

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN GREAT POWER POLITICS

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A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Baltimore, Maryland

July, 2016

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ABSTRACT

This project identifies a puzzle in how academics and policymakers have described international politics: the phrase ‘Great Power rights and responsibilities’ is widely-used and has been for centuries, but there exists no widely-shared understanding of what this term means, what it signifies theoretically about the casual relationships among states, and even from where the concepts underlying it historically came. It then posits answers to these questions, identifying these origins in the practices of feudal Europe and tracing their development into a complex of Great Power rights and responsibilities as feudal order gave way to an early modern states-system. Though formally anarchical, this system was actually ordered by a sophisticated social arrangement of Great Power relationships based on mutually-comprehensible rights and duties expressed through a shared identity as well as a number of differentiated roles unique to individual Powers. The material abilities of its Powers were understood in light of their moral commitments to their peers, to the political community around them, and to their own self-understandings. These encouraged certain behaviors, discouraged others, and kept European international activity rooted in a shared political culture. The project then examines how, over time, this arrangement was institutionalized to the point that the internal identity of a Great Power became a reified social status, while the roles of rights and duties expressed by the individual Powers came to exert legitimized ordering authority across regions and issue areas. However, the behavioral routines and cognitive patterns of the complex did not evolve as the moral and material contexts of the 19th century went through their own profound transformations. This incongruity made an upheaval event possible as the system crowded itself out: more Powers meant more roles

expressing more authority claims of rights and duties, and this would necessarily multiply areas of tension and points of potential conflict in a system with greater violence potential than ever before. This project concludes by demonstrating how periodic moments of role overlap between pairs of Powers led to the July Crisis of 1914 and, ultimately, to the shattering of the right- and responsibility-complex that fostered its necessary conditions.

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Ronald Walters

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am fortunate to have many people in many different communities to thank for their contributions to this dissertation as well as for their support and encouragement.

At Washington & Lee University, I was taught by a remarkable group of people whose commitment to inspiring undergraduates through scholarship was matched only by their fundamental decency and surpassed only by their rigorous standards. Professor Mark Rush deserves special mention for his encouragement of my work and for the many remarkable opportunities for scholarly growth he has provided me over the years. The men and women of the George C. Marshall Foundation also deserve recognition as special patrons of my undergraduate scholarship, especially my supervisor on Volume Six of the Marshall Papers Project, the late Sharon Ritenour Stevens.

At the University of Cambridge, I was privileged to learn from Professor Christopher Clark (St Catharine's), whose teaching influenced how I think about international affairs to a degree I have only come to appreciate years later. Professor Antony Lentin (Wolfson) and his wife Monica have also been tremendous friends and supporters; if I someday display half the erudition, half the eloquence, and half the graciousness of Professor Lentin, the scholar and the man, I will count myself lucky.

At The Johns Hopkins University, I am particularly thankful for Dr. Jared Hickman, who provided me with one of the most engaging intellectual experiences of my life, took an interest in my ideas, and encouraged me to refine them in what eventually became my first peer-reviewed article. Similarly, I will always be grateful to Professor Siba Grovogui for introducing me to so many new ways of thinking about the world in his many seminars, as well as for the way he valued and respected my contributions. To

my dissertation committee, you have my sincere thanks for your guidance and your willingness to engage with my work. To my supervisor, Professor Ren   Marlin-Bennett, I am truly humbled by your gracious assistance with this project.

Finally, I wish to recognize the friends and family that have so generously shared my life over these challenging years. *Mes sieurs* Richard S. Cleary Jr., Scott G. Centorino, and J. Zak Ritchie have been stalwart friends as well as gentlemen whom I respect and admire. Special mention must be made of Dr. Stephen Mann and his wife Priscilla, whose kindness and generosity have followed me by some quirk of fate since I made Stephen's chance acquaintance as an undergraduate. They welcomed me into their hearts and home during my studies at Cambridge, and they have since done the same for my wife and our friends and relatives. I cherish their friendship, and will always think of them as family.

To my parents, Jodie and Rayna, I owe thanks for everything that I have, everything that I will have, and all that is good in me. No words can properly credit them for helping me to become who I am, for supporting me unconditionally through good times and bad, and for being my first, and most significant, teachers. Most of all, I am grateful for my wife, Natalie. She has suffered and endured more than I can know for my sake. Her strength and courage inspire me, her love and support nourish me, and it is the vision of my future with her that makes straight my way. I dedicate these pages to her.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

- Jesus of Nazareth

No nation can claim rights without acknowledging the duties that go with the rights. . . . During the seven and a half years that I was President . . . [the United States] never failed to treat both strong and weak with courtesy and justice; and against the weak when they misbehaved we were slower to assert our rights than we were against the strong. . . . My endeavor [in international affairs] was not only to assert these rights, but frankly and fully to acknowledge the duties that went with the rights.

-Theodore Roosevelt

We have tried to emphasize that because of China's extraordinary development over the last two decades, that with expanding power and prosperity also comes increased responsibilities.

- Barack Obama¹

Capacity, right, and responsibility are frequently spoken of as though they are linked together in the organization of social and political life. However, the diversity of the discourse surrounding them conceals an often-unrecognized diversity of meaning. This is the problem academic international relations (IR) faces when it turns to how these concepts manifest themselves in world politics: a veneer of rhetorical similarity conceals real dissonance in how they are understood. Though these concepts are seemingly familiar, there is a actually counterintuitive absence of sustained, rigorous theorizing about them as a tripartite topic. To offer a remedy, this study will develop a conceptual framework within which material capacity, right, and responsibility are understood as an interwoven unity shaping world politics: a complex of 'Great Power rights and responsibilities'.

¹ Luke 12:48 (King James Version); Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 502, 505; Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Vice President Xi Jinping of China, *Daily Comp. Pres. Docs.* 201200097 (February 14, 2012).

The following six chapters will disentangle the many conceptual and historical components surrounding these concepts. This introduction explores the strengths and weaknesses of existing scholarship, articulating a new understanding of the right- and responsibility-complex as a key point of material-moral juncture influencing international norms and mediating international anarchy. Subsequent chapters each examine a discrete historical and conceptual facet of how this came to be. Chapter Two explores the theory linking together capacity, right, and duty within international politics, tracing the antecedents of the complex to feudal norms. Chapter Three examines the sociology of a ‘textbook’ Great Power system in the 18th century, exposing the macro-level operation of the identity and role mechanisms that demarcated its attitudes and determined its characteristic behaviors. Chapter Four addresses how this complex mediated and shaped historical cases of international change by referencing unit-level case studies of rising Powers. The consequences of this mediation are addressed in Chapter Five, which explains how the ability of the complex to successfully reproduce Great Power politics ultimately contributed to its own destruction. Finally, a concluding chapter summarizes the continuing influence of the components of the complex on contemporary international practice, capping off the argument made throughout that rights and duties correlated to material capacity exert causal force over international behavior.

I. Between Slogan and Substance: Great Power Rights and Duties in IR Literature

Just as the intermixture of rights, duties, and capacities forms the basis of citizenship *within* polities, *among* polities these same concepts shape the normative conduct of their social relations. Of course, these topics appear so frequently in IR literature that it may even seem absurd to assert a need for yet more theorizing about

them. There is even a conventional vocabulary by which they are often identified: the quasi-theoretic moniker of ‘Great Power’ describes materially-endowed states, while the norms and rules associated with them are given the quasi-mystical designation ‘rights and responsibilities’. These terms and the deeper material and moral linkages at which they gesture are found in almost every corner of the field. No less a realist than John Mearsheimer focused his efforts around ‘Great Powers’,² while Kenneth Waltz even prescribed Great Power as the starting point for *all* IR systems theory.³ Similarly, Hedley Bull and the moderate constructivists of the English School accepted as a cornerstone of their posited international society a system of Great Power managerial rights corresponding to a responsibility for the promotion of certain legitimate collective goods.⁴ As Jackson noted,

Great power brings greater responsibility: great powers can justifiably be called upon to maintain or restore international peace and security or to uphold or repair the world economy. Great power also obviously brings greater privilege: great powers can justifiably expect other states to recognize their special status and respond to their legitimate claims and demands.⁵

Liberal institutionalists echo this emphasis on responsibility and power, often examining the key role that the most powerful states play in the construction of international

² John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 5.

³ “The theory, like the story, of international politics is written in terms of the great powers of an era. . . . In international politics, as in any self-help system, the units of greatest capability set the scene of action for others as well as for themselves. . . . A general theory of international politics is necessarily based on the great powers.” Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), 72-3.

⁴ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 13, 71, 195-201.

⁵ Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 139-40. This expresses Bull’s foundational understanding, defined by Vincent as “the minimalist endorsement of the doctrine that authority must reside somewhere if order is to obtain anywhere. The great powers were burdened by responsibility as much as benefited by power, and theirs was a role that had to be played.” See R. J. Vincent, “Order in International Politics,” in *Order and Violence: Hedley Bull and International Relations*, eds. J. D. B. Miller and R. J. Vincent (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 62-3.

institutions as well as the burdens they must carry to ensure that these instruments of order function legitimately.⁶ Many critical theorists and cosmopolitans even make responsibility a transitive property, the key to the formulation of state policy and the exercise of force in an era of human rights; “responsibility talk” related to human rights, climate change, and economic inequality saturates this discourse.⁷ Two foreign policy experts dubbed this widely-felt mood “the Spiderman Doctrine: With great power comes great responsibility.”⁸ This litany enlivens IR scholarship past and present, but it also belies a problem that goes oddly unproblematized: these authors and schools do not really agree about what their shared vocabulary signifies. Instead, they study materially-capable states, rights, and responsibilities in diverse and often incompatible ways, regularly foreclosing their study as a unified complex.

Every major IR paradigm has its peculiar bias when exploring these ideas. Realists, being theorists of power, focus on how different levels of quantitative material capability influence state behavior. Their Powers are ‘great’ by virtue of their material capacity to behave differently—*not* because their behavior is shaped by their adoption of norms linked to rights and duties.⁹ Determinative force rests with the natural given of material distribution within anarchy and its operative mechanism, the balance of power.

⁶ See unipolar ‘strategic restraint’ in G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4. A discussion of how international position translates into domestic duty is in Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 333.

⁷ Mlada Bukovansky, Ian Clark, Robyn Eckersley, Richard Price, Christian Reus-Smit, and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Special Responsibilities: Global Problems and American Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

⁸ Gary J. Schmitt and Patrick Keller, "Germany and the Spider-Man Doctrine," *Wall Street Journal*, February 7, 2014, Europe. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1495379372>.

⁹ For realist definitions of Great Power focused around material capability, see Waltz, 131; Jack Levy, *War and the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 11-19.

A parsimonious focus on these elements detaches material ability from moral meaning, degrading our ability to comprehend the human antecedents of Great Power behavior. In contrast, liberals and English School theorists—groups interested in how material and moral orders intersect—look for what makes a Great Power in the degree and scope of a state’s engagement with international society, particularly in the adoption of common norms and the acceptance of common duties.¹⁰ When influenced by the constructivist reading of anarchy as a mutable feature of international life, this understanding tends toward the study of how informal regimes of norms can be subsumed within formal, cosmopolitan institutions of global governance and transnational ‘thickening’.¹¹ The recognition of both power and principle found in these paradigms forms a more complete picture than a monocausal approach, but they tend to view international affairs in teleological terms, as though it inevitably leads to something higher or better as it progresses through time. While right- and responsibility-complexes can abate *some* of the violence and uncertainty of an anarchical self-help system, they moderate that system rather than to promote its wholesale transformation into either authoritarian hierarchy or cosmopolitan or liberal global authority. Such transformation is also the concern of a final group: critical theorists and international legists. They focus on how ethical notions of responsibility and right should operate in international politics, often singling out

¹⁰ This behavioral approach (in contrast to the material capability approach of realism) is seen in the literature discussing the so-called ‘rising’ powers of China, Brazil, India, and South Africa. It posits that these states will only be ‘powers’ when they accept ‘responsibility’ for the promotion of the norms of international society. See Amrita Narlikar, “Is India a Responsible Great Power?” *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 9 (2011): 1607-1608.

¹¹ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1; Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Great Power and its privileges as a big part of the problem.¹² Though normative theory of this type is an important component of contemporary IR, its outside-looking-in stance has its handicaps; where statespeople are guided by their own ethical imperatives and power-political objectives, a detached, philosophical view often sees only a number of ethical quandaries and moral imperatives that translate into duties.¹³ This differs from the practice of international politics, where responsibility is not easily uncoupled from self-interested prerogative and practical material capability. Since these latter two elements play an important part in shaping the moral understandings of states, prescriptive theory ignores them at its peril.¹⁴

In sum, the tendency of different schools to focus their attentions on one or two of these components at the expense of the others has produced a severely fragmented understanding of how Great Power rights and duties affect international politics. Though there may be theories of state capacity and of international responsibility and even of international social systems involving Great Powers, there is no IR theory of material capacity, right, and responsibility *per se* as a causal force equally-dependent upon its

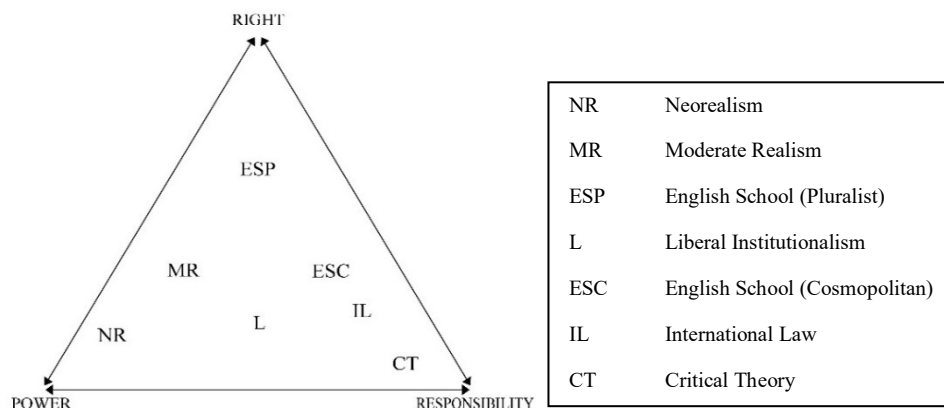
¹² The debate essentially focuses around whether international law “is to be the servant or the master of the state”—i.e., whether the primacy of politics or the primacy of principles will guide international progress. See James Mayall, *World Politics: Progress and its Limits* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 140. See also the discussion of international law’s “transformative” ability to “give voice to those who are otherwise routinely excluded” through the language of rights and duties in Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law, 1870-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 316-17.

¹³ For an interesting thought experiment along these lines from a realist, see Stanley Hoffmann, *Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

¹⁴ That international duties fall especially upon those states with the wealth and willingness necessary to fulfill them is actually a tacit reincorporation of Great Powers into such theories, as recent cases studies of the Responsibility to Protect illustrate. See the collected works in Ramesh Thakur and William Maley, eds., *Theorising the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). See also the progression from the duties and reciprocal responsibilities of all states to a directorate of the powerful in Paul Fauchille, *Traité de Droit International Public*, ed. Henry Bonfils, 8th ed. (Paris: Rousseau, 1923), 299, 398, 468, 491-514.

three components. Because there is so little agreement on how these three crucial concepts fit together, we lack a shared basis for understanding what Great Powers are, what rights and duties accompany their station, and what conceptual and historical sources account for their special norms. This dissonance produces a cacophony of incompatible and rhetorically decorative usages. ‘Great Power’ can mean anything—and often nothing—at all. ‘Responsibility talk’ is cheap, often articulated unclearly even when sincerely felt. Worse still, there has been no serious effort to formulate an understanding that has any hope of bridging paradigms. Most IR theorists tacitly concede this point by skirting the rigorous exploration of these words whenever possible: “in IR there is a willingness to duck the task of defining great power.”¹⁵

Figure 1.1: Ideal-typical Distribution of Emphasis among IR Paradigms



This is true even in monographs enshrining ‘Great Powers’ in their very titles. Some of these usages are really little more than rhetoric—cases in which ‘Great Power’ simply signifies any state important enough to be coded as a part of the study.¹⁶ Others aim for a more structural and integral role for Great Powers in their theories but likewise

¹⁵ Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 58.

¹⁶ For a recent example, note the absence of any definition of or meaningful theoretic role for ‘great powers’ in Sebastian Rosato, “The Inscrutable Intentions of Great Powers,” *International Security* 39, no. 3 (2014/15): 48-88.

sidestep the issue of term's deeper meaning.¹⁷ *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, for example, deploys only a single sentence to define its Great Powers.¹⁸ Similarly, *The Great Powers and the International System*, a recent winner of the International Studies Association's Annual Best Book prize, gives only a cursory definition buried 80 pages deep into the book.¹⁹ Even within the English School, the subject is increasingly avoided. Bull's international society centered on the fundamentally contradictory nature of right- and duty-bearing Great Powers: the actualization of *hierarchy* embedded in *equality* and of *normative, moral force* embedded in the *capacity for violence*.²⁰ Yet his successors have been less comfortable with this mixed material-ideational and hierarchical-anarchical framing, often omitting the Great Power institution entirely or eliding it with other concepts. For example, *Legitimacy in International Society* mentions the term 'Great Powers' only twice outside discussions of the Vienna and Versailles treaties, in both cases asserting that Great Power was a category applicable only to a narrow century of time.²¹ That this omission is found in a study devoted to international legitimacy

¹⁷ Polarity theorists often use 'Great Power' to mean 'any state functioning as a pole in a polarized system'. This vocabulary gestures at something deeper, but the casual force in their arguments lies firmly with the imperatives of polarity rather than with the interplay of norms of right and duty. See Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (1993): 5-51.

¹⁸ The term's origin, significance, and relationship to other usages is not explored; there is only a lone footnote directing the reader to an obscure text from two decades prior. Mearsheimer, 6.

¹⁹ Bear F. Braumoeller, *The Great Powers and the International System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 79-80.

²⁰ Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 196-201, 221.

²¹ *Legitimacy in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). The view that 'Great Power' is applicable only between the Vienna and Versailles settlements was pioneered in Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna: A Study in Allied Unity: 1812-1822* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946), 137. A recent exponent is Andreas Osiander, *The States-system of Europe, 1640-1990: Peacemaking and the Conditions of International Stability* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 88, 168, 233-4, 322-4. This position is dependent upon a certain narrow understanding of 'international system', as noted in Heinz Duchhardt, "Introduction" in *"The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848": Episode or Model in Modern History?*, eds. Peter Krüger and Paul W. Schröder (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 26-7. For early evidence of the turn away from a focus on Great Power norms, see the offhand dismissal of "limited 'group norms'" among the Great Powers as "sporadic and largely non-cumulative" in

would certainly have surprised founding figures such as Martin Wight and Bull.²² Others have simply replaced the study of Great Powers with a more generalized study of hierarchy.²³ Indeed, this *volte-face* within the School now includes full-throated prescriptive arguments *against* a Great Power system.²⁴

When even the English School disengages from the study of Great Powers and their rights and duties, there is a wider trend afoot. Today, it is common for IR scholars to use these terms without seriously exploring their full implications or to avoid them entirely, thus discouraging the study of how international capacity, right, and duty are linked together.²⁵ This has severely hampered the ability of these terms to be taken seriously alongside monocausal approaches that pull them apart and study them in isolation. There is scant room for the idea that these three components are operationally inseparable—a collective, *causal* force in international affairs worthy of *unified* study. This is a missed opportunity. As the historical case studies presented in subsequent chapters will suggest, capacity and norms do not exist independently of one another in international politics as it is practiced by statespeople. Instead, they have historically been linked within a complex of rights and responsibilities shaping how the possibilities and limitations of that field are understood in human terms. This study will explore the

Ian Clark, *The Hierarchy of States: Reform and Resistance in the International Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4.

²² Clark did concede the importance that founding figures such as Bull and Wight attached to Great Powers as the foundation of international society, but pursued the concept no further. Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society*, 21, 58, 70.

²³ William Clapton, *Risk and Hierarchy in International Society: Liberal Interventionism in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 19; Clark, *The Hierarchy of States*.

²⁴ See Nick Bisley, *Great Powers in the Changing International Order* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012).

²⁵ Prozorov's critique of 'world politics' applies to 'Great Power rights and responsibilities', which often amounts to either "a presupposition that is so self-evident as not to merit a conceptual explication [or] a problematic phantasm only accessible to thought in the form of a hegemonic pretension." Sergei Prozorov, "What is the 'world' in world politics? Heidegger, Badiou and void universalism," *Contemporary Political Theory* 12, no. 2 (2013): 103.

origins of the concepts and practices comprising this posited complex, the abstract function fulfilled by their union, and their practical significance for the conduct of world affairs. To frame this discussion, these chapters address a longstanding IR puzzle: why does the behavior of those most materially-capable of states, the Great Powers, so often seem to involve behaviors and outcomes contrary to the expectations of a purely rational, materially-determined international system?

II. Norms, Purpose, and Power

a. Rights, duties, and semi-archy

What follows will take up this task, arguing that the right- and duty-claims advanced separately and collectively by a group of Great Powers comprise *a complex of historically-developed, socially-conditioned behaviors and practices that regulate the intercourse of the powerful and provide it with purposive direction*.²⁶ This right- and responsibility-complex *defines the operation of the international system* in two ways. First, it promotes common customs, practices, and normative attitudes among a special group of states called the Great Powers.²⁷ These Powers are distinguished by their superior capacities for organized violence as well as by their collective understanding of one another as social and power-political analogs.²⁸ Because they are the key players

²⁶ This is to say that rights- and responsibilities-complexes are neither wholly cause nor wholly effect of international politics. It is not that they create the international system; that is simply the result of a plurality of power centers interacting within a formal anarchy. Nor are they the primordial prime mover of that system's politics; that is anarchy's companion, the risk of war. Instead, they hint at how statespeople give them meaning and render them comprehensible in human terms. See the approach in Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1962), 28.

²⁷ The title itself is at least as old as the mid-18th century, though as Chapter 2 will demonstrate the function it expresses is at least as old as the European states-system. Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3. For an early example of the typologizing of Powers, see [Jakob Friedrich] Bielfeld, *Institutions Politiques* (The Hague: Pierre Gosse, 1760), 84.

²⁸ This definition is both material and social in that a state must be both powerful *and* be understood and recognized as such by others in order to be considered a Great Power. The social element is what distinguishes a Great Power from a merely powerful state. See Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*,

within their international system, the normative ‘rules of the game’ they adopt and internalize stand a chance of enduring within a formal international anarchy and shaping its practical consequences.²⁹ As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, this complex has generally promoted regularized, isomorphic behaviors and attitudes among the Powers that defy the expectations of an ideal-typical anarchy. At its most developed level, such a complex can even serve as a basic governance mechanism for the system as a whole, organizing the units of the system into a loose ‘semi-archy’³⁰ that is neither formally

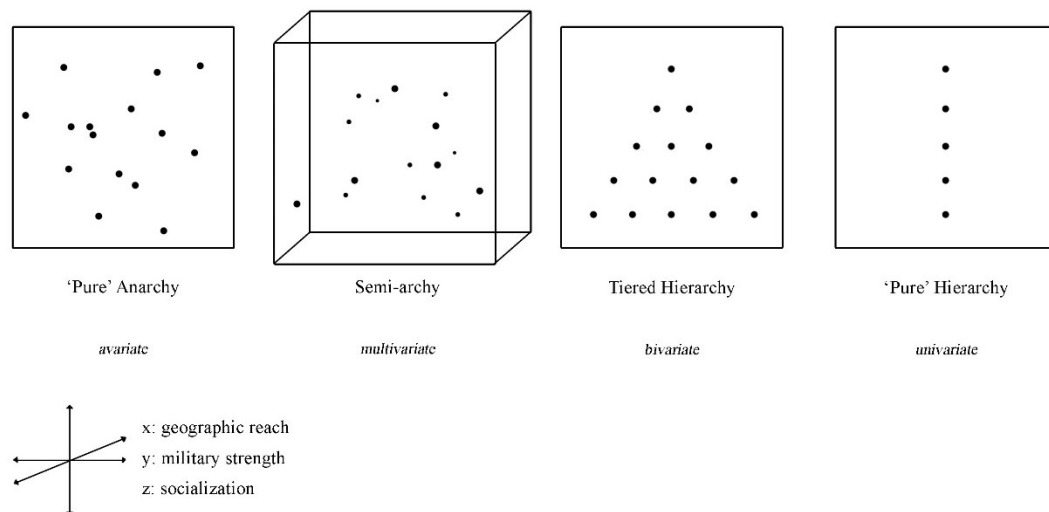
79; Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 196. For definitions of Great Powers, rising Powers, and simply states, see Appendix I: Glossary.

²⁹ “Whether a normative system is functional depends on the socialization and internalization of norms by the relevant actors. Educational content, discourse, and compliance with norms are indicators of internalization.” Matthias Schulz, “Did Norms Matter in Nineteenth-Century International Relations? Progress and Decline in the ‘Culture of Peace’ before World War I” in *An Improbable War: The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914*, eds. Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 59fn46. For differing degrees and rates of norm internalization and its consequences, see Wendt, 250-312 and Tanisha M. Fazal, *State Death: The Politics and Geography of Conquest, Occupation, and Annexation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 44-7. In the historical case of European international society, the norms incorporated within a complex of Great Power rights and responsibilities have derived from both the institutionalization of conventional international behavior and from the efforts of specific Powers to promote certain norms. On ‘norm entrepreneurship’, the ‘invisible hand’, and norm development, see Justin Morris, “Normative Innovation and the Great Powers” in *International Society and its Critics*, Alex J. Bellamy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 267-281.

