize, concentrate and cage coercive power within state institutions to a degree that has no parallels in the pre-industrial age.<sup>749</sup> Paradoxically, however, World War II and subsequent conflicts have repeatedly demonstrated that the concentrated violence of the modern nation-state also provides rulers with formidable capacities to destabilize international order. Consequently, local monopolies on force have been supplemented since 1945 by the maintenance of a collective capacity for marshalling force for the purpose of maintaining world order. In establishing the United Nations Security Council and empowering it to sanction the use of violence for the purposes of maintaining international peace and security, the UN's founding states recognized the necessity of supplementing the authoritative power of international institutions with the coercive power of the strongest sovereign states. Thus, while the institution of war remains a vital instrument for enforcing international order, the scope for its legitimate exercise has been limited to include only acts of self-defence, with responsibility for enforcing norms against aggression residing collectively with the UNSC. This prohibition on war except for defensive purposes contrasts radically with Christendom's acceptance of the intertwined relationship between feuding and litigation as acceptable means of conflict resolution, and reflects distinctively modern aspirations to completely replace war with law as the preferred mechanism of order maintenance internationally. Equally, in delegating responsibility for order enforcement to a community of states acting under the Security Council's imprimatur,

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<sup>749</sup>On the limited control over organized violence exercised by forms of polity preceding the modern nation-state, see Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, p. 57. On this point with specific reference to the monarchies of early modern Europe, see Kaiser, *Politics and War*, p. 135.

the constitution of the contemporary international order acknowledges the high fragmentation of coercive and authoritative power characteristic of sovereign state systems, thereby distinguishing it from the Sinosphere's exclusive reliance on imperial power as a bulwark against aggression.

### 8.2.3 The Order-Enabling Material Context of the Global State System

One of the most striking characteristics of the contemporary world order is the sheer magnitude of the ambitions underwriting its constitution. In both Christendom and the Sinosphere, the religious foundations of international order nurtured an acceptance of the limited, fragile, and imperfect character of collective attempts to replicate cosmic order in the temporal world. By contrast, the contemporary order is explicitly secular in its foundations, with the United Nations' commitment to the eradication of war, poverty and tyranny reflecting a deep confidence dating from the Enlightenment in the malleability of both human nature and social reality. More important perhaps than even the different philosophical underpinnings of historic versus contemporary international orders, the grand ambitions informing the present order may also be explained by reference to the unique imperatives imposed by the material context out of which it emerged.

Unlike its historical predecessors, the global state system emerged in an age in which humanity's capacities for production and destruction were being transformed by the industrial revolution. With the onset of the 'new imperialism' and the nineteenth century innovations of the telegraph, the railroad and the steamship, the world became enmeshed within global networks of production and exchange of unprecedented reach and density, a trend that merely intensified in the second half of the twentieth century

with further innovations in transportation and communication.<sup>750</sup> Whereas Christendom and the Sinosphere were grounded in relatively static material environments dominated by subsistence agriculture, the global state system has conversely emerged in a milieu which technological constraints on self-sustaining and continuous economic growth have largely been transcended. Similarly, whereas Christendom's poverty and the Sinosphere's pre-industrial character placed a definite ceiling on the scale of actors' destructive capacities, the advent of industrial and later nuclear warfare has removed all limits to the physical destruction rulers are collectively capable of unleashing.

The global state system can also be distinguished from its forebears in the different combination of kinship, patronage, bureaucratic and commercial mobilizational networks woven into its composition. As I have illustrated in previous chapters, in both Christendom and the Sinosphere, aristocratic kinship and patronage networks formed the basis of vital conduits for the mobilization of social power. Conversely, while kinship and patronage retain some importance as bases of mobilization in the contemporary world order, their relative significance has been surpassed by rationally organized state bureaucracies and formally depoliticized world-straddling networks of commercial exchange. With the universalization of a reflexively monitored state system, the rational-bureaucratic state has become generalized as the dominant institutional form through which authoritative and coercive power is channelled.<sup>751</sup> In many post-colonial states especially, state bureaucracies have been imbricated over powerful kinship and patronage networks, with the resulting polities coming to resemble at best partial approximations of the

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<sup>750</sup>On this point, see for example David Held. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Oxford: Polity, 1999, chapter three.

<sup>751</sup>See again generally Meyer, 'The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State.'



ideal-typical Weberian state.<sup>752</sup> Similarly, while global economic integration has accelerated rapidly in recent decades, this integration has been uneven in its geographical distribution, and the subsumption of social relations within the framework of market capitalism remains far from complete. These caveats aside, the dominance of state and market over less abstract and more personalistic kinship and patronage networks is undeniable, and is particularly pronounced when juxtaposed against the experience of my historical cases.

Of all the contrasts between the contemporary world order and its historical predecessors, however, the most salient relates to the state system's level of violence interdependence. The global state system emerged out of the crucible of industrial total warfare, and took shape during the Cold War under the shadow of nuclear annihilation. Unlike its predecessors, the contemporary order emerged in a context characterized by both an exceptionally high concentration and an exceptionally high accumulation of armed force.<sup>753</sup> In Christendom, violence had been a pervasive phenomenon but it was neither particularly intensive nor extensive in its reach, at least prior to the introduction of gunpowder and commercial mercenarism into European warfare in the fourteenth century. Moreover, in the Sinosphere, the Chinese empire was for the most part militarily unassailable prior to the nineteenth century, but its pre-industrial army and aversion to naval expansion limited the scale and reach of inter-polity violence within the Sinosphere.<sup>754</sup>

The global state system by contrast developed in an environment of pervasive and extensive high-level violence. The quantum leap in the destructiveness of warfare

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<sup>752</sup>On this point, see for example Francis Fukuyama. "The Imperative of State-Building." *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (2004), p. 27. See also more generally William Reno. *Warlord Politics and African States*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998; and Crawford Young. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

<sup>753</sup>As indicated previously, the distinction between the accumulation and concentration of the means of violence within social systems is drawn from Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>754</sup>See above, chapter six.

initiated by the industrial and nuclear revolutions has already been discussed, but bears repetition because it was partially the memory of industrial total warfare and the fear of nuclear Armageddon that spurred the establishment of the state system's ordering institutions in the first instance. Nevertheless, it is equally important to recognize that the state system also emerged consequent to two basic asymmetries obtaining respectively between core and periphery, and between rulers and ruled. In the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution opened up a vast asymmetry in war-making capacities between Europe and indigenous polities in Asia and Africa, permitting the incorporation of the world into a single geopolitical space.<sup>755</sup> In the twentieth century, the global process of geopolitical competition and consolidation continued, with the emergence of two anti-colonial superpowers beyond Western Europe permitting the dismantling of empires and the globalization of the sovereign state system.<sup>756</sup> This process of geopolitical consolidation has accelerated in the post Cold War period with the shift towards a unipolar system, a structural development that has profound implications for the state system's future which will be discussed in greater detail below.

In addition to the asymmetry between core and periphery engendered by the industrialization of warfare, the global state system has also been predicated on the opening up of a vast imbalance in coercive power between states and the societies over which they govern. Again recapitulating earlier comments, the contemporary international order is predicated on the worldwide establishment of localized state monopolies over the legitimate use of force within their territories. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the industrialization of warfare and the revolution in state power dramatically assisted the consolidation of the Weberian norm throughout the

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<sup>755</sup>Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, p. 226. See also Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 189-193.

<sup>756</sup>On this point, see for example Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 501-509.

Atlantic state system. Following the liquidation of the European empires, Western states sought to replicate this process in the developing world by providing post-colonial governments with the training and *materiel* necessary to construct modern military forces.<sup>757</sup> In many instances, this process of transference was successful. However, the state's monopoly on violence has nevertheless remained tenuous throughout many post-colonial societies. Moreover, with the accelerated diffusion of disruptive and destructive capacities to non-state actors facilitated by globalization, this essential asymmetry between state and society is being frayed further, thereby threatening the state system's material underpinnings.

### **8.3 The Decay of the Global State System**

In comparison to its historical predecessors, the global state system (see table 8.1 below) emerged with startling rapidity, with barely a century separating the dawn of the 'new imperialism' from the collapse of the last of the European maritime empires. So rapid has been the state system's emergence and so universal is its reach that it is easy to retrospectively assume the inevitability of its rise. The sovereign state's global spread has also been so identified with the onward march of modernity that its indefinite survival seems assured. However, as the following discussion demonstrates, a closer inspection of the state system's numerous underlying vulnerabilities sharply qualifies such optimism.

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<sup>757</sup>On this process, see generally Alexander Wendt, and Michael Barnett. "Dependent State Formation and Third World Militarization." *Review of International Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993): 321-47.

**Table 8.1 The Global State System, 1945-Present**

<b>Normative Complex</b>	<b>Governing Institutional Framework</b>	<b>Order-Enabling Material Context</b>
<b>Identity-Constitutive Norms</b> Popular eudemonism, human emancipation, and augmentation of collective and individual capacities for self-determination	<b>Ordering Framework</b> Sovereign state system collectively governed by permanent universal concert of formally equal states	<b>Aggregate Capacities for Production and Destruction</b> Global market capitalist system ordered within framework of states possessing industrial (and in some cases nuclear) capacities for violence
<b>Ethical-Prescriptive Norms</b> Cosmopolitan ethical framework institutionalized within global human rights regime	<b>Authoritative Institutions</b> Multilateralism and contractual international law, and issue-specific multilateral regimes claiming technocratic authority (e.g. WTO)	<b>Mobilizational Networks</b> Dominance of state and inter-governmental bureaucracies and formally depoliticized global commercial networks
<b>Power-Legitimizing Norms</b> National self-determination and international regime of sovereign equality	<b>Coercive Institutions</b> Maintenance of state monopolies on organized violence and collective maintenance of order through force authorized by UNSC	<b>Violence Interdependence</b> High concentration and accumulation of coercive means (unipolar distribution of Clausewitzian war-making capacities and diffusion of destructive and disruptive capacities to non-state actors) [high violence interdependence]

**8.3.1 Systemic Vulnerabilities – The Imperfect Extension of the Sovereign State System**

The greatest single weakness of the global state system lies in the institutional weakness and low popular legitimacy of many post-colonial states. Shielded from the threat of extinction by a negative sovereignty regime that grants them sovereign

recognition regardless of their institutional failings, many post-colonial states bear only surface similarities with the modern nation-states they are supposed to resemble. What a brief examination of these polities reveals is a constellation of weaknesses that have consistently undermined the state's ability to provide basic political goods to its citizenry. It is partially out of this gap between commitments and capabilities, and the ensuing erosion of the state's popular legitimacy, that the global state system's current vulnerability to subversion has developed.

In seeking to account for the weakness of many post-colonial states, Kalevi Holsti has observed that 'colonial rule was one in which the relation between state and society was characterized by downward links of domination, but not by upward links of representation.'<sup>758</sup> This observation captures the essential truth that post-colonial states began their lives as artificially imposed authoritarian structures established and maintained to advance the interests of the metropolitan powers. As an external imposition, the colonial state sunk only shallow roots into host societies in most instances, a legacy that has persisted in the form of the weak state-society linkages that continue to plague many post-colonial polities in Africa and the Greater Middle East.<sup>759</sup> In nineteenth century Europe, the growth in the state's infrastructural power that was facilitated by the administrative revolution finally enabled rulers to establish direct rule over subject societies, even as the growth of constitutional government increasingly limited their recourse to despotic power as a means of maintaining order.<sup>760</sup> Conversely, in colonial societies, the relative balance between infrastructural and despotic power was reversed. The infrastructural power of the central government

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<sup>758</sup>Kalevi J. Holsti. *The State, War, and the State of War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 100.

<sup>759</sup>*Ibid.* On this point with specific reference to Saudi Arabia, see Bertrand Badie, and Claudia Royal. *The Imported State: The Westernization of the Political Order*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000, pp. 31-32.

<sup>760</sup>On this point, see generally Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, chapter six ('States and Citizens').

remained limited, and order was maintained through a combination of coercion and co-optation, with colonial governments extending their patronage networks to incorporate favoured portions of the traditional elite into colonial structures of rule.<sup>761</sup>

In defiance of the hopes of many who supported decolonization, this estrangement between state and society has persisted in many polities after independence. Just as early modern European rulers resorted to the large-scale sale of offices to raise revenue and assert a modicum of control over a restive nobility, so too has patronage played a vital role as a mechanism of political integration in the developing world, albeit one that has exerted a similarly deleterious impact on the post-colonial state's cultivation of infrastructural power.<sup>762</sup> The establishment of one-party governments and the widespread adoption of dirigiste strategies of economic development provided many post-colonial rulers with opportunities to incorporate large sections of the population into government-dominated patronage networks.<sup>763</sup> Nevertheless, such strategies have done nothing to develop the state's autonomous infrastructural power, instead merely reinforcing the colonial legacy of sustaining dualistic state structures characterized by an anaemic Weberian bureaucracy operating alongside – and frequently in competition with – extensive informal patronage networks.<sup>764</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned weaknesses, many post-colonial polities have been further weakened by extensive misalignments between national borders and underlying popular loyalties. On this point, Martin Shaw's characterization of post-colonial states as quasi-imperial entities is apposite, given the arbitrariness of states' boundaries and the extensive cultural fragmentation prevalent within their

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<sup>761</sup>Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>762</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>763</sup>See for example generally Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*; and Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*.

<sup>764</sup>*Ibid.*

territories.<sup>765</sup> While baptised in the name of national liberation, post-colonial polities have frequently been states in search of nations, with authoritarian central governments forced to continuously fight rearguard actions against domestic insurgencies.<sup>766</sup> With post-colonial states largely immune to the threat of territorial dismemberment by neighbouring polities, state security institutions have typically been preoccupied with suppressing internal threats, employing coercion extensively and often ineffectively to promote economic development and compel popular adherence to official nationalism.<sup>767</sup>

To the inherent frailty and popular illegitimacy many post-colonial polities must be added two additional vulnerabilities that further weakened the state system in recent decades. The first of these has been the strain between the state system's egalitarian values and the persistence of hierarchical linkages bonding post-colonial client states to Northern patrons. In view of the fragility of many post-colonial states and their susceptibility to subversion, their dependence upon Northern security assistance is unsurprising. Nevertheless, precisely because of the socially disembedded character of many post-colonial states, their very dependence on Northern security assistance has frequently served to fuel popular perceptions of the state's indistinguishability from its 'neo-colonialist' benefactors. The resulting decline in the state's popular legitimacy has then necessitated further recourse to repression, at once increasing the state's dependence on foreign security assistance while further estranging it from the populace. To cite but one example, the Pahlavi monarchy's

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<sup>765</sup>Martin Shaw. "Post-Imperial and Quasi-Imperial: State and Empire in the Global Era." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31, no. 2 (2002): 327-36. See specifically p. 334.

<sup>766</sup>Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War*, p. 106.

<sup>767</sup>On this point, see for example Jun Honna. *Military Doctrines and Democratic Transition: A Comparative Perspective on Indonesia's Dual Function and Latin America's National Security Doctrines*. Regime Change and Regime Maintenance in Asia and the Pacific Discussion Series, Number 22. The Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, 1999, pp. 3-4.

dependence on US support severely compromised its capacity to garner popular support throughout the duration of the Shah's reign. That the Pahlavi restoration had been engineered by a CIA-orchestrated coup against the democratically elected Mossadeq government merely further reinforced popular perceptions of the regime's lack of autonomy from foreign interests, setting the stage for the splenetically anti-Western revolution that eventually swept the Shah from office in 1979.<sup>768</sup>

From 1776 onwards, the legitimacy of governments has increasingly been evaluated with reference to their degree of presumed concordance with the will of the people and their independence from foreign influence. With decolonization, this emphasis on the virtues of indigenous rule and the necessity of securing the nation's independence from foreign actors diffused throughout the world.<sup>769</sup> But the swiftness of decolonization and the frailty of many post-colonial states yielded a situation in which socially disembedded authoritarian regimes remained tied to metropolitan powers through their dependence on security assistance. This tendency for bonds of dependence to persist and even expand following decolonization was reinforced by the predominantly commodity-based export profile of many developing economies and the resulting rise of rentier state regimes. Thus, for example, the Gulf monarchies' reliance on the sale of oil on international markets for the great bulk of their revenue permitted them with a high level of insulation from popular demands, while simultaneously tethering them ever more closely to their Northern patrons.<sup>770</sup> The rise of rentier state regimes such as these, immune from popular pressures but yet integrated into a global economic and security environment through informal ties of hierarchy and dependence, has served to further undercut many post-colonial states'

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<sup>768</sup>On this point, see Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God - Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000, pp. 231-232.

<sup>769</sup>See generally Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, chapter eight.

<sup>770</sup>See generally F. Gregory Grause III, *Oil Monarchies - Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994, chapter three.



popular legitimacy.<sup>771</sup> The existence of these ‘marionette’ states has also highlighted a glaring systemic discrepancy between a formal international regime of sovereign legal equality and an underlying reality of enduring relations of informal hierarchy.<sup>772</sup> Analogous instances of ‘organized hypocrisy’ have of course existed in previous international orders.<sup>773</sup> But in an era in which international order has been explicitly organized around values such as self-determination, this disjuncture between principles and practice has proved particularly damaging to the state system’s legitimacy.

Finally, the global state system has been vulnerable to challenge on account of the unacknowledged cultural particularity of its normative foundations. Superficially, the state system’s promotion of popular eudemonism and self-determination, its cosmopolitan ethical framework, and its emphasis on the sufficiency of reason over revelation as a guide for state action present as being eminently ecumenical. However, on closer inspection, the global state system’s normative complex bears the deep imprint of the historical experiences of the Western world. Specifically, the revolutionary unmooring of political authority from sacred referents from the late eighteenth century built upon a series of developments in West-Central Europe that dated back to the Reformation. The revolutionaries’ de-coupling of the *polis* from the *cosmos* was made possible only by a prior ontological shift in the Western conception of religion, from a designation referring to an embodied community of believers

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<sup>771</sup>This observation relates in particular to Egypt and Saudi Arabia from 1979 onwards, when the Camp David accord (in the case of Egypt) and the threat of aggression from revolutionary Iran brought both countries into a tight geopolitical alignment with the United States. As will be discussed in chapter nine below, the popular disaffection towards incumbent rulers in both countries produced by this alignment has been fundamental to the growth of jihadist oppositional elements from 1979 onwards.

<sup>772</sup>On the dissonance between formal equality and informal hierarchy as an essential characteristic of the present world order, see generally David A. Lake. "Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics." *International Security* 32, no. 1 (2007): 47-79.

<sup>773</sup>See generally Stephen Krasner. *Sovereignty - Organized Hypocrisy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999; and Stephen Krasner. "Organizing Hypocrisy in Nineteenth-Century East Asia." *International Relations of the Asia Pacific* 1, no. 2 (2001): 173-97.

towards one referring to an abstract body of doctrines and beliefs.<sup>774</sup> With the post-Reformation separation of beliefs and doctrines from practices and communities, the political unity of the temporal state could then substitute for the shattered religious unity of the Church as the primary mechanism of social integration.<sup>775</sup> Despite the enduring confessional intolerance of many European polities after the Westphalia, this ‘privatization’ of religion was crucial in enabling the revolutionaries to subsequently articulate an entirely secularized vision of the state, conceived as an institutionalized expression of the General Will and entirely shorn of divine legitimations.

From decolonization onwards, the sovereign state, cast as the embodiment of the General Will and venerated as the chief vehicle for advancing human emancipation, has been the central institution sustaining world order. Despite its universality, however, its constitution has implicitly reflected the historical experiences of West-Central Europe in negotiating a working relationship between the sacred and profane worlds. Popular beliefs in post-colonial polities concerning the appropriate relationship between religion and politics have frequently departed from the norms encoded into the Westphalian state system.<sup>776</sup> This disjuncture has introduced an additional element of friction into the state system’s operation. In the Atlantic state system, the secularization of public life evolved endogenously and over centuries, with the traumas of Reformation and revolution eventually yielding a resolution in the form of the secular nation-state. Conversely, in post-colonial states in the decades after independence, secularization was often experienced as a traumatic state-directed assault, with authoritarian elites aggressively suborning religious actors and institutions to their programs of political and economic modernization.<sup>777</sup> The

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<sup>774</sup>Thomas, ‘Taking Religious and Cultural Pluralism Seriously’, pp. 821-823.

<sup>775</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 823.

<sup>776</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 823-824.

<sup>777</sup>On this point with specific reference to the Muslim-majority countries of Turkey and Iran, see for example Karen Armstrong. *Islam - a Short History*. London: Phoenix Books, 2001, pp. 135-136.

contempt demonstrated towards religion by these governments, together with their perceived worldliness, incompetence, and corruption, served to further estrange states from societies, while simultaneously stimulating the growth of oppositional discourses cast in a religious idiom.<sup>778</sup> Within sections of the Islamic world in particular, these oppositional discourses have increasingly attached not merely to local states, but also to the state system itself.

### 8.3.2 Evolving Strains in the Global State System – The Emergence of Ideological Dissent

On August 29, 1966, immediately following dawn prayers, the Egyptian government hanged Islamist ideologue Sayyid Qutb.<sup>779</sup> From 1953, Qutb had been a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization that had lobbied for a greater role for Islam in Egyptian public life since its establishment in 1928. While initially peaceful in its activities, the Brotherhood's maintenance of a vast network of health, educational and welfare services for its members had long highlighted the inadequacy of government programs, evoking the suspicion of successive regimes.<sup>780</sup> The Brotherhood's huge popular base and its prominence within Egyptian civil society had further stoked government perceptions of the Brotherhood as constituting a subversive 'state within a state'.<sup>781</sup> With the establishment of a terrorist unit by a faction of the Brotherhood in 1943 and its subsequent assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister in 1948, the government was finally given the pretext to engage in a campaign of

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<sup>778</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>779</sup> Lawrence Wright. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 2006, p. 37.

<sup>780</sup> Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, p. 222.

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*

savage repression against the organization.<sup>782</sup> Following the 1952 Free Officers' putsch and a brief period of *rapprochement* between the Brotherhood and the new order, the Brotherhood's confrontation with the state resumed, with a failed assassination attempt on Nasser catalysing a renewed wave of repression that culminated with Qutb's arrest, imprisonment and eventual martyrdom in 1966.<sup>783</sup>

The clash between the Brotherhood and Nasser and Qutb's martyrdom were both emblematic of a larger tension between religion and the state within the Islamic world that carried ominous long-term portents for international order. As early as the 1920s, the state system's privileging of the nation-state over the transnational community of believers had prompted a countervailing mobilization of the faithful in defence of the *umma*. From 1919-1924, the *Khilifat* movement in British India had lobbied unsuccessfully for the post-war preservation of the Ottoman Empire's borders and the perpetuation of the office of *caliphate* as a symbol of global Islamic solidarity.<sup>784</sup> Meanwhile, modernizing leaders' attempts to confine Islam to the private sphere in countries such as Turkey and Iran generated fierce and at times violent popular opposition, prefiguring a contest for the soul of the nation that would play out in many Muslim-majority states after decolonization.<sup>785</sup> The clash between the Brotherhood and Nasser; the long-running *Darul Islam* rebellion against the Sukarno regime in Indonesia; the protracted contest for legitimacy between Iran's Ayatollahs and the Shah – each of these struggles constituted local expressions of a larger battle over the compatibility of Islam with modernity. In the immediate post-

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<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>784</sup> See generally Gail Minault. *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>785</sup> Thus for example, in Ataturk's Turkey, the government's aggressive secularizing policies (including laws forbidding women wearing the veil and the dissolution of the country's *madrasahs*) eventually sparked a rebellion led by the head of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. The rebellion was crushed, swiftly and efficiently, by Ataturk's army within two months. See Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, p. 192.

war period, this battle was largely won by secular, authoritarian and often brutal post-colonial governments.

Beneath the Cold War clash between liberalism and socialism, the international system was also rent within the Islamic world by a subterranean clash between modernizing secular dictatorships and their religiously motivated opponents. It was in this larger context, and while languishing in one of Nasser's concentration camps, that Qutb formulated the ideological basis for what would eventually evolve into the contemporary jihadist challenge to the global state system. Qutb's critique began with the intuition that the corruption, poverty and injustice prevalent under the Nasser regime were merely the symptoms of a broader spiritual malaise infecting the modern world. This malaise was attributable to humanity's hubristic delusion that reason could ever replace revelation as the ultimate guarantor of human welfare.<sup>786</sup> Having lived and studied in the United States for almost two years in the 1940s, Qutb was left with the conviction that the West was incurably estranged from God, its people having abandoned spiritual devotion in preference for a hedonistic abandonment to base sensuous and materialistic desires.<sup>787</sup> Following the Pakistani Islamist Mawlana Mawdudi, Qutb characterised the modern world as subsisting in a condition of *jahiliyya*, referring to the time of ignorance in which the tribes of Arabia had lived prior to the coming of the Prophet.<sup>788</sup> While the Enlightenment had conferred upon Europeans technological advantages that had facilitated the conquest of the Islamic world, Westerners remained preoccupied with the mundane to the exclusion of the transcendental, their culture crippled by a decadent emphasis upon purely utilitarian

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<sup>786</sup>On the jihadists' identification of all human pretensions towards legislative sovereignty with idolatry and tyranny, and a discussion of the roots of this idea in the writings of Sayyid Qutb, see Ellis Goldberg. "Smashing Idols and the State: The Protestant Ethic and Sunni Radicalism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33, no. 1 (1991), p. 16.

<sup>787</sup>Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 20-27.

<sup>788</sup>On Mawdudi's influence on Qutb and his jihadist descendents, see Gilles Kepel. *Jihad - the Trail of Political Islam*. 4th ed. London: I.B. Taurus, 2006, pp. 31-35.

and pragmatic reasoning.<sup>789</sup> Seen through this prism, Nasser's secularism and his modernizing agenda appeared to embody a wholesale importation of the spiritual disease that had engulfed the West, a disease that also led to Islam's destruction if it wasn't resisted.<sup>790</sup>

From the outset, Qutb's ideology (henceforth referred to as Qutbism) was thus informed by an abiding hostility to Western secular modernity and an existential fear for Islam's future, which he saw as being threatened in Egypt by a combination of Western neo-colonialism and the depredations of the secular Nasser dictatorship. While Qutbism originated as a repudiation of Nasserism, it was embedded within a broader critique of modernity, and its core claims were from the beginning profoundly incompatible with the constitutional values of the modern state system. For Qutb, the very notion of popular sovereignty was seen as blasphemous, for true sovereignty could reside only with God.<sup>791</sup> Equally, while the faculty of reason enabled humans to apprehend and apply divine law as embodied in the *sharia*, the very existence of this divine legal code rendered it logically unnecessary to grant legislative sovereignty to any human agency, be it either a single ruler or the broader populace.<sup>792</sup> In place of the modern emphasis on the promotion of collective and individual autonomy, Qutb stressed instead that true liberation was possible only through unquestioning submission to the will of God.<sup>793</sup> Moreover, where liberals and socialists prioritized the promotion of popular welfare – particularly material welfare – in the temporal

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<sup>789</sup>Wright cites Qutb's writings from his time based in Greeley, Colorado, on the essential banality and materialism of the Western mindset: "The soul has no value to Americans... There has been a Ph.D. dissertation about the best way to clean dishes, which seems more important to them than the Bible or religion..." Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 27. Given the religiously devout character of the United States, particularly in the 1940s, this quote says much about Qutb's degree of estrangement and detachment from his host country at the time of his American sojourn.

<sup>790</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>791</sup>On the supreme emphasis placed on the notion of divine sovereignty (*hakimiya*) within jihadist thought, which stemmed directly from the inspiration of Qutb and others, see Fawaz A. Gerges. *The Far Enemy - Why the Jihad Went Global*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 4-5.

<sup>792</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>793</sup>Goldberg, 'Smashing Idols and the State', pp. 16-17.

world as the primary purpose of government, Qutb instead subordinated materialistic considerations to the promotion of the *umma*'s spiritual well-being.<sup>794</sup>

Qutb's diagnosis of the problems afflicting the modern world thus constituted a repudiation the moral purposes underpinning the global state system. Qutbism's incompatibility with the global state system was further evident in Qutb's emphatically internationalist orientation. Where Nasser's entire career was devoted to the aggrandizement of the Arab nation, Qutb and his followers regarded nationalism as a form of modern idolatry introduced by the West to divide and weaken the *umma*.<sup>795</sup> Certainly, within the Arab world, the artificiality and arbitrariness of the borders imposed by the Mandate powers had been a genuine source of popular resentment, as evident in the broad support elicited for the ill-fated merger of Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic between 1958 and 1961. However, whereas even the most ardent Arab nationalists proposed only the unification of the Arab nation, Qutb harkened back to the early history of Islam, during which time the entire Islamic community had been united under the temporal and spiritual leadership of the *caliph*.<sup>796</sup> In embracing the vision of a (re)unified *umma*, Qutb rejected the institutionalized territorial particularism characteristic of all sovereign state systems. This rejection flowed as a logical corollary of Qutb's denunciation of notions of popular sovereignty and modern nationalism, and served to further distinguish his world-view from the values and underpinning the post-war world order.

In the latter stages of his career, Qutb sought not merely to present a theoretical critique of modernity, but also to provide a concrete plan of action designed to enable the *umma* to escape the horrors of the *jahiliyya*. Drawing inspiration from

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<sup>794</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>795</sup> On Qutb's evolution away from an earlier support for Arab nationalism and towards a more unequivocally Islamist stance in the 1940s, see John C. Zimmerman. "Sayyid Qutb's Influence on the 11 September Attacks." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 2 (2004), p. 228.

<sup>796</sup> Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, p. 241.

Mohammed's early proselytisation of Islam in the teeth of opposition from the merchants of Mecca, Qutb proposed a staged strategy for overthrowing apostate regimes and thus restoring God's sovereignty on earth. Qutb argued that Muslims must begin the spiritual regeneration of their society by first voluntarily dissociating themselves from the *jahili* mainstream and its corrupting influences.<sup>797</sup> This dissociation from the mainstream would enable true Muslims to fortify themselves spiritually, and provide them with an opportunity to purge themselves of the residues and habits of life in *jahili* society. Having undertaken this process of purification, Qutb then enjoined his adherents to establish a genuine Islamic community (*jamaah*) outside of mainstream society, in which Muslims would cultivate a collective life governed by God's laws, and would also prepare both spiritually and militarily for a final confrontation with God's enemies.<sup>798</sup> This process of preparation and consolidation would eventually culminate with the waging of a victorious *jihad* against apostate regimes and infidels, leading to the reconciliation of God and man and the re-establishment of God's rule on earth.<sup>799</sup>

From its inception, Qutbism thus constituted a holistic negation of the global state system's normative complex. In place of state system's emphasis on the promotion of popular eudemonism and self-determination, Qutb proposed that humanity's purpose was to submit to the will of God and to live in harmony with His divine commands. Where the state system crystallized around a rights-based regime of cosmopolitan ethics, Qutb found the Koran entirely self-sufficient as a guide for moral action. In place of power-legitimizing norms authorizing acceptance of state power on account of its presumed concordance with the popular will, Qutbism insisted upon the supremacy and inviolability of divine sovereignty, arguing that the only legitimate

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<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*



polities were those that implemented God's law as revealed in the Koran. Such a stance carried weighty implications for the global state system's fundamental institutions. If divine command was to replace popular consent as the basis for all authoritative institutions, then both the United Nations and the fundamental institutions of multilateralism and contractual international law would need to be torn down and replaced by a universal *caliphate* built upon the foundations of *sharia* law.<sup>800</sup> Similarly, through Qutbist lights, the only legitimate violence was that which was undertaken in God's name, thus the modern state's monopoly on violence could only be legitimate when it was subordinated to God's law. In the meantime, Qutbism expressly authorized and indeed mandated individual believers to employ unlimited violence to overturn the existing order.

The birth of Qutbism signified the emergence of an uncompromising ideological challenge to the contemporary world order. As with Christendom and the Sinosphere before it, what made this challenge so potentially threatening was its genesis in an environment already marked by extensive institutional decay. In the Middle East, North Africa and in Pakistan, this decay was already apparent in the 1960s, and expressed itself in the corruption and economic under-performance of incumbent regimes. To cite but one example, in Nasser's Egypt, the attempt to transform the country into an Arab socialist utopia was faltering even prior to the Six Day war, in spite of the massive amounts of Soviet foreign aid being poured in to assist this enterprise.<sup>801</sup> Throughout the Islamic world, the adoption of *dirigiste* development strategies fuelled the rapid growth of inefficient state bureaucracies,

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<sup>800</sup>This antipathy towards the United Nations and the institution of international law has in fact subsequently been borne out by subsequent jihadist statements on this theme. On this broader point, see Barak Mendelsohn. "Sovereignty under Attack: The International Society Meets the Al Qaeda Network." *Review of International Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005), pp. 62-63.

<sup>801</sup>Between 1954 and 1961, an astonishing forty-three percent of the Soviets' entire foreign aid budget was invested in Egypt; see Christopher Andrew, and Vasili Mitrokhin. *The KGB and the World - the Mitrokhin Archive II*. London: Penguin Books, 2006, p. 151.

while the sponsorship of state-run heavy industries absorbed scarce capital without yielding commensurate benefits for the population.<sup>802</sup>

The gulf between the promises of independence and the reality of governments' underperformance had already weakened popular support for many Islamic states by the mid-1960s. However, in the years following Qutb's martyrdom, a series of cataclysms broke upon the Islamic world that further sapped the legitimacy of incumbent regimes. The most critical of these was the catastrophe of the Six Day War. The suddenness, comprehensiveness, and speed of the Israeli victory both discredited Pan-Arabism while also calling into question the basic competence of the Arab world's rulers. Far from annihilating the 'Zionist entity', the Arab armies had been comprehensively routed, with Egypt, Syria and Jordan sustaining severe territorial losses by the war's end. Of these losses, by far the most traumatic was the Israeli conquest of East Jerusalem. The establishment of Jewish sovereignty over Islam's third holiest city scandalized the Islamic world, with many able to comprehend this catastrophe only as a form of divine retribution inflicted upon the *umma* as a punishment for Muslims' refusal to live in accordance with the requirements of Islam.<sup>803</sup> Through this reading, which merely increased in popularity following subsequent failures to reclaim Jerusalem by either force or diplomacy, redemption could come only when Muslims abandoned the idolatry of modern nationalism and established an Islamic state.<sup>804</sup>

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<sup>802</sup>Once again, the Egyptian case is instructive on this point. Over the course of Nasser's eighteen year reign, the Egyptian civil service expanded from 325,000 to 1.2 million bureaucrats, and while this expansion enabled the government to integrate important constituencies into its patronage networks, it was not matched by an equivalent improvement in public service provision to a young and dramatically expanding population. See *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>803</sup>On this point, see generally Kepel, *Jihad – The Trail of Political Islam*, pp. 60-65.

<sup>804</sup>Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, p. 243.

Pakistan's 1971 defeat and partition following war with India exerted a similarly debilitating effect upon the Pakistani government's legitimacy. Unlike its secular Middle Eastern counterparts, the Pakistani state had always relied on religious legitimation, having been explicitly established to provide an independent homeland for the sub-continent's Muslim inhabitants. In the war's aftermath, President Yahya Khan was forced to resign and was succeeded by Ali Bhutto, who initially pursued a socialist reform program.<sup>805</sup> However, even within its newly truncated borders, Islam continued to stand as the only force capable of binding together Pakistan's polyglot tribal and ethnic groups. If anything, the disaster of 1971 had served to further highlight this truth by demonstrating Pakistan's nature as a fragile, arbitrary entity that remained at continuous risk of dismemberment by neighbouring states. Whereas Bhutto's reign began with an emphasis on socialist reforms, the partition of Pakistan thus convinced many that Pakistan needed to become *more* and not less Islamic if it was to reclaim God's favour and retain its territorial integrity as a defensible homeland for South Asian Muslims.<sup>806</sup>

### 8.3.3 Transformations in the Global State System's Material Foundations

By the early 1970s, a significant sub-section of the global state system was thus bedevilled by the interweaving processes of religiously inspired ideological dissent and growing institutional decay. As in my historical cases, these forces were soon compounded by a series of developments that worked to destabilize the state system's material foundations. The first of these developments emerged following the oil crisis precipitated by OPEC's temporary embargo on oil exports to Israel's allies in

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<sup>805</sup>Kepel, *Jihad – The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 100.

<sup>806</sup>*Ibid.*

the developed world. The overnight quadrupling of oil prices following OPEC's embargo produced a massive financial windfall for the oil-rich conservative monarchies of the Persian Gulf. Following the first oil shock, the region's strategic and economic centre of gravity thus shifted away from the radical Arab republics and towards monarchies such as Saudi Arabia. The Gulf States had long emphasized the primacy of tribal and religious themes over nationalism in their legitimating strategies, and had historically regarded Pan-Arabism and socialism with profound unease.<sup>807</sup> With the enormous influx of wealth following the first oil shock, Saudi Arabia in particular sought to seize the strategic initiative by subsidizing efforts to proselytize its own creed of Wahhabi Islam throughout the Muslim world.<sup>808</sup>

Saudi efforts from the 1970s to secure the international ascendancy of conservative Islam over radical populism were not unprecedented, with the monarchy having established the World Muslim League as an ideological foil to Nasserism as far back as 1962.<sup>809</sup> However, following the oil crisis, a range of forces converged to knit together the material foundations of a revived transnational Islamic imaginary. Within the sparsely populated Gulf States, the great surge in wealth engendered by the oil boom fuelled dramatically expanded these states' demand for foreign labour. The resulting increase in short-term migration to the Persian Gulf accelerated processes of regional integration, with states such as Egypt, Jordan and even Syria becoming increasingly dependent on financial remittances from citizens temporarily domiciled in the Gulf States.<sup>810</sup> For Muslim migrant labourers, who constituted the majority of the Gulf States' guest workers in the 1970s, temporary residence in the Land of the Two Holy Places and increased exposure to Wahabbi Islam both served to raise their

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<sup>807</sup>On the ideological foundations of the conservative Gulf monarchies, see generally Gause III, *Oil Monarchies*, p. 25.

<sup>808</sup>Kepel, *Jihad – The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 70.

<sup>809</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>810</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73.

awareness of the Islamic dimension of their identity.<sup>811</sup> When these labourers returned home they consequently became conduits for the transmission of a heightened sense of Islamic self-awareness back to their home societies.<sup>812</sup> Finally, the exponential growth in migrant remittances within the Islamic world provided a major fillip to the expansion of an under-regulated and largely informal *hawala* system of international financial transactions.<sup>813</sup> The growth of this *hawala* system, which complemented the equally prodigious rise of a formal international Islamic banking system, provided a further layer of connective tissue integrating the *umma* within a far denser web of transnational linkages than had previously existed.<sup>814</sup>

While initially precipitated in response to a renewed outbreak of Arab-Israeli hostilities, the OPEC crisis and its aftermath had repercussions that reverberated well beyond the Middle East. From the 1970s onwards, the combination of Saudi proselytisation, increased transnational migration throughout the *umma*, and the development of international Islamic banking structures provided a firm foundation for the growth of global Islamic solidarity. Certainly, the immediate import of these developments should not be overstated, for only a small percentage of the world's population were directly touched by the growth of Muslim diaspora networks, while Saudi efforts to spread Wahhabism also produced extremely mixed results. This caveat aside, the growth of this transnational Islamic imaginary from the 1970s was undeniable, and was all the more significant for crystallizing in an environment in which official nationalism's purchase on popular loyalties within many Muslim-majority countries remained modest. If the immediate political impact of radical Islamist thinking remained limited in the years following the oil crisis, the

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<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

constellation of forces the crisis had set in motion greatly facilitated the emergence of a transnational constituency for the Islamists' message.

Overlapping with and reinforcing the growth of a transnational Islamic imaginary, the late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed innovations in international transportation and communication that steadily corroded the global state system's order-enabling material context. These innovations, ranging from the rise of mass commercial civil aviation through to the continuing diffusion of television and the advent of compact audiocassette tapes, produced superficially similar effects of accelerated global time-space compression as had the advent of the telegraph, the steamship and the steam train a century earlier.<sup>815</sup> However, whereas the late nineteenth century innovations in communications and technology had worked to assist the European empires' military and economic penetration of Asia and Africa, the strategic consequences of comparable innovations in the late twentieth century were notably different. Specifically, these innovations dramatically enhanced the relative destructive and disruptive capacities of non-state actors, enabling them to launch sustained strategic terrorist campaigns against hostile states on a global stage. While the state system had been buffeted by waves of international terrorism prior to the late 1960s, terrorism had hitherto been employed largely as a supplementary *tactic* within the context of conventional guerrilla wars. From the late 1960s, by contrast, international terrorism emerged as a preferred *strategy* by violent nationalist and revolutionary groups seeking to break the will of conventionally stronger opponents by perpetrating spectacular acts of violence against 'soft' targets both domestically and internationally.<sup>816</sup>

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<sup>815</sup>Held *et al.*, *Global Transformations*, pp. 428-429.

<sup>816</sup>On the internationalization of terrorism from the 1960s onwards, see generally Bruce Hoffman. *Inside Terrorism*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1998, chapter three.

While a host of locally specific factors contributed to the eruption of nationalist and ‘new left’ revolutionary terrorist campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s, these drivers are of less concern to this study than the larger material changes that made the rise of international terrorism possible. With the growth of mass commercial civil aviation, anti-systemic actors began to enjoy levels of trans-continental mobility that were unknown to militants even one generation previously, while passenger airliners equally served as irresistible and easily accessible targets for hijacking by transnationally nimble militant networks.<sup>817</sup> The continued spread of television meanwhile provided violent non-state actors with a global platform through which to articulate and publicize their grievances, a potentiality that was most notoriously and effectively exploited by the Black September organization at the Munich Olympics in 1972.<sup>818</sup> As the events of 1979 were to demonstrate, even the invention of a product as seemingly benign as the audiocassette could have significant strategic consequences for the relative balance of power between state and non-state actors, with Khomeini’s ability to inspire the Iranian people from exile deriving heavily from the ease with which thousands of his taped lectures were smuggled into the country and then broadcast to a mass audience.<sup>819</sup>

Once again, the transformative effects of the above changes should not be overstated. Notwithstanding the alarm evoked in Western capitals by the rise of international terrorism, non-state actors’ increased recourse to terrorism only rarely yielded tangible political gains, and strong states rapidly crafted a host of domestic and international law enforcement measures to contain the threat of terrorism.<sup>820</sup>

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<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>819</sup> On this point, see for example Marc Lynch. "Globalization and Arab Security." In *Globalization and National Security*, edited by Jonathan Kirshner, 171-200. New York: Routledge, 2006. See specifically p. 184.

<sup>820</sup> On the growth of international cooperation in Europe to respond to the escalating threat of international terrorism in the 1970s, including initiatives such as the establishment of the TREVI Group

Moreover, while the broader Islamic revival was further fuelled by the increased time-space compression produced by innovations in transportation and communication, these innovations had yet to be effectively exploited by violent jihadists internationally in the 1970s. These observations aside, the larger significance of the growth of international terrorism during this period was that it signalled a crumbling of the material foundations upon which the global state system was based. Previously, mass-based guerrilla movements had typically posed the most serious threat to the state's maintenance of a monopoly on violence. Such movements were generally difficult to sustain, required the painstaking cultivation and mobilization of popular support, and prevailed rarely against better-armed state opponents equipped with modern military forces.<sup>821</sup> Moreover, even victorious insurgencies generally did not threaten systemic norms governing the state's monopoly on violence, seeking rather to re-institute this monopoly domestically under their own terms. By contrast, the growth of international terrorism signalled a larger shift towards the enhanced diffusion of destructive capacities to small, internationally mobile groups with only tenuous direct connections to a mass support base. In the 1970s, the emergence of such entities – deterritorialized, unconstrained by the challenges of mobilizing a mass support base, and capable of readily accessing dual-use technologies to perpetrate sustained trans-continental 'hit and run' attacks against the interests of target polities – was in its earliest stages. But this trend was already evident, and would merely accelerate with further advances in communication and innovation technologies as the century progressed.

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in 1976 and the establishment also of the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism in 1977, see Oldrich Bures. "EU Counterterrorism Policy: A Paper Tiger?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006), p. 58.

<sup>821</sup>On the difficulties in easily replicating the success of rural-based revolutionary insurgencies such as that undertaken by Mao Tse-Tung in the 1930s and 1940s, see I. F. W. Beckett. *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and Their Opponents since 1750, Warfare and History*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 81.



The enhanced diffusion of disruptive and destructive capacities to non-state actors evident from the 1970s onwards signalled a creeping corrosion of the basic asymmetry in coercive power between state and non-state actors upon which the state system relied. Paradoxically, this process dovetailed with the continuing global concentration of Clausewitzian war-making capacities in the hands of the two super-powers, as well as the increased involvement of both within the Islamic world. By the 1970s, the USSR was rapidly approaching strategic parity with the United States, with the pressures of a stagnant economy and a massive military expenditure burden having been partially alleviated by a post-oil shock boost in Soviet hard currency reserves.<sup>822</sup> With the super-powers locked in a nuclear and conventional stalemate in the European theatre, and both having experienced growing ideological dissent among their respective client states from 1968 onwards, the prospect of an enduring *détente* was appealing to both sides.<sup>823</sup> The ABM treaty, SALT, and the Helsinki accords were each symptomatic of this move towards strategic stabilization in the European theatre.<sup>824</sup> However, far from anticipating a more general abatement in rivalry, this stabilization merely prefigured a lateral displacement of tensions from the strong states of the developed core to the far more fragile polities of the developing world.

The lateral displacement of superpower rivalries from core to periphery expressed itself in the Islamic world firstly through greater superpower involvement in the Middle East. With Britain's 1968 declaration of its intention to liquidate all military commitments east of Suez, a power vacuum opened up in the Persian Gulf that the super-powers quickly filled through increased reliance on their respective regional allies. Throughout the decade and beyond, the USSR provided generous

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<sup>822</sup>On the Soviet Union's squandering of its oil earnings during the 1970s and 1980s on an arms build-up and Third World adventurism, see Daniel Yergin. *The Prize - the Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992, p. 14.

<sup>823</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>824</sup>*Ibid.*

sponsorship to the communist government that had forcibly established itself in South Yemen in 1970, while also attempting with limited success to parlay its massive arms sales to Iraq into more enduring strategic influence over the Ba'athist regime.<sup>825</sup> Still nursing its wounds from Vietnam, the United States abjured any direct military involvement in the Gulf, preferring to delegate responsibility for maintaining regional stability primarily to the Shah of Iran.<sup>826</sup> More importantly, the oil shock and its aftermath portended a renegotiation of the United States' relationship with the House of Saud. This renegotiation included large-scale recycling of petro-dollars into investments in the United States, as well as the establishment of both a Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation and a Joint Security Cooperation Commission between the two countries.<sup>827</sup> This intensified economic and security cooperation would prefigure a steadily expanding US military involvement in the Persian Gulf from the 1980s that would in turn play a vital catalytic role in the development of the global jihadist insurgency.<sup>828</sup> Finally, the Yom Kippur war alerted both superpowers to the risk of inadvertent escalation posed by a war between their client states, a risk that the US sought to defuse through its sponsorship of the Camp David Accords and its subsequent displacement of the USSR as the chief patron of the Arab world's most populous state.

The growth of superpower encroachment on the Middle East was partially a by-product of the power vacuum created by Britain's withdrawal from the Persian Gulf, and partially also a result of the super-powers' heightened appreciation of the

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<sup>825</sup>See generally Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II*, chapters nine (Iran and Iraq) and eleven (The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen).

<sup>826</sup>Richard A. Clarke. *Against All Enemies - inside America's War on Terror*. New York: Free Press, 2004, p. 37.

<sup>827</sup>On this point, see Rachel Bronson. *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia*. Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 125-128.

<sup>828</sup>This expansion of US influence and involvement in the Middle East from the 1980s is detailed in Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, chapter two.

region's strategic significance in the wake of the oil shocks. However, this encroachment was also an expression of a more general lateral displacement of superpower tensions to the developing world that was driven by both the rough strategic parity between the superpowers, and also by the massive disparity between the superpowers' military power and that of every other state in the world.<sup>829</sup> Elsewhere in the Islamic ecumene, superpower tensions took an even more destabilizing turn in Central Asia as the decade drew to a close. The deposition of the Afghan monarchy by a communist regime in April 1978 had proved profoundly alarming to Pakistan, which as America's chief ally in the region feared the encroachment of Soviet influence on its borders as well as the possible revival of irredentist Afghan claims on Pakistani territory by the new government.<sup>830</sup> The establishment of an atheistic communist regime in a historically Islamic land could also only be an unbearable affront to the recently established regime of the devout general Zia al-Huq.<sup>831</sup> Consequently, in the eighteen months separating the communist coup from the Soviet invasion, both Pakistan and the Soviet Union began to provide material support to their respective allies in Afghanistan.<sup>832</sup> In so doing, they anticipated the militarization of Afghan society and the ensuing disintegration of state power that would indefinitely plague the country thereafter, and that would eventually have globally destabilizing consequences.

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<sup>829</sup> On this process of lateral displacement, see Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, p. 16.

<sup>830</sup> On Pakistani fears that Kabul's communists might stir up Pashtun independence activists on the disputed Afghanistan-Pakistan border, thereby threatening the very survival of the Pakistani state, see Coll, *Ghost Wars*, p. 62.

<sup>831</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61.

<sup>832</sup> On this point, see Barnett R. Rubin. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan - State Formation and Collapse in the International System*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. Rubin notes that Pakistani support for Afghan Islamists dated back as far as 1975, when the Pakistanis sponsored Islamist rebels as a means of coercing the Afghan monarchy to cease its cultivation of nationalist sentiments among the Pashtun tribes bordering the two countries. Sponsorship of the Islamists continued after this period because the Pakistanis correctly assumed that the monarchy might crumble, and sought to secure a degree of influence over the Afghan political process in the wake of such an event.

## **8.4 Conclusion**

In Afghanistan immediately prior to the Soviet invasion, one can see a microcosm of the forces that were buffeting the global state system towards the end of the twentieth century. The global state system had taken form only one generation previously, having arisen from the ashes of the European empires, and been given life by the globalization of the popular sovereignty revolution. In the euphoria accompanying decolonization, it was assumed that the rapid modernization of newly independent states would assure the consolidation of a global order dedicated to the advancement of the eminently secular goals of popular eudemonism and individual and collective self-determination. Conversely, by the late 1970s, these ideals had been tarnished by the under-performance of the corrupt regimes that had taken hold after independence in many post-colonial states.

To the existing weaknesses of the state system owing to post-colonial state weakness, a series of further debilitating developments brought the state system's fragility into sharper relief in the Greater Middle East and South Asia from the late 1960s. In the emergence of radical Islamist thought, the state system witnessed the development of a direct attack on its philosophical foundations. Coalescing in the context of the immediate struggle between secular authoritarian regimes and religiously inspired opponents, this challenge gained increasing popular resonance with the onset of localized legitimacy crises and the onward decay of state capacities in the Islamic world after the defeats of 1967 and 1971. To this ideological challenge and the onward march of institutional decay, the material transformations from the late 1970s further undercut the state system's foundations, by providing a more robust basis for the development of a transnational Islamic imaginary, diffusing increased

destructive capacities to non-state actors, and concentrating Clausewitzian war-making capacities so heavily as to displace great power rivalry to the parts of the system possessing the least conflict-carrying capacity.

On the eve of the Afghan invasion, all of these destabilizing forces were gaining momentum globally, and all were converging on Afghanistan. And as the first T-72 tanks rolled over Afghanistan's borders on Christmas Eve 1979, the stage was set for a confrontation that would long outlast the Soviet occupation, and that would eventually culminate in a challenge not merely to the superpowers, but to the global state system itself.

## CHAPTER NINE – THE JIHADIST CHALLENGE TO THE GLOBAL STATE SYSTEM

### Introduction

On November 20, 1979, a new century was dawning on the Islamic calendar. Throughout the *umma*, the century's impending approach was greeted with excitement and apprehension, with a series of events appearing to foretell an imminent Islamic resurgence. In February of that year, the Ayatollah Khomeini had triumphantly returned from exile to Iran, while on April 1, the Islamic Republic of Iran was officially proclaimed. The toppling of America's most powerful client in the region signalled a seismic strategic shift in the Middle East, with the emergence of an Islamic republic forcing both the radical republics and the conservative monarchies onto the defensive. With the Iranian seizure of the American embassy on November 4, it even appeared briefly as if Iran was willing to challenge not merely the legitimacy of incumbent Middle Eastern regimes, but also the validity of the most basic diplomatic rules of international society itself. As it was, the hostage crisis would eventually be resolved and Iran, like revolutionary states before it, would gradually be socialized into accepting the established conventions of modern diplomacy. This observation aside, the Iranian revolution nevertheless constituted the first of three pivotal developments in 1979 that foreshadowed the contemporary jihadist challenge to international society.

The second of these developments was the seizure on November 20 of Islam's holiest place, the Grand Mosque of Mecca, by approximately two hundred Islamic militants led by the tribal leader Juhayman al Oteibi.<sup>833</sup> Despite the strict prohibition

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<sup>833</sup>The following vignette is taken from Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 101-109.

on the shedding of blood in Mecca, Juhayman justified his actions by arguing that the Al Saud monarchy had forfeited its custodianship of the Holy Places on account of its corruption, extravagance and Westernizing policies. After an initial attempt by the Saudi Arabian National Guard to recapture the Mosque failed, the monarchy was forced to rely on French Special Forces to reclaim the mosque, in so doing threatening the taboo prohibiting infidels from setting foot in Mecca.<sup>834</sup> While foreign involvement in reclaiming the Grand Mosque was kept secret for fear of scandalizing the *umma*, the Ayatollah Khomeini had meanwhile widely broadcast claims that the United States was somehow behind the seizure. This suggestion in turn sparked a wave of public outrage throughout the Islamic world, leading to the swift destruction of American embassies in Islamabad and Tripoli by angry mobs.<sup>835</sup>

As 1979 drew to a close, the perception of a resurgent Islam being besieged by infidels received a further boost with the year's third pivotal development, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Even under the narrowest definition of *jihad*, the Soviet invasion constituted an infidel attack on a Muslim land that demanded a robust response from all pious Muslims. Given the centrality of religion to the legitimating strategies of rulers in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, these countries spearheaded efforts to provide aid and military support to the Afghan *mujahadeen*.<sup>836</sup> Even more critically, the plight of Afghanistan evoked an enormous popular response in Muslim-majority countries, with thousands of volunteers from across the *umma* electing to fight alongside their Afghan brethren.<sup>837</sup> As it transpired, the Islamic Internationale's

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<sup>834</sup>Reportedly, however, the taboo was strictly observed, with the French commandoes converting to Islam in a brief, formal ceremony before entering the holy city. See *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>835</sup>The attack on the US embassy in Pakistan at this time is described in detail in Coll, *Ghost Wars*, chapter one ('We're Going to Die Here').

<sup>836</sup>On this point, see Jason Burke. *Al Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, p. 58.

<sup>837</sup>*Ibid.*

military contribution to the Soviet Union's eventual defeat would prove negligible.<sup>838</sup> But the broader significance of this conflict would be inestimable, providing as it did the forum for a convergence of radicals who would subsequently form the foundation of a global jihadist challenge to international society.

In chapter eight, I sketched in broad terms the centrifugal processes that had beset the state system within a generation of decolonization. These processes provided the enabling context for the development of the global jihadist insurgency that is analysed in this chapter. While this chapter focuses on the evolution of global jihadism, my larger purpose is to anchor the discussion within an examination of the larger processes of decay that both facilitated global jihadism's emergence, and that will endure even following its likely defeat. My discussion proceeds in three sections. Section one focuses on the period 1979-1990, and is dedicated to an analysis of the emergence of the Islamic Internationale and the resulting genesis of Al Qaeda in the context of the Afghan *jihad*. Section two, dating from the commencement of Operation Desert Shield and concluding with the attacks of 9/11, charts the globalization of Al Qaeda's objectives, its ascendancy as the vanguard organization of the global jihadist movement, and the course of its escalating war against the contemporary international order. Section three, dating from the September 11 attacks to the present, analyses the responses of both the United States and the international community to the jihadist challenge, and examines the impact of these responses upon the evolution of the jihadist insurgency. I conclude that the international community has met with jihadist threat with greater vigour than was evident in rulers' responses to ideological challenges in either of my two historical cases, and that Al Qaeda's operational capacity has been gravely damaged. Conversely, however, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have sharpened the ideological contest between global jihadism

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<sup>838</sup>On this point, see Kepel, *Jihad – The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 147.



and an increasingly assertive transformational liberalism sponsored by the United States, while simultaneously catalysing jihadism's mutation into a deterritorialized anti-systemic social movement. This development, in conjunction with the international community's lackadaisical efforts to address problems of state failure in the developing world, is symptomatic of weaknesses in the global state system that will persist in the long term.