³⁰ The concept nearest semi-archy in contemporary IR scholarship is Daniel Deudney’s *negarchy*. Both concepts share an “arrangement of institutions necessary to prevent simultaneously the emergence of hierarchy and anarchy.” But there are important differences, the primary being that negarchy is “the antithesis to hierarchy and anarchy” while semi-archy is rather a messy intermixture of parts of both. Another important difference between semi-archy as elaborated here and negarchy is that the former lacks the latter’s focus on union among units through co-binding. Rather, semi-archival arrangements do not require union but rather only cross-cutting relationships to differentiate the system from anarchy. A semi-archival system can, like negarchy, be value-focused around restraint and even around the ‘thickening’ of international governance relationships; but it can also be profoundly individualistic and unpredictable (as Chapter Two will demonstrate through its feudal origins) provided these elements are carried out so as not to replace the informal ordering of normal behaviors with either the formal ordering of hierarchy or the collapse of order writ large. Negarchy is thus a ‘higher’ concept both owing to its greater normative institutionalization (Deudney’s primary example is the early American federal republic) and its more conscious triangulation between two extremes. Semi-archy, in contrast, embraces the contradiction at its core: the simultaneity of hierarchical differentiation joined with anarchical equality and expressed through a variety of normative relationships, some healthy and bounded, others dangerous and assertive. See Daniel H. Deudney, “The Philadelphian System: Sovereignty, Arms Control, and Balance of Power in the American States-union, circa 1787-1861,” *International Organization* 49, no. 2 (1995): 191-228.

hierarchical nor operationally anarchical (see Figure 1.2).³¹ Though the material and social inequality of the units within this semi-archy helps to lift the system out of anarchy, this is not a unidimensional hierarchical ordering based on any single factor. Rather, the presence of multiple, overlapping relationships of rights and responsibilities ensures a multivariate ordering in which the particular position of any single unit is dependent upon how it materially and socially engages with its fellow units.

Figure 1.2: Anarchy, Semi-archy and Hierarchy



Semi-archy is distinguished by its dynamism. It is founded on the frequent redistribution of relationships within a common normative framework making such shifts possible without constant upheaval—thus allowing the ‘game’ of semi-archival international politics, a cooperative competition governed by norms and purposes worked out among and frequently renegotiated by the players themselves, to be played.

Consequently, international order is inherently relational and uneven because the position

³¹ See the early scholarship of Richard Rosecrance for its understanding of “regulative mechanisms” adopted by the Powers. Richard Rosecrance, *International Relations: Peace or War?* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), 88-90. An informative critique is found in Andrew P. Dunne, *International Theory: To the Brink and Beyond* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 55-60.

of a unit within a complex of material *and* social ties influences its own *self-understanding*—and thus the meaning of its own material capacity.³² In contrast, anarchy has no ordering principle; a command-based ‘pure’ hierarchy would be based on only a single principle (i.e., who has the most guns), and a ‘tiered hierarchy’ of the sort commonly postulated to describe the international system would be determined by two interlocking principles (i.e., the most guns qualified by the ability to deploy those guns across geographic space, thus establishing different hierarchical tiers based on states of similar absolute capacity in different spaces). As Chapters Four and Five will demonstrate, an ordering of international politics based on uneven and shifting right- and duty-based understandings of ‘self’ and ‘other’ is always in danger from two sources: the tendency of the relationships comprising it to either fall apart amidst the constant churn of shifting moral and material distributions or, alternatively, their tendency to ossify into semi-permanent, quasi-hierarchical arrangements. Such arrangements are prone to all the weaknesses and worst tendencies of the interpersonal relations they reflect; this is a consequence of semi-archy’s mixed moral and material nature, as well as of its reliance on human beings to adopt the attitudes and enact the behaviors necessary for its reproduction.

This leads to the second point: the actualization of a complex of norms linked to capacity helps ensure that an otherwise stark competition for simple survival is endowed

³² Self-understanding is a concept of particular importance. When developed to particularly sophisticated levels, the relationships, routines, and cognitive patterns undergirding a semi-archival system can actually become pillars of the *ontological security* of the state as understood by statespeople and even national populaces. Ontological security, a concept used across multiple academic disciplines, can be briefly defined as “security not of the body but of the self, the subjective sense of who one is, which enables and motivates action and choice.” It will figure prominently below in the July 1914 denouement of the Great Power system. Jennifer Mitzen, “Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 3 (2006): 344.

with a more nuanced spectrum of purposes. This is because it provides a conceptual point of intersection among a state's material capability, its moral self-understanding, and the international system. Because understandings of what a state *can do* are bound up with the moral judgments it formulates about what it *should do*, a Great Power's ambitions and purposes often manifest themselves through claims of right and duty. These claims express a multiplicity of goals beyond simple survival or conquest and provide a common vocabulary within which the practices of international affairs may be framed in normative terms. Thus, a complex of rights and responsibilities facilitates how Great Powers make sense of the international system and their place in it, both as individual players disclosing different international goals as well as a collective social class disclosing fundamental functional similarities.

Just as humans have created maps to aid their comprehension and navigation, so has a complex joining capacity with right and duty lent definition and meaning to an anarchic international system, ordering it into a semi-archy. The following sections will elucidate this complex in greater detail, explaining why it is an important component of international politics and why it makes for a compelling research topic. They then model how it influences state behavior, identifying two mechanisms involved in translating unit-level imperatives and systemic impulses into a systemic complex: the general *Great Power identity* and the parochial *Great Power role*.

b. Why rights and duties? A synthesis of system and soul

At its most abstract level, the right- and responsibility-complex is concerned with the reconciliation of the material/moral dichotomy at the heart of international politics. These contrasting elements generate tension within world affairs as well as intense debate

among scholars over which is dominant. The theoretical role articulated for it here aims at a different target, instead arguing that it is not the *resolution* of this debate in favor of a primarily material or a primarily social understanding of international politics that is of interest; instead, it is the unending *process of resolution* that captures the essence of Great Power right and responsibility, a complex holding these elements together in a perpetual state of tension.

To frame this understanding in theoretic terms, three propositions about the nature of international relations logically lead to this complex. The first is that the human elements of international life—those rooted not in the mechanistic calculation of material forces but rather in the human capacity for moral, normative, and justificatory reasoning—do indeed exist. Second, since the material elements of international life guide the development of these moral elements without fully controlling them, human understandings fall out of pace with the political reality established by the material distribution of power. Moral visions of all types—from nationalistic visions of Mitteleuropa to cosmopolitan hopes for a responsibility to protect—thus exert a normative pull on how international politics is conducted. Third, the consequence of this unstable moral-material intermixture is international uncertainty. States may well wish to embrace the relative certainty of a parsimonious balance based upon the mutual acceptance of inescapable material realities, but they cannot. Instead, they must cope with a plethora of objectives, judgments, and attitudes that cannot be reliably calculated or predicted. This uncertainty engenders a right- and responsibility-complex, the method by which the most dangerous members of this society abate their insecurity by yoking themselves to a common moral-material structure. This structure binds them to

normative, isomorphic behaviors—collectively routinizing how they act and how they think about international politics and their place within it—yet allows them sufficient space for the realization of individual national missions. The result is an imperfect system that curbs the worst excesses of an anarchic system while disclaiming any possibility of perfecting it, a loose semi-archy.

The initial point is that international relations is about more than just power and calculation—rather, it has an “essential normative element.”³³ History does not evidence such a thing as a purely *material* state, a state without an ideology or a moral self-conception; such an entity would be more akin to a premodern barbarian horde, held together by and existing for the sake of violence and—crucially—needing no normative justification beyond this fact. States, in contrast to hordes, constantly articulate justifications for their existence and their actions. This is because an important component in how they formulate their policies is the exercise of the human faculty of reason, itself bound up with the moral sense of the statespeople involved.³⁴ Policy

³³ Jackson, 46.

³⁴ There is an inescapable dilemma whenever scholars talk about ‘states’. Though state policies are made by actual human beings, specifically identifying each person involved in the complex process of policy formation can be time- and space-prohibitive. For the sake of convenience and to achieve a simplification of historical contingencies conducive to clearer theorizing, it is thus common to personify the complex policymaking structures of states into unitary, national actors—i.e., ‘France decided to invade’. This grants us narrative simplicity, but elides the lines of causality within and without the state that led to this policy. Consider three additional statements: ‘France decided to invade when the rider with the treaty was delayed on the road from Vienna’; ‘Richelieu decided to invade over the objections of the duke’; and ‘France decided to invade Burgundy after it was occupied by the Emperor’. All four statements can refer to the same event, but each can lead to different conclusions about how international politics worked in this particular historical case; in turn, different conclusions can lead to different theories, and different theories to different fundamental understandings of IR. There is no getting around this problem. To abate it as much as possible, this narrative will employ the personified usage (treating Great Powers as unitary *personae fictae*) when the historical consequences and sources of a policy or action justify this approach. When dealing with instances of a significantly divided policymaking structure—especially in later chapters where popular pressures play a greater role in shaping the self-understandings and policies of Powers—specific forces and statespeople will be cited as necessary to clarify where policies are coming from, and who (or what) is making them within the state. This an imperfect solution, and readers are encouraged to consult the wealth of secondary sources cited; these provide greater detail on the construction of policy according to the contingencies of their individual cases.

formation thus demands justification by reference to higher principles embracing a greater range of purposes than simple survival.³⁵ Realists would object, as Wight noted, because “the sophisticated Machiavellian may in a sense admit of the existence of moral values, but will see them as epiphenomenal.”³⁶ In place of moral judgments in the policy process, they are apt to substitute the relatively modern invention of ‘the objective national interest’. However, despite its popular reputation for dispassionate calculation, even it discloses a special, philosophically-grounded “ethics of statecraft.”³⁷ States, being mechanisms operated by very human statespeople, can never fully shed the biases (and consciences) of the men and women who operate them.³⁸

The second point is a consequence of the first. Since the state can never wholly escape its human moral patrimony, there is a material/moral dichotomy in world politics that allows for a wide variety of state behaviors.³⁹ Because the moral judgments of statespeople are not entirely derived from the material position of their states, ideas exist as semi-independent causal factors in world politics. Institutions, regimes, ideologies, and norms interpose themselves between the logic of brutal competition and the practical operation of the international system. Constrained and empowered by both the physically possible and the morally imaginable, each state is forced to formulate its own conception

³⁵ “The practical activity of international politics cannot be undertaken outside of moral and legal referents which constitute the normative framework of such activity.” This subject is dealt with in detail in Jackson, 6-10 [quote at 6]. See also Friedrich Kratochwil, “The Protagorean Quest: Community, Justice, and the ‘Oughts’ and ‘Musts’ of International Politics,” *International Journal* 43, no. 2 (1988): 207.

³⁶ Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant, and Mazzini*, eds. Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16.

³⁷ Jackson, 19-22.

³⁸ All regime types struggle to “develop procedures for expressing their corporate personality and [to resolve] conflicts between their individual interests and a putative national interest.” Mayall, 30.

³⁹ Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, 185.

of self-flourishing.⁴⁰ State behaviors are born in the shadow of this purposive struggle between the material and moral possibilities of international life.⁴¹ The diversity of purposes this struggle discloses necessitate in turn a wider range of international behaviors and attitudes than would be necessary within a parsimonious balance of power.

But more important than the particular goal of any particular state at any particular time is the fact that this wide range of purposes creates uncertainty, the third point. Because states cannot be relied upon to calculate accurately and yield their policies to the cold logic of pure materialism, international relations is a field full of surprises.⁴² “Folly,” as one author put it, is built “into the warp and woof of international politics.”⁴³ Because states aren’t much better at prediction under these uncertain conditions than scholars, they find themselves in need of some technique to manage the risk inherent to living with one another in an anarchy. How can diverse and often mutually-exclusive understandings of unit-level flourishing be pursued within the framework of a society built upon the shadow of war? Those arguing from ideal-typical positions might posit that either the grim acceptance of cyclical power-political realities or the progressive advancement of liberatory cosmopolitanism are the only answers—and that the long history of either escalating human conflict or escalating human cooperation proves their theorized teleology. In other words, the only way to solve the problem of international

⁴⁰ Such flourishing has been defined diversely as service to a deity, the defense of territory, the genocidal annihilation of an outgroup, the accumulation of glory and prestige, etc. See the case study of prestige in Steve Wood, “Prestige in world politics: History, theory, expression,” *International Politics* 50, no. 3 (2013): 387-411.

⁴¹ Kalevi J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order, 1648-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 331.

⁴² Aron, *Paix et guerre*, 22.

⁴³ Stephen Van Evera, “Why States Believe Foolish Ideas: Nonsell-Evaluation by States and Societies” in *Perspectives on Structural Realism*, ed. Andrew K. Hanami (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 185.

uncertainty is to somehow eliminate the *international political sphere* through the acceptance of mechanistic material hierarchy or revolutionary, post-international order.

In the end, they may well be right. But states, unlike scholars, are closely linked to their routine moral notions and material realities—they must pursue pragmatic solutions within the messy context of an uncertain and inconsistent world. For the most capable of states, the Great Powers, two essential problems—the regulation of behavior and the establishment of purposive direction—have been resolved by reference to a complex of mutually-comprehensible rights and duties. This has provided a vessel within which moral/material tensions are contained and adjudicated, but never permanently configured in a way that might definitively resolve the ‘game’ of world politics and end the conflict it necessarily entails.⁴⁴ Interposed between the moral will of the unit and the material realities of its system, rights and responsibilities instead promote a loose, never-ending, and ever-shifting semi-archival order.

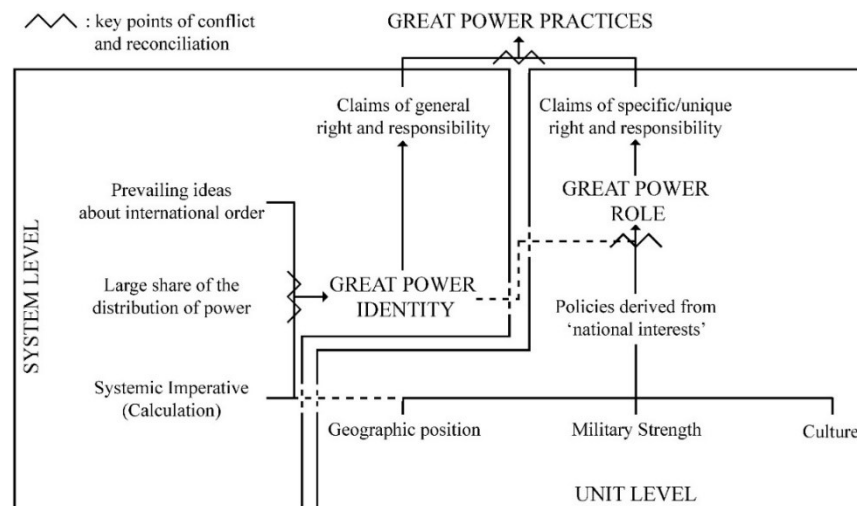
Two special mechanisms facilitate this process (see Figure 1.3). The first is a shared *Great Power identity*; the second is its translation into a multitude of *Great Power roles* expressing the material and moral circumstances of the individual units.⁴⁵ This combination of universal identity and parochial role can be discerned in the *practices* of

⁴⁴ As in the case of risk societies generally, this “does not aim to achieve perfect security: from a risk perspective the best one can hope for is to manage or pre-empt a risk; one can never achieve perfect security because new risks will arise as a ‘boomerang effect’ of defeating the original risk.” Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen, *The Risk Society at War: Terror, Technology and Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2; see also 35-37.

⁴⁵ Drawing from Wendt’s discussion of structure and agent, Kowert and Legro formulate a similar distinction between norms (here, the Great Power identity) as “the regulative cultural content of international politics” and identities (here, the Great Power roles) as “regulative accounts of actors themselves.” Paul Kowert and Jeffrey Legro, “Norms, Identity, and Their Limits: A Theoretical Reprise” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 453.

the Powers themselves.⁴⁶ Over centuries, this reconciliation has promoted Great Power co-binding based on procedural norms and social status, a regime abating the uncertainties disclosed by a shifting material/moral landscape.⁴⁷ At the same time, it has allowed for variation and change within the system, legitimizing the ambitions of individual Powers and normalizing their competitive expression.

Figure 1.3: The Production of Right- and Responsibility-based Great Power Politics



c. Great Power Identity

The first mechanism is a Great Power identity shared by a system’s leading states. It derives from three key material and social elements. The first is the formally anarchic status of the international system and the consequent necessity of calculation and vigilance.⁴⁸ The second is that system’s particular distribution of material capacity; where

⁴⁶ “[P]ractices are socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world. Practices, such as marking a linear territorial boundary, deterring with nuclear weapons, or finance trading, are . . . the dynamic material and ideational processes that enable structures to be stable or to evolve, and agents to reproduce or transform structures.” Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, “International Practices,” *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (2011): 4-5.

⁴⁷ This is not meant to assert that order and stability are necessarily preferable in any objective sense to disruption and change. If the former appear frequently in this analysis in the guise of an international ‘good’, it is merely because they have historically been viewed as such by certain statespeople.

⁴⁸ Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, 28.

there is geographic and political division, some states occupy positions of material preeminence.⁴⁹ The third is the system's distribution of ideas about social and political order. Developed alongside the first two elements but distinct from them, these ideas shape how power is understood and determine the possibilities for the social regulation of international behavior.⁵⁰ Together, they define the norms and behaviors characteristic of any Great Power.⁵¹

The historical case of the first European Great Power identity shows how these three elements come together. At the beginning of early modernity, the creation of an interstate system out of the decay of a universal feudal order created a formal anarchy marked by great disparities in material capacity. However, the stubborn persistence of certain religious and political understandings inherited from its civilizational predecessors injected a high degree of socialization into that system. In particular, an aristocratic ethos transplanted from domestic society was mapped over of the measure of hierarchical order that came out of these material disparities. This transformed the states of roughly the 'first-rank' from simple power centers into Great Powers united by a shared identity as civilizational leaders. Animated by a feudal intellectual inheritance, this identity found its natural expression in the language of rights and duties. Over time, its precise character would change by both incremental development and systemic shock, but the tendency to express this combination of systemic impulses, material positions,

⁴⁹ For European division, see Daniel H. Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 142-50.

⁵⁰ "Military systems and weapons are in turn the expression of political and social systems." Raymond Aron, "What Is a Theory of International Relations?" *Journal of International Affairs* 21, no. 2 (1967): 198.

⁵¹ For norms as "systemic-level variables in both origin and effects," see Martha Finnemore, "Constructing Norms of Humanitarian Intervention" in *The Culture of National Security*, 154.

and social understandings in terms of rights and responsibilities would persist as the foundation of a semi-archival international order.

Functionally, a Great Power identity simultaneously empowers and restrains its claimants. It empowers by introducing a small measure of very loose hierarchy into what is otherwise a formal anarchy, facilitating the provision of system-ordering ‘club goods’ and creating a type of cartel.⁵² The creation of a meaningful Great Power ‘us’ creates an ‘other’ (weaker states, states outside the system’s geographic or social reach, and nonstate actors)—which the cartel may dominate and exploit to mutually-acceptable ends. Because the identity is formulated in terms of special right- and duty-claims, the individual Powers can reap myriad benefits. Rights—normative assertions of the appropriateness of certain international behaviors—expand an individual Power’s range of moral and material possibilities.⁵³ Responsibilities—normative expectations of international behavior that are internalized within a Power’s policymaking—can pay dividends in prestige and provide an essential element of legitimation to a Power’s international policies.⁵⁴ Identifying as a Great Power thus hath its privileges, and most

⁵² Clark, *The Hierarchy of States*, 2-3. Oded Lowenheim, *Predators and Parasites: Persistent Agents of Transnational Harm and Great Power Authority* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 6-7.

⁵³ This abbreviated definition aggregates a number of multital legal relations, designated in Holcomb’s compendium of jural correlatives as ‘right-duty, privilege-no-right, power-liability, and immunity-disability’. Here, ‘right’ is used primarily in the second, third, and fourth senses owing to the fact that the participation of the Great Powers in the direction of world affairs has traditionally (pre-1914) a matter of custom and informal agreement rather than international-legal prescription. However, the rights of the complex have been diversely expressed over their long history, and have reflected each of these facets at various points. Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld, *Fundamental Legal Conceptions Applied in Judicial Reasoning and Other Legal Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), 65, 96-8.

⁵⁴ Power actually *requires* normalization by reference to moral concepts if it is to be reliably actualized. “The dominant person is not just anyone with power. The power relation must be stabilized for the dominant person to command. He must feel assured of his prerogative or of his capacity to exact obedience.” Raymond Aron, “*Macht, Power, Puissance: Democratic Prose or Demoniac Poetry?*” in *Politics and History*, trans. and ed. Miriam Bernheim Conant (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009), 102. Even actions born of purely power-political motivations must be legitimated by new or existing norms. This does not mean that norms are simply derivative of power, but rather that power needs the support of norms to efficiently function. Aron, “What Is a Theory of International Relations?” 191-2.

states strong enough to claim this social status have been eager to do so.⁵⁵ However, a shared Great Power identity can also encourage systemic restraint by linking the authority it discloses to certain behavioral conditions. This is evident in its normalization and normative-bounding of the very international predation that it often facilitates. Eschewing formal-legal prohibitions, a right- and responsibility-complex instead relies on largely informal norms to govern what kind of predation is acceptable. These norms are operationalized through “codes of crisis management” and “concert principles” that shape how international conflict is understood.⁵⁶ Importantly, they are self-reinforcing because they de-legitimize deviancy and encourage mimetic behavior as a sign of social status. A Power that is seen as reaching too far beyond the limits of the socially-acceptable is likely to face a coalition angered by its departure from a common limitation, while new behaviors that do not trespass excessively are likely to be mimicked by the whole.⁵⁷ The result is a cage of norms related to Great Power predation. It is sometimes a relatively permissive and sometimes a relatively prohibitive cage within which the Powers agree to be placed, but it is a cage nonetheless. Its outright breaking often results in armed conflict.

Though this mimesis favors continuity, normative understandings can change as attitudes evolve. This can happen slowly, as did historically with the gradual expansion

⁵⁵ Of course, there are exceptions to this rule—“states possessing the elements of great power refus[ing] to play the role their power entitles them to play.” As the case studies below demonstrate, recusancy among the most powerful states can be either a sign of individual decline or of a more serious disruption in principles at the systemic level. See Robert W. Tucker, *The Purposes of American Power: An Essay on National Security* (New York: Praeger, 1981), 186-7.

⁵⁶ Clark, *The Hierarchy of States*, 38.

⁵⁷ An example of the former was the Crimean War, in which Russian attempts to claim rights within the Ottoman Empire that surpassed international custom were met with an almost-universal coalition against it. An example of the latter was the Great Power practice of claiming rights to territorial concessions within China.

of norms against territorial conquest and state death.⁵⁸ However, it can also happen more rapidly, as when the Berlin Conference of 1884 formalized the group application of paternalist norms within Africa with the explicit expectation of managing a sudden wave of European expansion to forestall conflict.⁵⁹ At whatever speed, consensus-based norms-change alters the dimensions of the Great Power normative cage from within, allowing for change in how predation may be acceptably conducted while preserving the continuity of a collective Great Power identity. However, the identity can also be altered suddenly and disruptively by the rise or fall of specific Great Powers, especially after a general war.

In sum, a coherent Great Power identity subscribed to by the actors with the greatest potential for disruption encourages a convergence in normative practices and attitudes by incentivizing mimetic behavior. This reduces the instability naturally resulting from an international realm of diverse aims and means, encouraging the Powers to think and act within similar, mutually-comprehensible moral contexts. It lends substance to the notion of a separate class of states, and makes possible an academic discourse about ‘Great Powers’ that is cogent and reflective of real-world practice.

d. Great Power Role

A shared identity can attach social meaning to an individual Power’s understanding of its own material capacity. This identity can guide what statespeople understand to be within the realm of the materially and morally possible, but it is not sufficient in itself to the formulation of international policy. Too much motive force

⁵⁸ Mikulas Fabry, *Recognizing States: International Society and the Establishment of New States Since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23-48; Fazal, 44-52, 169-228

⁵⁹ For paternalist norms, see Jackson, 412-16.

resides within the state in the minds of its statespeople, the character of its geography and technology, and the sentiment of its populace.⁶⁰ Thus, while a shared Great Power identity can promote semi-archy by regularizing and socializing state behavior, it cannot perfectly harmonize international life.⁶¹ Within a right- and responsibility-complex, however, a partial corrective to these disruptive human tendencies is found in the affirmation of different *Great Power roles* through which the rights, duties, and routinization provided by the systemic Great Power identity are reconciled with the material and ideological idiosyncrasies of the individual units.

This is the point at which the geopolitical and social circumstances peculiar to the individual key actors—their unique ‘national interests’ as they are locally understood—make themselves known.⁶² Each of the Powers must adapt the general Great Power identity (and the opportunities and restraints it discloses) to the material and moral circumstances unique to them. Though the identity does not itself provide direct, purposive motivation for state policy, its adaptation to serve diverse unit-level interests calls forth a host of Great Power roles. Through them, actual state policy is reconciled with the international socialization entailed with Great Power status as states claim unique rights and duties.⁶³

A well-known example is Britain’s role as the holder of the European balance. Prior to its assumption of Great Power status, British foreign policy was inconsistent and confined to mostly local theaters and issues related to its commerce. After it shook off

⁶⁰ Waltz famously critiqued this inductive understanding in the works of Rosecrance, Aron, and Hoffmann; see Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 41-9

⁶¹ Jackson, 201-3.

⁶² For the objectives of states, see Aron, *Paix et guerre*, 81-102.

⁶³ Tucker, *The Purposes of American Power*, 186-7; Mayall, 12.

French clientage, however, it absorbed the Great Power identity of the day focused around the accumulation of prestige, the persistent conduct of limited warfare, and the participation in a fluid, pan-European system of alliances. When combined with a number of national ingredients (the geographic isolation of the British Isles; the economic necessity of access to European and overseas markets; a cultural exceptionalism of aloofness), this cemented a role for Britain as a global economic and military force responsible for the maintenance and management of the alliance blocs. Once isolationist and mercenary, Britain became the hinge of European diplomacy and broadly construed its interests. In this capacity, it would fight both with and against almost all the Powers in major conflicts before the century was out, adjusting its policies to serve that role as the need arose. It internalized its balancing role to such an extent that it was even prepared to backstab allies and forgo the fruits of its victories out of fear of excessively weakening its enemies. However, its own conviction about the necessity of its role led it to claim extraordinary rights over the other Powers; this overreach contributed to the formation of a European balance against the balancer and ultimately doomed its first overseas empire.

Importantly, these mechanisms do not aim at the resolution of anarchy by transforming it into hierarchy. Rather, they harness the very instincts that drive interstate competition, guiding and channeling them into right- and duty-based roles that loosely order the system into a semi-archy. The very act of rendering these instincts in the language of rights and duties is important because it situates parochial objectives within a systemic moral framework; when Great Powers understand themselves as socialized entities sharing deep conceptual commonalities, they formulate their policies in terms, manners, and methods comprehensible to others of their class. As seen in the British case,

this can impel a powerful state to engage its fellows in ‘thicker’ and more meaningful social relationships that mitigate the temptations of anarchical society toward predation and isolationism. Yet, at the same time, the promotion of a Great Power role based on exceptional rights and duties can enhance and magnify those tendencies, producing overreach and blowback. As the same British case demonstrates, any role can be overplayed, leading to hubris and precisely the sort of hegemonic behavior its role as balancer was supposed to counteract.

Thus, the collective Great Power identity constitutes the specific character of the international system—its normative limits and behavioral best practices—while the parochial Great Power role is that constitutive principle made manifest within the individual international actors. The interplay between identity and role has historically been crucial, structuring international politics based on how Great Powers are alike, how they are different, and how their understandings of their mutual position lead to conflict and cooperation.

e. Conclusion: The consequences of rights and responsibilities

Great Power right- and responsibility-complexes bridge the moral and material elements of international politics, unite systemic pressures and unit-level imperatives, and shape state behavior through a semi-archival ordering of international politics. They abate the uncertainty that necessarily arises from a sphere characterized by moral and material diversity by routinizing how states act and think, particularly among the actors possessing the greatest potential for harm by yoking them together within a socially-equal cartel at the expense of lesser states. However, they also accommodate and empower the

individual ambitions of each Power through the affirmation of special rights and responsibilities within unique Great Power roles.

Russia's rise to Great Power status in the 18th century is illustrative. More than any other state to that point, the theory, history, and international practice of Russia were all formed within the context of rights and duties. The 'westernizing' Tsars sought not just territory but the implementation of a particular theory of Russia-in-the-world derived from the theories operative among the Powers. Integrating itself into their society through its language and methods, Russia became the most skilled manipulator of treaty guarantees and spheres-of-influence—special Great Power practices—in European history, actualizing a Russian Great Power role focused on its right to securitized hinterlands and its duty of cultural protection and advancement. Embedded within this mission was (and is) a moral coloring endowing Russia with a politico-theological distinctiveness that not only sets it apart from the other Powers but actually gives it special rights and corresponding obligations to foster its unique purposes in the wider world—a specifically Russian Great Power role.⁶⁴ At different times, the fulfillment of this role led it to foster peace and stability, overreach and war. But in both cases, the act of being a Great Power deeply influenced not only Russia's abstract, moral self-understanding but also its concrete, material international policies.

In this way, a right- and responsibility-complex both shapes and reflects how the most powerful states understand international politics. It links them together, keeping them socially and politically engaged with one another in a way that transcends the

⁶⁴ For the past, see R. W. Seton-Watson, *A History of the Roumanians: From Roman Times to the Completion of Unity* (Archon Books, 1963), 262. For the present, Alain Besançon, "La Pensée Poutine," *Commentaire* 149 (2015): 15-22.

simple calculations of a purely dispassionate international system. This carries us from the theoretical generality of ‘fear-and-interest-within-anarchy’ to the empirical operation of an international system in which norms, standards, and customs are vital elements—and in which major actors pursue not just national interests springing directly from the imperative of survival but express identities that couple such interests to a sense of social position and normative purpose.

III. The Many Facets of Great Power Rights and Responsibilities

The subsequent five chapters show how this complex arose and changed over time by examining it at different conceptual levels: as a moral and political theory, as a sociological pattern of behaviors aimed at reconciling contentious tendencies within international society, as a causal historical force in the making of international change, and as an ongoing praxeological puzzle reflecting a significant realignment of right and responsibility principles.⁶⁵ Chapter Two operates primarily at the level of theory and concept; it is the story of how a particular understanding of rights and responsibilities became essential to European politics, colored the operation of the proto-international system of the Middle Ages, and sewed consequences for international politics that persist to this day. Beginning with the role of rights and duties in the mediation of feudal anarchy, it traces how these principles were elaborated upward to organize the nascent international sphere and how they survived the upheavals that accompanied the breakdown of the order that gave them birth. Chapter Three is sociological in nature, showing how, as medieval politics gave way to the politics of the post-Westphalia international system, stability was achieved by situating new power-political realities

⁶⁵ These conceptual levels are taken from Aron, *Paix et Guerre entre les nations*.

within the social framework of a rights and duties. This mediated competition by preserving older, creedal notions of right and duty and embedding them at the heart of a dense collection of societal relationships among monarchical Great Powers.

The next two chapters are historical in focus and apply the macro-level insights of the previous two to specific case studies. Chapter Four examines the relationship between forces of change in the 19th century and the right- and responsibility-complex. It begins by explaining how the Vienna settlement concretized the Great Power identity into an ideal-typical social status and transformed the various Great Power roles into authoritative mechanisms for global governance. It then looks at particular historical examples of how rising Powers shaped and were shaped by the norms and practices of this European Concert, demonstrating in the process both the potential of and the limits to the ability of rights and duties to guide the consequences of the material distribution. Case studies of the French Second Republic, Imperial Germany, and Japan and the United States will all illustrate how identities and roles based on rights and duties helped to shape how change was understood. Chapter Five continues this narrative by explaining how this mediation of change in the mid-19th century contributed to the origins of the First World War. As material space (land) and moral space (arenas for the authoritative expression of national roles) grew increasingly scarce in a world of more and more Powers, the flexibility of the former complex was gradually lost. Instead, the complex ossified as Powers became locked in dyadic role relationships, competitive and cooperative, that sapped it of its former fluidity and vitality. At the same time, the transfer of sovereignty from princes to peoples nationalized Great Power roles amidst the tremendous social changes taking place in the domestic sphere; increasingly, these roles

expressed explicitly national self-understandings that were less easily modified than in previous centuries because they were linked to the ontological security of the state itself. Thus, overlapping relationships based on right- and duty-claims, formerly a source of contingent international governance based on mutual recognition and restraint, underwent a significant change as a combination of creeping international hierarchy and geopolitical crowding-out reshaped Great Power politics; ultimately, they became subject to increasingly zero-sum competition as Powers resorted to brinkmanship to maintain the behavioral routines and cognitive patterns of their roles. When a crisis brought to a head the ontological security incompatibility of two antagonistic Powers, a cascade of dilemmas spread outward, creating the First World War.

The final chapter explains the consequences of this upheaval: the shattering of the traditional right- and responsibility-complex and the redistribution of its components into new, consciously-created programs of international order. It provides a series of short reflections on the development of 'civilian powers', the contemporary problem of international managerial burden-sharing, and the continued resort among some states to interventionist policies expressing a sense of role but lacking the peer legitimation and normative bounding of a Great Power society. Together, these developments illustrate how, even though the traditional complex of Great Power rights and responsibilities has been significantly reconfigured in contemporary international politics, its constituent components nevertheless remain drawn to one another logically and emotionally. Their interrelationship continues to drive world events in the 21st century.

CHAPTER TWO

FEUDAL RIGHTS AND DUTIES IN THE EARLY INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Unlike scientific estimations, which are corrected after each experiment according to rigorous rules of calculation, the anticipations of the habitus, practical hypotheses based on past experience, give disproportionate weight to early experiences.

-Pierre Bourdieu

In few periods of human history did individuals cling as tenaciously and believe as devoutly in their liberties and privileges as in the Middle Ages. The feudal world encouraged them to think of the world as a set of obligations and prerogatives.

- Kenneth Pennington

The rights and wrongs of the political life of modern Europe are rooted in the medieval history of Europe. . . . Medieval wars are, as a rule, wars of rights. . . . [It was] not that men loved law, but that they did so far respect it as to wish to seem to have it always on their side. They did not attack their neighbors . . . [without alleging] a legal claim or a legal grievance; and in the majority of cases really legal claims and really legal grievances. Of course, if law had been supreme, the wrong-doer would have yielded at once. . . . But I make no such claim for those ages; I only say that, when a man coveted his neighbours' vineyard, he went as it were to law for it, and did not simply take it by force.

- William Stubbs⁶⁶

I. Norms, Inheritance, and *Habitus*

A common criticism of norms-based IR studies is that they fail to specify where their norms really come from.⁶⁷ This chapter aims to do just that, illustrating how a theory most commonly associated with domestic society—relationships built on rights and duties—came to form the foundation of Great Power politics. It does so by looking outside the traditional territory of academic IR and into the society of premodern Europe. Though there is a significant literature on the formation and influence of norms, IR scholars have been hesitant to extend their gazes temporally beyond the Westphalian ‘birthdate’ of international politics and conceptually beyond the comforting familiarities

⁶⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 54; Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4; William Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures on the Study of Medieval and Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), 238, 248.

⁶⁷ Kowert and Legro, 469; Wendt, 134.

of the nation-state.⁶⁸ This aversion to the past has even been called “one of the defining peculiarities of the discipline.”⁶⁹ Older elements are often treated as either beyond the pale of the ‘international’ or as mere processes of decay and “erosion” which gradually wore away the marble of the premodern to reveal the statue of the modern.⁷⁰ The feudal period in particular, roughly seven centuries of European history, has been marked out as “a different basis for international order” compared to modernity’s international system.⁷¹ This it was, but the recognition of this difference has too often led scholars to hermetically seal off feudal from modern, foreclosing the possibility of meaningful continuity from the former to the latter. The result is analogous to sealing off the study of childhood development from that of adolescence, hiding the longer arc of causal forces that recur and endure.

This chapter is founded on a traditional understanding of how anarchy and violence condition the systems and societies humans build. It traces the origin of a premodern theory through its transmission to and reproduction within modernity, positing that the medieval world faced a number of security problems at both the micro- and macro-social levels that were ultimately mediated through the conditioning effects of a *habitus* of rights and duties—a self-reproducing complex of regulative and purposive

⁶⁸ When IR scholars do cross this boundary, it is usually to find evidence corroborating contemporary theoretic paradigms rather than to approach feudal thought and practice on its own terms. For a much-criticized neorealist example, see Markus Fischer, “Feudal Europe, 800-1300: Communal Discourse and Conflictual Practices,” *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 427-466; for a less problematic example situating the medieval past in contemporary theoretic terms, see Michael C. Horowitz, “Long Time Going: Religion and the Duration of Crusading,” *International Security* 34, no. 2 (2009): 162-193.

⁶⁹ Benno Teschke, “Debating ‘The Myth of 1648’: State Formation, the Interstate System and the Emergence of Capitalism in Europe — A Rejoinder,” *International Politics* 46, no. 5 (2006): 531.

⁷⁰ Osiander, 316.

⁷¹ Robert Gilpin, “The Global Political System,” in *Order and Violence*, 113.

understandings conditioning how actors understand their field.⁷² This *habitus* would outlast the feudal society that gave it birth, ultimately forming the constitutive principle of a right- and responsibility-based international system.⁷³ An examination of its development and enduring influence demonstrates how ideas can function as exogenous givens, persisting even in the face of bracing shifts in material context as an inherited *habitus* conditions how actors respond to the world around them.⁷⁴ This is a story of how “norms, identities, and ideas become inscribed into the practices of actors such that they enable and constrain future patterns of action.”⁷⁵ Specifically, rights and duties became inscribed into power, enabling the future development of a Great Power right and responsibility complex.

The structure of this chapter is designed to reveal these distant origins, uncovering how the character of modern international politics derives from feudal theories about

⁷² Bourdieu’s definition of *habitus* captures how the spontaneous operation of undetected or misapprehended norms can influence actors without the coercion of a central authority: “The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.” (Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 53.) Most IR scholarship on norms, in contrast, emphasizes conscious institutional direction, ultimately making inherited norms a secondary effect—a creation or “allocation”—of an institution such as a Great Power directorate or an international congress; for an example, see Bukovansky, et al., 16. Cf. the attention some English School authors give to ‘civility’ and ‘civilization’ as mediating complexes of norms, but the under-theorization of these terms makes them only roughly analogous to *habitus*. See Andrew Linklater, “Norbert Elias, the ‘Civilizing Process’ and the Sociology of International Relations,” *International Politics* 41, no. 1 (2004): 5-8.

⁷³ A *habitus*-based understanding inverts the dichotomy between international change linked primarily to new and disruptive ideas (a constructivist claim) and international fixity or cyclicity linked to power-political eternalists (a realist claim) by emphasizing the persistence of certain norms entailed with material capacity. See Daniel Nexon, “Zeitgeist? Neo-idealism and International Political Change,” *Review of International Political Economy* 12, no.4 (2005): 700-701.

⁷⁴ For a discussion of culture as an external, environmental feature of state identity, see Ronald J. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security” in *The Culture of National Security*, 33-75.

⁷⁵ Nexon, “Zeitgeist?” 701.

interpersonal capacity, extralegal violence, and societal purpose. Section II explains how the need to mediate medieval anarchy brought forth a *semi-archival distribution of authority* underwritten by a societal emphasis on contractual rights and duties. Through a significant social innovation—the relationship of vassalage—medieval society came to embrace a system of overlapping and interlocking norms, a superstructure of rights and duties normatively bounding the conduct of proto-international high politics. Section III traces the three stages of the *decline of this feudal semi-archy and the translation of its principles into a modern international system*. In the first stage of this process, nascent states agglomerated unto themselves the material capacity and the social capacity (rights and duties) that medieval constitutionalism had kept dispersed all around them. Though a significant derogation from past practice, the deep connection that had been formed among these elements within the medieval *habitus* ensured that they would be inherited and re-deposited into the emerging notions of territorial state and unitary monarchy. The second stage emerged as the possibilities disclosed by this reorganization of feudal principles led to normative upheaval and internecine conflict at the international level. This period of violent experimentation produced two contrasting models of material-moral development. One embraced a post-medieval understanding of international power based on the prescriptive, amoral balancing of forces; the other attempted to renew and renovate its feudal inheritance. The third and final stage resulted from the failure of either of these models to control the proliferating international violence of the 16th and 17th centuries. In response to this challenge, the international system that took shape ultimately united the regulative feudal norms of rights and duties with the prescriptive norm of rational international balance; together, these norms constituted a special class of

actor, the Great Power.⁷⁶ The society of these Great Powers would embrace the fundamental disunity of post-feudal power politics by making the balancing of forces its characteristic activity, but would bound this activity by rendering the particulars of this ‘new’ international realm—territory, legitimacy, and diplomacy—as rights and duties.

II. The Feudal Production of Order, 800-1400

The understandings of right, duty, and capacity undergirding the modern right- and responsibility-complex originated in early medieval anarchy. Charlemagne’s successors had proved unequal to the task of upholding royal and imperial authority; as their domains and titles fractured, their ability to control violence faltered. Following their collapse—“the swift and tragic defeat of a little group of men who, despite many archaisms and miscalculations but with the best of intentions, had tried to preserve some of the values of an ordered and civilized life”—European politics came to resemble the ideal-typical ‘thick’ international anarchy posited by IR scholars.⁷⁷ For a time, there was an absence of authoritative, hierarchical, and institutionalized checks on violence, and authorities claiming monopolies on the legitimate use of force were weak or nonexistent. Absent effective macro-level governance, warlordism proliferated as those who held the tools of violence—horses, weapons, and fortified places—preyed upon the weak:

The richest man in a particular area . . . [was] as a direct result the most powerful militarily, with the largest retinue; he is at once army leader and ruler. The relationship between one estate owner and another in that society was analogous to that between states today, the acquisition of new

⁷⁶ For regulative, prescriptive, and constitutive norms, see Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 891-2.

⁷⁷ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L. A. Manyon (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1968), 160. In his critique of anarchy’s historical usage in IR, Donnelly defines a ‘thick’ or maximal definition of anarchy as the “absence of rule and rules” rather than a ‘thin’ definition implying merely the “absence of a ruler.” To be clear, the anarchy posited here is much nearer the ‘thick’ variety than the ‘thin’, though it would grow much ‘thinner’ over time thanks to the mediation provided by feudal norms. Jack Donnelly, “The Discourse of Anarchy in IR,” *International Theory* 7, no. 3 (2015): 410-12.

land by one neighbor represented a direct or indirect threat to the others. . . . Every small estate is under its own rule, a 'state' in itself, every small knight its independent lord and master. . . . There is not much to constrain members of this ruling stratum to control their affects in any continuous way.⁷⁸

Out of this this anarchy “came a long and troubled period which was at the same time a period of gestation” as Medieval Europe successfully turned to an order-producing system of interlocking and overlapping rights and duties largely outside the institutions of formal government.⁷⁹ Known today as feudalism, it brought a measure of unity to a politically-fragmented medieval world by loosely ordering medieval politics into a semi-archy characterized by intersecting relationships of rights and duties at every level of social life. Within it, material capacity was institutionally linked to norms giving it meaning and purpose. Over time, this would lastingly embed purposive understandings within the concepts that would later define the ‘international’: organized violence, territory, and diplomacy. This section explains how this happened, starting with its microsocial beginnings in interpersonal vassalage, an institution that mediated the uncertainty of medieval anarchy. It then traces vassalage’s elaboration upward into progressively wider social spheres to satisfy cognate security needs and, ultimately, its apotheosis as the defining *habitus* of medieval high politics. Three case studies elucidate this process: the role of rights and duties in accommodating violent change within a durable framework of norms, their converse role in retarding and mediating political change through veto points built into the structure of feudal political life, and their

⁷⁸ Norbert Elias, *Power & Civility*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 43, 89. See also Teschke’s definition of the medieval ‘state’ as “a political community of lords with the right to armed resistance” engaged in “zero-sum” territorial competition along multiple interior and exterior “axes” of “social property relations.” Benno Teschke, “Geopolitical Relations in the European Middle Ages: History and Theory,” *International Organization* 52, no. 2 (1998), 326.

⁷⁹ Bloch, 160.

implantation into the principle of dynasticism. Though the order that feudalism raised up against the dangers of anarchical violence contained inbuilt disintegrative forces, the rights and duties of the feudal *habitus* would bridge the divide between old and new and impart an enduring medieval inheritance to international politics.

a. The Feudal Theory of Order

The rampant insecurity and proliferating violence of the early medieval anarchy began to abate around the 8th century with the growth of vassalage, a particularly sophisticated form of interpersonal patronage. This was a complex arrangement of norms—some explicit and some implicit—endowing each party with certain rights and duties in relation to the other.⁸⁰ Importantly, earlier forms of interpersonal patronage were akin to slavery, but vassalage was a formal contractual relationship, usually verbal,⁸¹ entered into by two free men *both of whom would remain free*.⁸² Over time, the expansion of this interpersonal, extra-governmental relationship of extraordinary nuance ensured that obligations and duties came to dominate medieval thinking about law and politics.⁸³

Relationships of personal and corporate rights—a high political *habitus* linking material capacity and its sources with shared understandings of its purposes and praxis—filled the gap left by the struggling state, moderating violence while deeply intermixing

⁸⁰ Teschke, “Geopolitical Relations in the European Middle Ages,” 346.

⁸¹ The verbal quality was important. “Never was the bond felt to be stronger than in the period when its effects were thus stated in the vaguest and, consequently, the most comprehensive fashion.” Bloch, 219.

⁸² F. L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, trans. Philip Grierson, 1st English ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1952), 7.

⁸³ This is an abbreviated summary of a contested scholarship. Approaches arguing for a more evolutionary, incremental narrative exist alongside those favoring an understanding based on the engineered transformation of society. Here, feudalism is framed as a purposive and instrumental innovation representing a discontinuity with past practice but that was carried out only semi-consciously by a myriad of rational actors. See Elias, 30-2.

public and private.⁸⁴ This process began when the high nobility connected vassalage to military capacity by settling on their vassals the benefice (lands and wealth) necessary to maintain heavy cavalry. *Capacity*—the ability to act—thus initially derived from the assumption of a *role*—a social understanding normatively-grounding action. Soon, however, the institutions of vassalage and benefice became so closely linked that the preexisting capacity to fulfill a role was seen as a prerequisite for the duties and rights bound up with the assumption of that role.⁸⁵ Capacity now *determined* role, and vassalage became a mark of authority pairing a locus of material capacity with the prerogatives and duties granted by a role.⁸⁶ The most powerful vassals became feudal lords—
 institutionalized centers of prerogative and responsibility in a Europe of weak and weakening states.⁸⁷ Their rise signaled the devolution of violence authority from states finding these tasks “beyond [their] physical and psychic resources.”⁸⁸ The resulting “penetration of all social relations” by vassalage redefined social life according to the *habitus*.⁸⁹ Norms—not states—now governed Europe.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ On the elision of public and private, see Ertman, 45; Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 16; Carl Stephenson, *Medieval Feudalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1942), 9; Bloch, 152.

⁸⁶ Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 40; see also Ganshof, 39-40 and Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 77-8; Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 51-3.

⁸⁷ For vassalage’s growth, see Ganshof, 45; Reynolds 200-3; Bloch, 190-9. For subinfeudation, see Reynolds, 100; Ertman, 45. Bloch, 147, 161, 175. For the decentralization of violence, see Reynolds, 19, 21, 48-50.

⁸⁸ Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 14; see also Dewald, 46.

⁸⁹ Dewald, 158. Vassalage’s cultural impact cannot be overstated. Even the middle classes and peasantry adopted feudal norms of obligation through manorial enserfment, villein tenements, and serjeanty, each enumerating specific arrangements of rights earned through the performance of duties. See Bloch, 167, 231-3.

⁹⁰ “To talk about the Middle Ages is to imply the existence of certain social institutions, such as feudalism and personalistic rather than impersonal or state politics; it is to refer to traditional rather than legal rational legitimacy. . . . Indeed, it is difficult to think about this period without having reference to

b. The High Political Habitus of Feudalism

Importantly, these norms smoothed the edges and shaped the contours of the anarchy around medieval society without truly vanquishing it—a situation mirrored in contemporary international society.⁹¹ Feudal norms instead *regulated* violence by constraining it within a theory of rights and obligations. Three particular areas illustrate how the *habitus* reconstructed high politics on the foundation of norms of right and duty: territorial predation, veto points to violence, and dynastic diplomacy. Its reconfiguration of these topics would prove lasting, their legacy essential to the growth of a Great Power system centuries later.

i. Territory as a locus of rights and duties

Medieval attempts to normalize and bound violent predation embedded rights and duties within the concept of territory.⁹² Lacking strong states and good maps, geographically-uncertain medieval ‘realms’ understood territory by reference to the normative bonds it disclosed.⁹³ This “social definition” of territoriality would endure, shaping how states would later construct the meaning of territory, predation, and sovereignty.⁹⁴

these widely recognized features that are constituted by customary norms and common understandings.” Rodney Bruce Hall and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, “Medieval Tales: Neorealist ‘Science’ and the Abuse of History,” *International Organization* 47, no. 3 (1993): 487; see also Gerald Fitzmaurice, “The Future of Public International Law and of the International Legal System in the Circumstances of Today,” *International Relations* (London) 5, no. 3 (1976): 751-2.