## **9.1 The Afghan *Jihad* and the Foundations of the Global Jihadist Insurgency**

### **9.1.1 The Multi-Dimensional Nature of the Afghan Conflict, 1979-1989**

Befitting its nature as the incubator of a global anti-systemic movement, the war in Afghanistan was not reducible to one conflict vector, but was rather driven by a cluster of nested national, regional, and global conflicts. At the national level, the war constituted a clash between an isolated, brutally authoritarian Marxist-Leninist regime and a loose coalition of tribal and religious groupings committed to forcibly resisting the government's revolutionary program. Like many post-colonial polities, the Afghan state was only weakly embedded within Afghan society prior to 1978. Under the Old Regime, the Afghan state was a classic rentier polity, with the government deriving an extremely large proportion of its income from foreign sources (primarily foreign aid but also sales of natural gas to the USSR), while conversely receiving only a limited proportion of its revenues from direct taxation of the population.<sup>839</sup> The institutional ligatures of taxation, government service provision, and political participation linking state to society remained under-developed, and life for the rural majority remained

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<sup>839</sup>On this point, see Barnett R. Rubin. *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan - State Formation and Collapse in the International System*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, p. 65.

strongly governed by the influence of tribal structures, religious brotherhoods and local strongmen (*khans*).<sup>840</sup> Following the April Revolution in 1978 and the ascension of a communist government, the relationship between centre and periphery deteriorated as the government resorted to decree and terror to impose a social revolution from above. The reforms imposed by the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) were extensive, ranging from the forcible expropriation of lands previously owned by tribal elders and Islamic scholars, through the introduction of female literacy campaigns, the abolition of dowries for brides, and the proscription of Islamic lending practices.<sup>841</sup> The PDPA additionally legislated for freedom of marriage, while mandating a secular Marxist education for all Afghans.<sup>842</sup> While many of these reforms appeared to be progressive on paper, the ineptitude and brutality with which they were implemented evoked widespread popular hostility, and had inspired widespread Islamist rebellions against the central government well prior to the Soviet intervention.<sup>843</sup>

At the national level, the Afghan conflict was thus driven by a centre-periphery conflict between a modernizing government with totalitarian ambitions and a resistant rural hinterland. The mismatch between the PDPA's revolutionary ambitions and the limited capacities of the state apparatus they had inherited severely curtailed their prospects for success from the outset. Conversely, however, the revolutionaries' access to a neighbouring superpower patron fortified their resolve to crush all resistance, establishing a militarized template for state-society relations that was further entrenched following the Soviet military intervention.<sup>844</sup> This clash between Afghan state and society represented in acute form a collision between state socialism

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<sup>840</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

<sup>841</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116-119.

<sup>842</sup> Coll, *Ghost Wars*, p. 40.

<sup>843</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>844</sup> On this point, see Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, pp.119-120.

and Islamist resistance that had already manifested itself in other Muslim-majority societies. However, what distinguished the Afghan conflict was its rapid internationalization from 1979 onwards.

The internationalization of the Afghan conflict was catalysed by the Soviet invasion, but it was also driven by the defensive adaptations of countries such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to the global Islamic revival. The growth of political Islam and the windfall financial gains flowing from the first oil shock had provided Saudi Arabia with both the means and the motivation to finance the spread of conservative Islam throughout the Muslim world. In Pakistan, this Saudi largesse had strengthened the relative position of the Jamaat-i-Islami, a mass Islamist organization committed to transforming Pakistan into an Islamic state.<sup>845</sup> Following the military coup in 1977, General Zia al Huq had sought to legitimize the new junta and cultivate a grass-roots popular base by aligning himself with the goals of the Jamaat, going so far as to declare his intention to create a 'genuine Islamic order' in Pakistan on October 21, 1979.<sup>846</sup> This shift towards a more Islamist order in Pakistan, coupled with Saudi Arabia's renewed efforts to fortify its Islamic credentials in the wake of the Iranian revolution and the siege at the Great Mosque, informed both governments' decisions to provide comprehensive assistance to the *mujahadeen*. Both the Saudi monarchy and the Pakistani military junta were autocracies that legitimized their rule explicitly through reference to Islam.<sup>847</sup> Both regimes had warily observed the surge in popular interest in political Islam spurred by the Iranian revolution. Unsurprisingly, both consequently played leading roles in sponsoring the *mujahadeen*, finding in their involvement in the Afghan *jihad* an expedient means of reaffirming their Islamic

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<sup>845</sup>Coll, *Ghost Wars*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>846</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>847</sup>On this point, and on Saudi Arabia and Pakistan's particular susceptibility to religiously inspired challenges on account of their predominantly religious legitimating strategies, see Olivier Roy. *Globalised Islam - the Search for a New Umma*. London: Hurst and Company, 2005, p. 66.

credentials and thereby harnessing the Islamic revival for the purposes of regime preservation.<sup>848</sup>

Overlaying the civil conflict between a totalitarian Afghan state and an indigenous Islamist opposition, the Afghan *jihād* was thus also entwined within a larger intramural struggle within the Islamic world as authoritarian states sought to come to terms with the larger Islamic revival. For self-consciously Islamic polities such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, sustained sponsorship of the Afghan *mujahadeen* and international volunteers promised to advance their geopolitical goals while also deflecting any potential Islamist challenges to regime legitimacy.<sup>849</sup> For officially secular polities such as Egypt, Algeria and Indonesia, by contrast, Islamist challenges to regime legitimacy seemed to be best handled through recourse to a combination of domestic repression and the exile of Islamist opponents, many of whom eventually gravitated to the Afghan *jihād*.<sup>850</sup> In either case, regime preservation strategies in Muslim-majority countries fuelled the Afghan *jihād*'s internationalization in the 1980s, strengthening the Afghan resistance in the short term while also sowing the seeds of the future global jihadist insurgency.

The final conflict vector framing the Afghan conflict was of course the global struggle for supremacy between the United States and the USSR. The war in Afghanistan constituted one of the bloodiest expressions of the lateral displacement of superpower rivalry from core to periphery that had developed from the 1970s. In the Soviet Union's case, the achievement of rough strategic parity with the United States in the 1970s had inspired a more activist policy in the developing world.<sup>851</sup> This

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<sup>848</sup> Kepel, *Jihad – The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 137.

<sup>849</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>850</sup> On this point, see Gilles Kepel. "The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement: From Anti-Communism to Terrorism." *Asian Affairs* XXXIV, no. II (2003), p. 94. See also Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 121.

<sup>851</sup> See Andrews and Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II*, pp. 15-17.

tendency had been further encouraged by American strategic retrenchment after Vietnam, past Soviet disillusionment at the fickle loyalties of formally non-aligned post-colonial dictatorships, and the breakout of successful Marxist-Leninist revolutions across a range of developing states in the 1970s, including in Afghanistan.<sup>852</sup> The USSR's intervention in Afghanistan thus formed part of a larger grand strategy for advancing Soviet interests through the promotion and support of Marxist dictatorships in the Third World, and was also motivated by the ungrounded fear that the mercurial PDPA dictatorship might be on the cusp of switching its strategic alignment from the USSR to the United States.<sup>853</sup> Conversely, American policy towards Afghanistan was driven by a desire to sap the Soviet Union's strategic energies by entrapping it in a protracted war against the *mujahadeen*.<sup>854</sup> America's subsequent adoption of the Reagan Doctrine, whereby the White House committed to 'rolling back' communism by sponsoring anti-communist guerrillas throughout the developing world, provided the rationale for the dramatic and continuous expansion of American support for the *mujahadeen* throughout the 1980s.<sup>855</sup>

As a nested series of conflicts, the war in Afghanistan thus represented a microcosm of the key centrifugal processes manifest in the global state system during the 1980s. The clash between the PDPA regime and the Afghan resistance exemplified in the most militarized fashion the familiar post-colonial collision between modernizing secular autocracies and resistant native populations. The rapid emergence

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<sup>852</sup>Halliday identifies no less than fourteen revolutionary upheavals in the developing world from 1974-1980, although he emphasizes both the diverse character of these different revolutions, as well as the dominance of local dynamics (as opposed to outside intervention) in driving these events. See Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>853</sup>On this point, see Andrews and Mtrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II*, p. 397.

<sup>854</sup>Coll, *Ghost Wars*, p. 51. Coll nevertheless notes that Secretary of State Brzezinski was initially extremely pessimistic about the guerrillas' prospects for success, and did not originally expect the Soviets to experience the same difficulties in suppressing the rebels as the United States had experienced in Vietnam. See also Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 114.

<sup>855</sup>Halliday notes that America's more aggressive posture in the Third World during the 'second Cold War' was motivated in part by the perceived failures of the Guam doctrine of delegation in maintaining America's vital interests abroad. See Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, pp. 102-103.

of an Islamist resistance to the PDPA, and the subsequent infusion of men, money and *materiel* from throughout the *umma* to assist the *mujahadeen*, were both demonstrative also of the conflict's embeddedness within a larger transnational Islamist revival, the most extreme expressions of which explicitly challenged the state system's normative foundations. Finally, the lateral displacement of superpower rivalries from core to periphery manifest in Afghanistan signified larger shifts in the state system's material underpinnings. With the superpowers stalemated in the core owing to their unprecedented accumulation of conventional and nuclear war-making capacities, the displacement of conflict to the most fragile polities further diluted many states' already tenuous control over violence within their borders.

The familiar constellation of institutional decay, ideological polarization, and increases in violence interdependence evident in late medieval Christendom and the late imperial Sinosphere manifested itself also in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Far from merely passively reflecting larger processes of systemic breakdown, however, the Afghan *jihad* also played a formative role in accelerating these processes and providing a permissive environment for a movement that would in due course violently challenge international society. In this respect, the Afghan *jihad* was not merely a mirror but a matrix, its product Al Qaeda and the global jihadist movement.

### 9.1.2 The Afghan *Jihad* and the Gestation of the Global Jihadist Insurgency

Over the course of the Afghan *jihad*, thousands of volunteers from across the Muslim world travelled to Afghanistan to assist their co-religionists.<sup>856</sup> Many of these

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<sup>856</sup>The exact number of Muslim volunteers that travelled to Afghanistan during this period cannot be established with any degree of precision, given that no central records were kept of international volunteers travelling in and out of the region during the Afghan conflict. A rough estimate of the number of volunteers is provided by Jason Burke, who cites estimates of a maximum of 25,000

volunteers stayed only briefly in the region, large numbers were involved in relief work and support duties rather than front-line combat, and only a few hundred volunteers were ever fighting at any one time, rendering negligible their direct military contribution to the *mujahadeens*' victory over the Soviet Union.<sup>857</sup> These caveats aside, the convergence of volunteers from across the *umma* produced a raft of unintended consequences that would eventually reverberate well beyond Afghanistan. Specifically, the bonds forged between international volunteers during the conflict and the ideological cross-pollination that resulted from their interaction facilitated the formation of the social networks and doctrinal innovations that would eventually coalesce into the global *jihadist* challenge to the contemporary world order.

While the Afghan *jihad* eventually yielded a constellation of formidable non-state anti-systemic networks, it is necessary to briefly revisit the role played by state actors in inadvertently bringing these networks into being in the first instance. Throughout the 1970s, rulers in Muslim-majority countries had confronted a rising tide of Islamic activism, one that occasionally manifested itself in anti-government violence. The events of 1979 emboldened Islamists throughout the Muslim world to intensify their subversive activities in the hope of toppling incumbent apostate regimes.<sup>858</sup> This upsurge in Islamist activism evoked varied responses from governments. In Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, governments' already strong dependence on religion in their legitimating frameworks saw them adopt a strategy of co-optation, with both states providing massive support to the Afghan *mujahadeen* while

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volunteers from CIA officials stationed in Pakistan during the 1980s. See Jason Burke. *Al Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, p. 58.

<sup>857</sup>On the contrast between the vast majority of foreign volunteers, who served as reservists, relief workers, or even simply armed tourists, and who were colloquially known by their brethren as 'birds of passage', and the very small minority who stayed for extended periods of time and actively fought against the Soviets, see Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement', pp. 94-95.

<sup>858</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

simultaneously encouraging domestic radicals to also participate in the conflict.<sup>859</sup> Conversely, in secular dictatorships such as Egypt, Indonesia, and Algeria, governments favoured strategies of brutal repression in the face of Islamist dissidence.<sup>860</sup> In each of these countries, Islamist violence was met with overwhelming force. In some cases, defeated Islamists were forced into exile as a result of heightened repression, while in other cases, governments actively banished dissidents or otherwise encouraged them to leave for Afghanistan in the hope that they would not return.<sup>861</sup>

The rough synchronicity of rebellion and repression within various Muslim countries after the *annus mirabilis* of 1979 thus played a pivotal role in funnelling Islamist dissidents towards the Afghan theatre. Ayman al Zawahiri's departure from Egypt following a brief period of imprisonment for his role in the 1981 assassination of Sadat; the forced exfiltration of Algerian Islamists following their 1982 decision to engage in armed struggle against the FLN government; the 1985 exile of future *Jemaah Islamiyah* leaders Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakr Bashir from Indonesia in the face of renewed repression by the New Order government – each of these episodes constituted local expressions of a broader pattern. Whether adopting strategies of co-optation or repression, governments in Muslim-majority countries effectively externalized their domestic legitimacy strains during the 1980s, projecting the intramural struggle within the *umma* between incumbent governments and Islamist dissidents onto a global stage.

Government responses to the ideological convulsions of the late 1970s and early 1980s constituted a strong 'push' factor on Islamist dissidents, wrenching them from their various local contexts and propelling them towards convergence in

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<sup>859</sup>Burke, *Al Qaeda – Casting a Shadow of Terror*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>860</sup>Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement', pp. 94-95.

<sup>861</sup>*Ibid.*



Afghanistan. Nevertheless, this ‘push’ factor was powerfully supplemented by the ‘pull’ factor of genuine sympathy for the Afghan people felt throughout the Muslim world. While the financial assistance provided by states such as Saudi Arabia to the Afghan *jihad* has received the greatest emphasis in narratives of Al Qaeda’s emergence, in reality state sponsorship constituted as little as 25% of the total money provided to the *mujahadeen* and their international brethren.<sup>862</sup> Volunteers who travelled to Afghanistan were frequently subsidized by massive amounts of money raised and donated by private donors, charitable organizations, and mosques.<sup>863</sup> Islamic civil society’s great generosity in responding to the war in Afghanistan is a testament to the emergence of a transnational Islamic imaginary in the preceding two decades. It is also a reminder that the Afghan *jihad* was not merely a cause *celebre* for the radical Islamist fringe in the 1980s, but rather engaged the sympathies of a broad cross section of society throughout Muslim-majority countries. The intense commitment the international volunteers demonstrated to the Afghan cause was obviously exceptional. But it was merely the most conspicuous manifestation of the newfound resonance that appeals to transnational religious loyalties and causes were capable of evoking throughout the *umma* by the 1980s.

Both government strategies of regime preservation and the intense activism of non-state actors in Islamic civil society facilitated the flow of volunteers to Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation. Consequently, the anti-Soviet *jihad* attracted a diverse ensemble of actors, many of whom were not committed Islamist radicals prior to their arrival in Afghanistan. Certainly, confirmed Islamists such as Ayman al-Zawahiri already subscribed to Qutbism prior to their departure from their

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<sup>862</sup>This figure is cited from Burke, who in turn derived it from an interview with Hamid Gul, director-general of Pakistan’s Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) from 1987-1989. See Burke, *Al Qaeda – Casting a Shadow of Terror*, p. 57.

<sup>863</sup>*Ibid.*

home countries, and saw in their participation in the *jihad* a unique opportunity to cultivate the skills, contacts and experience necessary to one day resume their struggle against home governments on better terms.<sup>864</sup> Others, particularly those that only stayed briefly or confined themselves to humanitarian and relief efforts in Afghanistan and the refugee camps in Pakistan, did not undergo a process of ideological radicalization over the course of the conflict. Still others, including Osama bin Laden, were driven to Afghanistan in response to devout religious convictions and became progressively more radicalized in their contacts with established Islamists.<sup>865</sup> What was critical about the Afghan *jihad* was that it provided the social environment in which these diverse groups could interact with one another. This interaction in turn spawned a host of perceptual, social, organizational and ideological mutations that formed necessary antecedents to the emergence of the global jihadist movement.

At a perceptual level, the Afghan *jihad* brought militants together from dozens of countries, nurturing a heightened awareness of their common struggles against secular governments. Despite their varied local circumstances, militants found common cause in Qutbism's core propositions. Militants were united in both their hostility towards Westernizing *jahili* tendencies in their home societies, and also in their privileging of divine sovereignty (*al hakimiya*) over human sovereignty as the governing principle of a properly constituted polity.<sup>866</sup> The goal of establishing theocratic societies governed by *sharia* law formed a further point of commonality among the militants.<sup>867</sup> In being exposed to like-minded actors suffering similar experiences of repression at home, the *émigré* militants experienced a significant

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<sup>864</sup>On al-Zawahiri's largely instrumental approach to the Afghan *jihad* and his continuing preoccupation with toppling the Egyptian government during his time in Afghanistan, see Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, p. 94.

<sup>865</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 131-135.

<sup>866</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>867</sup>*Ibid.*

perceptual shift whereby the global dimension of their individual struggles became more boldly illuminated. This perceptual shift was further reinforced by the intense social bonds and camaraderie forged among the Islamists as a result of their shared experiences in training camps and on the battlefield. By the end of the Soviet intervention, the jihadists remained predominantly focused on resuming their separate struggles back home, and the imperative of confronting America – much less contemporary international society itself – had yet to crystallize as a shared goal.<sup>868</sup> But the broadening of jihadist horizons and the social connections forged as a result of the Afghan jihad had now made this development possible.

In the short term, the Afghan jihad also yielded organizational and ideological innovations that would also be of long-term global import. At the organizational level, activists such as bin Laden and his mentor Abdullah Azzam worked diligently to provide a robust organizational framework for coordinating and managing the emerging transnational cadre of Islamic militants. As early as 1984, Azzam established the Maktab al-Khadamat (MAK, or Services Bureau), an organization based in Peshawar, Pakistan, in which thousands of volunteers were received, trained, housed and supervised prior to deployment in Afghanistan.<sup>869</sup> The organizers of MAK, which received generous funding from the Saudi government and also from bin Laden, were eventually able to establish a network of recruiting offices throughout the Middle East and beyond to channel volunteers to Afghanistan.<sup>870</sup> Complementing this effort, bin Laden established the Al-Faruq military college, a specialized training camp designed to equip volunteers with rigorous military training with a view towards turning out senior officers capable of fighting on behalf of Muslims in Afghanistan

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<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>869</sup> Burke, *Al Qaeda – Casting a Shadow of Terror*, p. 69.

<sup>870</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

and a range of other theatres.<sup>871</sup> Although the relationship between these efforts and the subsequent emergence of Al Qaeda was far from one of linear evolution, they nevertheless established an important precedent for future non-state efforts to organize and coordinate transnational networks of Islamic militants.

The enhanced interaction between militants in the context of the Afghan jihad also critically accelerated processes of ideological radicalization and cross-pollination. Fawaz Gerges notes that one of the most significant by-products of the conflict was the synthesis it affected between the militant Qutbist ideology of Egyptian Islamists and the puritanical Salafi-Wahhabism of the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>872</sup> The Salafi-Wahabbist strain of Islam that had prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula from the eighteenth century was traditionally an introverted faith, whose adherents advocated a return to the more pure form of Islam said to have been practiced by the Prophet and his early companions (*salaf*). This strain of Islam, which bin Laden subscribed to and which had sustained the Saudi monarchy from its establishment, was traditionally isolationist in its international orientation and politically quietist in character.<sup>873</sup> However, in the context of the Afghan jihad and thanks to innovators such as Azzam, the evangelical puritanism and scriptural literalism of the Salafis was fused with the revolutionary agenda and programmatic anti-Westernism of the Qutbists.<sup>874</sup> Once again, the import of this development was not immediately apparent, but it nevertheless signified an assimilation of bin Laden into the Qutbist mainstream, and also a further radicalization of the thinking of those who would subsequently form Al Qaeda's nucleus.

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<sup>871</sup>Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, p. 134.

<sup>872</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>873</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>874</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 132-135

The emergence of an international cohort of volunteers, ideologically committed and prepared to take up arms in defence of a transnational cause, was far from unprecedented in the history of the state system. In the Spanish Civil War, for example, approximately 32,000 volunteers drawn from over fifty countries had enlisted in the International Brigades in defence of socialism and the Spanish republic.<sup>875</sup> Additionally, like the International Brigades, which had been largely recruited with the assistance of the Soviet Union via the offices of the Comintern, the volunteers for the Afghan jihad enjoyed massive subsidies and assistance from states such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.<sup>876</sup> Unlike the International Brigades, however, the jihadist volunteers demonstrated precocious capacities for autonomous self-organization and independent ideological innovation at a transnational level.<sup>877</sup> These capacities were to a large degree the consequence of advances in communications and transportation technologies that made the tasks of transnational mobilization far easier for non-state actors in the 1980s than they had been in the 1930s. The greater relative autonomy of these jihadist groups from state sponsors, and the near-absence of a central state authority in Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal also assured the volunteer networks a greater longevity than their historical predecessors. Most importantly, however, whereas the International Brigades lost their struggle with Franco and spontaneously dissolved when the war ended, the jihadists had appeared to emerge victorious from their confrontation with the Soviet Union. However marginal the volunteers' objective military contribution to the victory may have been, the

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<sup>875</sup> MacKenzie, *Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era*, p. 117.

<sup>876</sup> Burke, *Al Qaeda – Casting a Shadow of Terror*, p. 57.

<sup>877</sup> Conversely, MacKenzie notes that the foreign volunteers comprising the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War were largely mobilized via a semi-clandestine network of recruiting stations maintained by the Comintern, and were again smuggled into Spain largely with the assistance and direction of the Comintern. See MacKenzie, *Revolutionary Armies in the Modern Era*, p. 121.

jihadists perceived the hand of providence in the Soviets' defeat.<sup>878</sup> Thus emboldened, a constellation of jihadist networks emerged from the Afghan jihad ideologically radicalized, transnationally organized, and thoroughly energized by their defeat of a *kufir* (infidel) superpower. The global jihadists' challenge against the state system had yet to be launched, but following the first 'victory' in Afghanistan, likelihood of such a challenge eventually emerging was dramatically raised.

## **9.2 The Consolidation and Globalization of the Jihadist Challenge to International Society, 1990-2001**

### **9.2.1 The 'End of History' and the Revenge of God**

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century entered its final decade, a series of momentous changes rapidly transformed the global political landscape. First and foremost of these changes was the end of the Cold War. The Cold War's end signified the peaceful termination of an internal schism within the popular sovereignty revolution that traced its European origins as far back as 1848, and that had assumed global significance following the Bolshevik revolution and the rise of Wilsonian liberal internationalism in 1917. With socialism discredited and the Soviet Union defunct, liberals looked forward to an era marked by the universalization of democracy and market capitalism and the strengthening of international institutions to advance the values of a liberal world order. Critically, even after the first flush of victory faded, the sentiment that

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<sup>878</sup>Indeed, the jihadists saw in their successful struggle against the Soviet Union a direct parallel with the early Muslim victories against the Sassanid Empire, which had opened up the lands of the East to Islam. As their hostility towards the United States grew in the years following the Soviet Union's collapse, many jihadists would return to this parallel, casting America as the latter-day Byzantium, the other great imperial rival that had eventually fallen to the jihadists' historical forebears. On this parallel and its significance in jihadist propaganda, see Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement', p. 97.

democracy and market capitalism could and should be extended to developing and post-socialist polities heavily conditioned the strategic outlooks of Northern states. For Western Europeans, their prior successes in rehabilitating post-authoritarian polities such as Spain, Greece and Portugal informed post-Cold War efforts to stabilize the EU's eastern and southern flanks through a combination of market liberalization, democracy promotion, and the incorporation of target polities into multilateral institutions.<sup>879</sup> Such policies were supported by the United States, but were tempered even prior to Bush the Younger's presidency by a more qualified endorsement of multilateralism and a greater readiness to employ diplomatic and even military coercion in the service of liberal ends.<sup>880</sup>

These differences in means notwithstanding, the strategic ends of liberal states were remarkably similar during the immediate post-Cold War period. Polities on both sides of the Atlantic identified the spread of capitalism and democracy and the strengthening of international institutions as beneficial developments that would promote international peace and security. This ideological consensus among Northern states was complemented by the Soviet Union's collapse and the advent of a unipolar international system. While the end of the Cold War had resolved a long-standing ideological schism, the advent of unipolarity marked an equally significant shift in the state system's material foundations. From its genesis in the second half of the seventeenth century, the European sovereign state system had relied upon the operation of a balance of power between the Great Powers as a mechanism for

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<sup>879</sup>On European democracy promotion efforts in the post-Cold War period, see Michael McFaul. "Democracy Promotion as a World Value." *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (2004-05), pp. 156-157. Far from being a purely American preoccupation, McFaul argues that democracy promotion has been central to European foreign policy agendas as well, going so far as to demonstrate that EU resources dedicate to democracy promotion exceed those dedicated by the USA. See *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>880</sup>On the emergence of unilateral tendencies in American foreign policy during the Clinton Administration, see for example Stefan A. Halper and Jonathan Clarke. *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 97-98.

moderating states' ambitions and maintaining international order.<sup>881</sup> As the centuries progressed, the reliability of this ordering mechanism had been progressively corroded through the steady concentration of Clausewitzian war-making capacities among an ever shrinking number of powers. From the classic European pentarchy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the state system had arguably evolved towards a tri-polar power configuration by the inter-war period, before stabilizing around a bi-polar distribution of power throughout the course of the Cold War.<sup>882</sup> With the Soviet Union's collapse and the advent of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), the United States assumed a position of predominance unprecedented in the history of the Westphalian state system.<sup>883</sup>

Both the advent of unipolarity and the end of ideological rivalry in the developed world marked profound departures from the norm when situated within the context of the Westphalian state system's long-term evolution. However, while these transformations held out the prospect of strengthening world order, in the immediate post-Cold War period this promise was partially offset by the accelerating decay of state structures across swathes of the post-socialist and post-colonial worlds. The chaos and instability characteristic of post-imperial transitions predictably manifested itself following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, as violent political entrepreneurs scrambled to eliminate rivals and consolidate their position following the collapse of these quasi-imperial polities.<sup>884</sup> In Africa as well, the complete

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<sup>881</sup>See generally Edward Vose Gulick. *Europe's Classical Balance of Power: A Case History of the Theory and Practice of One of the Great Concepts of European Statecraft*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1955.

<sup>882</sup>On tripolarity as a characteristic of the inter-war period, see Randall L. Schweller. *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

<sup>883</sup>On the magnitude of America's material preponderance in the post-Cold War period, see Stephen G. Brooks, and William C. Wohlforth. "American Primacy in Perspective." *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (2002), pp. 21-23.

<sup>884</sup>Colin S. Gray. "How Has War Changed since the End of the Cold War?" *Parameters* 35, no. 1 (2005), p. 19.



disintegration of state authority in polities such as Sierra Leone, Zaire, and Somalia offset the strategic dividends accompanying the end of superpower-fuelled proxy wars and the abolition of apartheid in South Africa.<sup>885</sup> Even in instances where the complete collapse of state structures was averted, many post-colonial polities suffered violent legitimacy crises in the 1990s. The crises that engulfed formerly stable authoritarian states such as Algeria and Indonesia during this period further underscored both the frailty of state authority in many post-colonial polities, as well as highlighting the potential for localized legitimacy crises to exert regionally and even globally destabilizing effects in an era of intensified global interconnectedness.