⁹¹ See the discussion of private warfare in Frank Merry Stenton, *William the Conqueror and the Rule of the Normans* (London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1925), 36.

⁹² For the social construction of territoriality, see Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 30-1. For case studies of the effect of indeterminate geographic imaginaries on international affairs, see Paul W. Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

⁹³ Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 34-42.

⁹⁴ Sack, 88.

To satisfy the need for a regulative principle to cope with territorial change and legitimately ground (and delimit) the control of lands, Europeans made the fact of possession conceptually dependent upon norms of right and duty. Nomadic raiders from the periphery illustrate how the power-political reality of control was reconfigured and distorted by feudal norms. As long as their goal was simple plunder, such raiders had no need of norms. When they began the transition from plunder to permanent conquest, however, they were quick to adopt the language and attitudes of feudal rights and duties. For example, the grand prince of a highly-successful group of Magyar raiders successfully legitimized not only his rule but the existence of a coherent Hungarian realm by converting to Christianity and reformulating the fact of territorial possession in the normative language of vassal rights and duties. King (later, St.) Stephen received his new crown from the pope himself, but the right to his realm was qualified by his duty as a papal vassal.⁹⁵ A similar case is the invasion of Normandy by the Norse adventurer Rollo. Charles III of West Francia managed to halt the Viking advance but a standoff ensued; the alignment of the fact of possession with the conceptual essentials of feudal territory—rights and duties—offered a solution. Charles acknowledged Rollo’s right to the profits of his military conquest in exchange for the latter paying formal homage and accepting the obligation to defend the northern frontier. Rollo, in turn, acknowledged the King’s right to maintain Normandy as a *de iure* part of the realm while conferring upon the King an obligation to respect its independent political existence. Though riddled with what the

⁹⁵ As a later pontiff would chide one of Stephen’s successors, “the Kingdom of Hungary was...offered and devoutly surrendered to St. Peter by King Stephen as the full property of the Holy Roman Church under its complete jurisdiction and control.” Pope Gregory VII to King Solomon of Hungary, 28 Oct 1074, *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII: Selected Letters from the Registrum*, trans. Ephraim Emerton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 48.

contemporary eye might see as contradictions and dodges, this nuanced arrangement lasted for centuries. Understanding territory as a moral relationship allowed the (re)definition of social and political geographies, thus facilitating the normative incorporation of territorial change.⁹⁶

Rollo's descendant William is another case of territorial conquest reified by norms. His invasion of England was made possible by a right-claim to inherit the throne confirmed by the pope.⁹⁷ The fact that others contested this right led to war between the claimants. After his successful conquest, William reconfigured his kingdom, using rights and obligations to revolutionize the English systems of property and territory and making them mechanisms for the production of loyalty, the collecting of taxes, and the marshalling of violence capacity.⁹⁸ Witnessing the efficacy of feudal norms in integrating particularistic territories, other rulers mimicked William's use of the feudal *habitus* to bind spaces and peoples.⁹⁹ From the *ius ad bello* to domestic governance *ante bellum*, territorial politics under feudalism was unthinkable without reference to rights and duties.

ii. Feudal norms as veto points to violence

Though rights and duties could facilitate medieval conquest, they also bounded it through veto points to the marshaling and deployment of violence. Thus, the same feudal concepts that empowered William to claim and integrate territory embedded the international affairs of the later Angevin empire within a restrictive web of norms. This web pervaded every aspect of medieval politico-strategic undertakings, adding layers of uncertainty that hindered efficient empire building. In William's case, he first had to

⁹⁶ Reynolds, 136-7.

⁹⁷ Stenton, 144-57, 161.

⁹⁸ Bloch, 170.

⁹⁹ Elias, 120.

assert a right to a territory by normatively linking his cause with a relevant source of conceptual legitimacy (the pope, past custom or feudal contract, or inheritance).¹⁰⁰

William went out of his way to secure two of these elements, yet the legitimacy of his invasion was still doubted. Second, his immediate vassals had to be summoned according to their obligations to form an army; since William's vassals thought his plan dubious, he had to supplement his forces with hordes of mercenaries anticipating rich rewards. Finally, having successfully asserted his right (through a rare quick victory in pitched battle), the conqueror had to shore up his vulnerable legitimacy in the wake of the changes he had wrought. William faced rebellion in Normandy, multiple rebellions in England, invasion from Scotland, and a truculent heir who, in his assertion of his right to succeed as duke, came close to killing William in battle. All these episodes had to be resolved before William could be secure in the rightful possession of his royal-ducal realm—a possession still held, of course, in the shadow of the obligations he owed his French suzerain.

At each of these points, the feudal *habitus* intruded itself into the very nature of political violence, directing its flow and conditioning its meaning. Since derogations from this regime of internal and external legitimacy would threaten both the conceptual basis of feudal authority and the practical basis of feudal power projection, it proved to be self-reproducing. Once established as a matter of custom, the successful conqueror *had* to work within this regulative system of norms precisely because the stakes, the tools, and the behaviors of conquest became unthinkable outside of the solution to the problem of

¹⁰⁰ For feudal norms and the social construction of instrumentality, see Tal Dingott Alkopher, "The Social (And Religious) Meanings That Constitute War: The Crusades as Realpolitik vs. Socialpolitik," *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005): 730-3.

collective action provided by shared, purposive understandings about rights and duties.¹⁰¹ This need to have recourse to right in order to conquer mediated medieval anarchy, driving high-political competition in another, less violent direction: the accumulation of titles, lands, and prerogatives by means of inheritance.

iii. Plurality and dynasticism: Interconnection and incoherence

Instead of outright conquest, the characteristic feudal empire was built through the accumulation of regulative, norms-based relationships such as rights and duties linked to land and people. Two key mechanisms, plurality and dynastic marriage, translated this accumulation into the production of great dynastic holdings, but they also contained the seed of feudalism's decay: the replication of overlapping relationships of incompatible rights and duties to the point that medieval high politics was threatened with incoherence.

Plurality, a state in which a vassal held obligations to multiple lords, was a vital determinant of medieval foreign affairs. A Janus-faced phenomenon, it confused medieval politics while simultaneously interconnecting Europe in new and potentially transformative ways. As vassals began to enter into multiple, often incompatible relationships of rights and duties, the meaning of these relationships became confused. These multiple, incompatible oaths promoted dissonance and illogic, threatening the coherence of the entire system of feudal obligations governing European politics. Though these contradictions were recognized at the time, little was done to abate the practice; the chance to harvest greater power and wealth from the possession of more titles and lands tended to trump the dictates of conscience.¹⁰² Plurality first appeared in the church, where a weak suzerain authority (the pope) found that his formal vassals (the bishops) were

¹⁰¹ Cf. a related materialist conclusion in Teschke, "Debating 'The Myth of 1648'," 535-6.

¹⁰² Ganshof, 92-3.

receiving lands, titles, and even extra bishoprics from the hands of temporal lords.¹⁰³ This plurality spread into high politics writ large as vassals grew stronger. Famously, the Normans utilized plural oaths to entice Flanders away from its French suzerain; motivated by the promise of wealth, the Flemings paid homage to England-Normandy right alongside their preexisting homage to France, somehow allying themselves with *both* parties in the event of a war between them.¹⁰⁴ This situation made the reliable calculation of forces impossible, retarding the growth of a modern international system.¹⁰⁵

At the same time, plurality also made possible a proliferation of cosmopolitan international relationships; the hyper-dynasticization of medieval high politics through the marriage of dynastic heiresses greatly intensified the accumulation of titles and territories.¹⁰⁶ Originally, the inheritance of a feudal relationship was open only to males because the rights and duties such relationships carried were intimately concerned with the ability to fulfill a given, gendered role. At first, the problem of female titleholders was circumvented by the feudal norm by which the lord or overlord arranged her marriage;

¹⁰³ The pope's anger at the plurality of Sitgand, simultaneously Bishop of Winchester and Archbishop of Canterbury, played an important part in convincing him to back the Norman invasion of England. See Stenton, 55-6. For the church's battle to reclaim its rights by fighting ecclesiastical enfeudation (a preview of the crown's clawing back of its own prerogatives), see Sack, 115-20.

¹⁰⁴ At times, the obligation the Flemish counts assumed was not only a levy of men, but actually a formal duty to restrain their duty of service to France to the bare minimum permitted by their vassalage. Bloch, 174; Ganshof, 79. For the continuance of this practice through the later Angevin period, see Gaston G. Dept, *Les Influences anglaise et française dans le Comté de Flandre au Début de XIII^{me} Siècle* (Gent: Van Rysselberghe & Rombaut, 1928), 29-30, 54-113 and Eljas Oksanen, *Flanders and the Anglo-Norman World, 1066-1216* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 54-106, esp. 72-9. For the moderating effect of strategic uncertainty on violence, see Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25, 232-3.

¹⁰⁵ For IR's discomfort with medieval strategy and decision-making, see Richard Little, "The English School and World History," in *International Society and its Critics*, ed. Alex J. Bellamy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 56-9.

¹⁰⁶ 'Diplomacy' is to be taken at this early stage in its general sense as the management of "relations of separateness," a theoretic understanding of diplomatic mediation found in Paul Sharp, *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

the heiress's new husband would fulfill the duties owed to her suzerain.¹⁰⁷ Over time, however, weakened monarchs proved unable to keep their more powerful heiresses from marrying other powerful feudal figures from outside the kingdom. The heir resulting from such a marriage would inherit the property of both parents, alienating territory as lands passed from the ownership of the heiress and into the hands of the newly-amalgamated feudal entity.¹⁰⁸

Dynasticism grew rapidly into the *grundnorm* of the feudal *habitus*. The capacity it created for change in the 'international' elements of medieval life—particularly in the possession of the rights and duties of territories—drastically altered the focus of political competition. In essence, “high politics [became] dynastic politics, that is, the structure of political life at its highest level was the same as that of family life.”¹⁰⁹ Problematically, dynastic marriages also promoted unsustainable situations of plurality since the heir would inherit two separate arrangements of rights and duties to two (or more) separate masters. This only led to further political competition by multiplying the available justifications for armed conflict. Together, these two problems—the practical alienation of territory and the conceptual alienation of rights and duties—spurred the development of a post-feudal international politics.

The Angevin experience illustrates these complex consequences. After the Norman Conquest, the creation of an Anglo-Norman-Breton baronial elite with properties

¹⁰⁷ Bloch, 200-1, 227; John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, “Lady and Lord: Eleanor of Aquitaine” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lady and Lord*, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xiv.

¹⁰⁸ The heiress bore both a right and a duty to preserve her domains intact for her heir. The husband of an heiress was consequently forbidden from alienating her property by grant of benefice or by treaty without her consent, since this would be to deprive a future heir of his patrimony. See Marie Hivergneaux, “Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine, 1137-1189” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 56-7.

¹⁰⁹ Bartlett, 6.

and titles spread across northern Europe inaugurated an unprecedented level of interpenetration: “a touch on the web [of property and power] in Norfolk or Paris could set it vibrating on the borders of Brittany.”¹¹⁰ The marriage of William’s grandson (the future Henry II) to Duchess Eleanor of Aquitaine (Queen Eleanor of France before her annulment) expanded this interconnected web even wider, stretching it from Scotland to the Mediterranean. The many titles that Henry bore illustrate how territory was understood as a system of overlapping prerogatives and obligations reproduced and sustained through marriage and dynastic inheritance.¹¹¹ These plural relationships were reflected even by the non-dynastic pillars of the normative order, the Papacy and the Empire. When Pope Adrian IV took the unusual step of declaring Ireland a papal fief and granting the rights and duties of its benefice to Henry, no one quite knew what this meant since the island was not under Angevin control.¹¹² Henry’s relationship with the Empire was similarly complicated. Even though his lands were far from traditional imperial borders, he took the extraordinary step of formally submitting his realm to jurisdiction of the Emperor: “We place our kingdom and everything subject to our rule anywhere at your

¹¹⁰ Bartlett, 13-19 (quote is at 19); case studies are presented from 102-120.

¹¹¹ Henry was the King of England; the semi-independent Duke of Aquitaine (through his wife, a French vassal both *de iure* and *de facto*); the independent Duke of Normandy (still a *de iure* French vassal); the independent Count of Nantes (though he acted as *de facto* Duke of Brittany and appointed the archbishop of Dol); the vassal lord of much of Flanders (a distinction he shared with the kings of France); and the sometime suzerain of the kings of Scotland. A full record of the Angevin holdings is in Bartlett, 22-3. For Scotland, see Bartlett, 83-4, 90-1. For Flanders, see Oksanen, 68-9. This focus on the “fuller exploitation of feudal rights” was mirrored in Henry’s domestic rule. He re-centered royal patronage around prerogatives over wardship and dynastic marriage, even commissioning a Domesday-like accounting of all the widows and wards that were under in the king’s giving (*de donacione regis*). John Walmsley, ed. *Widows, Heirs, and Heiresses in the Late Twelfth Century: The Rotuli de Dominabus et Pueris et Puellis* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), xi.

¹¹² The exact means by which Henry held title to Ireland have long been debated; whether or not the Bull *Laudabiliter* was authentic, the Angevin title to Ireland was certainly justified by reference to its grant. For English submission to the papacy under Henry II and John, see Bartlett, 410.

disposal and entrust it to your power so that all things shall be arranged at your nod and that the will of your command (*imperium*) shall be done in everything.”¹¹³

These were the fruits of plurality, confusing and unstainable even to contemporaries.¹¹⁴ Though feudalism’s high political *habitus* originally ordered political life by rendering its subjects and objects in normative terms, as early as the late 11th century but universally by the 13th century the proliferation of malleable rights and duties was proving corrosive. Lines of authority—formerly delineated by regulative, contractual, and non-replicable relationships of right and duty—were multiplying, overlapping, and blurring into incoherence. The course of European high politics itself was being diverted down a new and consequential path as norms uncoupled from the material reality they were supposed to reference. In this highly interpenetrated system—socially ‘deeper’ with far ‘thicker’ relationships than semi-archy but with a far smaller measure of hierarchical coherence—rights became too easy to assert or invent and obligations became too easy to avoid or nullify. Authority claims proliferated, outpacing the capacity of their claimants to enforce them and undermining the capacity-based hierarchy essential needed to control violence. The central logic underpinning the game was being lost.

c. Conclusion: The Habitus of Feudal High Politics

As the formal-legal authority of the medieval state diminished, the growth of a universal complex of rights and duties created an ordering semi-archy that devolved over time into incoherence. For a long while, it embedded and legitimized violence within a

¹¹³ K. Leyser, “Frederick Barbarossa, Henry II and the Hand of St James,” *The English Historical Review* 90, no. 356 (1975): 481-506.

¹¹⁴ Bloch, 211-14; Stenton, 387.

normative framework based on a multiplicity of free and independent authorities that nonetheless bore rights, duties, and roles in relation to one another, eventually taking a system of dynastic diplomacy that paired titles, territories, and relationships to the principle of inheritance as its natural carrier. Though it eventually became conceptually-confused and disordered, this complex society bequeathed two important legacies to the later Great Power right- and responsibility complex. First, feudal understandings of interpersonal right and obligation penetrated upward into the realm of high politics. Essential to the normative bounding of violence, their sequential inheritance created a self-reproducing *habitus* conditioning how medieval realms understood the practice and theory of high politics. Second, this *habitus* normalized the exercise of proto-international capacity by chaining it to notions of mutual rights, sacred obligations, and honor. These norms moderated how violence was employed, but did so by maintaining the nominal freedom of all the participants rather than by putting in place a formal command relationship based on a signal ruling authority. However, these concepts sat uneasily with the notional existence of the territorial state which, though battered and enfeebled, nonetheless persisted as a hierarchical alternative to the complexity of feudalism—and a constant reminder of its more incoherent elements.

III. The Reconfiguration of Rights and Responsibilities, 1200-1650

Feudalism was an attempt to produce order in the absence of a strong state by matching capacity to role and embedding it within a structure of norms. But the system became untenable when disintegrative tendencies undermined the fulfillment of key roles cognizant of certain obligations. Reforming efforts were unable to restore the sincerity of the earlier forms and overcome incompatible vows. Consequently, overlapping feudal

relationships of rights and duties gradually assumed “the appearance of an empty archaism.”¹¹⁵

Two successive historical movements reveal the transition from a feudal society of rights and duties to an international system of rights and duties. The first began in the 13th century when the monarchical state began to recover, laboring for the subsequent two centuries to reclaim that which it had lost to its temporal and spiritual vassals. Feudal centers of authority were morally and physically disarmed, while international politics was rationalized through the elimination of inconvenient norms such as the plurality of oaths and offices, alien property holdings, and the tolerance of small principalities. The result was a royal office with the duties necessary to assert its writ internally and the rights required for the exercise of its power externally—a feudal *habitus* reconfigured for powerful monarchs. The second movement resulted directly from the first. Since the reinvigoration of monarchy required its appropriation of the old order’s diffuse authority, there was a corresponding price to be paid in legitimacy: a normative upheaval. Over the period stretching from Machiavelli to Westphalia, the place of rights and duties in the new field of international affairs was gradually sorted out by its implantation within the sovereign political system of the 17th century. This arrangement combined the former feudal *habitus* of rights and duties with an international system based on the rational balancing of states. Its principles would constitute a special class of dynastic international actor known as the Great Power, the systemic bearer of rights and duties.

¹¹⁵ See Bloch’s discussion of ‘super-homage’ as an attempt to correct the vices of plurality. Bloch, 214-18 (quote is at 217).

a. *The agglomeration of rights, and duties to the crown, 1200-1450*

Kingship had suffered greatly since the time of Charlemagne. Unable to control proliferating violence in the 9th and 10th centuries, the mechanism society innovated to do so—vassalage—proved erosive of the rights and duties that had once made royal authority authoritative. Internally, the crown had lost its ability to prevent the inheritance of fiefs and had devolved away much of its authority.¹¹⁶ Externally, its claim to be the final arbiter of conquest and diplomacy bore little relationship to reality.¹¹⁷ Even the duty of holy war, once the sacred obligation of kings, had been consciously reframed by the church as the duty of all knights.¹¹⁸ The constitution of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the supreme achievement of feudal external policy, was a product of its times: baronial power threatened to overawe its weak monarchy.¹¹⁹

Yet, kingship—and the apparition of the unitary state that hung about it—avoided a killing blow. Conceptually, it retained the ability to assert wide claims of right and duty over major domestic services and institutions, particularly over coinage and roads as well as its anointed royal duty to protect the Church.¹²⁰ At the same time, a few warriors managed to make kingdoms out of conquests, utilizing feudal concepts to integrate and hold their new territory; this placed the king atop a pyramid that, though built upon widely-diffused rights and duties, still displayed signs of verticalized hierarchy.¹²¹ Even in areas of weaker kingship, the crown could find consolation in the fact that the feudal

¹¹⁶ Even the administration of justice and the appointment of bishops had been devolved to, respectively, the barons and the papacy. Bartlett, 60-1.

¹¹⁷ Bloch, 201, 220-1; Strayer, 21-2.

¹¹⁸ Alkopher, 723.

¹¹⁹ Stephenson, 95-6.

¹²⁰ Bartlett, 122-3.

¹²¹ For example, the barons' revolt that produced *Magna Carta* was a reaction against the verticalizing tendencies of the Norman monarchs and aimed at preserving a wide distribution of feudal rights and duties. Ganshof, 151.

system removed from its shoulders “the strain of trying to preserve unviable political units.”¹²² By passing that burden onto others, the crown found new influence—particularly by playing its vassals off of one another. Thus, the feudal system itself tended to reserve a grain of relevance for the kingly role.¹²³ “Slight as was this recognition, however, it was its survival...that prevented the complete fragmentation” of Europe’s major kingdoms.¹²⁴ As the dysfunctional feudal system began to gradually break down, kings finally reemerged as the primary drivers of high politics.¹²⁵ They did so first by quietly but effectively exercising the rights and duties reserved to them even under feudal decentralization, particularly those relating to justice and the mediation of disputes.¹²⁶ With domestic command restored, their campaign culminated in the reclamation of their military capacity and moral authority, tools they would use to sweep away much of the old normative order and cement their place as the rightful regulators of realms: wielders of the high political *habitus* and plenary holders of rights and duties.

i. Feudal monarchy: Domestic rights and duties

Feudalism’s disintegrative tendencies endowed the crown with opportunities to reassert its intrinsic rights and duties. In two particular areas—inheritance rights and the provision of royal justice—monarchs began to reconfigure the moral and material distributions of the feudal *habitus* to their benefit, gathering up normative morsels left unclaimed amidst the widely-dispersed authority of medieval society. First, the need to

¹²² Strayer, 18.

¹²³ Ibid., 30. Similar tendencies can be observed in Germany; see Daniel H. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 81.

¹²⁴ Ganshof, 56.

¹²⁵ An analysis of this process is found in “Chapter Two: On the Sociogenesis of the State” in Elias.

¹²⁶ For the key role of norms in preserving the materially-impooverished crown and its importance for IR theory, see Hall and Kratochwil, 486.

preserve intact estates capable of meaningful military service gave kings an impetus to intervene in affairs it had formally devolved. Given its original use as a method of military recruitment, vassalage had always been intimately concerned with the relationship between the capacity of the vassal's remit and the services he was obligated to provide from it. However, providing for an ever-expanding stable of heirs had required subinfeudation (vassals creating their own vassals) on a wide scale—in most cases, the acquisition of new territory by conquest or marriage simply couldn't keep up.¹²⁷ Whole fiefs began to be carved up and distributed piecemeal, an alienation of property winnowing the resources produced for the lords higher up the chain. This diminution of capacity threatened the integrity of the entire system of rights and duties, giving both the barons and the king a vested interest in curtailing the wider distribution of feudal relationships. Since the introduction of a remedy (primogeniture succession) was a thorny matter of custom and politics, the barons often needed royal backing against their own family. Here, kings were in a position of great advantage. Sometimes, this meant promoting primogeniture to maintain the integrity of a crucial political and strategic unit; sometimes, it meant permitting the disintegration of a rival's domains.¹²⁸

The crown also took advantage of its taxation and judicial patronage powers.¹²⁹ Even in its weakened state, kingship held an institutional advantage in that its unique writ in these matters notionally extended from one end of the realm to other. As Joseph Strayer noted, "rulers gradually began to see that justice was something more than a

¹²⁷ This problem was especially severe in cases where prominent families practiced "lax matrimonial relations" which led to a profusion of "oblique kinsmen" claiming rights to part of the patrimony. Stenton, 69; see also Elias, 58.

¹²⁸ Bloch, 202-10.

¹²⁹ For comparative case studies in taxation, justice, and the crown at the end of this process, see H. G. Koenigsberger and George L. Mosse, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Longmans, 1968), 226-37.

source of revenue. It was a way of asserting the authority and increasing the power of the king or greater lords.”¹³⁰ Kings began to encourage the hearing of cases in their courts, and particularly benefited from hearing appeals of baronial rulings—after all, “a lord whose decisions could be overruled was a lord who had lost much of his authority.”¹³¹ Of course, this was no easy process in a society of devolved privileges, so kings looked for ways to undermine baronial authority surreptitiously. In England and elsewhere, circuit courts and juries were important innovations that connected the crown with the people, bypassing the barons and sheriffs entirely.¹³² In France, there was less judicial innovation and more judicial appropriation. Though “Norman courts continued to enforce Norman law,” the officials executing the law were increasingly royal rather than provincial in allegiance.¹³³ Similarly, French kings offered patronage and favorable tax arrangements to urban notables, bypassing the traditional landed elite to gain a new constituency. These developments, tentative at first, foreshadowed the transition from a *noblesse d'épée* possessing a plenum of prerogatives to a *noblesse de robe* exercising prerogatives in the name of their rightful possessor: the royal state.¹³⁴

ii. *Feudal monarchy: High political rights and duties*

With the crown once again in possession of a multitude of rights and duties oriented inward toward its subjects, it set about gathering up those oriented outward: within two centuries, the rights and duties that the feudal *habitus* had lodged within the concepts of territory and dynasty would be regathered into the crown. The monarch, the

¹³⁰ Strayer, 29.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

¹³² Ertman, 67.

¹³³ Strayer, 51.

¹³⁴ Spruyt, 99-102; Strayer, 39.

nucleus of the developing nation-state, would now be the plenary bearer of rights and duties, the unitary arbiter of high politics for an entire realm.¹³⁵ This new form of feudal monarchy was a re-visioning of society with greater emphasis on hierarchy and the king's place at the summit of a right- and duty-pyramid.¹³⁶ Feudalism would thus pass into early modernity, its key concepts relocated but not destroyed or discarded.¹³⁷

However, this pyramid would no longer overlap with those of other princes and realms. Two key elements of the old order had to go: the acceptance of foreign-held rights over lands, monasteries, and castles within the realm and the tolerance of minor principalities—often *de iure* vassals who had achieved *de facto* independence over time—bordering the royal demesne.¹³⁸ First came a campaign to assert control over foreign feudal influences. Centuries of oaths, marriages, and donations had created an uneven politico-strategic landscape; castles garrisoned by foreign troops and monasteries sending tribute to foreign princes frustrated royal authority. In England, where Norman and Angevin rule had fostered cosmopolitan connections, numerous religious houses ('alien priories') owed allegiance to their ecclesiastical superiors in France. Their right to operate as such was sanctioned both by custom and by feudal Christianity, but their existence posed an inescapable problem of state: the Church's duty to its spiritual suzerains was in direct conflict with the king's right to levy taxes in his realm. Though early English kings respected the rights of monasteries, centuries of warfare saw the gradual erosion of their position until they were finally dissolved in the 15th century by an

¹³⁵ Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 122.

¹³⁶ Ertman, 53-7. For the role of contract armies in augmenting royal power at the expense of the barons, see Ertman, 62-7.

¹³⁷ This is a key point that IR scholars often miss. We too often assume that the entire substance of feudalism passed away alongside knights, prince-bishops, and crusades. This is to mistake particular expressions of ideas for the ideas themselves.

¹³⁸ Koenigsberger and Mosse, 224-5.

ascendant, conquering monarchy.¹³⁹ As royal power grew, so did royal right and duty; that it grew at the expense of the Church—pitting the nascent concepts of nation and state against it—signaled the gradual territorialization of right and duty within a unitary monarchical state.¹⁴⁰ This represented the transfer of “one’s specific obligations or rights” from “one’s place in [a] matrix of personal ties [to] one’s location in a particular area” and under a particular government.¹⁴¹

The modern notion of the territorial state began to coalesce around the crown as it gathered up these formerly diffuse rights and duties.¹⁴² A second blow to the old external order came as kings rationalized their borders through the absorption of smaller principalities, many of which had fallen away owing to appanage (the granting of estates to younger sons), dynastic alienation, or simple neglect. France is the classic example of this process. Beginning with the Capetians in the 13th century, the French crown was transformed through the reagglomeration of its territories to its direct control. Normandy and the northern English possessions fell to Philip Augustus in the 12th century (a taking legally justified by King John’s failure to appear before Philip, his suzerain, to answer charges of abducting a betrothed noblewoman in his French holdings). Major appanages (including Anjou and Provence) reverted to the crown through death and accession to the

¹³⁹ This was a gradual process mirroring the decay of feudal norms and the empowerment of the monarchy at their expense. Early kings seized the monasteries while at war with France but returned them at war’s end. By Edward III’s reign, however, they were confiscated for a period of 23 years, their estates placed in the service of the royal exchequer, and their monks deported. Richard II adopted a similar line, and the monasteries were finally dissolved permanently, their lands confiscated by the crown, under Henry V. The reverse relationship—the rights to Norman priories being held by English churchmen—was resolved in a similarly violent fashion after the French reconquest of Normandy. John Warburton, *Some Account of the Alien Priors, and of Such Lands As They Are Known to Have Possessed In England and Wales*, vol 1. (London: J. Nichols, 1786), iii-xii.

¹⁴⁰ Koenigsberger and Mosse, 225-6.

¹⁴¹ Spruyt, 35.

¹⁴² On the politicization of geographic boundaries, see Friedrich Kratochwil, “Of Systems, Boundaries, and Territoriality: An Inquiry into the Formation of the State System,” *World Politics* 39, no. 1 (1986): 33-5.

royal office. Champagne and Burgundy, previously independent and contumacious, were inherited. Dauphiné was bought outright.¹⁴³ Similar processes were at work in England, which absorbed Wales after centuries of castle-building along their shared border, and in Castile and Aragon, where conquest and integration were gradually unifying the peninsula. Though mechanisms for these absorptions varied, reference was always made to feudal concepts of right and obligation even in cases where the monarch was acting largely in contravention of the old order (and especially in cases of international significance involving the transfer of strategic or valuable territory).¹⁴⁴ By the mid-15th century, many of the territorial oddities bordering the greater principalities had been gobbled up by a combination of resort to force and reference to right. Thus were born the “composite polities” and “dynastic agglomerations” of the early modern period. The important change from past practice was that king himself now carried the plenum of prerogatives and duties rather than his vassals.¹⁴⁵

By the end of this process around 1550, the royal office had absorbed many of the rights and duties of feudalism that had once helped to define medieval high politics,

¹⁴³ Ramsay Muir, *Putnam's Historical Atlas: Mediaeval and Modern*, 6th ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 7-12, plates 24 and 25; see also Ralph V. Turner, “Eleanor of Aquitaine in the Governments of Her Sons Richard and John,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 89-90 and Bartlett, 26.

¹⁴⁴ For example, after Louis VII's failed marriage with Eleanor of Aquitaine, he made every effort to claim his status as Duke regnant—an essentially *illegitimate* move according to the decentralized feudal norms of the time—by reference to his wife's legitimacy. Even after their divorce, he tried to keep the title on the basis of his guardianship of their daughters and the fact that she, his vassal, had married without his permission. See Hivergneaux, 60-8. Germany is the exception in that monarchical power went through a period of relative decline characterized by imperial grants of principalities to bishops (in an effort to keep restive nobles in line) and reluctant concessions to the growth of the great houses that would later control the empire's semi-independent duchies. In these cases, what centralization there was took place at the level of duchy or archbishopric rather than kingdom or empire. In Italy, the retreat of imperial power by the mid-14th century opened the door to a new phenomenon built on the renovated foundations of the old: civic republicanism, international system, and modern diplomacy would all appear there within the next century. See Muir, 9, 11.

¹⁴⁵ Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 67-8, 82-4, 99.

uniting them into the moral body (*corpus moralis*) of the state.¹⁴⁶ Within these new bodies, the crown was the conceptual font of norms, binding and bound by its rights and duties vis. its lands and subjects.¹⁴⁷ However, there remained the question of how relationships *between* these moral bodies—what we would call international politics—would be normatively grounded now that the interpenetrative rights and duties of the old order had been regathered and vertically reorganized. The original purpose of feudal society—the creation and reproduction of authoritative domestic order in the absence of a strong state—had been superseded as the state recovered its former vitality. The next century would see the feudal *habitus* of a right- and duty-based international politics bend before similar winds—but, despite innovations and challenges, it would not break.

b. Three developmental tracks of international right and duty, 1450-1650

The feudal order of rights and duties had been successfully turned to the service of the monarch, but there would be a corresponding cost to be paid for this upheaval in norms and practices. Over the next two centuries, the resurgence of kingship combined with longstanding tensions in the ideology and practice of the *respublica Christiana* to widen the existing cracks in the medieval constitution. Into these chasms seeped “the new power relations of the nascent modern world” as the norms-based mediation of feudal order broke down.¹⁴⁸ This decay would bring both great insecurity and Great Power, but not before a transitional period in which innovations emerged and developmental dead-ends ran their course. This subsection aims to delineate how two distinct ‘developmental

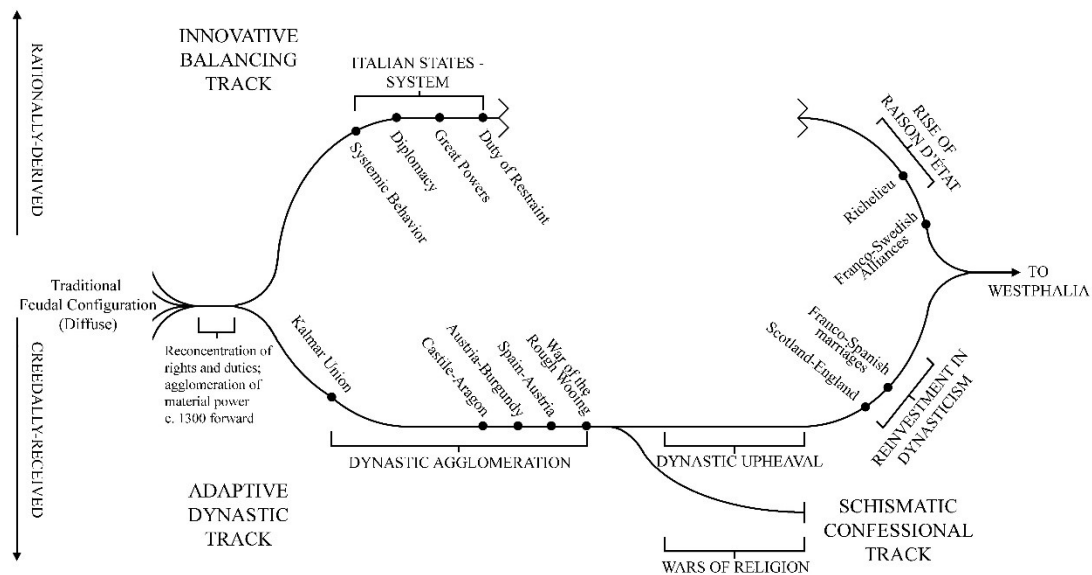
¹⁴⁶ Samuel Pufendorf's *On the Natural State of Men: The 1678 Latin Edition and English Translation*, trans. Michael Seidler (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 83.

¹⁴⁷“It is the nature of men to be as much bound by the benefits that they confer as by those they receive.” Machiavelli, 68.

¹⁴⁸ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 9.

tracks' of international rights and duties revealed themselves in the course of early modern European history, how they differed, and how they ultimately came together to establish the basis of the first pan-European international system; it will also touch upon a third that ultimately branched off from these developments, failing to survive the turbulent early modern period (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Three Developmental Tracks of Rights and Duties



i. Three configurations of right and duty

The late medieval period's changing material and social context ensured that violence, once restrained by feudal norms and geographic division, was proliferating as the nation-state began to gestate.¹⁴⁹ With material capacity everywhere more concentrated and norms everywhere uncertain, the configuration of international rights and duties began to resolve itself into three different developmental 'tracks' (mapped in Figure 2.1) emerging from the late medieval norm. The first track was the 15th century

¹⁴⁹ Gilpin, "The Global Political System," 116-18.

Italian states-system; this is termed the *innovative balancing track* because the rights and duties characterizing it were prescriptive innovations rationally-derived from existing behavioral patterns based on a systemic distribution of power. The second track, in contrast, was an attempt to adapt the feudal *habitus* to the material context of early modernity through the construction of dynastic super-states capable of resolving longstanding security problems. This *adaptive dynastic track* took its rights and duties from its medieval creedal inheritance; these were empowered monarchies of the late feudal type that sought to preserve and expand the dynastic basis of international law and politics.¹⁵⁰ A third track, the *schismatic confessional*, was animated by a hyper-creedal realignment of international allegiances in light of the splintering of the universal Church; borders and realms lost much of their immediate significance as rights and duties were radically realigned. This movement admitted little of balance, but much of violence as the legitimacy of the norms that had underpinned feudal order was denied to princes and peoples of differing faiths.

The first two ideal-typical configurations—exemplified by the Italian system and the Habsburg dynastic conglomerate, respectively—each related material capacity to right and duty. The Italians deduced from their own systemic behavior the duty of the actors with the greatest capacity for harm to act with restraint in support of equilibrium, while the Habsburgs tried to adapt traditional feudal understandings to govern a composite realm of astounding material size and conceptual complexity. The third attempted to do away with much of the feudal superstructure of right only to replace it with a new one based not upon rational balance or received tradition but instead upon the

¹⁵⁰ Paula Sutter Fichtner, “Dynastic Marriage in Sixteenth-Century Habsburg Diplomacy and Statecraft: An Interdisciplinary Approach,” *American Historical Review* 81, no 2 (1976): 243.

primacy of cultural struggle. Ultimately, the failure of this third track to unify Europe facilitated the development of a secular balance of power along the lines first seen in Italy but also its tentative unification with the rights and duties of the dynastic *habitus*. This combination would produce the classical international system. Together, the tumultuous development of these three tracks constructed a three-sided edifice supplanting the old order: the state, an international bearer of rights and duties; an international diplomacy of dynasticism, normatively grounding high political competition in patrimonial inheritance and family prestige; and an international system of balance, uniting the whole of Europe into a single community of fate.¹⁵¹

ii. The innovative balancing track: The Italian States-system

As feudalism decayed, power was more concentrated in Europe than it had been in centuries but the norms restraining it were weakening. Italy—urban, populous, and distanced from feudalism by accidents of geography and history—was the first to react to these changes by adopting a remedy in the form a states-system. The same reagglomeration of rights, duties, and lands that was taking place across the Alps had its moment here, but with one important difference: Italy was a geographically-compact, urbanized peninsula characterized by intense economic, political, and cultural interpenetration. If a ‘touch upon the Angevin web’ in Oxford could cause vibrations in Bordeaux, then a mere breath upon the Italian web in Rome could cause an earthquake in Naples. Under such conditions, the five emerging giants of Italy—Venice, Florence, Milan, Rome, and Naples—became understandably interested in one another’s high-political affairs. This engendered conflict, the destructive potential of which had

¹⁵¹ Richard Mackenney, *Sixteenth Century Europe: Expansion and Conflict* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1993), 64.

exponentially increased. By the early 15th century, violence interdependence—“the capacity of actors to do violent harm to one another”—had risen to an intolerable level.¹⁵²

To cope, Italian international politics diverged from the medieval norm and took on the character of an interstate system. Abandoning feudal scruples for a “separate political ethics” and feudalism’s norms-based approach to territoriality for a new understanding of civic space, the Italian states entered into a sustained power-political competition as each maneuvered to advance their strategic and commercial position.¹⁵³ Not for nothing did Machiavelli’s *The Prince* frame itself as a treatise on change, explicitly addressing itself to the “new monarchy” in which the praiseworthy prince “introduce[s] innovations into old customs.”¹⁵⁴ This intensifying churn connected the whole of Italy by means of fluid geopolitical alignments based on calculations of state wealth and military power. Through these calculations, states became sensitive to the each other’s likely reactions, soon balancing their forces through temporary military alliances. Importantly, the peninsula’s compactness allowed its constituent parts to roughly intuit the imperatives built into the operation of the system—to understand how the actions of one member could affect the fortunes of the whole—and to derive secular principles of action replacing the contingent, inherited practices of the *habitus*. As a result, there arose the first balance of power self-consciously recognized among its constituent units.¹⁵⁵ Though it was always shifting and never perfect, it was through this

¹⁵² Violence interdependence is defined at Deudney, *Bounding Power*, 35.

¹⁵³ Jackson, 160; Darshan Vigneswaran, “The Territorial Strategy of the Italian City-State,” *International Relations* 21, no. 4 (2007): 438.

¹⁵⁴ Machiavelli, 35, 58.

¹⁵⁵ A balance of power is defined as “a pattern of relations among states which, through shifting alliances and the use of various diplomatic techniques, tends to limit the ambitions of the main units, to preserve a relative equilibrium among them, and to reduce the amount of violence among them.” Stanley Hoffmann, “International Systems and International Law” in *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 153.

balance that the Italian states began to realize that they were connected to one another in a new and intimate way that required political innovation to manage. With its importance acknowledged, they increasingly directed their policies toward its preservation. As

Garrett Mattingly noted,

In the 1440s there began to form in certain Italian minds a conception of Italy as a system of independent states, coexisting by virtue of an unstable equilibrium which it was the function of statesmanship to preserve. This conception was fostered by the peninsula-wide alliances whose even balance of forces had ended every way of the past twenty years in stalemate. It recommended itself increasingly to statesmen who had accepted a policy of limited objectives, and had more to fear than to hope from a continuance of an all-out struggle. . . . But its first practical expression was in the proposal of Filippo Maria Visconti, in September 1443, for joint action by Florence, Venice, and Milan to end the war between the powerful condottiere, Francesco Sforza, and the pope, such action to be followed by a congress of the major Italian powers for settlement of all outstanding political questions and the exchange of mutual guarantees.¹⁵⁶

Thus crept into Italian thought and practice the first international duty connected to the possession of preeminent capacity: *the notional responsibility to restrain conflict by the preservation of equilibrium*.¹⁵⁷ Since this equilibrium had to be fostered within the context of a formal international anarchy, the responsibility for its preservation had to be distributed amongst its constituent units rather than delegated to a single hierarchical authority. Importantly, the units within the system endowed with the greatest capacity to upset it were particularly obligated to play active roles in its preservation, especially by

¹⁵⁶ Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1988), 71; see also Herbert Butterfield, "The New Diplomacy and Historical Diplomacy" in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, eds. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 183 and Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 78-9.

¹⁵⁷ Writing in the aftermath of this system's collapse, Machiavelli enumerated this duty alongside another: "These potentates [the five Powers] had to have two chief cares: one, that no foreigner should enter Italy by force of arms, the other that none of the existing governments should extend its dominions." *The Prince*, 70.

balancing their forces. Thus, the five great Italian states became the Italian system's Great Powers.¹⁵⁸

The Italian Great Powers are significant because they were the first occurrence of a phenomenon that would reoccur in every subsequent European states-system: the systemic-level actor possessing a prerogative interest across its breadth and bearing a duty to conform its behavior to a systemic standard for the sake of stability. These special actors were recognizable based upon certain shared characteristics that would later define the Great Powers of systems much wider in scope. The first identifying element was raw material capacity. The Italian Great Powers, unlike the ultramontane monarchies, enjoyed the advantages offered by compactness of territory and urbanization. Consequently, they were able to efficiently mobilize their internal resources earlier and more efficiently than their neighbors to the north, forming "city-empires" by conquering neighboring territories.¹⁵⁹ Materially, their ability to mobilize men, money, and resources was far greater than the other states in the system, and in some cases could even match and exceed those of the large monarchies lurking just outside the system's scope.¹⁶⁰

The second element was ideational and institutional: an isomorphic approach to diplomatic innovation as the sinew of the system. The systemic mechanism through which the Italian Great Powers operationalized their equilibrium processes, this new diplomacy of resident ambassadors, organized intelligence-gathering, and fluid, responsive alliances differed significantly from its medieval predecessor. The latter

¹⁵⁸ Craig and George, 13-14.

¹⁵⁹ Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 77.

¹⁶⁰ Venice, the most consistently powerful of the group, was competitive with far larger realms. The *Serenissima* could, at one point, put 40,000 troops in the field and 20,000 at sea simultaneously. It also took in an annual income greater than probably all other European states. William H. McNeill, *Venice: The Hinge of Europe, 1081-1797* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 45, 65, 70-1; Nexon, 89.

emphasized formal relationships of obligation cemented by symbolic practices meant to establish indissoluble relationships (treaties of ‘perpetual peace’ were not uncommon through the mid-16th century) even if the terms of those relationships proved flexible in practice.¹⁶¹ There was no dedicated corps of negotiators and no system of resident ambassadors. In place of this medieval configuration, the Italians substituted permanent diplomatic representation by specialist emissaries charged with facilitating temporary, opportunistic relationships. Indeed, one of the striking features of this new system was the attrition rate of its less powerful members, often victims of internecine conquest.¹⁶² Abandoning medieval fixity lent the system the dynamism it needed to cope with the changing material circumstances of early modernity.

Finally, this new diplomatic path was also the genesis for the articulation of the first modern Great Power right. Medieval diplomacy recognized precedence as an honor accrued by age; the realms meriting the greatest ceremonial consideration were those of the greatest antiquity. However, as Italian diplomatic practices diffused throughout Europe, only the wealthiest states could afford a large diplomatic corps; this practical economic reality translated into diplomatic practice as the title ‘ambassador’ became reserved for the emissaries of only the wealthiest of states. Lesser powers could send ministers, but the chief representatives of the largest, best-funded, and best-connected diplomatic networks were placed ahead of the rest in both practice and in theory.¹⁶³ The

¹⁶¹ Garrett Mattingly, “An Early Nonaggression Pact,” *The Journal of Modern History* 10, no. 1 (1938): 1-30.

¹⁶² Spruyt, 147-9.

¹⁶³ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 26; Derek McKay and H. M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648-1815* (London: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983), 203; Nicolson, 218-19; Michael Palliser, “Diplomacy Today” in *The Expansion of International Society*, eds. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 382; Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 405-6.

right to accredit ambassadors would grow in importance, becoming a peculiar prerogative of Great Powers and occasioning much dispute over the prestige to be gained through this formal ranking.¹⁶⁴

In sum, the discontinuity between the Italian system and the medieval society is evident. The Great Powers of 15th century Italy were the first states to recognize their common identity as the most capable actors in a system of states founded on calculation and the balancing of forces. They were able to understand the fragility of their system, and thus assumed the duties of restraint and vigilance; these two imperatives impelled them to invent modern diplomacy. In the end, it would be their derogation that would destroy the system and reduce its greatest Powers to the level of pawns. When the Papal States and Milan made the grave error of inviting a French invasion of Naples, the peninsula was reduced to a battleground as France's rivals rushed in after it. Importantly, this would be a struggle not so much between 'France' and 'Castile-Aragon' as between Habsburg and Valois—explicitly dynastic, personalized disputes firmly-rooted in medieval norms and practices. Ironically, the first system of rational, modern states was to be succeeded by over a century of decidedly pre-systemic dynastic and religious conflict among feudal monarchies.

This returns the narrative of the right- and responsibility-complex to wider developments in Europe. Italy had taken a far more direct route to a system of Great Powers; rather than rationally-inducing a system of Powers, the transalpine states were exploring the potential disclosed by a marriage of strong monarchies to the dynastic-

¹⁶⁴ The Congress of Vienna devoted substantial attention to the issue. It appeared intractable until the committee simply cut the Gordian knot and adopted alphabetical order as the standard practice. See Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, eds. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1978), 41; McKay and Scott, 203; Nicolson, 218-19.

religious understanding of international rights and duties found in the *habitus*. The creation of unified realms such as Castile-Aragon and Burgundy-Austria hinted at an interesting double-movement in the politics of feudal relationships in Europe: at its nadir in Italy, the feudal understanding of international rights and responsibilities was simultaneously reaching its apogee beyond the Alps.

iii. Dynastic conglomerations and the adaptive dynastic track

With material and social conditions far different from the Italian peninsula, the transalpine kingdoms could not easily abandon their feudal inheritance.¹⁶⁵ Instead, they were utilizing the strengthened position of the crown—flush with the reclaimed prerogatives of the late medieval period—to adapt and augment the high political norms of feudal society. Dynasty was the element chosen to organize this new international politics; beginning in the early 15th century, the marriage alliances inherited from the medieval period were gradually transformed into tools for territorial amalgamation on an astonishing scale. This process of union-by-inheritance endowed early modern rulers with ties of prerogative and duty that stretched across Europe. Five major dynastic conglomerates emerged during or just after the 16th century: the Kalmar Union (Sweden-Norway-Denmark), Castile-Aragon, Austria-Burgundy, and England (including Ireland and Wales)-Scotland. One additional union, the conglomeration of Emperor Charles V, united Castile-Aragon with Austria-Burgundy. All were established according to rights of

¹⁶⁵ Nor, indeed, did they desire to do so. As Mattingly reminds us in his discussion of European idealism and Italian realism, “Machiavelli’s views were very rare among his contemporaries. Most men at the turn of the sixteenth century were still medieval, idealistic, yearning for a world of order and of law.” Mattingly, “An Early Nonaggression Pact,” 4.

succession rather than military conquest; these were empires of right, the application of feudal principles to the nascent international realm.¹⁶⁶

This adaptive dynastic configuration of international rights and duties was based on feudal society's traditions of personal and corporate right, dynastic patrimony, and Holy Church—all norms derived from the *habitus*, *ex ante* considerations of the distribution of material capacity. It extended these principles to the emerging international sphere, not as incidentals to the operation of a rational states-system, but as foundational principles that would shape the objectives of international life. Owing to the feudal provenance of their territorial rights, the great patriarchs of these united kingdoms were “bound to observe the several customs, privileges and structures of each state” in their possession according to feudal custom.¹⁶⁷ Different titles beget different roles just as they did under feudalism, but the size and scope of these entities were unlike anything known in the medieval period. These were mixed regimes, empires of customary feudal right translated imperfectly into the formal-legal forms of early modern sovereignty. Consequently, “reason of dynasty, rather than contemporary notions of reasons of state, drove international-political competition” even as the edifice of the state was gradually raised up to buttress that which it would eventually replace.¹⁶⁸

Importantly, this stands in stark contrast to the rationally-derived, instrumentally-motivated Italian model, as Mattingly noted:

The formation of [these] new power-aggregates...illustrates a characteristic growth-pattern of the European monarchies. In Italy, the city states had devoured their neighbors by the simpler forms of aggression.

¹⁶⁶ Koenigsberger and Mosse, 174-8, 218-19. For the less significant unions of Sweden-Poland and Poland-Lithuania, see 219-224.

¹⁶⁷ M. J. Rodríguez-Salgado, *The Changing Face of Empire: Charles V, Philip II and Habsburg Authority, 1551-1559* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 20.

¹⁶⁸ Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 68; see also Koenigsberger and Mosse, 215-18.