The ascendancy of liberal internationalism, the advent of American unipolarity, and the prevalence of widespread state failure provided the enabling context for the fourth major development of the post-Cold War period, namely the enhanced projection of Western military power and political influence into the developing world. Admittedly, many weak post-colonial states had always struggled in practice to assert their autonomy from the strategic and economic imperatives of powerful Northern patrons. However, from the early 1990s onwards, longstanding *de facto* deviations from the norm of non-interference were reinforced by an increasing willingness on the part of Northern states to qualify the *de jure* validity of this norm, at least as it applied to weak states. Over the decade's course, Northern states explicitly invoked humanitarian considerations to justify their violation of norms of non-intervention in northern and southern Iraq, Bosnia, and Kosovo.<sup>886</sup> Elsewhere, (e.g. Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo), the total collapse of state structures enabled them to side step the question of non-intervention, permitting a tentative and

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<sup>885</sup>See generally I. William Zartman. *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1995.

<sup>886</sup>On the growth of humanitarian intervention as a practice within international politics in the post-Cold War period, see generally Nicholas J. Wheeler. *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

in most cases inadequate deployment of military force in the service of humanitarian objectives.<sup>887</sup> At a more diffuse level still, the indebtedness and geopolitical marginality of many post-colonial states following the end of the Cold War left them acutely vulnerable to Western pressures to adopt liberal economic and political reforms, further compromising the autonomy of incumbent regimes.

With liberalism ascendant following the end of the Cold War, Northern states became newly receptive to the idea that international peace and security could best be advanced by promoting the spread of democracy and liberal capitalism and by strengthening international institutions. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the concomitant abeyance of Great Power rivalry meanwhile provided the United States with the geopolitical space necessary to advance such a program. Finally, the advent of internationally destabilizing crises of state authority in many post-socialist and post-colonial states provided a strategic rationale for revising established norms of non-intervention to accommodate the projection of Western military power in the service of liberal ends. The resulting circumscription of weak states' sovereignty in the 1990s was *ad hoc*, sporadic, and inconsistent in its application, with both the legality and the efficacy of interventionist initiatives becoming the subjects of considerable contestation.<sup>888</sup> However, with advances in communications and information technologies continually compressing the strategic distance between North and South, the caging of weak states' sovereignty within liberal norms was nevertheless regarded by many as a necessary development, and one that would promote rather than subvert

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<sup>887</sup>On Operation Restore Hope, see generally Walter Clarke, and Jeffrey Herbst. "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention." *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 2 (1996): 70-85. On Operation Artemis, the EU's intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo, see Stale Ulriksen, Catriona Gourlay, and Catriona Mace. "Operation Artemis: The Shape of Things to Come?" *International Peacekeeping* 11, no. 3 (2004): 508-25.

<sup>888</sup>See generally Robert O. Keohane, and J. L. Holzgrefe. *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

the purposes of popular eudemonism and self-determination to which the global state system was dedicated.

For many Western observers, the foregoing developments appeared to signal a prospective consolidation of a liberal world order. The end of the Cold War and the advent of US unipolarity provided the opportunity to promote such a consolidation, while the emerging threats posed by failing states in the periphery appeared to render such an effort a strategic necessity. Unsurprisingly, for the jihadists returning from Afghanistan, the post-Cold War environment presented a radically different set of threats and opportunities. Whereas many Westerners saw the prospective emergence of a 'new world order' as signalling a break with the traumas of the twentieth century, for Islamists, the resulting projection of Western military power into Muslim-majority countries marked an alarming escalation of processes of colonial subjugation that had been manifest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that had steadily worsened from the abolition of the caliphate in 1924. This dissonance separating Western from Islamist viewpoints was most sharply apparent in their discordant interpretations of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, the UN-authorized missions marshalled in response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. For a Western-dominated international community, the operations represented a rare success for the UN's system of collective security. A multinational coalition, acting under the imprimatur of the Security Council, had repulsed an unequivocal act of aggression perpetrated by one member state against another. The UN's successful response to Iraqi aggression contrasted dramatically with its paralysis for much of the Cold War, suggesting renewed scope for strengthening collective security institutions in the post-Cold War era.

However, what served as a cause for celebration in Western capitals served equally as a cause for despair and humiliation amongst many Islamists. For the

Islamists, the fact that the Saudi monarchy had solicited the assistance of infidel forces to defend the Land of the Two Holy Places spoke volumes about the monarchy's spiritual bankruptcy, as well as demonstrating its scandalous dependence on foreign patrons to sustain itself.<sup>889</sup> Additionally, the indefinite presence of *kufir* forces in Saudi Arabia in the wake of Desert Storm blatantly contradicted Mohammed's injunction forbidding the practice of religions other than Islam on the Arabian Peninsula, thus further estranging Islamists from the Saudi monarchy.<sup>890</sup> For bin Laden especially and for jihadists more generally, the infidel occupation of the Arabian Peninsula served as a lightning rod for opposition to the Saudi monarchy and its Western patrons.<sup>891</sup> More broadly, for the jihadists returning from Afghanistan, the occupation of the Holy Lands represented merely the most egregious instance of a larger infidel encroachment upon the lands of the *umma* over the course of the 1990s. Again, the contrast between Western and jihadist perspectives is instructive. For Westerners, multilateral interventions in northern Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, and later East Timor and Kosovo were perceived as being primarily humanitarian in nature. But for the jihadists, these operations were conflated with ostensibly unrelated conflicts such as the Chechen wars and the long-running separatist insurgency in Mindanao as constituting a sustained military assault against the Abode of Islam (*Darul Islam*).<sup>892</sup>

The jihadist narrative of an *umma* assailed on all sides by infidels signified the most extreme manifestation of a continuing ideological polarization in the global state system between an ascendant liberal internationalism and a simmering Islamist counter-movement. Nevertheless, this transnational jihadist narrative resonated only amongst a minority of the most radical Islamists in the 1990s. Certainly, both the first

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<sup>889</sup>On this point, see Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 178-183.

<sup>890</sup>Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement', p. 98.

<sup>891</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>892</sup>Roy, *Globalised Islam*, p. 293

attack on the World Trade Centre and other abortive attempts to launch mass casualty attacks against Western interests in the early to mid 1990s (e.g. *Oplan Bojinka*) were illustrative of the capacity of this narrative to spur transnational jihadist networks to action.<sup>893</sup> Similarly, the participation of foreign jihadists in conflicts in Somalia and Bosnia demonstrated the continuing resonance of calls to defend the *umma* against *kufir* incursions among a small minority following their apparent ‘victory’ over the Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>894</sup> However, for the majority of jihadists, the changed geopolitical circumstances of the post-Cold War period appeared to present opportunities to advance the Islamist cause far closer to home. Given the brittle character of many autocratic regimes in Muslim-majority states, and given also the military experience jihadists had acquired in Afghanistan, the prospects of striking crushing blows against incumbent apostate rulers appeared to be promising.

Consequently, in the early to mid 1990s, several Muslim-majority states were engulfed in yet another cycle of Islamist rebellion and government repression. Once again, Islamist hopes were to be frustrated, with governments brutally suppressing renewed jihadist campaigns in Egypt, Algeria and elsewhere.<sup>895</sup> The renewed failure of jihadists to defeat the ‘near’ enemy of local apostate regimes would prove pivotal in the subsequent decision of some jihadists to turn their attention to the ‘far’ enemy of the United States and its allies, prefiguring the global jihadist assault on the state system from the mid-1990s. However, even a cursory consideration of the jihadists’ failed campaigns against incumbent governments during this period reveals several critical differences that distinguished them from prior waves of jihadist violence. Ideologically, jihadists embraced interpretations of jihad that permitted a radically

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<sup>893</sup>Rohan Gunaratna. *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 6.

<sup>894</sup>Kepel, ‘The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement’, pp. 100-101.

<sup>895</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 100-103.

more permissive attitude towards the targeting of non-combatants than had existed previously. From Qutb onwards, the practice of *takfir* (declaring another Muslim an apostate) had been common among Islamists seeking to justify acts of violence targeted directly at nominally Muslim rulers. Over the course of the Algerian civil war, however, the jihadist Armed Islamic Group (GIA) progressively extended the judgement of *takfir* to encompass everyone who refused to side with the GIA in its struggle against the secular government.<sup>896</sup> The resulting indiscriminate massacres of civilian populations drew harsh criticisms from within the Islamist movement, including from Al Qaeda itself, and the GIA's resulting estrangement from Algerian society contributed heavily to its defeat in 1997.<sup>897</sup> But by then, the theological precedent for relaxing scriptural norms against the killing of civilians had been well established, and it would continue to inform jihadist thought and action thereafter.

Jihadist campaigns in Algeria and Egypt during this time were also marked by an increased targeting of the political and economic bonds linking incumbent regimes with external sources of support. This partial internationalization of the struggle against the 'near enemy' was manifest in Egypt in jihadist massacres of foreign tourists in the mid 1990s, a tactic that was explicitly designed to cripple Egypt's tourist industry, undermine Egypt's fragile economy and thus starve the Mubarak regime of desperately needed revenue.<sup>898</sup> In Algeria, the internationalization of the local jihad entailed a sustained terrorist campaign undertaken within France itself from 1994-1995.<sup>899</sup> The object of this campaign was to compel the French government to withdraw its support for the beleaguered Algerian government, thus weakening it and

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<sup>896</sup>Wiktorowicz, 'Genealogy of Radical Islam', pp 88-91.

<sup>897</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>898</sup>Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement', p. 100. See also Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 291-293.

<sup>899</sup>Kepel, *Jihad – The Trail of Political Islam*, p. 256.

in so doing enhancing the jihadists' prospects of seizing power.<sup>900</sup> Ultimately, neither of these tactics were successful. The French government resisted the jihadists' attempts at compellence, while the Egyptian tourist massacres sparked a popular backlash from those hit by the massacres' economic fall-out, contributing heavily to local jihadists' subsequent declaration of a unilateral ceasefire in 1997.<sup>901</sup> Despite their failure, these attempts to internationalize local jihads were significant, inasmuch as they anticipated the subsequent moves by a minority of jihadists to much more systematically target the 'far enemy' through a global campaign of asymmetric warfare.

Finally, the local jihads of the early to mid 1990s also witnessed jihadists' increased resort to weak state havens, as well as their growing recourse to *ad hoc* transnational alliances with other jihadist groups in order to prosecute their struggles against home state governments. The activities of Ayman al-Zawahiri's Islamic Jihad during this time are particularly revealing on this point. In 1990, the newly established Islamic fundamentalist regime in Sudan had explicitly sought out and invited jihadist groups to re-locate from Afghanistan to Sudan.<sup>902</sup> This initiative provided Islamic Jihad with a proximate territorial platform from which to launch attacks against Egyptian interests throughout the region.<sup>903</sup> The most notorious of these attacks, an assassination attack on President Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1995, reflected Islamic Jihad's growing willingness to prosecute its war against the Egyptian government at an international level.<sup>904</sup> The 1995 bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan further underscored this shift in strategy, but was equally revealing for Islamic Jihad's

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<sup>900</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>901</sup> On the French government's resistance to jihadists' attempts at compellence, see *Ibid.* On the failure of jihadist attacks on tourists to advance their strategic objectives in Egypt, see *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>902</sup> Burke, *Al Qaeda – Casting a Shadow of Terror*, p.131.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>904</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

reliance upon locally recruited proxies to execute this attack.<sup>905</sup> The combination of the availability of weak state havens and *ad hoc* alliances with other jihadist groups had provided Islamic Jihad with a global reach by the mid 1990s, while the failure of terrorism and guerrilla warfare to advance jihadist goals within Egypt itself made the shift towards a global strategy for destabilizing the Mubarak regime seem increasingly essential.<sup>906</sup> In this respect, Islamic Jihad's experience prefigured the incipient globalization of jihadist violence off the back of weak states and transnationally connected militant groups that would find its apotheosis in the Al Qaeda network.

By the mid 1990s, the global jihadist movement was clearly faltering. The atrocities perpetrated by extremists in Algeria and Egypt had radically estranged them from local populations, precipitating a splintering of local jihadist movements and the defeat of the Islamist project in both instances.<sup>907</sup> Jihadist efforts in theatres such as Somalia, Bosnia and Chechnya had also yielded largely disappointing results for the jihadist cause.<sup>908</sup> The renunciation of jihad by many local jihadist groups signalled the prevailing mood of disillusionment and disunity among many jihadists by the middle of the decade.<sup>909</sup> However, while this sentiment was widespread, it was by no means universal. The more permissive attitude towards attacks on non-combatants; the shift towards a more internationalized struggle against local apostate regimes; the exploitation of weak states and loose alliances between militant networks to forge jihadist entities of global reach - each of these legacies of the 1990s jihads would

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<sup>905</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>906</sup> Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement;', p.100.

<sup>907</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-103.

<sup>908</sup> On Al Qaeda's failure to create a fundamentalist state in Bosnia for want of local support, see Evan F. Kohlman. *Al Qaeda's Jihad in Europe - the Afghan-Bosnian Network*. (New York: Berg, 2004), p. 229. On the relative insignificance of foreign jihadist involvement in the Chechen wars and their inability to align with indigenous resistance groups due to doctrinal differences, see Mark Galeotti. "'Brotherhoods' and 'Associates': Chechen Networks of Crime and Resistance." *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* 11, no. 2/3 (2002), p. 349. On bin Laden's decision not to relocate Al Qaeda to Somalia – tellingly because he reportedly believed local clan leaders would prove untrustworthy allies, see "Somalia and the 'War' on Terrorism." *Strategic Comments* 8, no. 1 (2002), p. 2.

<sup>909</sup> Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, pp. 159-160.



profoundly influence the evolution of the jihadist movement's radical transnational fringe. And each would be evident in the rise of Al Qaeda and the subsequent outbreak of the global jihadist insurgency.

### 9.2.2 Declarations of War – The Rise of Al Qaeda and the Onset of the Global Jihadist Insurgency, 1996-2001

‘The situation cannot be rectified, as the shadow cannot be straightened when its source, the rod, is not straight either, unless the root of the problem is tackled. Hence it is essential to hit the main enemy who divided the *umma* into small and little countries and pushed it for decades into a state of confusion...’<sup>910</sup>

On 23d August 1996, speaking from a mujahadeen base in Tora Bora, Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden officially declared war against the ‘Zionist-Crusader alliance’ in the name of the *umma*.<sup>911</sup> While bin Laden at the time constituted merely one representative of the transnational fringe of the jihadist movement, the declaration was nevertheless significant for several reasons. At the most basic level, bin Laden’s declaration marked a transition from his prior role as a financier of Islamist terrorism towards more active involvement as a coordinator and instigator of Islamist attacks throughout the Middle East and beyond. Relatedly, bin Laden’s declaration also constituted an audacious move to elevate his status within the ranks of the transnational jihadists, representing nothing less than a claim to leadership of a vanguard force dedicated to the *umma*’s defence. More fundamentally, the bin Laden

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<sup>910</sup>Osama bin Laden, ‘A Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places’, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1996, cited in Burke, *Al Qaeda – Casting a Shadow of Terror*, p. 149.

<sup>911</sup>*Ibid.*

declaration also marked a dramatic mutation of jihadist organization, strategies and objectives. Where previously jihadists had concentrated their efforts on direct action against incumbent Middle Eastern regimes, bin Laden urged jihadists to prioritize targeting the United States and its allies, identifying them as the malignant force that directed and underwrote local apostate tyrants, and that consequently represented the ultimate fountainhead of Muslims' present misfortunes.<sup>912</sup> With bin Laden's declarations of war against the 'Zionist-Crusader alliance' in 1996 and again in 1998, the jihad became global, and the systemic confrontation between the jihadist insurgency and the global state system truly began.

Any adequate comprehension of the globalization of the jihadist insurgency must begin with a recognition that the global jihad was borne out of a pervasive sense of failure within the Islamist movement. By the mid 1990s, the jihadists' persistent inability to topple incumbent apostate regimes had become starkly apparent. Despite their lack of popular legitimacy, the robust repressive capacities of incumbent regimes in the Muslim world had proved sufficient to the task of suppressing jihadists' efforts to seize control of the state through the use of armed force.<sup>913</sup> Guerrilla warfare, urban terrorism, economic sabotage, and even attempts to infiltrate the state's armed forces with a view towards launching *coups d'état* against *kufir* rulers had all failed to accomplish the jihadists' objectives.<sup>914</sup> Equally, the non-violent and gradualist efforts of other Islamists to Islamicize society from the bottom-up had also been generally unsuccessful.<sup>915</sup> By the mid-1990s, it was obvious that the state was too strong and

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<sup>912</sup>Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, p. 149. Gerges adverts to a comment made by bin Laden to some of his colleagues, predicting that once the United States was expelled from the Middle East, its local clients would 'fall like ripened fruits.' See *Ibid.* See also Doran, 'Somebody Else's Civil War', p. 27.

<sup>913</sup>Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement', pp. 98-103.

<sup>914</sup>Kepel, *Jihad – The Trail of Political Islam*, pp. 4-11.

<sup>915</sup>On the Egyptian government's success in defeating both the radical and moderate elements of the Islamist opposition through recourse to an indiscriminate policy of ruthless repression, see *Ibid.*, pp. 297-299.

civil society too cowed, atomized, and anaemic in most Muslim-majority societies for either of these strategies to be effective, leaving the Islamists at a strategic impasse.

At the same time that the failure of existing Islamist strategies was becoming apparent, Islamists were also confronted by a continued worsening of the very perils that they had sought to combat. Foremost of these perils was the inexorable extension of *kufir* influence into Islamic countries. This trend had already manifested itself during the Cold War, most conspicuously in the Soviets' invasion of Afghanistan, but more subtly and enduringly in the United States' alliance with Israel and its steadily increasing military presence in the Persian Gulf. Both the United States' enhanced strategic cooperation with Israel and its growing military presence in the Persian Gulf in the 1980s were animated by a desire to curb the threat of possible Soviet military expansion in the Middle East.<sup>916</sup> Equally, the United States' growing involvement in the Persian Gulf was also driven by the perceived need to fill the security vacuum left by the British liquidation of military commitments east of Suez after 1968, and by a growing appreciation of the necessity of securing developed states' reliable access to the region's energy reserves.<sup>917</sup> In the 1980s, the United States had extended its regional power projection abilities through improvements to existing air bases and enhanced pre-positioning of war *materiel* in the Persian Gulf.<sup>918</sup> However, from 1990 onwards, America's regional presence expanded dramatically, with Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm leaving thousands of American troops stationed indefinitely in the Saudi kingdom.<sup>919</sup> It was specifically this 'provocation' that formed the focal grievance for bin Laden, but it was also symptomatic of the larger process of global

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<sup>916</sup> Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>917</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>919</sup> Clarke notes also that Saudi Arabia's purchase of vast quantities of American military hardware after the Gulf War necessitated the stationing of increased numbers of American civilians to assist the Saudis in the use and maintenance of these weapons systems, thus further increasing the foreign presence in Saudi Arabia and further antagonizing Islamist radicals such as Osama bin Laden. See *Ibid.*, p. 70.

geopolitical consolidation evident during the post-Cold War era of American unipolarity.

The presence of infidel troops in the Holy Land provided the primary catalyst for the emergence of the global jihadist insurgency, but it constituted only the most grievous instance of the *umma*'s perceived subjugation by *kufir* forces. This subjugation was evident also in the military campaigns being waged against Muslims in theatres as diverse as Chechnya, Bosnia, Somalia, Tajikistan, and the southern Philippines.<sup>920</sup> At a more insidious level, however, continuing advances in communications technologies were progressively increasing Muslims' exposure to outside cultural influences, further fuelling Islamists' anxieties for the *umma*'s future.<sup>921</sup> The spread of satellite television in particular not only provided a conduit for the transmission of Western cultural 'pollutants', but also increased the visibility of violence perpetrated against Muslims in places such as Bosnia and Chechnya, serving in both instances to reinforce the sense of siege gripping the Islamists.<sup>922</sup> For Islamists, the combination of American unipolarity and globalization posed an existential threat to the *umma*'s very survival. That incumbent rulers were not repelling the *kufir* threat, despite the ease with which they had defeated the jihadists, seemed to lend further support to the jihadists' characterization of them as apostates who were actively complicit in the infidels' plans to destroy Islam.<sup>923</sup>

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<sup>920</sup>On the importance of conflicts at the 'Islamic frontier' in consolidating in jihadists' minds the existence of an imagined transnational *umma* to be defended at all costs, see Roy, *Globalised Islam – The Search for a New Ummah*, pp. 288-289.

<sup>921</sup>On this point, see Lynch, 'Globalization and Arab Security', pp. 189-190.

<sup>922</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>923</sup>In jihadist lights, the 'apostate' rulers of Muslim-majority states are explicitly compared to the *Munafiqun*, the notorious Hypocrites of Medina who nominally accepted Islam to protect their worldly status, but who secretly harboured malice towards the Prophet and who abandoned Mohammed on the battlefield when he was woefully outnumbered. Jihadists explicitly invoke the parallel between the *Munafiqun* of early Islam and contemporary rulers of Islamic states in order to attach upon the latter the degree of opprobrium necessary to be deemed necessary to delegitimize them in the eyes of Muslims, and thus justify jihadist violence against the latter-day *Munafiqun*. See Doran, 'Somebody Else's Civil War', p. 25.

Faced with a strategic impasse at home, and gripped by fears of impending catastrophe evoked by the combined influence of unipolarity, globalization, and localized failures of governance, a tiny, radicalized transnational fraction of the Islamist movement underwent profound mutations that yielded the phenomenon of global jihadism. While Al Qaeda assumed unofficial leadership of the global jihadist movement for only a brief period of time, a consideration of its ideology, objectives, organization, strategy and operations yields important insights concerning both the nature of global jihadism as well as the distinctive milieu out of which it emerged. Ideologically, bin Laden and Al-Zawahiri married the political program of Qutb with the moral puritanism of Salafism, before situating this synthesis within a global framework of grievances.<sup>924</sup> The result was an anti-systemic ideology that comprehensively repudiates the identity-constitutive, ethical-prescriptive, and power-legitimizing norms that jointly constitute the normative complex of the contemporary international order.

At the identity-constitutive level, global jihadism rejects entirely the proposition that the purpose of world order should be to promote popular eudemonism and the advancement of individual and collective self-determination. For the jihadists, following Qutb, the Enlightenment's unmooring of the *polis* from the *cosmos* constitutes the root cause of the modern *jahiliyya* afflicting contemporary society.<sup>925</sup> In elevating reason over revelation and the satisfaction of humankind's material wants over its spiritual needs, the *kufir* world order is seen to institutionalize humankind's estrangement from God.<sup>926</sup> In jihadist lights, true sovereignty (*al hakimiya*) can reside only with God, the creator of the universe.<sup>927</sup> The divinely inspired *sharia* provides an

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<sup>924</sup>On this point, see Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, pp. 131-135.

<sup>925</sup>On this point, see Daniel Philpott. "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations." *World Politics* 55, no. 1 (2002), p. 88.

<sup>926</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>927</sup>Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, p. 5.

entirely self-sufficient legal code for human societies, thus the assignment of legislative sovereignty to any human agency both denies God's authority, while also empowering earthly rulers to establish a tyranny over their fellow men.<sup>928</sup> For contemporary jihadists, as for rulers in Latin Christendom and the Sinosphere, the spiritual and political realms are thus intimately connected, with submission to the divine imperatives of the former guaranteeing the realization of a modicum of order in the latter. This integrationist conception of the relationship between the sacred and the mundane conflicts radically with the privatization of the religious sphere implicit in the Westphalian state system, and accounts to a considerable degree for the jihadists' implacable hostility towards the contemporary international order.

In addition to opposing the state system's purposes, jihadism also rejects its ethical-prescriptive norms. While bin Laden in both of his major *fatwas* against the West protests the large-scale violations of Muslims' human rights allegedly perpetrated by the global *kufir*, these references to the cosmopolitan ethics of the contemporary order sit uneasily within the context of Al Qaeda's broader moral outlook.<sup>929</sup> For the jihadists, God's will as revealed in the Koran constitutes the sole legitimate guide for moral action. The jihadists' idiosyncratic privileging of the sword verses of the Koran also leads them to posit an unbridgeable moral divide between believers and non-believers.<sup>930</sup> In place of the moral universalism of the global human rights regime, the jihadists attribute exclusive moral worth to the *umma*, casting it as a community of faith locked in ceaseless existential struggle with the forces of infidelity, unbelief, and idolatry.<sup>931</sup> In keeping with this outlook, the laws of war are

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<sup>928</sup>Goldberg, 'Smashing Idols and the State', pp. 16-18.

<sup>929</sup>OBL – Declarations of War, Al Qaeda Reader

<sup>930</sup>On the idiosyncratic character of the jihadists' interpretation of Islam, which expressly contravenes orthodox Islamic jurisprudence, see Khaled Abou El Fadl. "The Orphans of Modernity and the Clash of Civilizations." *Global Dialogue* 4, no. 2 (2002), p. 13.

<sup>931</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

seen to have no authority, being superseded by de-contextualized Koranic injunctions marshalled by the jihadists to legitimize unlimited war against a dehumanized and undifferentiated *kufir* adversary.<sup>932</sup>

Finally, in relation to the state system's power-legitimizing norms, the jihadists' rejection of popular sovereignty extends to a repudiation of the entire institutional architecture of the state system, including both the United Nations and its member states.<sup>933</sup> Once again following Qutbism, the artificial splintering of the *umma* into a mosaic of territorially delimited and mutually exclusive sovereign states is interpreted as a mutilation of the embodied community of believers inflicted by infidel forces to divide and weaken Muslims.<sup>934</sup> For the jihadists, the idolatry embodied in the modern nation-state must be rejected in favour of a transnational caliphate encompassing all believers.<sup>935</sup> In contrast to traditional Islamic jurisprudence, which abhors the prospect of strife (*fitna*) and counsels against rebellion, jihadist ideology recognizes only the authority of God and his chosen *caliph*.<sup>936</sup> In the absence of a caliph to marshal Islam's forces in defence of the *umma*, jihadists insist that it is the individual and perpetual duty of all Muslims to

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<sup>932</sup>This is not to suggest that jihadists make no effort to convince their broader Muslim audience of the moral legitimacy of their actions. On the contrary, jihadists spend a great deal of time seeking to marshal religious justifications for disregarding norms of non-combatant immunity. See for example Wiktorowicz, 'A Genealogy of Radical Islam', pp. 89-93. Wiktorowicz also notes the considerable efforts jihadists have gone to in seeking to delegitimize alternative voices within Islam (including voices within the broader Islamic fundamentalist movement) that have questioned the ethical validity of jihadist attacks on non-combatants. See Quintan Wiktorowicz. "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and Al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority." *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004), pp. 175-176.

<sup>933</sup>On the jihadists' hostility towards the United Nations, see Mendelsohn, 'Sovereignty Under Attack', pp. 62-63.

<sup>934</sup>On the global jihadists' hostility to the nation-state, and on the discrepancy between this position and that of most Muslims, see Mohammed Ayoob. "Deciphering Islam's Multiple Voices: Intellectual Luxury or Strategic Necessity?" *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 3 (2005), p. 83.

<sup>935</sup>Bassam Tibi. "The Totalitarianism of Jihadist Islamism and Its Challenge to Europe and to Islam." *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 1 (2007), p. 49.

<sup>936</sup>On the traditional Islamic injunction against *fitna* and the efforts of jihadist ideologues to circumvent this injunction from Qutb onwards, see Marc Sageman. *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, pp. 7-9.

wage war against the infidel.<sup>937</sup> In arrogating to themselves the responsibility for taking up arms in defence of an imagined transnational *umma*, the jihadists thus reject the Weberian norm mandating the state's monopoly of legitimate violence.<sup>938</sup> In so doing, they thereby undercut the most basic and essential power-legitimizing norm undergirding the contemporary world order.

Al Qaeda's ideology remained faithful to the core elements of Qutbism, while simultaneously fashioning an interpretation of it that was more sensitive to the new threats and opportunities jihadists confronted in a more global age. Thus Qutb's dichotomy between *jahiliyya* and *al-hakimiya*, his critique of the soulless materialism of Western modernity, and his insistence on the necessity of jihad against apostate rulers were all retained, but were augmented by an awareness that the 'near enemy' would remain impervious to annihilation while it retained the support of the 'far enemy.'<sup>939</sup> While Qutbism had always been virulently anti-Western, bin Laden made the fight against the 'Zionist-Crusader alliance' jihadists' first priority, and sought to channel Islamists' activities towards jihad against a Western-dominated international system underwritten by American hegemony.<sup>940</sup> For bin Laden and his followers, the apostasy afflicting Muslim-majority societies and the *umma's* military encirclement and ongoing penetration were both attributable to the pernicious influence of America and its allies.<sup>941</sup> As a logical corollary of their integrationist conception of the relationship between the sacred and the mundane, bin Laden and al-Zawahiri naturally saw the Muslim world's spiritual and geopolitical afflictions as being inextricably entwined. This sentiment was most pithily captured in bin Laden's post September 11 characterization of America as the Hubal of the Age, referring to the stone idol that

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<sup>937</sup> Al Qaeda reader

<sup>938</sup> On this point, see Mendelsohn, 'Sovereignty Under Attack', p. 67.