But the legalistic habits and traditional loyalties of five centuries of feudalism were so deeply ingrained in society beyond the Alps that mere conquests were hard to make and harder to keep, and even the greediest kings were eager to discover legal grounds for expansion. In the main, therefore, ruling dynasties laid province to province as the more successful landlords among their subjects laid field to field, by purchase and exchange and foreclosure, but chiefly by marriage and inheritance. Force was employed not to advance a rational interest but to support a legal claim.¹⁶⁹

These legal claims were of clear feudal provenance. As long as they ruled, there could be no modern states-system along the lines observed in Italy—only a continuation of the transnational society of the *respublica Christiana*. Indeed, the balance between social and material imperatives in Europe was even shifting in favor of the former thanks to the geographic strides accomplished by dynastic unionism. Since the principles underpinning such unions transferred ownership and sovereignty according to the dictates of social norms, the formation of composite empires like that of Charles V represented a significant derogation from the traditional stopping power of geographic division. For a brief period in the 16th century law had accomplished a feat of which force had never dreamed: an empire stretching from the Danube to the Rio Grande.

Though this could not last—right could not govern Europe for long without reference to capacity—the importance of these dynastic empires is worth emphasizing. They consciously attempted to carry over the normative core of feudalism and adapt it to function as the organizing principle for a changing world. Each of these unions proposed a solution to some international security problem, be it endemic violence between bordering realms or the need to join forces against a common threat. All were the result of generations of calculated dynastic policy, and none were accomplished through the

¹⁶⁹ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 108.

force of arms. Most would collapse under their own weight, but they would leave a significant political residue: these composite empires would entrench the dynastic principle into the very fabric of modern European diplomacy. At the conclusion of this drama, the *habitus* would be combined with the same systemic tendencies observed in Italy to produce the first modern, pan-European states-system.

iv. Confessional schism

Before this system would be inaugurated, the feudal pinnacle of the dynastic unions would be sundered by a transnational realignment of rights and duties along confessional lines. The schismatic confessional track grew naturally out of the application of the medieval maxim ‘faith must not be kept with heretics’ (*cum haereticis fides non servanda*) to the emerging international sphere.¹⁷⁰ As the Reformation spread across borders, it carried with it the potential for a transnational realignment of rights and duties along confessional lines—even the hope of an “alternate world-system.”¹⁷¹ Though ultimately a dead-end, this track worked two significant changes in the high political *habitus* of feudalism: it shattered the unity of the great conglomerate states and sundered the *grundnorm* of international politics, dynastic rights and duties.

Both changes were visible in the failure of Charles V to maintain an empire based on feudal catholicity and Roman Catholicism when the Reformation shook its core assumptions.¹⁷² His framed his fight to preserve his vast dominion in normative terms, both in his rights and duties as a temporal suzerain to maintain peace and punish

¹⁷⁰ Martin Wight, *International Theory: The Three Traditions*, eds. Gabriele Wight and Brian Porter (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), 240-1.

¹⁷¹ Mackenney, 136.

¹⁷² Over half of the 65 cities over which Charles held direct rights abandoned his faith, while others suppressed the new beliefs with varying degrees of success. Bernd Moeller, “Imperial Cities and the Reformation,” in *Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays*, trans. and eds. H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr. (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1982), 41-2; 104.

aggression as well as his religious obligations as an emperor and a Roman Catholic.¹⁷³ Thirty years of costly war and domestic strife would pass before he accepted the extinction of his duty to police the faith of his subjects and the rights that sprang from it. It was a serious blow not only to the emperor and the Catholic Church—two former pillars of feudal order—but to the empire itself.¹⁷⁴ Charles finally recognized that the dream of universal empire had definitively passed.¹⁷⁵ The routines and cognitive patterns of the rights and duties he had so deeply internalized had been shattered, and he acknowledged this by, in an unprecedented move, abdicating and dividing his empire between his son and his brother.

This sea-change signaled the weakening of dynastic right and religious duty. As the new faith spread, authority was undermined as never before; uprisings and disturbances rocked the great unions during this period as their legitimacy began to falter.¹⁷⁶ Crucially, these conflicts “exacerbated all of the problems inherent in dynastic states” by breaking down the early modern feudal monarchy’s “firewalls”—social barriers that discouraged horizontal cooperation across domains and classes that could undermine traditional relationship patterns.¹⁷⁷ In many cases, religious civil war was the next step on this troubled path. Under such conditions, confession supplanted all other factors as the determinant of political alignments; as religious factions began to look to their foreign co-religionists for assistance, a new developmental path of international rights and duties emerged. This *schismatic confessional* track attempted to replace the

¹⁷³ See Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 1.

¹⁷⁴ “*Cuius regio, eius religio* destroyed the Empire as an entity holy and Roman.” Mackenney, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Rodríguez-Salgado, 3. On traditional imperial pretensions to universal monarchy, see Pennington, 8-18.

¹⁷⁶ Koenigsberg and Mosse, 241-4, 275-304.

¹⁷⁷ Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 129-32, 179-81.

faltering feudal norm of dynastic legitimism with a new international alignment based on the religious renovation of European society. For each major confessional grouping, inter- and transnational organizations and movements emerged, cutting across borders in a way detrimental to the verticalized state.¹⁷⁸

In this new transnational struggle, domestic politics was internationalized with surprising results.¹⁷⁹ France, once Europe's most powerful single crown, was reduced to an arena as French Catholics united with their traditional enemies, the Spanish and the papacy, to stamp out the English-backed Huguenot faction of Protestants. The failure of the Valois line expanded the conflict into a three-way war for the crown among the moderate Catholic king, his Protestant heir presumptive, and the foreign-backed Guise family. England fared no better. Elizabeth I drew a papal bull requiring the faithful to resist her rule "on pain of anathema" and support international efforts to depose her; this was an exhortation cast in the language of transnational duty, requiring ordinary people "to obey an international authority rather than the laws of [their] own state."¹⁸⁰ She returned the favor by backing the efforts of Dutch Protestants against their Spanish overlords.¹⁸¹ Ironically, it was to this same international Catholic apparatus that later English royals turned for succor after Charles I's execution by radical Protestants.

¹⁷⁸ "Here was the greatest crisis that the monarchies of western Europe had yet to face: revolutionary movements with organizations that came to match those of the monarchies and with patterns of loyalty which, at times, were not only more powerful than those the monarchies could call on, but which stretched across national boundaries." Koenigsberg and Mosse, 248.

¹⁷⁹ For a vivid case study detailing the profoundly transnational, cosmopolitan character of European confessional politics during this period, see Garrett Mattingly, *The Armada* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959).

¹⁸⁰ Mattingly, *The Armada*, 59.

¹⁸¹ England governed the United Provinces for a two-year period, and both English and German delegations participated in the governance of the emerging Dutch Church. See Israel, 219-240, 460.

These struggles blurred the lines between internal and external in ways reminiscent of feudalism. But where feudal rights and duties subordinated all (in theory) before a single normative complex that bounded conflict, the primacy of religious right and duty during a period of schism overrode such mediation. Similarly, during this violent confessional reconfiguration, revolutionary belief drove politics rather than concerns of calculations of power or balance.¹⁸² But as the waste and bloodshed of Europe's century of religious conflict drew to a close, the need for order drew the European monarchies down the same path trod by the isolated Italian republics much earlier.¹⁸³ Crucially, they entered into this new era with both a feudal inheritance, the *habitus* of rights and duties embedded in territory and dynasty, as well as the tools and methods of the Italian states-system. The combination of the two would ultimately contribute to a complex of modern Great Power rights and responsibilities.

v. *The precondition of the modern complex: A union of balance and habitus*

All that had come of a century and a half of religious war was material and moral exhaustion. Though it would take another major conflict to reestablish order, the signs of what would come were present as early as 1600. Schismatic confessionalism had lost its vitality, its excesses detrimental to general peace and order. The understanding of right, capacity, and duty found in the feudal *habitus* had been preserved within the dynastic principle, but dynasticism alone could not serve as a supra-national organizing principle. From these realizations came the penetration of international politics writ large by the same systemic consciousness first seen in Italy. The resulting union fused the rights- and

¹⁸² "There was no balance in Europe any more; only a fatal dichotomy to be resolved with violence." Mattingly, *The Armada*, 25.

¹⁸³ Nexon, *The Struggle for Power*, 264.

duties-focus of the feudal *habitus* with the rationally-prescribed and systemic tendencies of a states-system to create a new normative complex. Subsumed within it were regulative norms defining shared understandings about international behavior and prescriptive norms about the need for material balance and the good of the whole; from this would spring a new class of actors, the Great Powers, to serve as centers of authority expressing and reproducing this union of material capacity and moral direction. This final section will illustrate how this process began, tracing the gradual coming-together of the remnants of the high political *habitus* with the innovative practices of balance.

The schismatic confessional alignment of rights and duties had run out of steam by the mid-17th century. Gradually, Europeans abandoned the primacy of religious duty for the self-interest of *raison d'état*. The religious civil war in France that had proved the occasion for so much transnational strife resolved itself along dynastic—not confessional—lines with the accession of Henry IV (a convert to Catholicism who proclaimed Paris “well worth a mass”) and the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes promising tolerance for Huguenots. In Britain, where the execution of Charles I had inaugurated a commonwealth, presbyterian government rapidly devolved into a military dictatorship more concerned with defending its commerce than advancing its creed. By 1652, it had determined that religious affinity with its Dutch neighbors was trumped by the need to protect its shipping from competition, while its strident anti-Catholicism gave way to an alliance with France. As these former hot spots cooled, an important piece of evidence emerged: international politics was becoming less cognizant of denomination. At the same time, dynastic right was increasingly recognized to have been limited and qualified by the events of the previous century. Within Europe, widespread rebellion

against (and the assassination of) legitimate monarchs necessitated a number of practical compromises recognizing *de facto* rather than *de iure* conditions.¹⁸⁴ Spain was forced to acknowledge the independence of Portugal, and its 80-year conflict with the rebel United Provinces ended with their independence. Similarly, the authority of the Empire was further dismembered by the Westphalia settlement, which granted the German princes the right to make alliances with outside powers. Abroad, longstanding Iberian right-claims to the possession of the Americas gave way to large-scale colonization by their competitors. Dynastic rights and legitimacy now counted for less.

Since neither the duties of faith nor the rights of dynasty could alone animate a new, international order, a neutral principle had to be adopted. Into this gap stepped the innovative balancing tendencies first glimpsed in Renaissance Italy. Absent a workable alignment of international rights and duties based solely on faith or tradition, Europe was gradually forced to seek international order in the acceptance of a systemic co-relationship among its constituent parts. Under such conditions, the survival of the state became the highest priority, its chief imperative the understanding and calculation of opposing material forces rather than the promotion of a creed or the assertion of right for right's sake. Yet, this introduction of system came at an opportune moment. Just as Europe sought order, the dynastic and territorial rights and duties of the feudal *habitus* had been weakened just enough to make them a suitable basis for the reconstructed normative complex of a European international system.

Despite over a century of internecine violence, the major states of Europe remained monarchical, dynastic institutions formally organized around normative

¹⁸⁴ By the 1580s, "Europe was now swarming with would-be tyrant killers." Koenigsberg and Mosse, 268.

principles of right and duty.¹⁸⁵ A juncture between balance and *habitus* could offer the best of both worlds: rational imperatives softened and re-visioned in moral terms. Moreover, such a union was necessary. As early modern sovereignty was gradually refined into monarchical absolutism, the crown remained a depository of domestic and international norms. Unlike the rulers of the Italian republics, such individuals could not simply gobble up territory without asserting a right cognizant of the practical bonds—commercial, political, and religious—that tied states together.¹⁸⁶ Since “the balance of power model . . . [could] only be an effective and rational policy within a framework of conventions with normative status,” the new, systemic order had an inbuilt legitimacy problem: such predation would sometimes be necessary if the maintenance of an equilibrium of forces was to be its prime principle.¹⁸⁷ To recover some of the stability and legitimacy that its operation would erode, the material bounding of power found in the new states-system would have to be paired with the moral bounding of violence found in the *habitus*.

Dynastic diplomacy, the primary carrier of the *habitus*, was the logical solution to the new European system’s very old violence problem.¹⁸⁸ As Europe began to rebuild, dynastic diplomacy was a sound starting point for peace. Spain and France, emerging from the late 16th century with battered legitimacy and empty treasuries, signaled the beginning of this trend. Both desired a period of peace, but a great deal of blood and a

¹⁸⁵ Mackenney, 34-6.

¹⁸⁶ For honor, faith, and prestige among early modern monarchs, see Rodríguez-Salgado, 25-33.

¹⁸⁷ Friedrich Kratochwil, “Thrasymachos Revisited: On the Relevance of Norms and the Study of Law for International Relations,” *Journal of International Affairs* 37, no. 2 (1984): 347.

¹⁸⁸ Though it had never really disappeared, its efficacy as a mechanism for signaling restraint and encouraging stability in the preceding decades had been called into doubt by humanists, who had attacked the practice as cruel and ineffective, and by the enmities of schismatic confessional conflict, which had compounded the challenges to a successful match. See Fichtner, 244.

great many backstabs hindered the preservation of a fragile truce. At the pope's suggestion, a solution was found by layering a double dynastic union over an uncertain peace settlement. Thus resulted the joint 'Spanish marriages' of Louis XIII of France to a Spanish princess and of the future Philip IV of Spain to a French princess; this union and the diplomacy that brought it about helped secure relatively peaceful relations between the bitter rivals for two decades. Both profited from the prestige, legitimacy, and peace the match fostered, confirming the utility of dynastic marriage diplomacy as a check on the unhappy enmity characteristic of the religious wars.¹⁸⁹ The utility of dynastic marriages as solutions to post-confessional security problems led to their proliferation, including some matches that would have been impossible a few decades before.¹⁹⁰ Thus, by the time the Peace of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years' War, an institution of dynastic diplomacy was ready to serve as an organizing principle for a new complex of international rights and responsibilities.

Rational balance had been joined to the normative guidance of dynastic *habitus*; all that remained was for the system to stabilize itself by likewise yoking together its chief participants as Great Powers. The full inauguration of this new complex will be addressed in Chapter Three, but the essential conditions for its creation were in place at the end of the Thirty Years War. These Powers would all be dynastic and monarchical;

¹⁸⁹ J. H. Elliott, "The Political Context of the 1612-1615 Franco-Spanish Treaty" in *Dynastic Marriages 1612/1615: A Celebration of the Habsburg and Bourbon Unions*, ed. Margaret M. McGowan (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

¹⁹⁰ Most significantly, England's rulers began to reintegrate their monarchies into continental politics by marrying outside their faith. The future Charles I's married a Bourbon Catholic in 1625. The future Charles II likewise married a Catholic noblewoman from newly-independent Portugal, a diplomatic renewal of England's traditional alliance with Spain's Iberian neighbor. James II, whose second marriage was to a Catholic daughter of the Duke of Modena, was ultimately ousted thanks in part to his wife's successful efforts to convert him; his replacements were the Protestant Princess Mary and her husband, the Dutch Protestant William III, which signaled a permanent shift in English statecraft.

through ties of blood, they would find themselves linked together, giving significant impetus to the promotion of common norms of right and duty that would stabilize international politics. Their characteristic activity would be, as in Italy, to balance and check one another for the good of systemic stability and the mediation of disorder. However, unlike in Italy, the developing Great Power states-system would be predicated upon more than the rational induction of rights and duties from these patterns of systemic behavior. Instead, it would be determined by a socialized club of dynastic states bound together by both material circumstances and cultural norms, particularly those of rights and duties grounded in the concepts of family and territory.¹⁹¹ This patrimonial grounding allowed the human beings involved in foreign affairs to easily ‘buy in’ to the complex of norms and relationships animating this arrangement by linking it with purposive language and concepts familiar from domestic life. The self-understandings of statespeople in the subsequent century would thus be focused on transnational ideas—honor, prestige, duty—that could mediate international competition and give normative coloring to the operation of rational balance. Together, this union of balance and *habitus* facilitated a departure from the excesses of naked force and holy war, securing a measure of continental order and, in comparison with what had come before and would come later, peace.

c. Conclusion

The regulative norms of feudalism took form amidst anarchy and uncontrolled violence, ultimately becoming enshrined as the defining *habitus* of medieval high

¹⁹¹ Cf. Teschke’s conclusion in the realm of political economy: “Against conventional IR assumptions, absolutist sovereignty and therewith the Westphalian states system and its territorial geopolitical logic are thoroughly premodern institutions.” Teschke, “Geopolitical Relations in the European Middle Ages,” 353.

politics. However, the restraint this *habitus* provided by rendering these concepts in normative, right- and duty-terms was gradually lost as reinvigorated states began to reconfigure key moral and material distributions. Challenged by the innovative prescriptive norm of systemic balance and the specter of schismatic confessional realignment, the traditional rights and duties of the *habitus* were placed under great strain. Two centuries of divisive cultural and political conflict required an accommodation between the old and the new in order to control violence and provide order. Ultimately, the incorporation of calculation and balance into a complex of norms correlated to capacity facilitated the rise of a “States-system,” its members “morally united into one community, which was only politically divided.”¹⁹²

¹⁹² A. H. L. Heeren, *A Manual of the History of the Political System of Europe and Its Colonies*, 5th German ed. (London: Bohn, 1846), 7

CHAPTER THREE

RIGHTS AND DUTIES IN INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY, 1648 - 1789

Already for a long time one could regard Christian Europe (except Russia) as a sort of great republic divided into several states . . . all in harmony with each other, all having the same substratum of religion, although divided into various sects; all possessing the same principles of public and political law, unknown in other parts of the world. In obedience to these principles the European nations do not make their prisoners slaves, they respect their enemies' ambassadors, they agree as to the pre-eminence and rights of certain princes, such as the Emperor, kings and other lesser potentates, and, above all, they are as one on the wise policy of maintaining among themselves an equal balance of power.

- Voltaire¹⁹³

The previous chapter explained how a *habitus* linking norms with material capacity developed into a complex of Great Power rights and responsibilities. This chapter examines the operation of the international society that complex anchored. The period between the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution has passed into the IR vernacular as the transparently self-seeking, unabashedly anarchic, and simplistically mechanistic international system *par excellence*.¹⁹⁴ Typified by the settlements at Westphalia and Utrecht, this narrative often understands the 18th century international system as a field of unending material competition punctuated by periodic ordering moments of alignment and realignment.¹⁹⁵ Yet, there was much more to this century's international politics: a system of balance, yes—but one paired with a multidimensional society of “ideas, collective mentalities, and outlooks”¹⁹⁶ organizing international politics into a loose semi-archy. These norms-based relationships were embedded in a shared culture rendering the actions and justifications in terms of rights and duties.

¹⁹³ Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*, trans. Martyn P. Pollack (London: Everyman's Library, 1969), 5.

¹⁹⁴ For Newtonian thinking about international politics in the 18th century, see Torbjørn Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*, 2d ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 121-3.

¹⁹⁵ For an influential account of key 18th century settlements, see Holsti, 25-79.

¹⁹⁶ Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), viii.

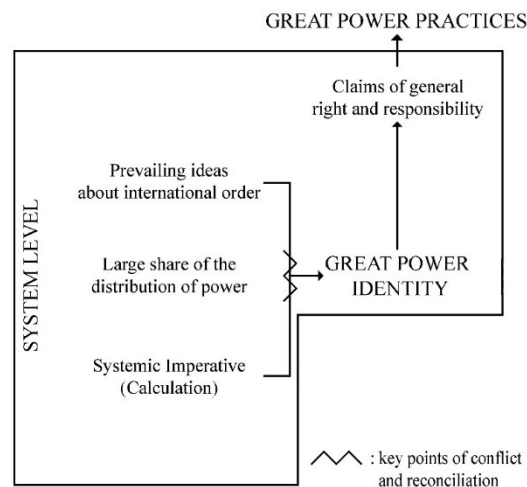
Examining this period through the lens of a complex of Great Power rights and responsibilities will uncover how this culture operated, offering explanations for international outcomes rooted in how normative attitudes about material capacity and social purpose shaped the meaning and consequences of international affairs. Its structure proceeds through each of the inputs identified in Chapter One as involved in the production of Great Power politics, explaining their 18th century context and tracing their casual contributions. Section II explores the shared Great Power *identity*, the bundle of rights and duties attached to superior material capacity and the standard of behavior reflecting the possession of Great Power. Section III identifies the behaviors that sprung from that identity, the general right- and duty-*claims* of all the Powers. Each of these claims was a point of intersection connecting elements of international theory with discrete international practices; they thus form a body of clear, empirical evidence of how a social identity expressed through rights and responsibilities shaped international affairs. Section IV turns to the various Great Power *roles*, discrete behavioral routines by which the possibilities and prohibitions disclosed by the systemic Great Power identity conditioned and were conditioned by unit-level circumstances. These roles were the actualization through policy of what it meant to be one of a select few Great Powers, but also of what it meant to be a specific Great Power rooted in a specific place and culture. Together, these sections will show how rights and duties contributed to international outcomes in ways often overlooked by IR scholarship.

I. Elements of Great Power Identity, 1648-1813

A shared Great Power identity—the consensus understanding of what it means to be a Great Power at a given point in time—derives from a number of ideational and

material components (see Figure 3.1). Three key components were particularly influential in the identity operative in the years following Westphalia. First, there was the given imperative of the calculation of forces within an international system characterized by violent competition. Second, there were a number of states with disproportionate pluralities of the system-wide distribution of material capacity (France and Sweden initially, with others gaining this status as they recovered from the war). Third, there were two important traditions of thinking about international order: an adaptive dynastic one descended from feudal norms as well as an innovative balancing one based on the imperatives of international equilibrium. Their synthesis into a right- and responsibility-complex helped define the international politics of the long 18th century.

Figure 3.1: The Formation of Great Power Identity



Historically, the first states to express a Westphalian Great Power identity were the victorious allies, France and Sweden. They anchored this particular international system with their overlapping spheres of material operation and social involvement.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ This is not to imply that France and Sweden were acting on a particular “systemic vision,” but rather to note that the practical effect of the arrangements they put into place was to ultimately unite European international politics in a new way. For objections of this type, see Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society*, 56.

Their military alliance merged the French zone of involvement in western and southern Europe with the Swedish in the north and east; at the same time, they both claimed guarantees over the central German empire, institutionalizing their involvement there and creating systemic relationships stretching from the Russia to Spain. France and Sweden were thus the first modern Great Powers, both because of their similar material characteristics as well as their joint promotion of a purposive direction within the new international system. The scope of their interests and political action encompassed the system's full territorial extent, and they together formed the key points of interconnection between the system's various parts.¹⁹⁸ Their military power was of the first rank, and they behaved as though a complex of special rights and duties influenced their relationships with the rest of Europe. Subsequent Powers would mimic this Franco-Swedish model.

Table 3.1: Great Powers in Three Eras

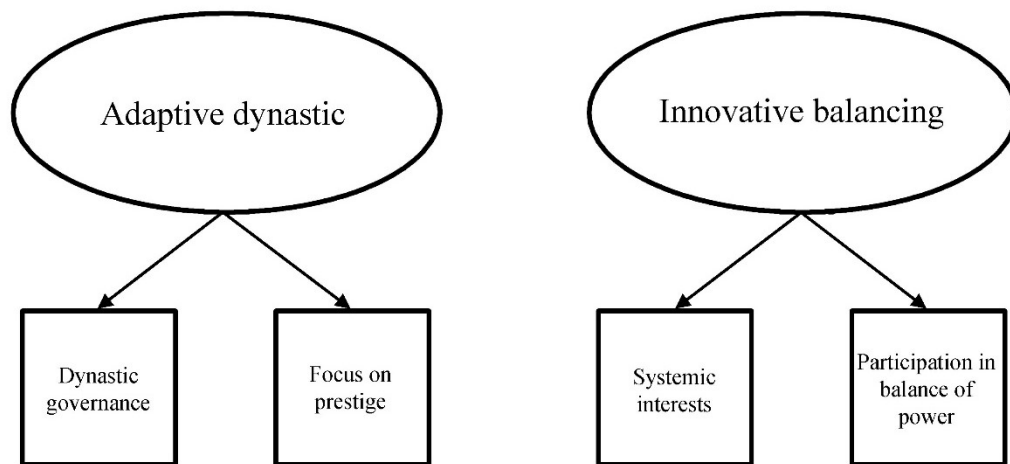
<i>Era</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Great Powers</i>
Introductory Era	1648-1713	France, Sweden, Spain, Austria, Holland (from 1673), Britain (from 1689)
Era of the classical balance	1714-1763	Britain, France, Russia, Prussia (from 1740s), Austria, Spain, Holland (to 1720s)
Era of exhaustion	1764-1789	Britain, France (to 1785), Russia, Prussia, Austria, Spain

However, the full implications of Great Power status would only become apparent as the immediate effects of the war faded and the international system recovered a measure of elasticity. With this in mind, the period under examination can be divided into three eras (see Table 3.1). In each of these eras, four primary elements shaped the shared identity: dynastic governance, the assertion of systemic interests, the pursuit of prestige,

¹⁹⁸ For systemic interconnectedness and Great Power, see Robert Jervis, "Systems Theories and Diplomatic History" in *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, ed. Paul Gordon Lauren (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 9.

and the active participation in the balance of power. Of these shared elements, two—
 dynastic governance and the pursuit of prestige—derived from the adaptive dynastic
 developmental path and two—the assertion of systemic interests and the active
 participation in the balance of power—from the path of innovative balancing (see Figure
 3.3).

Figure 3.2: Genealogy of Great Power Identity Right- and Duty-claims, 1648-1813



Caveats are necessary at this level of abstraction. These elements did not always reflect a co-equal influence over the policies and practices of all the Great Powers. Likewise, the complex of prerogatives and obligations they engendered was not always respected nor universally acknowledged. Yet, the shared Great Power identity provided a common conceptual basis for political action that lent normative substance to material preeminence. It did so through constellations of norms and practices defining the field of action and the behaviors appropriate to it. Like astral bodies, their position shifted with the seasons but ultimately remained an enduring presence throughout the century; the geographic location from which one gazed at them imparted a unique view and the cultural context within which they were understood gave them with differing names and

interpretations. But the measure of socialization they provided to international politics managed to transform an anarchical material competition into a multidimensional arrangement of international order. Within this semi-archy, claims of right and duty were highly influential in conditioning self-understanding, the recognition of others, and, ultimately, behavior. To understand this relational order, attention must be given to how a shared identity fostered bi- and multilateral relationships among the Powers, holding them together while keeping them apart. This section will do so, showing how norms and behaviors common to all the Powers influenced 18th century international politics.

a. Dynastic Governance

Inherited from past practice, the adaptive dynastic elements of the Great Power identity were the foundation of the first Great Power identity. At Westphalia, *dynastic governance* was common to victor and vanquished, the principles of “loyalty, legality, and the inviolability of existing structures” animating a strong preference for legitimism.¹⁹⁹ The importance of dynasty to the meaning of Great Power is especially apparent when looking at Britain and Holland, two cases which show how republicanism negatively correlated with Great Power status.

Commonwealth Britain played only a confused and unsteady role in early post-Westphalian politics. Though it could and did make cause with other states from time to time, its regicide government was unable to play the systemic game with fluidity and confidence owing to its near-pariah status. Though the restoration of the monarchy improved its international standing, lingering internal disputes ensured its kings remained

¹⁹⁹ Osiander, 72.

dependent on the French.²⁰⁰ Only a revolutionary coup would ultimately free Britain to be a Great Power by restoring dynastic confidence. As for the Dutch, they were an object of scorn in most European courts owing to their rejection of the Orange dynasty and consequent aloofness from continental politics.²⁰¹ Rescued from Spanish domination by the intervention of other anti-Habsburg powers, the Netherlands was widely viewed as meriting nothing better than French clientage. After the Provinces had shirked their duties in this regard, Louis XIV declared war, eager to avenge insults to his honor and prestige.²⁰² The words of his herald carried an indictment of international *lèse-majesté*, a case of a small power abrogating its duties to its Great Power patron:

Owing to the ill opinion His Majesty has for some time past entertained of the conduct of the States General,” he couldn’t, “without the diminution of his glory . . . any longer dissemble the indignation wrought in him for their acting so little conformably to the great obligations, which His Majesty and the Kings his predecessors have so bountifully heaped upon them.”²⁰³

This amounted to an expression of royal disgust with “a republic of Calvinist ‘cheese and herring merchants’ . . . claiming the right to act as a great power because of their commercial success.”²⁰⁴ Only after an *annus horribilis* of major defeats did the United

²⁰⁰ Charles II and many of his ministers received French subsidies (like many other middle-rank states), and James II’s Catholicism encouraged him to sustain France’s largesse in the face of domestic unrest. Stéphanie Jettot, “Ideologies of interests in English foreign policy during the reign of Charles II,” in *Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe, 1650-1750*, eds. David Onnekink and Gijs Rommelse (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 145-6. McKay and Scott, 26; Louis André, *Louis XIV et L’Europe* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1950), 43-4.

²⁰¹ The rejection of the hereditary stadtholderate—pro-French, land-focused, and interventionist—was a reversal of the proto-Great Power ambitions seen in the Thirty Years’ War. See Israel, 702-7.

²⁰² Carl J. Ekberg, *The Failure of Louis XIV’s Dutch War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 13, 186n1.

²⁰³ Quoted in *War, Diplomacy, and Imperialism*, Geoffrey Symcox, ed. (New York: Walker and Company, 1973), 114.

²⁰⁴ McKay and Scott, 24. Louis considered the United Provinces “*une ingrate république, qui s’arrogeait le droit de servir d’arbitre aux potentats*” by virtue of their global commerce; C. Fallet, *Louis XIV et La Hollande* (Rouen: Megard, 1870), 100.

Provinces recant and restore the hereditary stadtholderate to William of Orange.²⁰⁵ From this point forward, William's energetic coalition-building and dynastic politics would frustrate the triumphant French, raise the United Provinces to the undeniable rank of Great Power, contract a major dynastic marriage and use it to obtain the crown of England, and establish himself as the embodied holder of the European balance of power at the center of its dynastic-diplomatic web.²⁰⁶

Thus, by both institutional inheritance and the rational requirements of international diplomacy, the Great Power right- and responsibility-complex of this period relied upon dynastic governance to buttress and reproduce its characteristic norms. Only monarchies or mixed, aristocratic republics capable of playing the international dynastic game could claim Great Power status at this point. It is no coincidence that Holland's withdrawal from an active Great Power role in the mid-18th century was attended by a reduction in dynasty's role in its foreign and domestic policy. Likewise, Britain's long road from theocratic republic to Hanoverian empire was marked by progressively-increasing efforts to solidify its dynastic legitimacy at home and abroad.²⁰⁷ Similar movements took place among the major newcomers of this period, Russia and Prussia; once militarily established, both sought to signal their social fitness by contracting prominent Great Power marriages uniting upstart dynasties to well-established families.

²⁰⁵ Contrastingly, the De Witt brothers, his republican predecessors whose explicit rejection of dynasticism had guided the state for two decades, were deposed, murdered, and—in a vivid repudiation of their disengaged foreign policy—publicly roasted and eaten by an orderly crowd. For the De Witt's rejection of an international politics based on dynasticism, see Israel 738. For their violent overthrow in this context and William's elevation, see Israel, 803-17.

²⁰⁶ Israel, 818-24.

²⁰⁷ For the many dynastic problems confronting the 18th century British monarchy, see the essays collected in *The Hanoverian Succession: Dynastic Politics and Monarchical Culture*, eds. Andreas Gestric and Michael Schaich (Farnham, Ashgate: 2005).

b. Focus on Prestige

The Great Power identity also centered on the pursuit and maintenance of *prestige*, the esteem in which its honor, power, and culture were held by its fellow Powers. Prestige is a topic that IR literature has had difficulty situating—this despite (or perhaps because of) the frequency with which it has been historically cited as a motivator of state behavior. There has been a tendency, especially but not exclusively among realists, to see prestige as a secondary function of power. Hans J. Morgenthau understood “the policy of prestige”—the social, reputational reflection of power—as inseparable from power itself.²⁰⁸ Similarly, Martin Wight defined it as “the influence derived from power.”²⁰⁹ But this approach oversimplifies the situation, mistaking the ability to inspire international fear for the possession of international prestige. Plenty of regimes have great material capacity but not are prestigious because prestige is conferred only by social recognition. Similarly, some regimes are accorded great international prestige owing to non-material factors; these can magnify their influence beyond that granted by their material abilities alone. Prestige is simultaneously an end of power, a means to it, and a sigil of the normative temperature of international society.

Historically, *amour propre* shaped state behavior because it was a key element of social standing for the Powers.²¹⁰ Because these were all dynastic states, there was a deep ontological investment in prestige as a fundamental purpose of international life among the small coterie of policymakers and monarchs that were, for all intents and purposes,

²⁰⁸ See the discussions in Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred a Knopf, 1973), 27, 33-5, 40, 73-4.

²⁰⁹ See Wight, 97.

²¹⁰ Weber actually defines “the ‘Great Powers’” as “those polities that appear to be the bearers of power prestige.” Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, vol. 2, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 912.

the generators and internalizers of 18th century foreign affairs. Prestige mattered in statecraft because it mattered in the minds of statespeople, and it particularly mattered in this period because those statespeople spoke a universal language of dynastic prestige embedded within a shared Great Power identity. This was famously the case with the French doctrine of *gloire*, the aggrandizement of the king's reputation to a level in keeping with the perceived power and influence of the realm. Under Louis XIV, this policy brought France to the brink of war over a conflict of precedence, justified aggression in the Low Countries, and magnified the costs of defeat to the point that it was unable to refuse battle for fear of dishonor. Of course, France was in good company; every Great Power considered its prestige a vital asset of state key to its self-conception and place in international society. Spain, trapped in a quagmire of declining material capacity paired with vast material and social overextension, allowed its touchiness over its declining prospects to be a significant and recurring impediment to the rationalization of its policy. Its refusal to countenance a humiliating partition during the War of the Spanish Succession preserved most of its territories—but only at the cost of dependence on its French allies. Realizing after the fact that it had consented to the loss of its prestige in installments rather than all at once, Spain embarked on a series of Italian wars motivated by pure vanity that only served to further debase its reputation and accelerate its decline from Great Power status. Similarly, British imperialism reflected how the Great Power emphasis on prestige could concretely affect international policy. Riding high after its triumph in the Seven Years' War, the United Kingdom possessed the leading colonial empire, the world's foremost navy to defend it, and an excellent military establishment capable of defending its continental possessions. George III and his

advisers were understandably proud of their international position and fearful of the implications of disorder in the Thirteen Colonies, so they chose the face-saving quagmire of a colonial war over a dishonorable compromise with contumacious colonists. Even after it became clear that victory would not be forthcoming, Britain continued the war, its efforts succeeding only in convincing the other Powers—a diverse coalition of former friends and historic foes—that the time had come to redress its over-mighty attitude. They intervened to strip Britain not so much of concrete possessions, but rather of the prestige that served as the lifeblood of Great Power status. Once the bearer of unquestioned preeminence, Britain had lost the bulk of its empire; it surprised no one that it immediately embarked on new colonial ventures in India to restore its former luster.

c. Systemic Interests

Transitioning to the innovative balancing category of identity elements, the third component of the Powers' common identity was the extent and character of their interests. They understood themselves to be involved in the politics of Europe writ large rather than those of a singular region, dynasty, or issue area: their "interests [were] as wide as the states-system itself."²¹¹ This meant that every Power was interested in all major outcomes affecting the system—that "the justifiability of a national interest claim [was]...tied to a systemic conception of international politics: the states' individual preferences have to be assessed in terms of the repercussions for all."²¹² Thus, most 18th century wars ultimately came to involve four or more Powers because the outcome of any major conflict usually had too much importance to the system as a whole to permit states

²¹¹ Wight, 50.

²¹² Friedrich Kratochwil, "On the Notion of 'Interest' in International Relations," *International Organization* 36, no. 1 (1982), 14.

to both hide *and* remain Great. Two issue areas illustrate how the systemic assertion of interests influenced the nature of Great Power in the long 18th century.

i. Changes in the international system's geographic scope and social focus

First, as the geographic limit and social focus of the international system changed, so did the interests of the Powers. The first iteration of the pan-European system, the Introductory Era, united for the first time a north-eastern European sphere of operation dominated by the policies of Sweden with that of a south-western sphere centered on the policies of France. The Empire, straddling these two worlds, was made the lynchpin uniting them when its constitution was subjected to the first Great Power formal-legal guarantee. The Powers of this era thus embroiled themselves in conflicts on the Empire's north-western and north-eastern borderlands; in the Franco-Dutch War of 1672-8, for example, Sweden invaded the Empire in concert with France's attack on the Netherlands, while Spain joined with Austria and its old Dutch rivals to oppose the Franco-Swedish bloc even though its own possessions were not under immediate threat. Similarly, as Britain awoke from its stupor and claimed the status of a Great Power, its policies adapted to fit the scope of the system it sought to determine. It adopted a continental style of warfare at odds with its maritime focus, placed formidable armies in the Low Countries and Germany, and intervened in the distant conflict between Sweden and a rising Russia. As subsequent changes in the international system shifted the system's scope to south-western Europe (the Classical Era) and overseas to the colonial world (the Era of Exhaustion), the Powers likewise shifted. States claiming Great Power status thus had to be vigilant throughout the geographic extent of the system, which led to the proliferation of international ties in unexpected quarters. By the American Revolution,

for example, Russia was reacting to faraway events in eastern North America through its creation of an anti-British naval league.²¹³

Similarly, the international system bore a particular locus of social principles that mirrored its geographic emphases. Great Powers had to cope thematically with changes in the overarching social focus of the right- and responsibility-complex just as they did geographically with changes in the international system's territorial extent. In the Introductory Era, dynasticism was the key principle; France undertook multiple wars justified by dynastic right and the question of the Spanish succession sparked a global war when dynastic principles collided. It was subsequently clear that the resulting settlement would have to further dial back the dynastic principle in European politics, limiting it to the service of a wider principle of stability. Consequently, the Utrecht settlement required formal renunciations by France and Spain of any possibility of future union; this was guaranteed by Britain, who in turn received a guarantee from the other signatories of the legitimacy of the Hanoverian succession in place of the deposed (and ever agitating) Stuart dynasty. In the words of Lucien Bély,

These renunciations lay at the heart of the European peace, just as the accords prior to dynastic marriages had been till this time. The commitments of 1712-13 were regarded as a foundation of the public good. Thus the natural order and law were reversed and denied for the benefit of a rational order and law of nations.²¹⁴

²¹³ Leos Müller, "The League of Armed Neutrality, 1780-83" in *Strategy in the American War of Independence: A Global Approach*, eds. Donald Stoker, Kenneth J. Hagan, and Michael T. McMaster (New York: Routledge, 2010), 202-220.

²¹⁴ Lucien Bély, "European Powers and Sovereign Houses," in *"The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848": Episode or Model in Modern History?*, 52.

This signaled a shift in the social focus of the international system away from the feudal rights and duties conferred by heredity and toward the rational duties of maintaining a fluid and continuous balance of power.

Being a Great Power thus necessitated a certain level of mimetic engagement with the social and territorial trends of the international system. As social focus and territorial locus shifted, the Great Powers were increasingly drawn into distant conflicts in places long peripheral to their interests such as southern Poland and the American frontier. Those unwilling to play this game, such as Sweden and the Dutch, gradually withdrew from the prerogatives and obligations they had formerly incurred, exiting the Great Power game entirely.

ii. Absence from the system and the decline and loss of Great Power status

If the assertion of a systemic interest was a sure indicator of Great Power, the absence of an asserted state interest in a political issue of systemic importance was the surest counter-indicator. Consider three cases of a Great Power losing its status: Sweden, the Netherlands, and France. Sweden's loss to Russia cost it its empire, and its parliament responded by scaling back its interests to the politics of the Baltic region. Its only major intervention in Great Power politics writ large after 1721, a failed police action against Prussia, was framed in terms of its Westphalian guarantee over the Empire and aimed only at the restoration of its territories along Pomerania's Baltic coast; even this ancient Great Power formal-legal claim thus concealed a policy of regional, rather than systemic interests and aims. While Sweden had little choice to act as it did given its declining material capacity, the Dutch republic presents a different case. Even though it had won its great struggle against Louis XIV, the Republic withdrew from its once-preeminent

diplomatic position after having “derived...an important lesson from [its] experience...that [it] had little to gain from participation in the contests of the greater powers.”²¹⁵ Consequently, after the 1720s, the Dutch ceased to actively play a role in Great Power politics and its requirement to follow where the systemic distribution of power led; they had no interest in the developing conflicts of central and eastern Europe—nor in “pay[ing] for a great-power policy” and the large fleet it required of them.²¹⁶ Their trade declined, their government apparatus withered, and their military became theoretical, resulting in “a decline in the opinion of the other powers . . . which, though gradual, was inevitable and of the last importance.”²¹⁷ In Heeren’s judgment, the case of Holland revealed an important truth: “A state passes for the value it sets upon itself.”²¹⁸ One might add, ‘and a Great Power for the scope of its interests’.

The final case, France, may seem unlikely. After all, France would go on to claim hegemony over the European continent before the Westphalian international system would finally give way to that of Vienna. Nevertheless, after a century of economic profligacy and a series of long-term policy sacrifices for short-term gains, France had exhausted itself by the mid-1780s and had ceased to play an active role in Great Power politics entirely by the coming of its revolution. The reasons for this were complex and interconnected. At home, France had spent itself into an economic hole and invited significant social unrest. Its ability to draw on its reserves of material capacity to act as a Great Power had been seriously impaired and it abandoned the rights and duties it had previously asserted. With its ability to mobilize military strength hamstrung, France was

²¹⁵ Heeren, 186.

²¹⁶ McKay and Scott, 100.

²¹⁷ Heeren, 186.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

unable to assert its national interests on its own borders, let alone throughout the extent of the international system; the French had to sit idly by as their allies in a Dutch civil war were crushed by Prussia in 1787.²¹⁹ Further afield, longtime clients of the *barrier de l'est*, Poland and Turkey, had been subdued by the Prusso-Russo-Austrian troika without any consideration of France's position; those Powers had ceased to include it as a factor in their systemic calculations.²²⁰ Cuts in funding for the diplomatic corps came in 1788, and by the onset of the revolution state diplomacy had "simply withered away."²²¹ Its standing disintegrated as Great Power France finally fell to revolutionary violence.

d. Participation in a Balance of Power

A final element of the general Great Power identity was active participation in the balance of power. This was closely related to the assertion of systemic interests, but was made distinct by its strategic focus. In essence, a state could have a significant share of the distribution of material capacity and have interests from one length of the system to another, yet still be aloof from the balance of power and the system of fluid diplomacy and power-politics that defined it. Commonwealth Britain, a pariah state, is the classical example. Though its republican character denied it one key aspect of the Great Power identity of its time, it still had significant military capacity, claimed wide geographic interests, and formed occasional alliances. Importantly, however, it lacked another element of Great Power because it neither considered itself—nor behaved as though it was a part of—a systemic balance of power centered on the European continent. It failed

²¹⁹ See Munro Price, "The Dutch Affair and the Fall of the Ancien Régime, 1784-1787," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 38, no. 4 (1995), 875-880.

²²⁰ See H. M. Scott, "The Decline of France and the Transformation of the European States System" in *"The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848": Episode or Model in Modern History?*, 111, 128.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

to play a significant role in the Thirty Years War, and its strategic ventures were simple predation rather than the strategic deployment of state power in support of a particular alignment of European forces. After all, this theocratic state saw only enemies in the wider world; even the Dutch were influenced by the French and harbored the court of its displaced monarch. Under such conditions, the Commonwealth had little incentive to join the European balance in support of any coherent, systemic objective, nor to conform its language and thinking to a complex of Great Power rights and duties.²²²

The United States is a later example. The American republic certainly possessed several key elements of Great Power. It had the potential to mobilize a significant share of the distribution of material capacity that seemed poised to increase exponentially after the stabilization of a national government in 1787, asserted extensive commercial interests that would soon lead to multiple overseas interventions, and had demonstrated an ability to manipulate the levers of the European balance through coalition-building. Its form of government, a non-dynastic republic, was of course a strike against it, but not so black a mark as the regicide theocracy of Cromwell. Given these factors, it is not impossible to imagine a counterfactual in which the American republic asserted the status of a Great Power—had it done so, the schema presented here would take a somewhat different form. Yet, it steadfastly refused to be drawn into the European entanglements

²²² The British case demonstrates how the social neglect of the balance of power system can reduce the effectiveness of a state's material power. Thus, the Commonwealth's aloofness from the balance of power system acted as a reverse force multiplier of its material power. Most strikingly, after recognizing their international isolation and inability to engage with the European balance, the Parliamentarians attempted to redress this deficiency by simple imperialism—first attempting to coerce the Dutch into a political union by treaty and, later, to destroy their trade by unilateral war. Both efforts failed. Though the English fleet had local superiority in the Channel and was able to win multiple victories, the Dutch simply rebuilt their fleets, mopped up English colonies, and waited for Cromwell to realize that he could not win without allies. England could not be a Great Power as long as it stood apart from the balance and embraced unilateralism. See Israel, 714-723.

that had served as its midwife. It abrogated its treaty with the French, destroyed its own commerce to stay out of the Napoleonic wars, and faced the British without the participation of any other European Powers. Aloof, the early American republic was not a Great Power in fact or in theory.

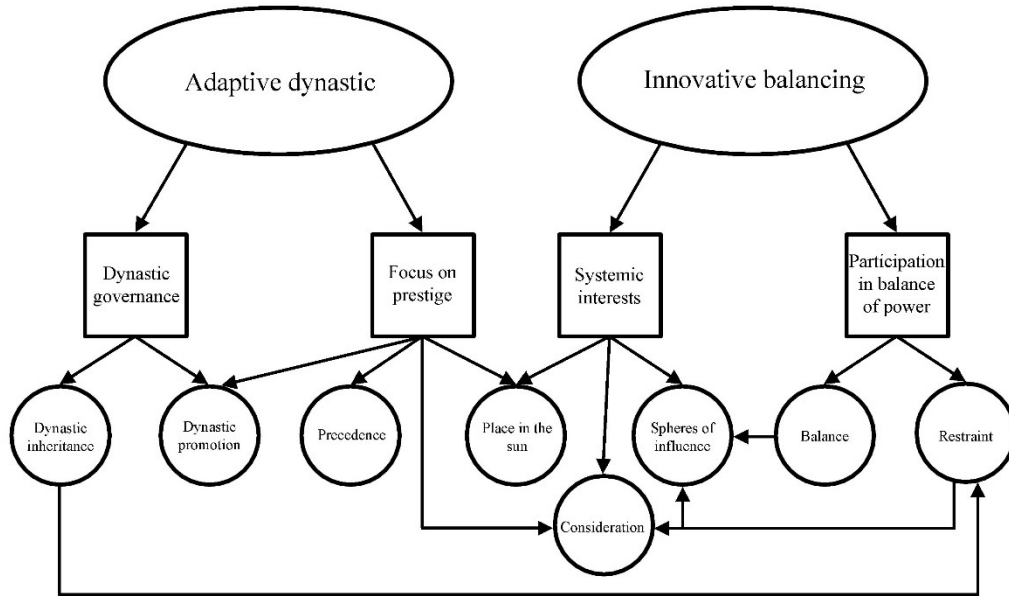
II. General Right- and Duty-Claims, 1648-1813

The influence of the identity elements common to all the Powers is detectable in their assertion of similar right- and duty-claims (see Table 3.2). These claims and the practices innovated in their assertion were employed in support of diverse objectives; they were sometimes genuine and sometimes cynical in their application and exerted varying levels of normative pull. What matters about them, however, is that they delimited a set of normative concepts and practical mechanisms by which Great Powers properly conducted their international affairs a shared complex of rights and duties. This section explains how they were formulated, classifies them into four thematic categories—Dynastic, Territorial, Social-temperate, and Social-assertive—and places them alongside instructive examples of their purpose within and influence upon international politics (see Figure 3.3 and Table 3.3).

Table 3.2: Shared Rights and Duties, 1648-1789

<i>Developmental track</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Associated GP rights/duties</i>	<i>Characteristic GP practices</i>
Adaptive dynastic	Dynastic government	Dynastic inheritance (r) Dynastic promotion (d)	Dynastic diplomacy
	Focus on prestige	Precedence (r)(d) Place in the sun (r) Consideration (r)(d) Dynastic promotion (d)	Consultation, proto-managerialism
Innovative balancing	Assertion of systemic international interests	Spheres of Influence (r) Consideration (r)	Guarantee, Partition
	Active participation in a balance of power	Balance (d) Restraint (d) Spheres of influence (r)	Coalition warfare, armed mediation, partition

Figure 3.3: Developmental Typology of Right- and Duty-claims



a. Dynastic rights and duties

The dynastic category of rights and duties derived from feudal norms.

Importantly, it was not that alternative means of ordering domestic and international politics were unavailable in the 17th and 18th centuries, but rather that the hold of tradition was still extraordinarily strong. Consequently, elements of systemic politics like the distribution of material capacity and the imperative of calculation found themselves poured into a dynastic mold as the old feudal norms of family and property were combined with and made to organize the new international system. Patriarchal legitimacy was made to coexist—often dissonantly—with the power-political demands of international competition, contributing to a semi-archival, relational order based on social norms derived from domestic life as well as international material capacity. This

subsection explores two general claims of this type: the right to dynastic inheritance and the duty of dynastic promotion.