<sup>939</sup> Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, pp. 144-145

<sup>940</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>941</sup> Doran, 'Somebody Else's Civil War', p. 27.



had once stood in the Kaaba prior to Mohammed's revelation.<sup>942</sup> As Michael Scott Doran has noted, this symbolism carried a dual resonance for Muslims. In portraying America as the modern Hubal, bin Laden both cast America as the font of all idolatry, while simultaneously identifying its military presence in the Holy Land as an unpardonable desecration of Islam's holiest site.<sup>943</sup> The opposition of Hubal and Kaaba as respective metonyms for *kufir* world order and beleaguered *umma* economically communicated the jihadists' central anxiety concerning the ongoing encroachment of the profane upon the sacred worlds, an encroachment personified most starkly in the American military presence in the Gulf. At the same time, the statement also conveys the jihadists' Manichean world view, as well illuminating their strategic reorientation from an emphasis on local rebellion towards a global insurgency against the global state system.

Al Qaeda's ideological innovations were very much the product of perceived strategic necessities flowing from the failure of local jihads and the waxing of the *kufir* threat. However, in their organization and grand strategy, Al Qaeda also demonstrated a precocious capacity to exploit emerging mobilizational opportunities made possible by changes in the state system's material foundations. Writing on the dynamics of emergent power agglomerations in relation to ideological, economic, military and political sources of social power, Michael Mann has observed: 'When an independent source of power emerges, it is promiscuous in relation to 'factors', gathering them from all crannies of social life, giving them only a distinctive organizational configuration.'<sup>944</sup> This observation relates particularly well to Al Qaeda, which was able from the mid 1990s to draw from global flows of people, capital, ideas and materiel to energize a unique form of globalised insurgency more analogous to a

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<sup>942</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>943</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>944</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Volume I*, p. 22.

transnational social movement than to a traditional guerrilla organization. Indeed, while Al Qaeda during the period 1996-2001 undoubtedly possessed the rudiments of a central hierarchy, the broader jihadist movement it purported to lead can best be conceptualized as an interstitial social phenomenon, sustained by a combination of transnational flows, localized governance gaps in weak and failing states, and social ties of varying strength between diverse militant groups.<sup>945</sup>

The enhanced interconnectedness of societies bequeathed by globalisation conferred new opportunities upon a range of non-state actors in the 1990s, including the global jihadist movement. Advances in communications technologies empowered activists such as bin Laden to communicate rapidly and easily with a global audience.<sup>946</sup> Relatedly, the information technology revolution also enabled him to more effectively coordinate the actions of territorially dispersed networks of operatives, permitting him to orchestrate the series of trans-continental terrorist attacks on Western interests that culminated in 9/11.<sup>947</sup> Improvements in communication and transportation technologies meanwhile increased the transnational mobility of men, money and materiel, while the patchy and uneven nature of global governance regimes in the areas of finance, migration, and arms control facilitated the harnessing of each of these resources to the jihadist cause. To cite two illustrative examples, from 1996 Al Qaeda benefited from substantial flows of money and volunteers from Saudi Arabia to its training camps in Afghanistan. These flows were enabled by a Saudi regime that did not supervise the international financial transactions of its citizens, and that continued in the 1990s to encourage a culture of private military participation in

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<sup>945</sup>On this point, see generally David J. Kilcullen. "Countering Global Insurgency." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (2005): 597-617.

<sup>946</sup>On this point, see for example Audrey Beth Cronin. "Cyber-Mobilization: The New Levee En Masse." *Parameters* XXXVI, no. 2 (2006), pp. 81-83.

<sup>947</sup>On Al Qaeda's use of both low-tech traditional means of communication (e.g. face-to-face meetings) in addition to high-tech communications techniques to coordinate the 9/11 attacks, see Kevin O'Brien. "Information Age, Terrorism and Warfare." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14, no. 1 (2003), p. 199.

foreign conflicts that dated from the original Afghan jihad.<sup>948</sup> Similarly, the planning and organization of the 9/11 attacks was facilitated by Malaysia's pre-September 11 policy of enabling Muslims from throughout the *umma* to visit and transit through Malaysia without the need for an immigration visa.<sup>949</sup>

The combination of enhanced international inter-connectedness and an uneven state supervision of global flows provided a conducive operating environment for transnational jihadists in the 1990s. Equally, the gaps in governance capacity evident in weak and failing states further assisted the insurgency's evolution. As was the case for the more locally oriented jihadists that had preceded them, transnational jihadists indirectly benefited from governments' inability to provide their citizens with basic political goods, such as protection from physical violence or the provision of even an elementary level of material welfare.<sup>950</sup> The resulting popular disaffection against incumbent regimes broadened the jihadists' potential recruitment base, although this must be qualified by a recognition that Al Qaeda's 'hard core' leadership derived from the educated middle and upper classes of Egypt and Saudi Arabia rather than being drawn from the huddled masses.<sup>951</sup> More importantly than their utility as a recruitment base, however, under-policed polities provided valuable staging grounds from which to launch attacks against Western interests, as demonstrated for example

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<sup>948</sup>On the culture of private military participation that flourished in Saudi Arabia among the country's Islamists in the 1990s, see Thomas Hegghammer. "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia." *Middle East Policy* XIII, no. 4 (2006), p. 48.

<sup>949</sup>On this point, see Brek Batley. "The Complexities of Dealing with Radical Islam in Southeast Asia - a Case Study of Jemaah Islamiyah." In *Strategic and Defence Studies Paper*. Canberra: Australian National University, 2003, p. 57. The author notes that this policy has subsequently been discontinued following 9/11.

<sup>950</sup>On this point, see generally Robert Rotberg. "Failed States in a World of Terror." *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 4 (2002): 127-40. Although for a more sceptical interpretation of the relationship between state failure and terrorism, see Stewart Patrick. "Weak States and Global Threats: Fact or Fiction?" *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2006), pp. 34-36.

<sup>951</sup>Sageman notes that what he dubs the 'Central Staff' of Al Qaeda were drawn from particularly privileged and educated backgrounds, and cohered together as a network through their shared participation in the original Afghan *jihad* in the 1980s. See Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 171.

in Al Qaeda's activities in Somalia undertaken in preparation for the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.<sup>952</sup> Most critically of all, however, internationally ostracized failing states such as Sudan and later Afghanistan presented as useful potential partners for Al Qaeda, offering the jihadists' extended sanctuary in exchange for economic and in some cases even military assistance. In the case of Afghanistan in particular, bin Laden was able to cement an enduring alliance with an initially diffident Taliban regime by providing it with a much-needed cadre of trained militants (the 055 Brigade) to assist in prosecuting the regime's ongoing war against the Northern Alliance.<sup>953</sup>

Transnational flows and failing states provided jihadists with operational mobility and a vital ecological niche in the global state system, but the jihadist movement was also sustained by the existence of dense webs of social ties linking various militant groups to one another. In the case of Al Qaeda, bin Laden was able to effectively constitute an Al Qaeda 'High Command' by building upon the existing web of social connections forged during the Afghan jihad between various alumni of Azzam's Services Bureau.<sup>954</sup> Given the relatively small number of militants clustered around bin Laden, however, the Al Qaeda leadership assiduously cultivated more diffuse ties with like-minded jihadist organizations in other theatres to extend the network's global reach. Networks such as the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) in the Maghreb and *Jemaah Islamiyah* in Southeast Asia subscribed to similar if slightly more parochial agendas to Al Qaeda, but were often only tenuously connected (if connected at all) to bin Laden through the prior involvement of some of

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<sup>952</sup>On the role played by Somalia-based Al Qaeda operatives in the 1998 embassy bombings, and in their suspected role in attacking a hotel and El Al plane in Kenya in 2002, see John Prendergast and Colin Thomas-Jensen. "Blowing the Horn." *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (2007), p. 65.

<sup>953</sup>On this point, see Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, pp. 58-60.

<sup>954</sup>Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 71.

their members in the Afghan jihad.<sup>955</sup> Bin Laden therefore sought to plug in to the strengths and capacities of these groups by providing them with money, know-how, and access to training opportunities in his camps in Afghanistan.<sup>956</sup> So successful was this strategy in building bin Laden's profile and prestige among jihadists that independent militants eventually began to solicit bin Laden's assistance in the preparation of terrorist attacks against Western targets.<sup>957</sup>

The caution some commentators have expressed in employing the designation 'Al Qaeda' to describe bin Laden's network in the period 1996-2001 is justifiable given the protean nature of his organization, and given also the varying strength of its relationships with the other important jihadist networks also operative at this time. Certainly, while bin Laden emerged as the most notorious jihadist during this period, his pretensions towards leadership of the global jihadist movement were never universally accepted by other jihadists.<sup>958</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that no central brain was coordinating the global jihad in its entirety should not detract from the ingenuity or import of bin Laden's adaptations to evolving changes in the state system's material foundations. In exploiting new communications technologies and the enhanced

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<sup>955</sup>Burke, *Al Qaeda – Casting a Shadow of Terror*, pp. 152-153.

<sup>956</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>957</sup>On this point, Wright notes that it was Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the future mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, who initially approached bin Laden with ideas for a 'planes operation' against the United States as early as 1996. Although Mohammed initially rebuffed bin Laden's request that he join Al Qaeda and re-locate to Afghanistan, the encounter between the two men planted the seed that would eventually grow into the 9/11 attacks. See Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 266-268. Beyond the diffuse links of sponsorship, patronage, and ideological solidarity, however, Al Qaeda also attempted in some cases to forge more enduring alliances with Islamist groupings through the adhesives of marriage and kinship. Much like the aristocratic confessional militants of Reformation Europe, bin Laden cemented alliances on at least two occasions through recourse to marriage. With his son's marriage to one of Mullah Omar's daughters, bin Laden consolidated an increasingly symbiotic relationship between Al Qaeda and the Taliban, while his connection via his brother-in-law's marriage to South-East Asian militants also played a role in extending Al Qaeda's influence in that region as well. On the significance of social networks in forming the basis of the jihadist movement, see generally Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, chapter five. On the great importance of kinship and marriage as mechanisms of network integration for *Jemaah Islamiyah*, see generally *Jemaah Islamiyah in South East Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous* International Crisis Group, 2003 [cited 5 November 2007]. Available from [http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report\\_archive/A401104\\_26082003.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/report_archive/A401104_26082003.pdf).

<sup>958</sup>On this point, see Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, pp. 158-159.

international mobility characteristic of globalization for purposes of transnational military mobilization, bin Laden was far from unique.<sup>959</sup> Still less was his exploitation of weak and failing states for illicit purposes all that distinctive, although one struggles to find contemporary parallels to the extraordinary alliance he was able to contrive between his organization and the Taliban regime. Even bin Laden's synthesis of older 'Afghan alumni' contacts with newer connections to regional networks and autonomous cells was not absolutely exceptional. What distinguished bin Laden was his capacity to simultaneously exploit intensified global inter-connectedness, endemic state failure, and existing and developing social ties between jihadist groups and individuals to craft a subversive entity of unprecedented reach and sophistication.

While the global jihadist threat that emerged in the period 1996-2001 cannot be reduced to Al Qaeda and its allies, a consideration of Al Qaeda's operations is nevertheless useful for illustrating the new methods of asymmetric warfare that were being pioneered by jihadists during this time. The jihadists' grand strategy was deeply flawed but nevertheless relatively straightforward. Having failed to defeat apostate regimes through local struggle, the jihadists embarked on a global campaign designed to compel the United States to terminate its sponsorship of client states in the Muslim world.<sup>960</sup> With their umbilical cord to their *kufir* sponsors severed, the jihadists anticipated that the regimes would then be vulnerable to the threat of popular revolutions led by the jihadist vanguard.<sup>961</sup> Once state power was seized in multiple polities, the ground would then be clear for the establishment of a caliphate stretching throughout the Greater Middle East. A spiritually purified and politically unified *umma*, empowered by the Gulf States' massive financial wealth and also by the

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<sup>959</sup>On this point, see generally Fiona B. Adamson. "Globalisation, Transnational Political Mobilisation, and Networks of Violence." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 1 (2005): 31-49.

<sup>960</sup>Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement', p. 104.

<sup>961</sup>Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, p. 149.

Muslim world's control over much of the world's energy reserves, would then restore Muslims to the privileged position of power they had enjoyed for the first millennium following the Prophet's revelation.<sup>962</sup>

While bin Laden's grand strategic vision remained constant, the multiple techniques Al Qaeda pursued in realizing this vision varied. In exploring this variation, it is interesting to note that Al Qaeda's military operations reflected an assimilation and synthesis of multiple military traditions, each adapted to the changed circumstances of a rapidly globalizing world order. From 1996 onwards, Al Qaeda pursued a sustained campaign of 'hit and run' operations targeted at American interests overseas. This campaign, including attacks on US military facilities in Saudi Arabia in 1996, the 1998 African embassy bombings, the attempted bombing of *USS The Sullivans* January 2000 and the successful attack on the *USS Cole* in October 2000, was explicitly designed to steadily ratchet up the costs of America's continuing military presence within the Middle East until such time that America resolved to leave the region.<sup>963</sup> With its emphasis on speed, surprise, mobility, ambush, and then rapid withdrawal once enemy forces had been successfully engaged, the strategy comported with classic guerrilla warfare techniques as articulated by Mao Tse-Tung.<sup>964</sup> At the same time, however, the strategy also resembled the far older techniques of tribal raiding on the Arabian Peninsula with which bin Laden was

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<sup>962</sup>This grand strategy emerged prior to 9/11, but it has continued to inform jihadist strategy in the wake of the Iraq war. The latest iteration of this strategy involves the following four steps: (1) expulsion of Coalition forces from Iraq; (2) establishment of an Islamic emirate in Iraq or part thereof; (3) extension of the jihad to secular regimes neighbouring Iraq; (4) engagement in an armed confrontation against Israel, and presumably with the West more generally. See *English Translation of Ayman Al-Zawahiri's Letter to Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi* [cited 5 November 2007]. Available from <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/006/203gpul.asp?pg=1>.

<sup>963</sup>Kepel, 'The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement', p. 104.

<sup>964</sup>Although as David Kilcullen has convincingly demonstrated, the analogy between classic insurgents in the Mao-Tse Tung mould and contemporary jihadist insurgents should not be overstated, particularly at the operational level. See David J. Kilcullen. "Counter-Insurgency Redux." *Survival* 48, no. 4 (2006-07), p. 117-119.

familiar from his reading of early Islamic history.<sup>965</sup> In the time of the Prophet, warfare between the nomadic Arabic tribes was not focused upon seizing and holding territory, but rather revolved around a series of raids, skirmishes, and ambushes undertaken by horsemen warriors against enemy caravans.<sup>966</sup> This style of warfare subsequently persisted down to the seventeenth century wherever nomadic pastoralists co-existed with sedentary agricultural societies, with horse-borne warriors using the advantages of speed, mobility and surprise to harass and at times even conquer far wealthier and more populous societies.<sup>967</sup> For Bin Laden, the greater transnational mobility afforded by globalisation presented analogous opportunities to launch lightning raids against American interests on a global stage. Equally, just as the horsemen of earlier ages were able to withdraw to the safety of over-the-horizon sanctuaries after a successful raid, so too Al Qaeda enjoyed in Afghanistan a territorial platform deep within Central Asia that lay largely beyond the reach of American retaliation, at least prior to 9/11.<sup>968</sup>

Bin Laden's strategy of global raiding arguably reached its apogee with the lightning strike on the American citadel perpetrated on September 11. But 9/11 moved beyond earlier 'hit and run' attacks in both its shift in geographic focus (from American interests overseas to the homeland itself), and also in the unprecedented

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<sup>965</sup>On this parallel, see for example Denis McAuley. "The Ideology of Osama Bin Laden: Nation, Tribe, and World Economy." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 10, no. 3 (2005), pp. 277-279. McAuley notes that the parallels with Arabia's tribal past are explicitly evoked in bin Laden's rhetoric, as for example in bin Laden's characterization of 9/11 as 'yawm New York' or 'the day of New York.' McAuley notes that this is the same formulation that would have been used to describe a raid in the time of Muhammad. See *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>966</sup>On this point, and for a useful parallel between tribal modes of warfare and that now being undertaken by the global jihadist movement, see generally David Ronfeldt. "Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates: A Global Tribe Waging Segmental Warfare?" *First Monday* 10, no. 3 (2005). [Cited 5 November 2007]. Available at: <http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1214/1134>

<sup>967</sup>McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 116.

<sup>968</sup>For a more extensive development of the analogy between the contemporary global jihadists and the nomadic steppe warriors of the past, see Malise Ruthven. "The Eleventh of September and the Sudanese Mahdiya in the Context of Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Islamic History." *International Affairs* 78, no. 2 (2002), pp. 347-350.



scale of death and destruction it wrought. The 9/11 attacks were not the jihadists' first attempt to strike the American homeland, nor were they the first attempt to inflict mass casualties on America and its allies. The first World Trade Centre attack in 1993 and the foiled *Oplan Bojinka* and Millennium Plot attacks all speak to the longstanding nature of jihadists' desires to perpetrate large-scale attacks against the 'Zionist-Crusader' alliance.<sup>969</sup> That the jihadists' are possessed by an urge towards indiscriminate purgative violence directed against religious outsiders is consistent with my analyses of the sentiments animating the Reformation militants and the Taiping rebels that preceded them. However, this parallel should not detract from the instrumental objectives of the 9/11 attacks, which were to puncture America's perceived aura of invincibility, to inspire the Muslim masses to revolutionary action, and to provoke America into a militarized over-reaction that then would draw it into open conflict with the Islamic world.<sup>970</sup> Once again, this strategy reiterated upon historical precedents, while adapting them to exploit the enhanced destructive and disruptive capabilities conferred on non-state actors by globalization.

Specifically, the strategy constituted a modern adaptation of the 'propaganda by the deed' tactics first employed by anarchist terrorists one century earlier. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, anarchists had perpetrated a range of high profile attacks against heads of state and civilian targets in America, Europe, and Tsarist Russia.<sup>971</sup> The widespread diffusion of technologies such as repeating rifles

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<sup>969</sup>*Oplan Bojinka* referred to a abortive plan orchestrated in 1994 by Al Qaeda-linked militants to destroy up to a bomb American jumbo jets over the Pacific in the space of 48 hour time period. See Wright, *The Looming Tower*, p. 247. See also Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, p. 175. The Millennium plot involved a series of thwarted Al Qaeda mass casualty attacks timed for the turn of the millennium, which included attacks on Los Angeles Airport, the Radisson Hotel in Amman Jordan, attacks on tourists at Mount Nebo (also in Jordan), and an abortive attempt to sink the *USS The Sullivans* while the ship was docked at Aden in Yemen. See Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, p. 213.

<sup>970</sup>On this point, see Doran, 'Somebody Else's Civil War', p. 23. See also Brigitte L. Nacos. "The Terrorist Calculus Behind 9-11: A Model for Future Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, no. 1 (2003), pp. 3-6.

<sup>971</sup>See generally Richard Bach Jensen. "Daggers, Rifles and Dynamite: Anarchist Terrorism in Nineteenth Century Europe." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 1 (2004), pp. 129-136. Jensen

and dynamite during this time empowered non-state actors with the capacity to launch such attacks, while the advent of mass circulation newspapers ensured that their psychological effects would reverberate throughout targeted societies.<sup>972</sup> Similarly, in the lead-up to 9/11, jihadists repeatedly attempted to exploit the emergence of global mediascapes and the accelerated diffusion of dual-use technologies to engage in ‘propaganda by the deed’ at a global level. Bin Laden’s establishment of a WMD acquisition unit in Al Qaeda as far back as the early 1990s reveals the longevity and intensity of the jihadists’ commitment to developing a capacity to inflict mass casualty attacks against those deemed Islam’s enemies.<sup>973</sup> However, what the 9/11 attacks also demonstrated was that the direct acquisition of a WMD capacity was not necessary to achieve Al Qaeda’s goals. Instead, by the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, continuing modernization was itself conferring upon non-state actors the ability to creatively exploit civilian technologies to perpetrate mass atrocities guaranteed to instantaneously reach a global audience.

By the eve of the millennium, an ideology that had originated as a localized challenge to secular dictatorships in the Greater Middle East had morphed into a virulently anti-systemic worldview. The end of the Cold War, the waxing of American military involvement in the Middle East, and the halting consolidation of a liberal world order under conditions of globalization meanwhile drew the proponents of this ideology into ever-sharper confrontation with a state system underwritten by

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notes that the years 1892 to 1901 became known as the Decade of Regicide, during which more heads of government and heads of state were assassinated than at any other time in history. Prominent victims of anarchist terrorism included President Sadi Carnot of France in 1894, Prime Minister Antonio Canovas of Spain in 1897, Empress Elizabeth of Austria in 1898, King Humbert of Italy in 1900, and President William McKinley of the United States in 1901. See *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>972</sup>On the significance of the invention of dynamite for the anarchist terrorists, see *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130. On the significance of the advent of mass circulation newspapers in publicizing and amplifying the threat posed by anarchist terrorism to public order, see *Ibid.*, pp. 140-143.

<sup>973</sup>On bin Laden’s establishment around 1992 of a WMD acquisition unit targeting the weapons stockpiles of the countries of the Former Soviet Union, see Michael Scheuer. "Central Asia in Al Qaeda's Vision of the Anti-American Jihad." *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (2006), p. 7.

American hegemony. At the same time, improvements in communication and transportation technologies, the continuing diffusion of destructive and disruptive capacities to non-state actors, the opening up of territorial sanctuaries in failed states, and the existence of established and emerging links between diverse jihadist groups enabled the consolidation of an oppositional movement explicitly dedicated to the state system's destruction.

In Reformation Europe, the unholy trinity of ideological polarization, institutional decay, and increases in violence interdependence had eventually yielded the 'hard shell' of the sovereign state, and with it a reflexively monitored sovereign state system. By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, globalization had compressed the strategic distance between North and South, as well as rendering the hard shell of the sovereign state increasingly permeable. Simultaneously, a combination of post-colonial state failure and accelerating technological innovation were working steadily to corrode the state monopoly on organized violence that had been so painstakingly constructed in the centuries after Westphalia. In this increasingly fluid context, Bin Laden and others like him tapped into transnational flows, exploited global and local gaps in governance, and leveraged off the various social ties linking the jihadist diaspora to marshal an armed challenge to the prevailing world order. Jihadist ideology explicitly challenged the constitutional principles of the global state system. Jihadist actions meanwhile undermined the state's monopoly on warfare and threatened the Hobbesian protection bargain linking popular obedience to publicly provided collective security. In the years preceding the millennium, jihadism thus challenged both the authoritative and the coercive foundations of the liberal world order. While the threat had crystallized due to a convergence of long-ranging ideological, institutional, and material developments in the world polity, by the dawn of the new millennium the threat to the state system was immediate. But in the dying

days of the twentieth century, the international community failed to appreciate the threat's urgency, and its response to jihadism was uncoordinated, localized, sporadic, and desultory. Then came 9/11.

### **9.3 Global Jihadism versus the Liberal World Order, 2001-Present**

#### **9.3.1 The Day After – International Society Responds to 9/11**

‘Nous Sommes Tous Américains’<sup>974</sup>

For the preceding quarter of a century, Islamist rebellions had roiled large sections of the Muslim world, and had intermittently struck painful blows against Western interests overseas. Nevertheless, it was only with the attacks of September 11 that the proximity and immediacy of the jihadist threat became universally apparent. Al Qaeda's spectacular assault on the global superpower indelibly established the fragility of the state's monopoly on violence to a global audience. In many developing countries, including Afghanistan, the state's tenuous control over the means of violence had long been manifest. But it was only after 9/11 that Northern rulers and citizens grasped the global strategic consequences of this longstanding reality. Similarly, September 11 also shattered the insular Western conviction that the Cold War's end had somehow signalled the termination of international ideological rivalries. With the destruction of the Twin Towers, the illusory 'Fukuyaman moment' of post-Cold War ideological unipolarity ended, and the battle was joined between the custodians of international order and the soldiers of the global jihad.

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<sup>974</sup>Jean-Marie Colombani. "Nous Sommes Tous Américains." *Le Monde*, 13 September 2001, 1.

Even in their death throes, neither Christendom nor the Sinosphere ever experienced an event that so vividly signalled their underlying frailty as did the 9/11 attacks for the liberal world order. Equally, however, neither of these orders demonstrated the same capacity for defensive adaptation as was evident in the state system in the days and months following September 11. Beyond the broad outpouring of international sympathy for the United States in the attacks' immediate aftermath, the 9/11 assault activated a diverse range of more tangible responses to the jihadist threat that can be surveyed only briefly here. At the global level, a raft of initiatives was rapidly implemented to constrict the permissive operational environment that Al Qaeda had previously exploited in preparing the September 11 attacks.<sup>975</sup> Under American leadership, a suite of policies were introduced or expanded under the auspices of the United Nations to restrict Al Qaeda's access to personnel, money, and materiel. Thus, for example, an established UN convention to suppress terrorist financing rapidly received the necessary ratifications to enter into force in the months following September 11.<sup>976</sup> With the convening of the 1540 Committee, the UN Security Council additionally founded an institution explicitly charged with the task of preventing non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.<sup>977</sup> The founding of the UN Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) and later the Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) also signified the UN's new-found willingness to create dedicated assets charged specifically with the task of defending the global state system from the threat of jihadist terrorism.<sup>978</sup>

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<sup>975</sup>On this point, see generally Eric Rosand. "The UN-Led Multilateral Institutional Response to Jihadist Terrorism: Is a Global Counter-Terrorism Body Needed?" *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 11, no. 3 (2007): 399-427.

<sup>976</sup>On the startling rapidity with which states signed and ratified the convention in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, see Mendelsohn, *Jihadism, International Society, and Interstate Cooperation*, p. 199.

<sup>977</sup>On the nature and functioning of the 1540 committee, see Gabriel H. Oosthuizen, and Elizabeth Wilmhurst. *Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540*. Briefing Paper 04/01. London: Chatham House, 2004.

<sup>978</sup>On these institutions, see Rosand, 'The UN-Led Multilateral Institutional Response to Jihadist Terrorism', pp. 409-411.

The initiatives listed above constitute only a small sampling of the policies introduced under UN authority to combat global jihadism after 9/11. In addition to these policies, the international community also responded with enhanced moves to delegitimize terrorism and state sponsorship of terrorism. With characteristic bluntness, President Bush famously declared after the attacks that states were either with America or against it in the struggle against global terrorism.<sup>979</sup> While this sentiment evoked consternation among many observers at the time, what the ensuing controversy obscured was a larger post 9/11 systemic strengthening of norms against terrorism.<sup>980</sup> In place of the permissive negative sovereignty regime that had prevailed in the immediate post-colonial period, by the 1990s a more demanding conception of ‘sovereignty as responsibility’ was acquiring increasing purchase, a trend that was further strengthened after September 11<sup>981</sup> In keeping with this emerging emphasis on sovereignty as responsibility, on September 28, 2001 the United States and its allies successfully sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 1373 under the

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<sup>979</sup>President Bush’s statement, which was directed primarily at states suspected to be harbouring terrorists, but which in its exact formulation seemed far broader in its potential application, was as follows: ‘Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.’ See George W. Bush. *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People*, September 20, 2001 [cited 6 November 2007]. Available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>980</sup>Although it is nevertheless worth noting that while the international community has responded robustly to the specific threat posed by global jihadist terrorism, the establishment of an internationally agreed definition of terrorism as a threat to international peace and security more generally remains elusive, despite occasional signs of progress such as at the World Summit meeting in 2005. See Rosand, ‘The UN-Led Multilateral Institutional Response to Jihadist Terrorism’, p. 407.

<sup>981</sup>On the prevalence of a negative sovereignty regime in the immediate post-colonial period, see Robert H. Jackson. *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 40-47. The concept of sovereignty as responsibility as it developed in the 1990s related primarily to the emerging practice of humanitarian intervention, with the principle of the ‘responsibility to protect’ receiving broad endorsement by the international community at the World Summit in 2005. See Alex J. Bellamy. "Whither the Responsibility to Protect? Humanitarian Intervention and the 2005 World Summit." *International Affairs* 20, no. 2 (2006): 143-69. However, from 9/11 onwards, the notion of sovereignty as responsibility has been increasingly extended to the areas of counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation. On the application of the principle of sovereignty as responsibility to the area of counter-proliferation in the post 9/11 era, see generally Jofi Joseph. "The Exercise of National Sovereignty - the Bush Administration's Approach to Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction." *The Nonproliferation Review* 12, no. 2 (2005): 373-87.

authority of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.<sup>982</sup> This resolution imposed a host of uniform obligations on all 191 member states to prevent or suppress terrorist activities within their borders. These responsibilities included obligations to suppress terrorist financing, obligations to deny safe haven to terrorist organizations, obligations to implement rigorous border controls to constrict the transnational movement of terrorists, and obligations to refrain from providing either active or passive support to terrorist organizations.<sup>983</sup> In establishing explicit obligations on the part of member states to suppress jihadist terrorism, the Security Council reaffirmed systemic norms pertaining to the maintenance of the state's monopoly on legitimate violence, while simultaneously aligning the prerogatives of sovereign power more closely with the imperative of defending the state system against jihadist subversion.

Despite the international community's increased willingness to confront jihadism following September 11, many weak states lacked the institutional capacities necessary to practically pursue effective counter-terrorism policies in the short term. Consequently, the United Nations, the European Union, and the G8 each launched state-strengthening initiatives explicitly designed to empower states with the resources necessary to meet their counter-terrorism obligations as legitimate members of international society.<sup>984</sup> In the areas of border control and the suppression of terrorist finances in particular, Northern states and specialist NGOs cooperated intensively with weaker states to transfer the institutional capacities necessary to assure these states' compliance with emerging counter-terrorist norms.<sup>985</sup> Equally, the looming danger of

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<sup>982</sup>United Nations Security Council, SC Res. 1373 (2001), S/RES/1373, New York, 28 September 2001.

<sup>983</sup>For further details on the obligations imposed on member states by UNSC resolution 1373, see generally Eric Rosand, "Security Council Resolution 1373, the Counter-Terrorism Committee, and the Fight against Terrorism," *The American Journal of International Law* 97, no. 2 (2003): 333-41.

<sup>984</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 335-337.

<sup>985</sup>On international cooperation to enhance states' capacities in the area of border control, see Mendelsohn, *Jihadism, International Society, and Interstate Cooperation*, pp. 171-177. On international capacity-building initiatives to assist states in the suppression of terrorist financing, see generally *Ibid.*, chapter six.

WMD terrorist attacks spurred a renewed commitment to securing nuclear-related technologies, particularly within the states of the former Soviet Union. The United States' Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (CTRP) constituted merely the most conspicuous and most expensive of a raft of programs designed to secure former Soviet stockpiles, and transfer to the former Soviet states a long-term capacity to prevent the diffusion of WMD-related technologies and expertise to terrorist groups.<sup>986</sup>

Finally, the United States acted swiftly and decisively in October 2001 to drive Al Qaeda from its territorial sanctuary in Afghanistan. In destroying Al Qaeda's network of training camps in Afghanistan and deposing the allied Taliban regime, the United States dealt bin Laden's organization a heavy blow. Deprived of its territorial sanctuary and also of the infrastructure that had previously been such a powerful drawcard for other militant groups, Al Qaeda's capacity to plan major attacks was significantly degraded, as was its ability to attract the allegiance of others within the jihadist diaspora through the provision of in-theatre training and financial assistance.<sup>987</sup> Intelligence acquired as a result of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) also assisted in both the subsequent assassination or capture of leading Al Qaeda cadres, as well as the thwarting of at least one major follow-up jihadist attack in Singapore in December 2001.<sup>988</sup> The decimation of both the Taliban and regional jihadist allies such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) further weakened the global jihadist movement, while the inauguration of a new Afghan government and

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<sup>986</sup>On both the continuing difficulties in effectively implementing the CTRP, as well as efforts to extend the program beyond the states of the Former Soviet Union, see Richard G. Lugar. "Redefining the Threat." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 61, no. 5 (2005): 20-21. On international efforts more generally to prevent the spread of WMD to non-state actors in the wake of 9/11, see Mendelsohn, *Jihadism, International Society, and International Cooperation*, chapter seven.

<sup>987</sup>Michael Kenney. "From Pablo to Osama: Counter-Terrorism Lessons from the War on Drugs." *Survival* 45, no. 3 (2003), p. 195. Kenney does nevertheless qualify this observation by suggesting that while Operation Enduring Freedom certainly weakened Al Qaeda's offensive capabilities, its defensive strengths – in terms of coyness, elusiveness, and adaptability – may have been strengthened by the dispersal of Al Qaeda operatives away from their Afghan redoubts.

<sup>988</sup>On this point, see Ron Suskind. *The One Percent Doctrine: Deep inside America's Pursuit of Its Enemies since 9/11*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006, p. 57.



the country's subsequent diplomatic rehabilitation held out the prospect of long-term regional stabilization.<sup>989</sup>

It can be argued on the basis of the above analysis that what 9/11's aftermath demonstrated was not the state system's fragility, but rather its exceptional resilience. The constriction of jihadists' access to personnel, money, and materiel, the delegitimation of terrorists and their state sponsors, the establishment of state-strengthening programs to help weak states meet their international counter-terrorism obligations, and Al Qaeda's defeat and expulsion from Afghanistan all present as manifestations of the state system's robust capacity to respond to anti-systemic threats. Despite the Bush administration's penchant for unilateralism, the cooperation between the United Nations and the United States in prosecuting the war on terror in 9/11's immediate aftermath was far more extensive than is commonly acknowledged, suggesting also a continued complementarity between the respective pinnacles of authoritative and coercive power in the global state system. If anything, the months following 9/11 indicated the frailty of global jihadism rather than the state system. Al Qaeda's swifter than expected defeat in Afghanistan lent plausibility to interpretations that 9/11 was a colossal strategic error by Bin Laden, more analogous for the defeated jihadists to the Battle of the Bulge than to the victorious anti-Soviet jihad. Far from re-energizing a flagging global Islamist movement, 9/11 instead opened up bitter internal divisions within jihadist ranks, leaving bin Laden isolated and his organization damaged and disoriented.<sup>990</sup> With peaceful Islamists and locally oriented jihadists being swept up in the indiscriminate wave of repression unleashed in many states after

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<sup>989</sup>On this point, see Svante E. Cornell. "The Narcotics Threat in Greater Central Asia: From Crime-Terror Nexus to State Infiltration?" *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (2006), p. 58. See also Evgeny Troitskiy. "U.S. Policy in Central Asia and Regional Security." *Global Society* 21, no. 3 (2007), p. 425.

<sup>990</sup>See generally Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, chapter five ('Aftermath: The War Within').

9/11, bin Laden's ambitions to lead the umma in revolt against the *kufir* world order appeared fated to fail.

### 9.3.2 Snatching Defeat from the Jaws of Victory? The Iraq War, the Rejuvenation of Global Jihadism, and the Prolongation of the 'Long War.'

In early 2002, as the spring sun dissolved the snows of the Hindu Kush, the jihadist challenge to the global state system appeared to be in inexorable retreat. Five years later, the Afghan spring saw renewed offensives by a resurgent Taliban against NATO and Afghan troops in southern Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Al Qaeda worked to feverishly to re-establish its terrorist infrastructure in neighbouring Waziristan, while the United States remained locked in a losing battle with foreign jihadists and local insurgents in the heart of the Arab world.<sup>991</sup> Worst of all, while Al Qaeda's operational capabilities remained severely degraded after six years' of continuous warfare against the state system, the Iraq war helped catalyse jihadism's evolution into a globally distributed anti-systemic social movement that will likely endure into the indefinite future.<sup>992</sup>

How did this happen? Many factors account for this reversal, but two deserve particular attention. In Afghanistan, the United States failed to consolidate its victory over the Taliban by refusing to commit the resources necessary to reconstitute a viable central state. Having initially sidelined NATO in favour of an *ad hoc* 'coalition of the willing' during Operation Enduring Freedom, the Bush Administration subsequently

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<sup>991</sup>On Al Qaeda's post 9/11 resurgence, see generally Bruce Riedel. "Al Qaeda Strikes Back." *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 3 (2007): 24-40.

<sup>992</sup>On the emergence of the Iraq war as a *cause celebre* for the jihadist movement, and on the growing geographical spread of the jihadist threat, see *Declassified Key Judgements of the National Intelligence Estimate: "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States"*, April 2006 [cited November 6 2007]. Available from [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/Declassified\\_NIE\\_Key\\_Judgments.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf).

handballed the task of reconstructing Afghanistan to the United Nations and to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in order to free its forces for the pending war in Iraq.<sup>993</sup> Consequently, while Al Qaeda and other jihadist networks were momentarily evicted from Afghanistan, the anarchic local security environment that enabled Al Qaeda's relocation to the region in the first instance continues to persist. Six years after its liberation, Afghanistan remains plagued by massive unemployment, endemic corruption and pervasive governmental weakness.<sup>994</sup> Cursed with limited opportunities to participate in the non-drug market economy, many farmers have resumed their involvement in opium production and distribution, fuelling a resurgence of organized crime and warlordism throughout the country.<sup>995</sup> Meanwhile, the Taliban is now safely headquartered in Quetta and is steadily reconstituting its forces in the Pashtun tribal belt straddling Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>996</sup> More alarmingly still, the Taliban continues to receive substantial sponsorship from patrons in the Persian Gulf and also elements of the Pakistani security services, endowing it with the wherewithal to continuously harass and destabilize the fledgling Afghan government.<sup>997</sup>

Just as America's post-Cold War abandonment of Afghanistan permitted the rise of the Taliban, so too the Bush Administration's aversion to nation-building has left Afghanistan and indeed the broader Central Asian region vulnerable to a jihadist revival. Conversely, where the Administration's sins in Central Asia are largely those of omission, the invasion of Iraq was an unforced error of commission that has done more than any other policy to revive global jihadism's fortunes. In the 1980s, the Afghan jihad emerged as a *cause celebre* throughout the Muslim world, with the

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<sup>993</sup>Barnett R. Rubin. "Saving Afghanistan." *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2007), p. 65.

<sup>994</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 67-69.

<sup>995</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>996</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>997</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 70.

convergence of volunteers to Afghanistan catalysing the genesis of global jihadism. Similarly, the Iraq war has evoked similar passions throughout the *umma*. More specifically, it has spurred the emergence of a new generation of transnational jihadists who are committed to expelling *kufir* influence in the Middle East, and then subsequently establishing a stem-polity for the Caliphate on the ruins of the Iraqi state.<sup>998</sup> The jihadist narrative of a beleaguered *umma* besieged by infidel forces has also received an enormous fillip, with fundamentalists exploiting shared narratives of past subjugation to draw parallels between the American invasion of the Iraq and the Mongol destruction of the Abbasid caliphate over seven centuries earlier.<sup>999</sup> The continued spread of the internet has meanwhile facilitated the rapid dissemination of this message to a global audience, aiding greatly in the recruitment of fresh volunteers for the Iraqi jihad from the Middle East, the Western European Muslim diaspora, and beyond.<sup>1000</sup>

Having smashed the brittle skeleton of Saddam's police state, the United States' has thus far failed to re-establish a central government capable of providing for the security of the Iraqi people.<sup>1001</sup> In effect, the invasion and subsequent botched

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<sup>998</sup>Declassified Key Judgements of the National Intelligence Estimate: "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States", April 2006 [cited November 6 2007]. Available from [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/Declassified\\_NIE\\_Key\\_Judgments.pdf](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf). On jihadist aspirations to establish a stem-polity for the Caliphate in Iraq, see English Translation of Ayman Al-Zawahiri's Letter to Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi [cited 5 November 2007]. Available from <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/006/203gpuul.asp?pg=1>.

<sup>999</sup>On the deep resonance that the Mongols' 1258 destruction of the Abbasid Caliphate still carries within the Islamic world, and the scope for parallels with the American occupation, see Husain Haqqani. "The American Mongols." *Foreign Policy*, no. 136 (2003): 70-71. In his propaganda in relation to Iraq, bin Laden has nevertheless relied on his preferred parallels between the Coalition of the Willing and the *umma*'s earlier Western antagonists (both Roman and Crusader). See Osama bin Laden. "To the Muslims of Iraq II." In *The Al Qaeda Reader*, edited by Raymond Ibrahim, 251-55. New York: Broadway Books, 2007. See specifically pp. 252-254.

<sup>1000</sup>On this point, see for example Kilcullen, 'Counter-Insurgency Redux', p. 113. See also Cronin, 'Cyber-Mobilization – The New *Levee En Masse*', p. 83.

<sup>1001</sup>The literature on the Bush Administration's failures in Iraq is now extensive. See for example Rajiv Chandrasekaran. *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006; George Packer. *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*. 1st ed. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2005; and Thomas E. Ricks. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006.

occupation have established a failed state in the Arab epicentre of the *umma*, reproducing in Iraq a vacuum of effective governmental authority analogous to that which has plagued Afghanistan since 1979. As in Afghanistan, the fragility of state structures has enabled foreign jihadists to insinuate themselves into local conflicts, while also permitting them to use Iraq as a launching pad from which to strike at neighbouring states.<sup>1002</sup> Despite Al Qaeda's limited operational capabilities, the conflict has raised the network's prestige in some quarters, as witnessed by the growing number of jihadist groups that either explicitly invoke Al Qaeda's name in justifying their atrocities, or that have even moved to explicitly affiliate themselves with the organization and its remaining leaders.<sup>1003</sup> Finally, the Iraq war has schooled a new generation of militants in the ethos and practice of jihad. Indeed, whereas the original Afghan jihad exposed foreign jihadists to techniques of rural insurgency that were of limited relevance in the context of their local struggles, jihadist returnees from Iraq will leave equipped with invaluable urban warfare skills, making them even more dangerous as adversaries than were their 'Afghan alumni' predecessors.<sup>1004</sup>

Both America's failure to consolidate victory in Afghanistan and its strategic misstep in invading Iraq have given jihadism a new lease of life, and have ensured that it will pose a threat to world order for an indefinite time to come. The Administration's mistakes have been attributable to a number of factors, not least of

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<sup>1002</sup>The potential for the jihadists to use Iraq as a launch-pad for destabilizing surrounding countries was for example evident in the bombing of the Radisson and two other hotels in Amman, Jordan by militants linked to the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in November 2005. See Riedel, 'Al Qaeda Strikes Back', p 30.

<sup>1003</sup>This trend is evident for example in the official merger between Al Qaeda and the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) in 2006, which produced the new organization Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Subsequent to this merger, AQIM has recast its strategy and goals in accordance with Al Qaeda's more global agenda, and has additionally adopted many of the signature tactics (e.g. a reliance on suicide bombers) of the Al Qaeda organization. Nevertheless, while this merger has enhanced Al Qaeda's prestige and operational reach, it has also yielded internal fissures within AQIM that could gravely compromise the organization's effectiveness over time. See Andrew Black, "Recasting Jihad in the Maghreb." *Terrorism Monitor*, vol. V, i. 20, October 25 2007, 6-8.

<sup>1004</sup>On this point, see for example Bruce Hoffman. "The 'Cult of the Insurgent': Its Tactical and Strategic Implications." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 61, no. 3 (2007), p. 325.

which has been a misreading of the post-Cold War world that conflated American unipolarity with omnipotence. Freed from the straitjacket of superpower rivalry and empowered by their leadership of an incipient Revolution in Military Affairs, many Americans overestimated the capacity of American military might to remake the world in the image of liberalism.<sup>1005</sup> One of the essential flaws in such reasoning is that it overlooked states' capacity to thwart American designs through various stratagems of 'soft balancing' and passive non-cooperation.<sup>1006</sup> Thus, while the absence of a genuine peer competitor provided America with much greater latitude than it had enjoyed in the Cold War, this increased room for manoeuvre did not translate into a liberation of American foreign policy from all constraints. In an international order predicated on principles of sovereign equality and non-intervention, the constitutional principles of the liberal world order imposed very real and binding practical political constraints on the exercise of American military power. Additionally, in an era of popular sovereignty, where even autocratic regimes must appear to be at least minimally responsive to public sentiment, American military power has proven far from infinitely fungible. In the area of counter-terrorism in particular, where intensive inter-governmental cooperation remains essential for realizing fundamental policy goals, America's undisputed military supremacy has been of limited value in convincing regimes such as that of Musharraf to comply with American requests that run against the grain of essential state interests or domestic political imperatives.<sup>1007</sup>

In addition to overestimating the extent to which military pre-eminence could be translated into political influence, America's leadership also misjudged the ease with which liberal values and institutions could be successfully and rapidly

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<sup>1005</sup>On this point, see Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order*, pp. 50-52.

<sup>1006</sup>On 'soft balancing' and more passive forms of non-cooperation, see generally Robert A. Pape. "Soft Balancing against the United States." *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005): 7-45.

<sup>1007</sup>On this point, see for example Howard La-Franchi. "America's Pakistan Dilemma." *Christian Science Monitor*, July 23 2007, p. 1.

transplanted to countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Certainly, the Bush Administration was correct in its assessment that state tyranny in the Muslim world constituted a key incubator of jihadist terror. But the deduction that jihadism could best be confronted by engaging in projects of long-distance democratization overlooked some critical considerations concerning Muslim polities' developmental trajectories and contemporary composition. Specifically, while the ideology of global jihadism represents an extreme and generally unpopular reaction to the past and present excesses of secular dictatorships, the disillusionment it expresses towards a wholesale secularization of political life has in the last three decades become far from uncommon in the Islamic world.<sup>1008</sup> Consequently, while popular demands for greater political participation remain widespread in Islamic countries, the Bush Administration erred in identifying this sentiment with a readiness to embrace republicanism in its secular liberal incarnation.<sup>1009</sup> More fundamentally, the transformational liberalism embodied in the Bush Doctrine either downplayed or ignored the degree of institutional decay prevalent in large sections of the Greater Middle East. Whereas liberal democracy depends upon the existence of a Weberian legal-rational state endowed with a monopoly on violence, decades of institutional decay have left many post-colonial polities bereft of functioning state institutions. Lamentably, this observation was no truer than in Afghanistan and Iraq, which

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<sup>1008</sup>On this point, see for example Armstrong, *The Battle for God*, p. 367. Significantly, however, Armstrong stresses that this disillusionment with secularism is far from unique to the Islamic world, but has manifested itself also in the faith traditions of Judaism and Christianity as well in acute and sometimes violent ways.

<sup>1009</sup>Tellingly, this dissonance was manifest most conspicuously in post-Saddam Iraq, when the Coalition Provisional Authority sought in the teeth of Iraqi opposition to introduce clauses in the Iraqi constitution guaranteeing both gender equality and the strict separation of church and state. While from a Western standpoint, such intentions seem admirable, the resistance these ideas encountered from large swathes of the post-war Iraqi political establishment is perhaps indicative of the Bush Administration's naïveté in assuming that Western liberal values and institutions could be readily implanted in the Middle East. See Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*, p 211.

through the vagaries of the war on terror became the first test cases for Bush's variant of transformational liberalism.

Most critically of all, the Bush Administration's failures in the war against jihadism can be sheeted home to an abject failure to calibrate commitments with capabilities. Notwithstanding the Administration's post 9/11 rhetorical allusions concerning the need for a Marshall Plan for the Middle East, its financial commitment to democracy promotion in the Islamic world has been paltry.<sup>1010</sup> Despite the Administration's proclaimed grand strategy of 'draining the swamp' of terrorist sentiment by democratizing the region, in practice this objective has been systematically sacrificed to the more pedestrian prerogative of maintaining longstanding alliances with regional autocracies such as Saudi Arabia.<sup>1011</sup> Meanwhile, in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the Administration's goal of effecting the total political transformation of these societies has been systematically under-resourced from the outset.<sup>1012</sup> In both cases, the Defence Department's goal of transforming the military into a transnationally nimble expeditionary force of global reach took absolute precedence over the requirements of nation building, dooming US policy to failure in both instances.<sup>1013</sup>

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<sup>1010</sup>On the relative paucity of US assets dedicated to democracy promotion in the Greater Middle East, see Christopher Hobson. "A Forward Strategy of Freedom in the Middle East: Us Democracy Promotion and the 'War on Terror'." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 59, no. 1 (2005), p. 42.

<sup>1011</sup>On the contrast between the Administration's efforts at democracy promotion in Iraq and its continued adherence to a longstanding policy of support for the conservative autocratic monarchies of the Persian Gulf, see generally Marc J. O'Reilly, and Wesley B. Renfro. "Evolving Empire: America's 'Emirates' Strategy in the Persian Gulf." *International Studies Perspectives* 8:2 (2007): 137-51.

<sup>1012</sup>On Afghanistan, see Rubin, 'Saving Afghanistan', pp. 65-66. On the under-resourcing of the invasion of Iraq and the subsequent occupation, see for example David C. Hendrickson, and Robert W. Tucker. "Revisions in Need of Revising: What Went Wrong in the Iraq War." *Survival* 47, no. 2 (2005), pp. 12-13.

<sup>1013</sup>On the under-resourced character of US nation-building efforts in Iraq relative to earlier efforts in Japan, Germany, Bosnia and Kosovo, see James F. Dobbins. "America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq." *Survival* 45, no. 4 (2003-04), pp. 105-108. On the under-resourced character of the nation-building effort in Afghanistan relative to earlier missions, see *Ibid.*, p. 99.



In mistaking unipolarity for omnipotence, overstating the political utility of military power, underestimating the difficulties of long-distance democratization, and failing to calibrate commitments with capabilities, the United States has potentially snatched defeat from the jaws of victory in the struggle against global jihadism, or at the very least deferred victory for some time. I would argue that at the root of all of the above misperceptions lies a failure to situate the jihadist challenge to the liberal world order within its larger systemic context. The global jihadists remain implacable enemies of the global state system, and their defeat will require the kind of intensive international cooperation that the US and the UN were together capable of marshalling in the months immediately following 9/11. However, the jihadist threat cannot be confronted in isolation from a conscious engagement with the larger macro-processes that initially brought it into being. For at its base, the jihadist phenomenon is merely one manifestation of a more protracted multi-dimensional crisis in the state system, the roots of which I have sought to excavate in the preceding two chapters. Thus, while global jihadism embodies the most radical religious repudiation of the contemporary international order, its origins lie in a much broader revival of popular religious consciousness that sits awkwardly with the sovereign state system's secular foundations. Jihadists' recourse to asymmetric warfare has likewise been singular in its global scale and impact, but is emblematic of larger material processes that will continue to compromise the hard shell of the sovereign state long after jihadism's defeat. Finally, the continuing decay of many post-colonial states is a well-established feature of the global state system that continues to worsen, corroding the present world order's popular legitimacy and thereby increasing its exposure to anti-systemic threats.

In both Christendom and the Sinosphere, the destruction of international orders was heralded by the intersection of the unholy trinity of ideological polarization, increases in violence interdependence, and pervasive institutional decay. In the past

three decades, this constellation of forces has begun to manifest itself once again. While the global state system is hardly on the cusp of dissolution, its fragility and its susceptibility to future breakdown is consequently greater than is commonly acknowledged. If the custodians of the present world order are to successfully preserve the global state system's liberal constitutional values, they must first acknowledge the full magnitude of the threat being faced, for only then can a collective response be fashioned that adequately responds to the challenge. The likelihood of such a renewal occurring, and the steps that must be taken to avert continuing systemic decay and eventual disintegration, form part of the subject of the concluding chapter of this investigation, to which I now turn.

## CONCLUSION

‘Politics will, to the end of history, be an area where conscience and power meet, where the ethical and coercive factors of human life will interpenetrate and work out their tentative and uneasy compromises...’

– Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.<sup>1014</sup>

In 1500 CE, from Paris to Peking, the bulk of the world’s population were governed by clerics and emperors. In Latin Christendom, the dream of re-uniting Europe under the imperial sceptre continued to fire the hearts of men such as Charles V, while the pope remained unchallenged as Christendom’s supreme spiritual leader. Throughout the Muslim world, the *umma*’s seemingly inexorable centuries-long expansion looked set to continue, with the sixteenth century witnessing both the waxing of Ottoman power, as well as the emergence of new Muslim empires in the form of Safavid Iran and Mughal India. Finally, in the Far East, a far-flung suzerain state system flourished under the Celestial Empire of the Ming Dynasty, with the Chinese emperor exercising unchallenged regional hegemony by dint of his status as the Son of Heaven. Across the length and breadth of the Old World, the ethical power of transcendental religious visions intertwined uneasily with the coercive power of multi-ethnic dynastic empires. Faith and empire thus formed the twin foundations of regional international orders in Christendom, the *umma*, and the Sinosphere, with the

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<sup>1014</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr. *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1960, p. 4.

political stability afforded by each facilitating the ensuing surge of world-wide demographic and commercial expansion that heralded the advent of modernity.

In the twenty-first century, emancipation has displaced salvation as the animating purpose of collective association, while the nation-state has eclipsed empire as the world's dominant form of political community. In the preceding chapters, I have sought to chronicle this transition, concentrating on two configurative crises that propelled the state system's genesis and subsequent expansion, before considering the contemporary challenges that now threaten that system's untroubled perpetuation. My purposes in undertaking this inquiry were to investigate the nature of international order, to account for the transformation of international orders throughout history, and to make a preliminary assessment concerning the long-term durability of the contemporary global state system. In this concluding chapter, I will revisit my main findings, considering in turn this study's contributions to our understanding of the nature of international order, the dynamics of international systems change, the developmental trajectory of world order from 1500 to the present, and the likely future of the global state system in the twenty-first century.

### **The Nature of International Order**

The notion that there exists a clear distinction between the domestic and the international spheres, whereby the former is dominated by the pursuit of the good life while the latter is dominated by the struggle for survival, has long framed prevailing conceptions of international order. Even with the stabilization of the post-war order and the resulting recession of the threat of state extinction, international politics has continued to be regarded by many as a realm of necessity, in which there exists minimal consensus over visions of the good life, and in which the threat of violent

death remains a permanent possibility.<sup>1015</sup> In the post-Cold War era, this conceptual distinction between the international realm of necessity and the domestic realm of freedom has grown increasingly untenable. Internationally, the post-Cold war period has witnessed the global ascendancy of a liberal transformationalist agenda, in which both multilateral institutions and hegemonic power have been harnessed to the task of promoting distinctly liberal visions of the good. This task has been undertaken much more aggressively and systematically than was the case during the Cold War. Concurrently with this development, post-colonial state failure has left people in countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan trapped in a condition of pervasive personal insecurity, with the disintegration of central authority plunging populations back into a condition in many ways reminiscent of Hobbes' imagined state of nature. These developments alone suggest the limited utility of traditional dichotomies that locate the imperatives of emancipation and survival respectively in the domestic and international spheres.

More generally, however, my inquiry into the nature of international orders reaffirms constructivist insights regarding the intimate relationship that exists between shared conceptions of the good and the design of fundamental institutions. In Latin Christendom, the Sinosphere, and the modern state system, international orders have been thoroughly suffused with historically particular conceptions of the good. Moreover, in each instance, the maintenance of international order has been highly dependent on practices of communicative action, which have themselves been mediated via authoritative institutions anchored in shared conceptions of legitimacy. Thus in Latin Christendom, it was actors' shared commitment to the Church's vision of universal salvation that invested canon law with the authority necessary for it to effectively mediate conflicts between Christendom's fractious kings and princes.

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<sup>1015</sup>See for example Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

Similarly, in the Sinosphere, the stability of the East Asian ecumene was heavily dependent on the operation of the elaborate rites and forms of ceremonial tributary diplomacy, practices which were themselves underwritten by the emperor's broadly acknowledged authority as the Son of Heaven. Finally, in the modern state system, the authority of fundamental institutions such as multilateralism and contractual international law is heavily predicated on actors' shared subscription to fundamentally liberal conceptions of the moral purpose of the state.

Nevertheless, while my investigation re-affirms the existence of an Aristotelian dimension to all international orders, I depart from established constructivist accounts in acknowledging the equally significant Augustinian dimension of international orders. In opposition to most realists, I concur with constructivists that shared conceptions of legitimacy and practices of communicative action are central to the constitution and operation of international orders.<sup>1016</sup> But these authoritative norms and practices – 'the arts of man' in Machiavelli's parlance, are by themselves insufficient to maintain international order. On the contrary, I have argued that it is the combined operation of authoritative institutions with legitimate practices of coercion – the art of man and the art of beasts – that works to cultivate cooperation and contain enmity between different political communities. This argument derives from the undeniable reality that violent struggles over power and principle have posed a central challenge to the maintenance of international order in every case I have considered. In each of my cases, the custodians of international order have sought to contain the disruptive consequences flowing from two forms of enmity. The first, that of conventional enmity, expresses itself in the form of violent positional struggles for power and prestige that occur within the normative framework of the existing order.

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<sup>1016</sup>See for example Buknovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics*; Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*; and Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*.

The second, that of absolute enmity, finds its expression in violent challenges that anti-systemic actors have mounted against the most basic constitutional values of the prevailing order. Both the Augustinian as well as the Aristotelian purposes of political order – the containment of enmity as well as the pursuit of the good life - have informed the constitutional structure and fundamental institutions of international orders throughout history. For this reason, any attempt to understand the constitutional structure of international orders by focusing exclusively on the operation of authoritative institutions and practices of communicative action is bound to remain incomplete.

That practices of organized violence have been central to the reproduction of international orders will come as no surprise to realists. Indeed, realists have long insisted on war's necessity as an unavoidable mechanism for preserving order within sovereign state systems.<sup>1017</sup> More generally, the ordering mechanisms realists favour, including great power hegemony, deterrence, and the maintenance of a balance of power, derive their efficacy at least in part through their association with legitimate practices of organized violence. However, this study departs from conventional realism on two important matters. Firstly, my investigation demonstrates the variability of institutionalized practices of legitimate violence across time and space. Secondly, I have also demonstrated that institutionalized practices of legitimate coercion are profoundly conditioned by prevailing conceptions regarding the moral purpose of collective association. In Latin Christendom, the Sinosphere, and the modern sovereign state system, differing conceptions of the good yielded differing practices of legitimate violence in addition to different forms of authoritative institutions. Far from being diametrically opposed to one another, authoritative and

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<sup>1017</sup>See generally Hans Joachim Morgenthau. *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 5th ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978; and Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

coercive institutions modes of social action have both been recruited to the task of order preservation throughout history. Moreover, in their varied expressions, both forms of social practice have been intimately related to one another, owing to their common origins in shared beliefs regarding the ultimate ends of social life.

The argument that practices of organized violence are central to the operation of international orders will sit uncomfortably with many constructivists, particularly those who are ethically committed to the goal of supplanting the logic of force with the force of logic as the primary feature of international politics. Nevertheless, I maintain that there is significant compatibility between constructivists' emancipatory objectives and the arguments advanced here. In demonstrating the variability of practices of legitimate coercion across different international orders, I hope to have undermined the realist refrain that human agents are condemned to remain stuck in an endless cycle of recurrence and repetition, with brief intervals of peace being punctuated by renewed outbreaks of violent disorder. For while violence has remained a pervasive feature of international politics throughout history, agents' conceptions of what constitutes legitimate violence and who may wield it have varied markedly in different eras. More fundamentally, agents' tolerance for violence has fluctuated significantly in accordance with the differing visions of the good that have sustained different international orders. For example, whereas the Church duly accommodated itself to the bellicosity of the European nobility in the legitimacy it extended to the institution of the feud, Confucianism restricted legitimate recourse to violence to the emperor, and consistently emphasized the superiority of moral example over violence as the preferred method of maintaining cosmic and social order. Stated bluntly, some visions of the good – and thus some international orders – have been more accepting of violence as a feature of everyday social life than have others. In illustrating this variability, I hope to have provided a firm empirical basis for refuting realists'



pessimism regarding the possibility of achieving fundamental moral progress from more to less violent forms of international order. Equally, in encouraging constructivists to acknowledge the indispensability of legitimate violence in sustaining international orders, I hope to stimulate greater debate regarding the best means of harmonizing the ethical imperative of emancipation with the practical imperative of preserving the liberal world order from either external assault or internal corruption.

### **The Dynamics of International Systems Change**

The research traditions of realism, rationalism, and constructivism, framed respectively around the motifs of power, efficiency, and identity, each suggest different explanations for the transformation of international orders.<sup>1018</sup> For realists, for whom the ceaseless struggle for power, prestige and survival remains paramount, international systems change is best conceptualized as a residue of Great Power conflict. This school of thought regards international orders as being essentially expressions of the will and the purposes of the strong, and consequently views their transformation as being driven primarily by tectonic shifts in the underlying distribution of capabilities between ascending and declining Great Powers.<sup>1019</sup> Conversely, rationalists are more inclined to account for international systems change by reference to actors' search for more efficient institutional solutions to common problems. Thus, in rationalist lights, institutional dysfunction and the quest for more efficient alternatives are accorded causal primacy as the chief mechanisms driving the

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<sup>1018</sup>On power, efficiency, and identity as the key motifs of the dominant research traditions in international relations, see J. J. Suh, Peter J. Katzenstein, and Allen Carlson. *Rethinking Security in East Asia: Identity, Power, and Efficiency, Studies in Asian Security*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004, pp. 8-9.

<sup>1019</sup>See for example Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*.

transformation of international orders.<sup>1020</sup> Constructivists offer yet a third explanation for international systems change, emphasizing the transformative significance of revolutionary ideas and new forms of social identity in undermining old orders and providing the normative impetus for the construction of new orders.<sup>1021</sup>

The preceding analysis indicates that valuable insights can be drawn from each of these traditions. In each of my cases, processes of order creation and disintegration have been heavily conditioned by the rise and fall of empires. In both Christendom and the Sinosphere, the Habsburg and Qing imperial households tried but ultimately failed to reconstitute international orders along imperial lines, while more recently, the struggle against jihadist terrorism has been intimately entwined with the travails of an informal American imperium. Similarly, the functional strains that growing violence interdependence placed on established ordering mechanisms in Christendom, the Sinosphere, and the contemporary global state system appear to vindicate rationalists' emphasis on institutional dysfunction as a mechanism of international systems change. Finally, constructivists may take heart from my readings of historical instances of international systems change, which re-affirm constructivist understandings regarding the critical role played by insurgent ideas and new forms of categorical collective identities in precipitating transformative crises of international order.

These observations aside, my argument does not completely vindicate any of the established research traditions. Instead, my findings suggest that historical events as complex and protracted as transformations of international order can only be properly understood through recourse to multi-causal forms of explanation. The emergence of new forms of violence; processes of systemic institutional decay; the polarization of international orders following the irruption of insurgent ideas and

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<sup>1020</sup>See for example Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors*.

<sup>1021</sup>See for example Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics*; Hall, *National Collective Identity*; and Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*.

forms of collective identity – each of these developments are of equivalent importance in accounting for episodes of international systems change. *More fundamentally, these processes work together in an interactive rather than merely an additive fashion.*

International orders falter not simply because they are overwhelmed by the simultaneous accumulation of discrete material, institutional, and ideational challenges to their integrity. Rather, these macro-processes interweave with one another in complex ways to collectively produce transformations of international order. The fundamental institutions of international orders are always susceptible to challenges to their legitimacy, owing to the inevitable discrepancies that exist between the values they purport to protect and their limited success in practically realizing these values. However, they are most likely to fracture only when their efficiency and legitimacy is compromised by simultaneous increases in violence interdependence and the emergence of ideological challenges to their animating values. Equally, it is not technologically driven increases in violence interdependence *per se* so much as the qualitatively new forms of violence that they enable that threaten international order. These new forms of violence are certainly facilitated by material changes, but they are also derivative of both the mobilizational opportunities afforded by institutional failure, as well as the behavioural imperatives to violence implied in insurgent ideologies and their corresponding forms of social identity. Lastly, my analysis confirms that revolutionary ideas and identities acquire their full subversive potential only when the fundamental institutions of international orders are already fragile, and ideally only when increases in violence interdependence have provided anti-systemic actors with the coercive wherewithal necessary to challenge the prevailing order.

In addition to demonstrating the multi-causal and conjunctural character of international systems change, my argument also highlights the highly contingent and largely unintended character of this process. Struggles over power and prestige,

disputes and bargaining over questions of institutional design, and more fundamental contests over meaning and identity feature heavily in the everyday warp and woof of international politics. However, my analysis suggests that a focus on the agency and specific intentions of particular actors is likely to be of limited value when considering protracted episodes of international systems change. This is because international orders are not transformed by either Herculean acts of statesmanship, the cool calculations of rational actors seeking optimal solutions to shared problems, or even the apocalyptic visions of prophets seeking to inaugurate the new millennium. Certainly, all three of these behaviours may manifest themselves during periods of systemic flux. But transformations of the scale witnessed in early modern Christendom or the late modern Sinosphere are so vast as to preclude their deliberate determination by acts of conscious human will. In the case of Latin Christendom, Reformation ideas were undoubtedly central in dissolving Christendom's spiritual unity, while an elective affinity also existed between many Protestant propositions and the constitution of the early modern state. However, the constitution of the Westphalian state system was conditioned even more profoundly by Absolutist conceptions of state sovereignty. These ideas owed their genesis to the Wars of Religion that the Reformation catalysed, but they did not organically arise out of the Reformation challenge itself. Similarly, in nineteenth century East Asia, the Taiping vision worked to eviscerate the old order of the Sinosphere, but played absolutely no role in constituting the East Asian state system that succeeded it. The ideology of jihadism looks similarly unpromising as the potential inspiration for the emergence of a new international order. Nevertheless, given the dominance of a logic of unintended consequences in guiding past transformations of international order, the possibility that the jihadist challenge may yet catalyse far-reaching revisions in the practice of sovereignty cannot be summarily dismissed, a point to which I will return below.

## **The Direction of International Systems Change**

### **The Ends of History and the Historical Trajectory of International Systems Change from 1500 to the Present**

In emphasizing the themes of causal complexity and contingency, my account of transformations of international order would initially appear to confound teleological readings of world history. When considered in isolation, the themes of complexity and contingency evident in my historical cases may imply that there is no over-riding logic to patterns of international systems change, and thus no useful way in which history can guide us in anticipating the long-term prospects of the contemporary world order. Nevertheless, a more holistic consideration of my cases does reveal the existence of undeniable common trends and global patterns. These trends must be identified and acknowledged before any informed evaluation of the possible future of the present international system can be undertaken.

The first trend that is evident across my cases is the steady secularization of international order from 1500 to the present. At the start of the sixteenth century, political and spiritual authority structures were deeply intertwined across each of the regional international orders that dominated the Old World. In Christendom, the Church retained its spiritual leadership of the *Respublica Christiana*, while the emperor's admittedly tenuous claim to temporal suzerainty derived from his status as the Church's pre-eminent earthly bodyguard. In the Ottoman Empire, the Caliph was not forced to contend with a religious establishment as organized or as autonomous as the Roman Church. Nevertheless, his legitimacy remained strongly tied to the tasks of extending the territorial reach of the *Darul Islam*, and governing his diverse subject peoples in a God-pleasing manner. In the Sinosphere, the sacred and the temporal

spheres were least differentiated, with the East Asian ecumene being regulated by an elaborate system of tributary diplomacy, and the Ming Emperor claiming universal spiritual and political supremacy over the civilized world as the Son of Heaven.

From the Reformation onwards, the relationship between the *polis* and the *cosmos* has grown increasingly attenuated, firstly in Western Europe and then subsequently throughout the world. In Christendom, this process of disenchantment began with Luther's proclamation of his ninety-five theses at Wittenberg, before being momentarily reversed with the onset of confessional polarization and the outbreak of the ensuing Wars of Religion. The Wars of Religion eventually yielded a reinvention of religion (conceived as a body of beliefs rather than a body of believers), a weakening of the transnational authority structures of Church and Empire, and a re-conceptualization of political authority around the innovation of Absolutist sovereignty. The modern separation of religion from politics owes its origins to this configurative crisis, but was only really completed in Europe after 1789, with the delegitimation of divine right Absolutism and the elevation of emancipation over salvation as the ultimate end of collective association.

In East Asia, the secularization of international order was if anything even more traumatic than in Europe. There, the combination of Western encroachment and domestic millenarian rebellion fatally undermined the emperor's credibility and authority as the Son of Heaven, with the dissolution of the old order ironically hastened by Hong Xiuquan's quixotic quest to bring heaven to earth following his fleeting establishment of a New Jerusalem in Nanjing. Finally, within the Islamic world, the abolition of the office of the Caliphate in 1924 best symbolized the global extrusion of religion from international order in the twentieth century. This process had begun as a localized challenge to the Church in a fragment of early modern Christendom in 1517. It had been refined and fortified in the Atlantic Age of

Revolution with the delegitimation of divine right Absolutism and the onset of the popular sovereignty revolution. And it was extended and imposed on the polities of Africa, Asia and the Middle East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the successive processes of imperialism and decolonization.

Alongside this global secularization of international order, the last half millennium has also been marked by crises of empire, the flattening of international hierarchies, and the wholesale delegitimation of systems of foreign rule. At the dawn of modernity, the majority of the Old World's sedentary populations were governed by composite monarchies, ranging in size from the Renaissance kingdoms of Western Europe to the sprawling gunpowder empires of Muscovy, China, and the Ottoman domain.<sup>1022</sup> These polities were characterized by their extreme ethnic diversity, their uneasy synthesis of monarchy with patronal forms of indirect rule, and their heavy dependence upon religious forms of legitimation to sustain and strengthen rulers' authority. From the sixteenth century onwards, successive crises of international order have overlapped with, and have partially been driven by, the break-up these imperial formations. Within Christendom itself, this pattern was manifest in the interweaving of struggles for religious freedom and political autonomy that punctuated the Wars of Religion. Most important for Western Europe's subsequent evolution was the failure of Charles V and his successors to (re)unify Christendom spiritually and politically in the wake of the Reformation. The failure of the Habsburg imperium in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was driven by a multitude of factors, but local resistance to foreign rule in places like Holland and Bohemia, as well as resistance to external interference in religious beliefs and practices, was decisive in driving this process.<sup>1023</sup>

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<sup>1022</sup>On the consolidation of the early modern gunpowder empires, see generally McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires*. See also McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 116. On the growth of gunpowder empires in the Islamic world at this time, see Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, chapter one.

<sup>1023</sup>See for example Nexon, 'Religion, European Identity, and Political Contention in Comparative Perspective', pp. 266-270.

Even if it is anachronistic to label these and other anti-Habsburg revolts as being nationalist in the strictly modern sense, the xenophobic rhetoric, anti-imperial sentiments, and demands for local religious and political autonomy characteristic of these struggles bore many family resemblances to the more self-consciously nationalist rebellions that followed them, and that themselves further accelerated the global shift from imperial to sovereign state systems.

In nineteenth century East Asia, the transition from the Sinosphere to the sovereign state system was also accompanied by crises of empire, entailing a conjunction of religious and proto-nationalist anti-systemic violence. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, anti-Manchu Han nationalism played a crucial role in sapping the Qing Dynasty of its legitimacy, and featured heavily – albeit in a millenarian guise – in the Taiping challenge that almost toppled the dynasty in the period 1851-1864. *Fin de siècle* rebellions, including the Chinese Boxer rebellion, the Korean Tonghak rebellion, and the Santa Iglesia movement in the Philippines, served to further entrench nationalist sentiments among Asian populations, even as they sought with limited success to resist the Japanese and Western imperial encroachments that followed in the train of Chinese imperial decline. The final collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 definitively signalled the end of the imperial Sinosphere, and was thus of inestimable significance for the East Asian region. However, at the same time, it also marked the beginning of the first of the four waves of imperial disintegration that transformed the world polity in the twentieth century. The collapse of the Ottoman, Habsburg, Romanov and Hohenzollern realms either during or immediately following World War I; the World War II defeat of the Nazi, Fascist Italian, and Imperial Japanese totalitarian empires; the post-war liquidation of the European maritime empires; and finally, the collapse of the Soviet Union towards the century's end – each of these epic convulsions brought national self-determination



to successively greater swathes of humanity. More generally, the twentieth century recess of empire capped a deeper world-historical process, entailing the delegitimation of international hierarchy generally, and of practices of foreign rule in particular.<sup>1024</sup> This process had its antecedents centuries earlier, in the failure of the papal-imperial *diarchy* and the subsequent defeat of the abortive Habsburg imperium. But it was only properly universalized in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, firstly with the collapse of hierarchical non-Western international orders such as the Sinosphere, and secondly with the eradication of European colonialism and the globalization of a sovereign state system founded on the principle of national self-determination.

Finally, the last five centuries have seen a dramatic increase in both the scale and scope of violence interdependence internationally, as well as a parallel – if admittedly more sporadic and faltering – ‘civilizing process’, whereby violence has been progressively monopolized by states and then imperfectly corralled within a universal framework of international law. This process began with the consolidation of early modern European Renaissance monarchies and Eurasian gunpowder empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Across the Old World, the introduction of gunpowder weaponry generally favoured political consolidation and the strengthening of kings over subjects, although in Western Europe, the technological balance both between rulers and between rulers and subjects was initially more even than elsewhere, yielding a sovereign state system that departed from the Eurasian imperial norm.<sup>1025</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century, however, the spread of gunpowder weaponry had shifted the military balance of power between sedentary agriculturalists and nomadic pastoralists decisively in favour of the former for the first time since the

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<sup>1024</sup>See generally Jackson, *Quasi-States*; and Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, chapters eight to twelve.

<sup>1025</sup>McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 118.

fall of the Roman and Han Empires.<sup>1026</sup> With the perennial threat of nomadic *blitzkrieg* invasions finally contained, empires such as Muscovy and the Qing imperium were then able to expand rapidly into the Eurasian hinterland.<sup>1027</sup> Meanwhile, the ‘military revolution’ facilitated a similarly rapid and devastating European expansion into the New World, as well as also enabling the construction of a series of littoral factories and forts throughout Asia and Africa that would subsequently form the launch pads for later European imperial expansion into the Old World.<sup>1028</sup>

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a raft of technological, organizational, and ideological changes emanating from the Atlantic world further increased global violence interdependence, as well as also catalysing intensified state efforts to monopolize violence domestically and constrain its use internationally. The combination of the popular sovereignty revolution, European imperialism, and the industrialization of warfare destroyed the multi-ethnic gunpowder empires of the Old World. The disintegration of the gunpowder empires began with the Opium Wars and the Taiping rebellion in the mid-nineteenth century, and concluded with the cataclysm of World War I, the establishment of the Mandate System over the rubble of the Ottoman Empire, and the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924. The global growth of violence interdependence during this time did however coincide with attempts to contain and control violence, both through the codification of international laws of war, and also through the establishment of a permanent universal congress of sovereign states dedicated to the abolition of war. Following the ‘total wars’ of the twentieth century, and under the shadow of nuclear annihilation, this commitment to civilizing violence internationally and eventually eradicating it entirely has formed

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<sup>1026</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>1027</sup>McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>1028</sup>See generally Parker, *The Military Revolution*.

one of the chief *raison d'être* of the UN system. In the post-Cold War period, one can cite both the steady decline in civil and international wars, as well as the UN's increasing activism in both facilitating state-building and responding to new threats such as global terrorism and the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction, as suggestive evidence of the continued maturation and institutionalization of this civilizing process at a global level.<sup>1029</sup>

### International Systems Change – The Persistence of Contrary Dynamics

From 1500 onwards, the world has been wracked by a succession of configurative crises, involving outbreaks of religious radicalism, crises of empire, and the emergence of new forms of violence that have threatened the functional integrity of existing international orders. These crises have historically been resolved, in both Western Europe and East Asia, through the secularization of international orders, the delegitimation of universal empires in favour of sovereign state systems, and the corralling of violence within the institutional parameters of the sovereign state. The macro-trends, which become visible through a comparative analysis of episodes of configurative systems change, superficially suggest an inevitability in the state system's genesis and its subsequent expansion. Nevertheless, upon closer scrutiny, each of these macro-trends can and must be subject to serious qualifications that militate against an unreservedly optimistic reading of the state system's historic ascendancy and its long-term prospects.

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<sup>1029</sup>On the steady decline in both civil and international wars during the post-Cold War period, see generally *Human Security Report 2005 - War and Peace in the 21st Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

The worldwide growth of politicized forms of religious sentiment, particularly the violent form embodied in global jihadism, sits uneasily with the historical trend towards the global secularization of international order. For optimists, this so-called ‘revenge of God’ is often cast as a lamentable but transient detour from the path of secular modernity.<sup>1030</sup> More pessimistic observers have conversely portrayed this development as forming part of a more enduring anti-modern backlash, which is symptomatic of the unfulfilled promises of development and democracy in parts of the post-colonial world.<sup>1031</sup> Neither of these readings is sustainable upon closer inspection, however, for both fundamentally overestimate the secularism of modernity in their initial assumptions. Certainly, the genesis and expansion of the sovereign state system entailed the *institutional* secularization of international order. However, what is often overlooked is the fact that the expansion of a Western-dominated sovereign state system throughout the Middle East, Africa and Asia coincided with a synchronous consolidation and globalization of the major faith traditions, most particularly Christianity and Islam. Thus, the historic eclipse of non-Western international orders such as the Sinosphere corresponded with what historian Christopher Bayly has dubbed the coterminous rise of ‘empires of religion’.<sup>1032</sup> The rise of these so-called empires of religion entailed the following: (a) the growing

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<sup>1030</sup>This optimistic view is not the sole preserve of liberals, as evidenced in Colin Gray’s confident prediction regarding the future of Islamic radicalism: ‘Al Qaeda and associated organizations will be a perennial menace, but they will be beaten decisively as the Islamic world comes to terms, culturally in its own ways, with the modern, even the postmodern, world. That process will take two or three decades, at least.’ Gray, ‘How Has War Changed Since the Cold War?’, p. 23. The protracted character of the Islamic world’s anticipated transition aside, what is telling is the implied assumption regarding the inevitability of this transition.

<sup>1031</sup>Evocations of this pessimistic theme can be found in different forms in works such as Samuel P. Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996; and Robert D. Kaplan. *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War*. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2000. In its starkest and arguably most hysterical form, this pessimism extends towards a fear that the process of desecularization will be forcibly imposed on the West in coming decades by a resurgent Islam. See for example Ye or Bat. *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005.

<sup>1032</sup>C. A. Bayly. *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*. Oxford ; Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004, p. 325.

rationalization, codification, and standardization of religious beliefs, accompanied by increasing activism in suppressing and disciplining ‘heretical’ popular forms of religious devotion; (b) the increased bureaucratization of forms of religious hierarchy; (c) the ‘downward’ expansion of religions to impose devotional uniformity and moral regulation and surveillance upon a steadily greater proportion of society; and (d) the geographic expansion of major faith traditions ‘outwards’ at the expense of local folk and animist forms of spirituality.<sup>1033</sup>

What is so significant about this trend is that it suggests a key paradox in the state system’s evolution. On the one hand, the state system expanded in the nineteenth century at the expense of other non-Western international orders built upon religious foundations. In doing so, it imposed an order upon non-European peoples that assumed the international separation of religious and political spheres of authority. On the other hand, however, this very process of expansion helped to stimulate the rationalization and extend the geographic reach of the major world religions, thereby fuelling the development of forms of subjectivity that were both religious and in some cases also transnational in character.<sup>1034</sup> Seen through this lens, the relationship between secularization and modernity becomes significantly more complex, and the emergence of religiously framed challenges to the contemporary order appears as less obviously counter-intuitive than is suggested in conventional ‘revenge of God’ accounts. For while the expansion of the state system led to an institutional separation of political from religious authority internationally, it also coincided with the growing homogenization of structures of religious belief within different faith traditions, as well as a growth in the importance of these global faith traditions in shaping individual and collective identities.<sup>1035</sup> Global patterns of institutional secularization

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<sup>1033</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter nine *passim*.

<sup>1034</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>1035</sup> *Ibid.*

have thus mapped uneasily onto patterns of popular identification from the moment of the state system's initial expansion, suggesting that contemporary religious challenges to its normative constitution are neither as unusual nor as emphatically 'anti-modern' (and thus, by implication, as transient) as is often assumed.

Equally, the historic eclipse of empire and other forms of international hierarchy should not be overstated. At first glance, the modern sovereign state system presents as a relentless steamroller of modernity, flattening international society firstly through the humbling of Church and Empire in early modern Europe, before sweeping aside the gunpowder empires of the Old World to create a global system of sovereign national states. The litany of defunct empires that expired in the twentieth century appears to further reinforce this narrative, as does the profound extent to which anti-colonial norms against foreign rule have now become entrenched in the modern state system. However, once again, further analysis calls this teleological argument into question. This is so firstly because at a regional level, trace elements of past international orders continue to endure. In Europe, for example, the post-war project of European integration has seen the partial revival of regional forms of heteronomy, a development that replicates the multi-layered pattern of authority relations that has governed Europe for most of its history.<sup>1036</sup> The European Union's stalled efforts to integrate Turkey into its ranks also demonstrates the continuing salience of religious fault-lines in demarcating the outer boundaries of a putatively post-Christian Europe.<sup>1037</sup> In East Asia and the Persian Gulf, meanwhile, the hierarchical lineaments of past orders find partial parallels in the United States' contemporary maintenance of

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<sup>1036</sup>Ruggie, 'Territoriality and Beyond', pp. 171-172.

<sup>1037</sup>On this point, see M. Hakan Yavuz. "Islam and Europeanization in Turkish-Muslim Socio-Political Movements." In *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, edited by Timothy Byrnes and Peter Katzenstein, 225-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. See specifically pp. 250-252.

‘empires of bases’ in both regions.<sup>1038</sup> More critically still, at a global level the revival of practices of international neo-trusteeship suggests the continuing vitality of hierarchy as a feature of international politics, even in an officially post-imperial age.<sup>1039</sup>

Finally, the post 9/11 era has decisively demonstrated that violence interdependence continues to grow in the contemporary state system off the back of globalization and technological advances, and that it has done so in a manner which has temporarily outpaced the international community’s institutional capacities to fully contain its disruptive potential. The spectre of non-state actors acquiring and deploying Weapons of Mass Destruction remains a disquietingly plausible possibility, and it has already been explicitly invoked by the Bush Administration for the purposes of relaxing hitherto sacrosanct norms prohibiting states from engaging in preventative war. Equally worrying, however, given its far greater likelihood, is the global diffusion of modern techniques of urban warfare of the kind now being refined in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The widespread use of vehicle-borne and roadside Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in both of these countries, alongside traditional insurgent techniques such as assassinations and guerrilla ambushes, has paralysed both local governments and their foreign allies.<sup>1040</sup> These techniques are eminently capable of being adopted by autonomous cells operating in major cities in Europe and North America, particularly as the continuing information and communications revolution enables anti-systemic actors to spread both the knowledge

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<sup>1038</sup>With reference to East Asia, see for example generally Chalmers Johnson. *Blowback - the Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. London: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002. See also Chalmers A. Johnson. *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*. London: Verso, 2004, chapter six. With reference to the Persian Gulf, see generally O’Reilly and Renfro, ‘Evolving Empire: America’s “Emirates” Strategy in the Persian Gulf.’

<sup>1039</sup>See generally William Bain. *Between Anarchy and Society: Trusteeship and the Obligations of Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, chapter six; and also Richard Caplan. "From Collapsing States to Neo-Trusteeship: The Limits to Solving the Problem of 'Precarious Statehood' in the 21st Century." *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007): 231-44.

<sup>1040</sup>On this point, see for example Hoffman, ‘The Cult of the Insurgent’, p. 325.

necessary to undertake such attacks, as well as the propaganda necessary to justify them in the minds of potential perpetrators.<sup>1041</sup>

What both the prospective spread of WMD capabilities to non-state actors and the potential introduction of urban warfare techniques into Western cities together represent – albeit on radically different scales – is an unravelling of the modern state's monopoly over the legitimate use of violence, one which contrasts starkly with past historical experience. In both Reformation Europe and nineteenth century East Asia, the ordering mechanisms of existing international orders were decisively unsettled by increases in violence interdependence, driven respectively by the early modern military revolution and by the nascent industrialization of warfare. However, what was noteworthy about both of these material ruptures was their long-term centripetal effect. In both instances, material changes eventually favoured the increased assertion of control over violence by central governments. This centralization of control over violence enabled the development of rudimentary international institutions to contain its exercise, while the increasing technological scale and scope of violence potential rendered this 'civilizing process' a practical necessity. By contrast, the prospective spread of WMD and the contemporary growth in non-state practices of asymmetric violence both constitute a partial reversal of this process.<sup>1042</sup> This observation should not be taken to suggest that the international community will be unable to effectively adapt to the challenges posed by this growth in violence potential. But it does nevertheless convey the fact that the contemporary growth of non-state capacities for violence is far from trivial, and that it will require significant and potentially profound

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<sup>1041</sup> The widespread fear and insecurity the Washington sniper was able to evoke in Fall 2002 is indicative of the disproportionately disruptive capacities now available to individuals and small groups. See for example *Ibid.*, pp. 325-326.

<sup>1042</sup> On this theme, see for example Fred Charles Ikl e. *Annihilation from Within: The Ultimate Threat to Nations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006; and Walter Laqueur. "The Terrorism to Come." *Policy Review* 126, Aug/Sept 2004: 49-64.



institutional adaptations at the systemic level if the ‘civilization of violence’ is to progress and the present international order is to be sustained.

### **The Future of the Global State System**

What, then, are the implications of this investigation for our efforts to anticipate the future of world order? At the outset of this inquiry, I identified four different types of international change, specifically configurative, constitutional, institutional, and positional forms of change. The bulk of my investigation has been devoted to understanding historic episodes of configurative international systems change, while in the preceding two chapters I have also sought to identify points of fragility and potentially transformative trends now evident in the contemporary state system. In concluding this inquiry, I wish to briefly sketch out the likely contours of international systems change in the coming decades.

Although the future of world order remains uncertain, at the very least, we can expect that the twenty-first century will see the rise of the Asian giants and the corresponding decline of Western hegemony. While the unipolar era may persist for some time yet, the great chasm in power and wealth that opened up between East and West with the onset of the industrial revolution will narrow dramatically in the coming century. Of the four types of international change identified earlier, positional change thus seems to be inevitable, barring some as yet unforeseeable calamity such as the disintegration of either China or India. The rise of non-Western Great Powers (and their possible resurgence, in the case of Russia and Japan) will necessarily entail significant shifts in both the international distribution of power and privileges, as well as wrenching shifts in the West’s understanding of its place in the world. From the Age of Discovery onwards, the peoples of Western Europe and their colonial offspring

have been enamoured of themselves as possessing a special claim to world leadership. The basis of this belief has been recast on diverse foundations over different epochs, with Christianity, racial supremacy, and economic and political modernity successively being invoked as both the markers of Western virtue, and also as the foundation of Western claims to exercise dominance over the rest of humanity. In the twenty-first century, the material asymmetry of power that has sustained this Western self-understanding will slip away, as modernity becomes unshackled from its dominant associations with the Atlantic world, and the historic pattern of a multi-centric world economy dominated by the Eastern powers is finally restored.<sup>1043</sup>

The stability of world order in the coming decades will depend in large part on the ability of the West – the European powers perhaps even more so than the United States – to come to terms with their relative decline, and to manage the ascendancy of the emerging Great Powers in a manner that accommodates non-Western aspirations for recognition without sacrificing either vital material interests, or the equally important principled interest in promoting and extending the global human rights agenda. The history of failed attempts to manage the rise of past Great Powers such as Germany and Japan is a testament to the inherent difficulties involved in peacefully managing power transitions. These challenges will be further compounded in future by the renewed scope for geopolitical friction posed by Great Powers' growing anxieties over energy security.<sup>1044</sup> They will also be complicated by principled disagreements between democratic and authoritarian Great Powers over the relative balance to be struck between human rights concerns and the preservation of states' sovereign

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<sup>1043</sup>On the historical precedent of a multi-centered world economy, see generally Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*.

<sup>1044</sup>On this point, see for example Flynt Leverett, and Jeffrey Bader. "Managing China-U.S. Energy Competition in the Middle East." *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2005): 187-201.

prerogatives within the domestic sphere.<sup>1045</sup> Finally, ecological security concerns (particularly food security and water security concerns driven by climate change) will further strain relations both within and between countries, a dynamic that will likely impinge negatively on Great Power relations as well.<sup>1046</sup> Whether the international community will be able to peacefully resolve these tensions is at this point difficult to foresee. Nevertheless, it can definitely be stated that this effort will require at a minimum the preservation of a state system that is sufficiently stable to support to the continuing operation of the global economy, and that is also sufficiently robust as to resist subversion by the anti-systemic forces presently agitating for its destruction. Significant revisions in both the authoritative and coercive fundamental institutions of the global state system will be required if these minimum conditions of order are to be met.

Historically, the threat posed by nomadic predators operating from ungoverned sanctuaries was most commonly dealt with within the framework of empire. From the collapse of the Western Roman and Han Empires through to the early modern consolidation of gunpowder empires in the Old World, nomadic pastoralists continuously preyed upon and occasionally overwhelmed their wealthier sedentary neighbours. In managing this threat, sedentary rulers across Eurasia oscillated between strategies of trade and tribute on the one hand, and reprisal and conquest on the other, their choice of strategy being governed largely by the relative balance of power then obtaining between city and steppe.<sup>1047</sup> Even with the consolidation of the Eurasian gunpowder empires and the parallel growth of the European maritime empires, the

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<sup>1045</sup>On the ideological and geopolitical significance of the ascendancy or re-emergence of authoritarian Great Powers, see generally Azar Gat. "The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers." *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4 (2007): 59-69.

<sup>1046</sup>On the security implications of climate change, see generally Alan Dupont, and Graeme Pearman. *Heating up the Planet - Climate Change and Security*. Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2006.

<sup>1047</sup>McNeill, *The Global Condition*, p. 116.

problem of frontier instability persisted for empire-builders from the seventeenth down to the twentieth century. From Kabul to Khartoum, regional potentates resorted to a plethora of coercive and co-optive strategies, seeking to stabilize their porous frontiers while securing the wealth-producing core of their patrimonies from external assault. Empire-builders took for granted the principled legitimacy of foreign rule over subject peoples. At the same time, they also accepted the practical spatial limits of imperial rule. In restive frontier regions, where the empire's reach exceeded its grasp, the best that could be hoped for was a fitful stability to be maintained by local clients where possible, and enforced through punitive expeditions when necessary.<sup>1048</sup>

Today, the institution of empire is defunct, but many of the governance problems that bedevilled past empires have re-emerged in new and more dangerous forms. In place of fractious imperial frontiers, the international community is now struggling to contain the instability emanating from weak and failing post-colonial states. Similarly, transnational predators such as Al Qaeda stand as contemporary analogues to the nomadic marauders that threatened sedentary societies in an earlier age, with the 'Manhattan raid' of 9/11 providing a chilling demonstration of the disproportionate damage non-state actors are now capable of inflicting without warning on global cities.<sup>1049</sup> Should anti-systemic actors succeed in acquiring and deploying Weapons of Mass Destruction, the essential imbalance of power that has prevailed between state and non-state actors since the seventeenth century would be drastically compromised, imperilling the very foundations of world order. For this reason alone, it is vital that states collaborate effectively to adapt the fundamental institutions of international society to comprehensively confront these challenges.

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<sup>1048</sup>On the spatial limits of governance constraining the power of traditional states, see Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>1049</sup>For further development of this analogy, see again Ruthven, 'The Eleventh of September and the Sudanese Mahdiya', pp. 347-350.

The international community's responses to emerging threats will be conditioned by two realities that distinguish the contemporary period from earlier epochs. Firstly, institutional solutions predicated on some form of indefinite foreign rule over weak and failing states are no longer viable. Nationalism was effectively globalized in the twentieth century, and popular tolerance for foreign rule remains low even in the most volatile of polities.<sup>1050</sup> Secondly, imperial strategies of containment, which sought to quarantine instability in the periphery, are not likely to be practically effective in any case, having been superseded by the surge in global interconnectedness facilitated by modern advances in transportation and communication.<sup>1051</sup> Neither the normative basis of empire nor its underlying spatial premises survived the twentieth century. The globalization of the nation-state has made a return to formal empire politically impossible, while globalization itself has diluted traditional distinctions between core and peripheral zones, rendering traditional imperial strategies of order maintenance practically unavailing. Both the governance capacity of fragile states will need to be strengthened, and the state system's collective capacity to resist anti-systemic violence reinforced, if international order is to be maintained. But both projects will need to be undertaken within the normative parameters of a sovereign state system in which anti-colonial norms and ideals of non-intervention and sovereign equality have become deeply entrenched.

Notwithstanding the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan and the continuing fiasco in Iraq, the international community has already demonstrated significant adaptive capacities in the face of the jihadist challenge. The UN's establishment of

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<sup>1050</sup>On the discrepancy between the universalization of the nation-state and the persistence of classically imperial governance problems in the contemporary era, see Barnett R. Rubin. "Constructing Sovereignty for Security." *Survival* 47, no. 4 (2005), pp. 94-95.

<sup>1051</sup>Once again, the 9/11 attacks are instructive here, being directed from Afghanistan, but having been coordinated in meetings in Hamburg and Kuala Lumpur before being perpetrated in New York and Washington.

both the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate and the 1540 Committee combating the spread of WMD to non-state actors stand out as definitive examples of the facility with which states have harnessed the authoritative institutions of the UN system to the task of upholding states' collective monopoly over legitimate organized violence. These formal initiatives, in conjunction with more *ad hoc* forms of multilateral cooperation such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, are demonstrative of the state system's resilience in the face of threats to its perpetuation. More fundamentally, however, they also reflect evolving conceptions of sovereignty as responsibility. While the notion of sovereignty as responsibility has been most popularly associated with nascent norms surrounding the practice of humanitarian intervention, the UN Security Council's post 9/11 activism in the areas of counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation has led to the emergence of a raft of new 'duties to prevent', which the UN's member states are now universally bound to observe.<sup>1052</sup> These developments signify the Great Powers' sanctioning of the partial return of a positive sovereignty regime, at least to the extent that all sovereign states are increasingly expected to fulfil certain minimum requirements associated with the preservation of international order if they are to be fully recognized as members of international society.

The institutionalization of duties to prevent activities such as terrorist financing and WMD proliferation to non-state actors is a welcome and necessary development, as are multilateral efforts to enhance the institutional capacities of weak but willing states to fulfil these duties. Nevertheless, the defence of international order in the coming decades will be possible only if two related challenges can be effectively addressed. Firstly, the international community will need to formulate an agreed framework for deploying coercive power against those states that conspicuously refuse to uphold their core duties as members of international society. In the post 9/11 period,

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<sup>1052</sup>See generally Feinstein and Slaughter, 'A Duty to Prevent.'

the United States has repeatedly resorted to violence against states have been perceived to have been thwarting its counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation objectives. Given the magnitude of the threat posed by both terrorism and WMD proliferation, one can reasonably expect this trend to continue in a post-unipolar world, as Great Powers invoke these perils to justify the preventative use of force against recalcitrant ‘outlaw’ states.<sup>1053</sup> If international order is to be preserved, both coercive as well as authoritative power will need to be mobilized to defeat anti-systemic actors and their passive and active state sponsors, but this must be done in a way that minimizes the collateral damage thereby inflicted on norms of non-intervention and freedom from external aggression. What was so destabilizing about the Bush Administration’s post 9/11 foreign policy was not its attempt to redraw the rules governing the international use of force *per se*, so much as the unilateral manner in which it sought to pursue this enterprise. In a world in which imperial solutions to anti-systemic threats are unavailable and American hegemony is both finite and constrained by international legitimacy concerns, it is imperative that the international community develop criteria and procedures to enable the *legitimate* use of organized violence in future to neutralize imminent threats and to punish those states that are willing to provide sanctuary to the would-be subverters of the present state system.

In addition to formulating clear international criteria and procedures for dealing with states that refuse to abide by the most basic norms of international society, the custodians of international order will need to develop more reliable means of managing the threats posed by ungoverned spaces, in which there exists no

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<sup>1053</sup>On the significance of ‘outlaw states’ and informal relations of coercive hierarchy between these actors and Great Powers, and the recurrence of informal forms of coercive hierarchy alongside the formal institution of sovereignty, see generally Gerry J. Simpson. *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order*. Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

effective state apparatus capable of either monopolizing legitimate violence or policing against anti-systemic threats. As noted earlier, the strength of anti-colonial norms makes an overtly imperialist solution to the problem of state failure and state collapse impossible. Similarly, the international community's post-Cold War experience of short-term international neo-trusteeship in territories such as Eastern Slavonia, Kosovo, and East Timor, has demonstrated the limited generalizability of neo-trusteeship as a method of systemic stabilization.<sup>1054</sup> While UN-led projects of neo-trusteeship have been qualified successes in most instances, they have generally been undertaken within small territories, and scholars have argued that both political and logistical constraints would likely prevent their application to larger territories such as Somalia or the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>1055</sup> Given these normative and practical constraints, the Great Powers and regional organizations will need collaborate to develop new regimes, both to prioritize targeting of the ungoverned spaces that pose the greatest threats to international peace and security, and also to marshal the material and institutional resources necessary undertake the reconstructive interventions needed to revive failing and collapsed states.

In addition to managing the rise of new Great Powers and the decline of Western hegemony, world leaders will thus also need to adapt the fundamental institutions of the existing international order to more effectively combat transnational predators, chastise their active and passive state sponsors, and revive state authority in the ungoverned spaces of the global state system. Without the possibility of easily reverting back to formal empire, the international community must therefore collaborate to strengthen the authority of the sovereign state throughout the world. Paradoxically, this project will necessarily entail increased international involvement

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<sup>1054</sup>Caplan, 'From Collapsing States to Neo-trusteeship', pp. 235-236.

<sup>1055</sup>*Ibid.*



in state-building. This task is itself likely to be rendered more complicated by the possibility of incremental purposive shifts in the nature of international order in the coming decades. On the one hand, the ascendancy of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian Great Powers such as China and Russia will increasingly constrict the scope for the United States and its allies to promote the transformational liberal agenda that held sway in the immediate post-Cold War era.<sup>1056</sup> Equally, while the growth of politicized forms of religiosity will likely have regionally uneven effects, it is nevertheless likely to open up a noticeable dissonance in values between a secular, rich, demographically moribund North, and a pious, predominantly poor, and demographically dynamic South.<sup>1057</sup> One needn't subscribe to some form of civilizational essentialism to acknowledge the historical particularity of the Western experience, and to acknowledge also the challenges to world order posed by the existence of multiple forms of modernity. Recognition that the West's post-Reformation conception of the sacred/secular divide is but one of many possibilities that are compatible with modernity should imply neither the inevitability of cross-cultural confrontation, nor the necessity of disengaging from efforts to promote liberal values internationally out of respect for cultural diversity. On the contrary, the core values of popular eudemonism and self-determination that underpin the global state system resonate across different traditions, while violent extremism of the type personified by jihadism offends the key tenets of all the major faiths. Nevertheless, in seeking to promote their own hitherto dominant liberal conception of the state system's core values, the Western democracies should proceed with a spirit of humility. More specifically, they must proceed with a willingness to accept the

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<sup>1056</sup>Gat, 'The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers', pp. 67-68.

<sup>1057</sup>For a variation of this theme that focuses on an emerging values gap not between the West and Islam but rather between a secular North and an ascendant Southern Christianity, see generally Philip Jenkins. *The Next Christendom - the Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

possibility that public piety is not incompatible with popular sovereignty, and that in the Islamic world in particular, a degree of rapprochement with peaceful variants of political religiosity will be essential if the shared threat of jihadist terrorism is to be decisively defeated.

Positional changes in the global state system will be *inevitable* in the coming decades. Revisions and adaptations of the state system's fundamental authoritative and coercive institutions are *likely*, given the necessity of such reforms if anti-systemic threats are to be effectively contained. Purposive challenges to the state system's normative values – particularly in their present liberal incarnation – are *possible*, owing to both the rise or revival of authoritarian Great Powers, and the continuing global ascendancy of intensely politicized forms of religiosity, especially but not exclusively within the Islamic world. In light of these trends, is configurative international systems change, on the scale evident in my historic cases, likely to manifest itself in the twenty-first century? I would suggest that configurative international systems change remains a remote but nevertheless imaginable possibility, believing it more likely that the custodians of international order will 'muddle through' the challenges of the coming decades than that we will witness the holistic transformation of the global state system. As the post-Cold War period of unipolarity wanes, I believe that we will enter an era of 'contested constitutions', analogous in many respects to the decades immediately following the Congress of Vienna.<sup>1058</sup> Much like the post-Congress period, the world will be multipolar in its essential form, but informally underwritten by the dual hegemony of two preponderant powers. In the nineteenth century, Britain and Russia underpinned the Concert system for the duration of its existence, while in the twenty-first century their places are likely to be

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<sup>1058</sup>On periods of 'contested constitutions' within the history of international orders, see Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty*, p. 26. I would like to thank Heather Rae for first drawing my attention to this aspect of Philpott's argument.

taken by the United States and China, each country serving respectively as the maritime liberal and continental autocratic anchors of an uneasy but nevertheless relatively stable international security order.<sup>1059</sup> At a global level, the Great Powers will compete with one another for influence in major energy-producing regions, with the lands of the former Ottoman Empire and Central Asia serving once again as the chief foci of rivalry, just as they did in the nineteenth century.<sup>1060</sup> Moreover, as in the post-Congress era, the Great Powers are also likely to disagree on the extent to which insurgent ideologies (liberalism in the nineteenth century, Islamism today) threaten international order, and will disagree too on the scope of states' legitimate prerogatives to intervene to resist Islamist influence in states of vital concern.

In yet another parallel with the post-Congress international system, states will also collaborate to suppress shared anti-systemic threats. As with the nineteenth century struggle to suppress piracy, which was largely undertaken under British leadership, the United States is likely for some time yet to take the lead in combating transnational terrorism and non-state WMD proliferation, owing to both its acute vulnerability to these threats, and also to its unparalleled military command of the global commons.<sup>1061</sup> However, unlike the post-Congress Concert of Powers, initiatives against shared threats will need to be undertaken with at least partial regard to the norms of consultation and consensus now institutionalized in the UN's permanent universal congress of states. Equally, Great Power competition – both geopolitical and ideological – will be muted in the coming century both by unprecedented global

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<sup>1059</sup>On dual hegemony as the basis of the post-1815 international order, and on the distinguishability of dual hegemony from a bipolar balance of power, see Schroeder, 'Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?', p. 693.

<sup>1060</sup>See again generally Leverett and Bader, 'Managing China-US Energy Competition in the Middle East.'

<sup>1061</sup>On America's present military command of the global commons and its likely persistence for the foreseeable future, see generally Barry Posen. "Command of the Commons - the Military Foundations of US Hegemony." *International Security* 28, no. 1 (2003): 5-46.

economic interdependence, as well as by the consolidation of anti-imperialist norms that prevent the resolution of ‘great games’ through the overt territorial conquest or partition of smaller polities. Finally, in the most profound contrast with the nineteenth century, the international order of the twenty-first century will genuinely be a world of regions. With the global imbalance of power between ‘the West and the rest’ finally wound back, different regional orders are likely to cohere under the broader glaxis of a global state system, with these regional orders reflecting the diverse historical experiences of their constituent polities. The traumas of the past five centuries were of such magnitude and permanence that modern-day facsimiles of either Latin Christendom or the Sinosphere will not re-emerge. Nevertheless, echoes of these old orders are likely to resurface, whether in the more formally institutionalized structure of a heteronomous European Union, or in the more informal structure of an East Asian order economically dominated by Chinese family business networks, and sustained politically and diplomatically by a regionally preponderant China.<sup>1062</sup>

The survival of the global state system, albeit one characterised by continuing Great Power rivalry, persistent transnational security threats, and intensifying regional diversity, is likely. It is not, however, guaranteed. In previous epochs, episodes of configurative international systems change have been catalysed by systemic crises of the kind described earlier in this inquiry. My analysis of the global state system revealed unnerving parallels with prior systemic crises, to the extent that the present world order is bedevilled, much like its predecessors, by widespread institutional decay, the emergence of anti-systemic ideologies, and increases in violence interdependence. Should the custodians of international order fail to act decisively to

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<sup>1062</sup>On the prospect of a partial return to European heteronomy, see again Ruggie, ‘Territoriality and Beyond’, pp. 171-172. On the (re)emergence of a Sinosphere politically dominated by China and economically dominated by interlocking and regionally dispersed Chinese family business networks, see Hameshita, ‘The Intra-Regional System in East Asia’, pp. 134-135

address these challenges, it is possible to envisage the continuing decay and accelerating disintegration of the state system in the coming century. Such a scenario might begin with growing global anxieties over food, water and energy security. These anxieties would be driven by increasing demand for these necessities, combined with diminishing supply caused by over-consumption and (in the case of food and water) local and ecological crises fuelled by anthropogenic climate change. Global warming is expected to impact with particular severity upon the already water-scarce societies of the Mediterranean littoral, and would feed into increased popular distress and disillusionment towards government among the rapidly growing populations of North Africa and the Middle East. Simultaneously, rising demands for fossil fuels would draw the United States and emerging non-Western Great Powers into further involvement in the Greater Middle East. Great Power competition for resources and influence in the area would aggravate the region's already tense geopolitical situation. In conjunction with states' existing concerns about the spill-over effects of instability in Iraq and the continuing Iranian ascendancy, accelerating Great Power competition in the region could amplify existing trends towards conventional arms build-ups and 'nuclear hedging' by concerned states.<sup>1063</sup> At the same time, increased Great Power involvement in the Middle East would also exacerbate the sense of siege and existential danger informing jihadist ideology, leading to a likely surge in jihadist terror attacks both within the region and beyond.

In the face of growing terrorism, heightened Great Power resource competition, ecological crises, and the threat of nuclear proliferation throughout the Middle East, strong states would be increasingly tempted to abandon conventional

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<sup>1063</sup>On recent conventional arms build-ups in the region, see Dan Glaister. "US Accused of Fuelling Arms Race with \$20bn Arab Weapons Sale." *The Guardian*, July 30 2007. On the increased tendency towards 'nuclear hedging' in the Middle East, as evidenced in the fact that no less than 13 Sunni states have declared atomic energy plans within the space of a year in response to the Iranian ascendancy, see Dan Murphy. "Middle East Racing to Nuclear Power." *Christian Science Monitor*, November 1 2007.

norms of non-intervention and non-aggression, both for defensive and offensive reasons. Within an ever more volatile environment, and against the backdrop of rising terror attacks against Great Power interests overseas and at home, states would develop ever more permissive defensive justifications for the pre-emptive use of force against terrorists and their presumed state sponsors. Equally, the temptation to seize hydrocarbon reserves, both to ensure states' own energy security while also potentially denying it to rivals, could contribute to a further corrosion of international norms against aggression. This would in turn worsen the security anxieties of small energy-rich states, further increasing their incentives to acquire unconventional weapons to deter potential aggressors. Horizontal proliferation among states – particularly in the Middle East -would in turn raise the likelihood of non-state actors acquiring WMD, and then deploying it against Western targets. Were this to occur, the global state system – at least in its liberal incarnation – would be in danger of unravelling. Domestically, formerly liberal states would confront the now existential threat posed by terrorism by further winding back civil liberties, adopting an even more permissive attitude towards the use of coercive interrogation and torture upon terror suspects, and potentially even reviving the World War II precedent of indefinitely interning suspect nationalities. Borders would be sealed to insulate the homeland from subsequent attacks, in so doing threatening the continued operation of the global economy. With the fragile bonds of global economic interdependence severed, strong states might be compelled to return to imperialist strategies of wealth accumulation to sustain their popular legitimacy at home. This development would further weaken the norms of sovereign equality, non-aggression, and non-intervention that have sustained the global state system since 1945, thereby threatening a return to a less liberal, less peaceful, and less egalitarian age.

While the breakdown of the present international order is alarmingly easy to envisage, it is impossible to reliably predict what form of successor order might emerge on the other side of the abyss. Conceivably, as occurred following the thirty years' crisis of 1914-1945, the Great Powers might succeed in reconstituting a global order of sovereign states, albeit one equipped with mechanisms of collective defence more properly attuned to the threats of the twenty-first century. Alternatively, some form of global confederacy might emerge, with states voluntarily surrendering a portion of their sovereignty to a global authority equipped with the authoritative and coercive wherewithal necessary to confront common threats to international peace and security more effectively than did its UN predecessor.<sup>1064</sup> Yet another possibility is that of the reversion to a form of 'durable disorder', characterized by a plethora of different governance forms interacting with one another in the absence of any formal organizing principles or shared values.<sup>1065</sup> Finally, in the event of a genuinely transformative systemic crisis, technological and ideological possibilities that are as yet unimaginable might facilitate the emergence of the world's first genuinely global empire. Regardless of the exact outcome of such a hypothetical crisis, the historic experience of both Christendom and the Sinosphere teaches us that transformations of international order are singularly traumatic experiences. These cases also warn us of the perils of complacency. Both Christendom and the Sinosphere were underpinned by religious visions that appeared to contemporaries to guarantee the indefinite perpetuation of these orders until it was too late to prevent their dissolution. The global state system by contrast lacks the reassuring certainty of any cosmic guarantee,

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<sup>1064</sup>This seems to be the preferred vision of Daniel Deudney, who anticipates the possibility of continually rising levels of violence interdependence producing a federal republican world nuclear government incorporating 'negarchical structures of mutual restraint' among the world's political communities. See Deudney, *Bounding Power*, pp. 262-264 and p. 276.

<sup>1065</sup>On 'durable disorder' as a possible future, see Philip Cerny. "Terrorism and the New Security Dilemma." *Naval War College Review* 58, no. 1 (2005), pp. 29-30.

relying rather on the collective reason of its members to ensure its preservation. Writing this dissertation has given me a strong appreciation of the horrors entailed in the transformation of international order. It has also reinforced my conviction that the contemporary world order is much more fragile than is commonly acknowledged. Nevertheless, it has also re-affirmed my belief that the challenges facing the global state system, unlike those that faced its historic predecessors, remain in the last instance eminently surmountable.

### **A Final Word From Augustine**

St. Augustine once argued that the Latin word *religio* derived from the earlier *religare*, meaning ‘to bind together.’<sup>1066</sup> From Augustine’s time down to the Reformation, religion served this vital purpose within Christendom, tying otherwise disparate and feuding communities together through the higher bond of a common faith. Since the sixteenth century, however, religion has receded as the primary basis for international order, firstly within Christendom and then subsequently throughout the world. This secularization of international order has been partially propelled by systemic crises in which self-styled soldiers of God have invoked the divine not for the purposes of binding communities together, but rather with a view towards tearing international orders apart. Today, men who have invoked God’s name to justify the most heinous of atrocities are assailing the global state system. But while today’s jihadists have sought to invest their struggle with sacred significance, their ideas and actions are instead suggestive of an instrumental, cynical attitude to human life that owes more to Machiavelli than it does to Mohammed. In this respect, they represent

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<sup>1066</sup>On the etymology of religion, see Martin Warner. "Introduction." In *Religion and Philosophy*, edited by Martin Warner, 1-22. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. See specifically p. 1.



merely the most recent manifestation of a type of intensely politicized religiosity that has recurrently erupted from the Reformation onwards, and that has paradoxically been indirectly responsible for the birth and global diffusion of the very state system that jihadism now aims to annihilate. In a multi-confessional world, in which authoritative and coercive power are unevenly dispersed among almost two hundred sovereign states, it is no longer possible for international society to remain anchored within the cosmic certainties of bygone orders. Nevertheless, it is still possible to identify those whose ethos violates the tenets of every major faith tradition, and whose actions threaten the very order within which freedom becomes possible.

All international orders are impermanent, and all are imperfect. However, while I recognize the many imperfections of the present order, I nevertheless continue to believe that it is worth defending. In both Christendom and the Sinosphere, attempts to institute God's reign on earth unleashed human suffering on a massive scale, and ultimately destroyed international orders that had endured for centuries on the basis that they were believed to have been divinely ordained. For all their destructive fury, however, the confessional militants of Europe's Wars of Religion failed to expunge religious diversity from Europe in the Reformation's wake. Similarly, the militant faith of the Taipings went the way of Carthage, their creed being utterly obliterated from the Chinese popular consciousness upon their defeat. One can only hope that global jihadism will suffer a similar defeat, as the grotesque dissonance between the jihadists' protestations of piety and the profane character of their actions becomes universally apparent, spurring the international community to take the actions necessary to rejuvenate the current order, and defeat civilization's common enemies.

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