Table 3.3: Categories and Functions of Right- and Duty-claims

Category	Name	Right / Duty	Purpose	
			Type	Function
Dynastic	<i>Dynastic inheritance</i>	Right	Social	Secures domestic and international basis of legitimacy
	<i>Dynastic promotion</i>	Duty	Social	Fulfills social objective (prestige)
Territorial	<i>Place in the sun</i>	Right	Social	Justifies isomorphic international behaviors
	<i>Sphere of influence</i>	Right	Security	Manages risk arising from the control of territory by lesser powers
Social-temperate	<i>Restraint</i>	Duty	Security	Promotes public good of international system based on division rather than hierarchy
	<i>Consideration</i>	Right	Social	Stabilizes system in response to changes in the distribution of power
Social-assertive	<i>Precedence</i>	Right	Social	Provides social recognition through the introduction of hierarchical elements into the operation of a formal anarchy
	<i>Balance</i>	Duty	Security	Promotes public good of international system based on division rather than hierarchy

i. The Right to Dynastic Inheritance

The right to dynastic inheritance was the *sine qua non* of the 18th century patriarchal state. The notion of intergenerational property was tied directly to sovereign authority, formulating the basis by which a state defined its territorial extent and justified the spilling of blood in its defense. It thus shaped the meaning of Great Power patrimony and established the stakes of international statecraft. However, the domestic analogy this thinking used to frame the international sphere provided an important point of semi-archival linkage intruding elements of domestic law into the practice of a formally anarchical system of states. Indeed, in the century prior to Westphalia, there was even a growing consensus about the inalienability of royal inheritances overriding international *raison d'état*. Legists argued that those lands and honors with which a king began his rule could not be surrendered, for that would be the *de facto* deprivation of his heirs of a piece

of their patrimony.²²³ Similarly, the idea that rights to inheritance could be renounced for the sake of diplomatic convenience began to lose currency during this same period.²²⁴ Concrete, hierarchical elements of domestic law thus penetrated international practice, providing a foundation for semi-archival order.

This had significant consequences for early Great Power behavior, particularly in how it restrained territorial change. Because inherited rights were so integral to sovereign authority among all the Powers, transgressions against the principle of rightful possession could destabilize the whole system. This common focus on the protection of rightful patrimony reduced the amount of territorial and titular alienation experienced by defeated Powers, rare compared with the drastic shifts of the late medieval and modern periods. The most significant examples of alienation of territory by direct conquest were Sweden's loss of its empire to Russia and Austria's loss of Silesia to Prussia; elsewhere, even the bitterest conflicts generally resulted only in the changing-hands of a few cities, or in the destruction of border fortresses.²²⁵ Instead, the territorial cost of Great Power conflict was shunted away from their inherited lands as overseas colonies and middle-rank powers shouldered the costs of maintaining a semi-archival system of international property relations among the mighty. By accepting the derogation of the rights of others,

²²³ The idea of the state as distinct from the king can be partially traced to the legal structure put in place over a period of centuries to defend the king's successors from the mismanagement of their progenitor. The patrimony's interests thus became eternal, and the standing of the king—who was mortal and finite—consequently suffered. See Symcox, 4; Herbert H. Rowen, *The King's State: Proprietary Dynasticism in Early Modern France* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 73, 80.

²²⁴ Rowen, 64.

²²⁵ The Nine Years' War, for instance, saw a large number of small territorial exchanges perhaps the most significant among which was the transfer of present-day Haiti—some of the world's most profitable sugar-growing land—from Spain to France. Compared with what medieval England lost in France or what modern Germany would gain at the expense of France and Austria, 18th century outcomes were mild.

the Powers were able to keep the majority of Europe's violence capacity—a majority they themselves held—bound within a rights-based system of mutual legitimacy.

A second consequence of this period's strong inheritance right was that it fostered international tensions through its very indissolubility. This had not always been the case. Renunciations of future succession rights had accompanied many earlier dynastic marriages to ensure the union wouldn't produce rival claims to the same inheritance among later generations. But as the patrimonial right grew absolute, these renunciations, formerly a lubricant of diplomacy, became suspect. After all, a great crown was an essential right derived from God, who also ordained the great dynasties that transmitted those rights through the ages.²²⁶ Two major wars—the War of Devolution and the War of the Spanish Succession—resulted directly from this thorny issue of whether it was possible to renounce the inheritance right. Decades later, an attempt to gain international backing for the succession of Maria Theresa in Austria—a deviation from the normal course of dynastic succession—created a justificatory right for international intervention. The inheritance of a Great Power monarch was thus a precious matter of state disclosing problems and possibilities for the entire system. Too often dismissed as mere pretext, there was actually a significant normative core to these conflicts that exerted real influence. Even Philip IV of Spain, whose daughter's French marriage would lead to multiple wars to the detriment of the Spanish crown, admitted that her renunciation was invalid because the right of succession could not be trespassed upon even by a king.²²⁷

²²⁶ Rowen, 84, 100-1.

²²⁷ Ibid., 73.

ii. The Duty of Dynastic Promotion

There was a complementary Great Power duty to assert the interests of one's dynasty. This duty of dynastic promotion derived from a combination of the adaptive dynastic elements of Great Power identity, dynastic governance and the pursuit of prestige. From the former, it took its focus on blood and inheritance as the basis of international territorial competition. From the latter, it took the accumulation of patrimonial prestige as the normative coin of the international realm. Since prestige was directly tied to measures of both material prosperity and social authority, this created a conceptual juncture between the concept of royal dynasty and the fundamental material and moral elements of international politics. Thus, "personal *gloire*, dynastic prestige and reason of state often added up to the same thing."²²⁸ These were the fundamental goals of political life as understood by early modern monarchs; placed simultaneously at the head of great families as well as fabulous concentrations of material capacity, rights, and duties, these men and women saw it as their essential purpose to glorify the former by the increase of the latter. This could be accomplished through absolute gains, but relative gains against competitor houses were preferred. Conversely, failure to obtain a territory up for legitimate grabs was a blow to the monarch, his or her family, and the state itself.

The duty of dynastic promotion exerted its greatest influence during the Introductory Era. Ironically, the greatest dynastic victory of this era was achieved by the head of a nominal republic. When William III of Orange was presented with the opportunity of asserting the claims of his wife to the British throne, he chose to pursue it despite the danger that would accompany failure. Of course, his desire to prevent Britain

²²⁸ Symcox, 41.

from drawing closer to France was also a powerful motivator, but the damage to his reputation that would have followed from failing in his duty to promote his family's claims would have itself devastated his international standing.²²⁹ Unsurprisingly, the ultimate withdrawal of the United Provinces from the status of a Great Power was accompanied by a rejection of the hereditary position of the Orange dynasty and the repudiation of its place in the international system's dynastic diplomacy.²³⁰

France was the most consistent dynastic player throughout this era. Louis XIV eagerly promoted his family's interests in his early wars, justifying the Devolution War not only through the rights of his wife to the Low Countries, but also by his duty to protect the rightful inheritance of the royal couple's son and heir.²³¹ While duty facilitated Louis's ambitions in this case, it limited his freedom of action when his grandson inherited the Spanish throne. Though he had earlier supported the partition of the Spanish empire as the only irenic solution to the succession issue,²³² the ultimate bequest of the crown to a member of his own house meant that "it was incumbent on [him], as head of the Bourbon dynasty, to press his family's claim to the inheritance."²³³ This he did despite the transparency of the Spanish king's attempt to coopt French troops in defense of Spanish interests. The ensuing war saw his candidate successfully claim his possession, but only as part of a wider peace settlement detrimental to France's

²²⁹ Rowen, 90.

²³⁰ Israel, 959-967, 992-3.

²³¹ Ibid., 99-101.

²³² André, 281-300; see also Rowen, 109-114.

²³³ Symcox, 5. See also Guy Rowlands, *The Financial Decline of a Great Power: War, Influence, and Money in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21.

exchequer and prestige.²³⁴ While the Bourbon dynasty had gained, the realm of France had suffered—and the recognition that the two did not always coincide was important.²³⁵

The Utrecht settlement subsequently attempted to curtail the duty of dynastic promotion in the interest of political flexibility. As a part of the treaty, the formal separation of the French and Spanish Bourbons was confirmed and guaranteed by the strongest of the Powers, Britain, whose participation in the war had been partly motivated by the French recognition of the Stuart claimant.²³⁶ In exchange, the Powers collectively legitimized Britain's Protestant succession—a significant move that severed generations of dynastic connections and effectively limited the potential of dynastic marriages to shatter the system. The promotion of family claims to foreign thrones would no longer occupy the imperative position in international politics, its turbulent possibilities curtailed by the obligations of balance.²³⁷ Nevertheless, the duty of dynastic promotion did not disappear entirely. Shortly after Utrecht, Spain embarked on a quixotic crusade to obtain Italian duchies for its queen's progeny, sparking the War of the Quadruple Alliance. The resulting treaty gave much attention to dynastic issues, including new guarantees of collectively-backed royal legitimacy, the partial fulfillment of the Spanish Bourbon's Italian ambitions, as well as a number of territorial transfers that gave the powerful and well-connected House of Savoy the crown of Sardinia.²³⁸ Yet, both Britain and France feared dynastic challengers even after Utrecht, and France's involvement in the War of the Polish Succession was largely motivated by a desire to correct the “*mésalliance*” of

²³⁴ Rowlands, *The Financial Decline of a Great Power*, 1, 14-15, 239.

²³⁵ Rowen, 35.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-17.

²³⁷ Clark, *Legitimacy in International Society*, 71-8; Bély, 52; McKay and Scott, 65; Guy Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest, 1661-1701* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11.

²³⁸ McKay and Scott, 115.

Louis XV by securing his father-in-law—a deposed Polish king—a throne.²³⁹ Though weakened at Utrecht and increasingly incorporated into the balance of power as a subsidiary element, the duty of advancing dynastic interests would continue to be a part of Great Power for some time.²⁴⁰

b. Territorial Rights and Duties

The second category of Great Power claims contains those related to a key element of the distribution of power, the control of territory. Two specific right-claims fell under this label: the right to isomorphic territorial aggrandizement, commonly called a ‘place in the sun’, and the right to assert special sway over lesser powers short of formal hierarchical-command relationships, generally through a sphere of influence.

i. The Right to a ‘Place in the Sun’

Prestigious Great Powers were expected to control vast territories and to expand. Crucially, this expectation was often motivated more by the pursuit and maintenance of social standing than by strategic concerns; what mattered was not so much the size or material value of the territory a Power gained but rather that it was keeping up with its fellows. The most famous expression of this tendency came in the 19th century rush to claim markets and colonize, but its history is somewhat longer and the practices it encompassed more varied than simple colonial competition. Though the phrase ‘a place in the sun’ originated later (as detailed in Chapter Four), the reality behind it contributed

²³⁹ John L. Sutton, *The King’s Honor and the King’s Cardinal: The War of the Polish Succession* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980), 7, 12-14, 26; Spencer Wilkinson, *The Defence of Piedmont, 1742-1748: A Prelude to the Study of Napoleon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 18.

²⁴⁰ For dynasticism’s relationship to balance, see M. S. Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748* (London: Longman, 1995), 3-4.

to the nature of Great Power from the very beginning: the right to isomorphic acquisitions simultaneously impelled and justified aggrandizement.

This right was often disruptive. For a long time, it could be satisfied by the subjugation of technologically less-sophisticated peoples and the seizure of new colonial territory. Terrible as the consequences of this process were, they long remained peripheral to Great Power politics since the conflicts they sparked were localized. However, as the blank spaces on the American map were gradually filled in and land-hungry rising powers grew in the east, the territorial prestige expected of a Great Power only increased.²⁴¹ Prussia, the newest and least significant of the Powers, drove this trend. Though it had successfully absorbed a portion of Sweden's empire at the conclusion of the Great Northern War and gained for itself a royal crown, its territories remained sparse and separated; even the monarch's title granted by the Emperor ('King *in* Prussia') reflected the state's uncertain position. This uncertainty encouraged the desire of Frederick II to make Prussia into a true and independent Power. His brash Silesian wars were motivated not by dynastic right or duty, nor by the imperatives of balance, but rather by the right he possessed to glorify his regime. Similarly, Russia possessed an internal colony in Asia but longed to further westernize its manners and territory. Together, Prussia and Russia formed a pincer tightening around the middle-rank power of Poland; their desire for empires worthy of Spain, France, and Britain doomed this ancient, turbulent state. Austria, worried that its own place in the sun would be eclipsed if

²⁴¹ See the comparative analysis of French, Spanish, and British administrative understandings of the New World in Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire*.

Poland was carved up without its consent, joined in despite the ethical reservations of Maria Theresa herself.²⁴²

Similarly, the prestige-based roots of this right meant that revanchism, a preference for short-term gains, and a focus on relative standing frequently skewed rational calculation when a Power's place in the sun was involved. France exemplified this confusion. After its German and American defeats in the Seven Year's War, its place in the sun had been effectively lost. It seethed about this for two decades before an opportunity to avenge its defeat presented itself in the form of the American Revolution. It enlisted against the British to drag down its enemy's preeminent prestige rather than to advance a coherent grand strategy.²⁴³ Indeed, it was sufficient for France to see Britain's own American possessions stripped away at the conclusion of the peace: Britain's humiliation meant more to France than the return of Canada. That this war might prove ruinous for the financial and social fabric of the French nation was a concern for only a few worried ministers; what mattered at the time was that France, a Great Power, had a right to a certain level of prestige that it had lost along with its colonial territory. Only by inflicting a similar loss on Britain could its standing be restored and its place in the sun confirmed.

ii. The Right to a Sphere of Influence

The territorial aggrandizement right was closely related to the right to a sphere of influence, itself emanating from three conceptual propositions: lesser powers are features

²⁴² Albert Sorel, *The Eastern Question in the Eighteenth Century: The Partition of Poland and the Treaty of Kainardji*, 1st English ed., trans. Bramwell (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969 [1898]), 145, 193.

²⁴³ For French resentment at the loss of prestige and its importance for policy, see James C. Riley, *The Seven Years War and the Old Regime in France: The Economic and Financial Toll* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 223.

of the international system and therefore of material interest to the Great Powers; they have a position in the systemic balance of power and are therefore targets for manipulation and coercion; and they are often stakeholders in the same international dynastic system so important to the Powers. Together, these facts required the Powers to assert their interests within the lesser states, but to do so delicately. This was the right to a sphere of influence, the institutional assertion by formal or semi-formal means of a Great Power's controlling interest in a territory without the extinction of the lesser partner's claim to sovereignty. Spheres ordered relations between the Great and lesser powers, reducing the risk posed by the latter's independence to an acceptable level.²⁴⁴ All Powers strove to establish spheres, though only a few did so successfully.

The guarantee at Westphalia was the first attempt to establish semi-formal spheres of Great Power influence as a part of a peace settlement. However, Swedish weakness, French bellicosity, and Dutch aloofness contributed to the failure of these post-Westphalian experiments. In contrast, the fecund dynasty of the Habsburg kingdoms was able to patch together a wide sphere of influence by marriage and treaty in Italy's myriad duchies and republics. But Russia, unique among the Powers in that its borderland was populated solely by weak neighbors, made the most sophisticated use of spheres to magnify its power and prestige. Its Swedish rival exchanged its former glory for the status of a satellite when Russia acquired a guarantee of its constitution, a mechanism to keep the Swedish monarchy weak, humble, and reliant on St. Petersburg.²⁴⁵ In Poland, a treaty formalized Russia's right to "preserve, to defend, and secure the integrity of the

²⁴⁴ For the management of risk in international relations, see Clapton, 29-37.

²⁴⁵ Ironically, the Swedes themselves requested the guarantee as a means of protection from the Duke of Holstein. See Stewart P. Oakley, *War and Peace in the Baltic: 1560-1790* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 128.

republic,” thus providing numerous justifications for future interventions.²⁴⁶ Likewise, military success against the Ottomans allowed Russia to guarantee the privileges of the Moldavian and Wallachian vassal principalities to its south, creating a thorny issue that persisted into the 20th century.²⁴⁷

Similarly, Tsars declared protectorates in Holstein and the Crimea to further Russian authority while preserving elements of local sovereignty, though the ultimate goal—a guarantee of the Empire’s constitution and the *entrée* into western politics it so desired—was thwarted by the ambiguous wording of a key treaty.²⁴⁸ But most important was the Treaty of Kainardji (1774) formalizing a Russian relationship with Christians living in the Ottoman Empire. As Sorel noted, this granted Russia both a right and an “*obligation* to mix in the internal affairs of Turkey whenever the interests of the Christians demand it.”²⁴⁹ In all of these cases, a relationship undergirded by a guarantee or protectorate allowed Russia to bring a state within its sphere of influence, thus lessening the risk posed to Russian interests by territories outside of its formal control. Subsequent eras would see the further formalization of the sphere of influence as a fundamental component of Great Power politics.

c. Social-Temperate Rights and Duties

The rights and duties of the social-temperate category were primarily held *in relation* to the other Powers, i.e. constituted socially as instruments of the society formed by those Powers’ interaction. Emphasizing the fundamental likeness of the great states,

²⁴⁶ This right had been exercised *de facto* since the time of Peter the Great. McKay and Scott, 92; Sorel, 23.

²⁴⁷ Sorel, 250.

²⁴⁸ Karl Otmar von Aretin, “The Empire and European Politics, 1763-1806” in “*The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*”, 97. Sorel, 153; McKay and Scott, 92. The declaring of a protectorate was an arrangement that *impaired* but did not *extinguish* sovereignty.

²⁴⁹ Emphasis original. Sorel, 248.

they were important lubricants of ‘club behavior’ and the building blocks of later managerialism. Two claims fall under this category: the duty to display power-political restraint and the right to have one’s vital interests taken into consideration. Though they obviously did not forestall all Great Power conflict, they nonetheless helped to moderate the ultimate form of that conflict by overlaying power-political competition with the veneer of an elite international society based on special social recognition.

i. The Duty of Restraint

As in the early Italian states-system, the Great Powers of the long 18th century came to understand that the sum of their interactions bound them together within a material and social web. Scholars refer to this web as a ‘system’, while the participants themselves used the concept of a European ‘republic’ to convey the same concept.²⁵⁰ This republic was a public good aiming at “the stability and mutual independence of its members.”²⁵¹ However, the major participants understood that it was fragile. Should even a single Power abrogate its principles, the result could be the replacement of order by ‘universal monarchy’ or even a return to the transnational chaos of the late 16th century. This possibility encouraged the Powers to develop conscious behaviors aimed at its preservation. While the balancing of forces was the most visible external example of this tendency, each Power held a common duty to restrain its international behavior, approaching international ambition and international change with caution.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Kratochwil notes that this was underwritten by a conception of a ‘public interest’ in European politics, even though “from a Hobbesian perspective on international reality, this seems indeed strange. Nevertheless, the awareness of the distinctiveness of a European state system and its convention, which mitigated many of the anarchical features of the international arena, was commonly accepted by reason of state theorists and practitioners alike.” Kratochwil, “On the Notion of ‘Interest’ in International Relations,” 14-15. For European republican discourse, see Deudney, *Bounding Power*, 137-42; see also Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, 9.

²⁵¹ Heeren, 5.

²⁵² Holsti, 45.

Though prone to derogation by both accident and intention, the duty of a Great Power to act with restraint was internalized within the self-understandings of its statespeople, particularly distinguishing itself through the character of the period's warfare and peacemaking. As discussed above, the Great Power wars of this period were concluded by peace settlements that sought to preserve face on all sides and to shunt the territorial and political costs of the peace onto lesser powers or outside of Europe entirely. The Peace of Utrecht allowed Louis XIV to escape without significant territorial penalties at home or abroad, while his Spanish allies surrendered only their Italian territories as well as Minorca and Gibraltar. The Seven Years' War peace settlements saw massive transfers and exchanges of colonial territories but not a single territorial rectification in Europe for fear of alienating the French and Austrians; the cost paid by the former overseas and by the latter in prestige was judged high enough in itself. Similarly, the treaties concluding the War of the American Revolution—a rare upper-hand moment for Spain and France—stripped Britain of only a portion of its North American empire. But all of these pale in comparison to the War of the Polish Succession. It engulfed almost every continental power but its chief combatants, France and Austria, “managed the struggle so as to cause no mortal injury to either.”²⁵³ The war's English-language chronicler captured this characteristic mood:

The war had followed the old pattern of the victorious power taking his advantages in Italian property; the dignities of hereditary sovereigns, even the defeated ones, were preserved; and the side that was getting the worst of the military action was allowed to cut its losses and withdraw. Both victor and vanquished knew that another round might be played in a few years and the forces and alliances might be reversed, as well as the fortunes of war. The reverence for hereditary rights mingled with playacting here. Stanislas is still king (momentarily), the honor of Louis XV is saved, the old cardinal's position at Versailles is secure, the

²⁵³ Sutton, v.

emperor has his Pragmatic Sanction, Count Sinzendorff maintains his dignity, the army commanders on both sides are dining together amicably as they work out details.²⁵⁴

Only the mutual society of the Great Powers—and the duty it embodied to treat one another with restraint—could make possible such subtle management of the international system by means of minor sovereignty swaps, colonial exchanges, and border rectifications. This duty created a measured international politics aimed at the preservation of the ‘republic of Europe’.

ii. The Right to Consideration

The duty of restraint was linked to a right to special consideration based on the recognition of vital interests. All Powers pursued prestige, all asserted myriad national interests across the length and breadth of their common system, and all were expected to restrain their ambitions to preserve a measure of international order. Consideration grew from these commonalities; a measure of international empathy facilitated better understanding of the system and its probable sources of friction, promoting collaboration and conciliation. Both were vital because the distribution of material capacity was dynamic rather than static. Shifts in state interest often followed from shifts in capacity, and the mutual recognition of such interests—even where seemingly incompatible—was an important first step in navigating moments of international friction. As an English diplomat remarked during a crisis in the 1730s, the important thing was to find a solution that would prove “unexceptionable” to the most interested Great Power parties.²⁵⁵

The Powers granted one another special consideration in the practice of day-to-day diplomacy from the beginning—multilateralism, close ambassadorial ties, and the

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 209.

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Sutton, 32.

circulation of formal notes to the Powers in advance of international action all had their origins in the early struggle against French hegemony and Spanish dynastic ambitions. As they came into closer and closer contact following the Utrecht settlement, the right to consideration encouraged peaceful collaboration over common security problems; this was notably expressed through Great Power condominiums over Poland, a state subject to a periodic power vacuum each time its elective throne came up for purchase. Recognizing the security problem inherent in such an arrangement, the three Powers neighboring Poland—Austria, Prussia, and Russia—agreed to cooperate on its disposition.²⁵⁶ When they eventually partitioned Poland among themselves—an example of “co-operative system-conforming conduct”—it was done with maximal consideration for their interests and a complete disregard for those of Poland.²⁵⁷ Thus, in the service of “reconciling ambitions, the rivalry between which threatened to embroil all Europe,” the Powers decided to manage their competition in Poland based on a recognition of their shared interests.²⁵⁸ This was only the first instance of “the great powers’ tendency to club together as a kind of directorate and impose their will on the states-system.”²⁵⁹ In economic terms, the Great Powers were indeed acting as a club even though they justified their actions as a public good for all of Europe.²⁶⁰ The consideration granted to one another—and pointedly not granted to outsiders like Poland—would prove an important and enduring Great Power right.

²⁵⁶ Sutton, 29-31.

²⁵⁷ Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, 19.

²⁵⁸ Sorel, 260.

²⁵⁹ Wight, 42.

²⁶⁰ A club is defined as “a voluntary group deriving mutual benefits from sharing . . . production costs, the members’ characteristics, or a good characterized by excludable benefits.” Todd Sandler and John Tschirhart, “Club theory: Thirty years later,” *Public Choice*, v. 93, no. 3-4 (Dec 1997), 335.

A similar practice derived from the right to consideration was that of awarding compensation—territorial and otherwise—to reconfigure the distribution of power.²⁶¹ This opened up the possibility of accommodating expansionist Powers within the normative structure of a right- and responsibility-complex, and is thus an example of restrained system management.²⁶² As noted above, Great Powers needed both land and prestige—but they also needed to cloak themselves in the normative *couture* of the club they wished to join. This set up a paradox in that rising Powers had to violate the very norms that characterized the status to which they aspired in order to obtain the territory and prestige requisite for that status. To wit, for Frederick the Great to confirm the place of Prussia within the aristocracy of the Great Powers he had to behave as a ‘mere robber’ and steal from other Powers.²⁶³ To square this confounding circle, the Powers granted special consideration to the power-political demands of the moment by compensating the losers in one theatre with advantages elsewhere. This applied primarily to their dispossessed clients and satellites; e.g., Louis XV’s father-in-law, blocked by an Austrian coalition from claiming the crown of Poland, was assigned the Duchy of Lorraine (formerly allied with the Empire) for the span of his life.²⁶⁴ Such compensation set up a non-zero sum game among the rising or ‘hungry’ Powers, giving them space in which to

²⁶¹ Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, 6-7.

²⁶² Wight, 189. Compensation underlay much of the territorial changes resulting from the Peace of Utrecht; see Linda Frey and Marsha Frey, “Introduction” in *The Treaties of the War of the Spanish Succession: An Historical and Critical Dictionary*, eds. Linda Frey and Marsha Frey (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), xxi.

²⁶³ Norman Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 390.

²⁶⁴ For examples of how such trades were contemplated in the chanceries, see Sutton, 23-4. For the complex series of compensations that followed the war, see Craig and George, 20. Similarly, the four Great Powers of the Quadruple Alliance revoked the Duke of Savoy’s title to the Kingdom of Sicily but awarded him the Kingdom of Sardinia as compensation, and France compensated its Spanish ally for the sacrifice of Florida by giving it Louisiana in the peace ending the Seven Years’ War.

fulfill their expansionist desires at the expense of lesser states, while simultaneously preserving the principle of dynastic legitimacy through a token redistribution of titles.²⁶⁵

In the beginning, this worked well: “It was a big pie, and everybody got a piece.”²⁶⁶ However, as the scramble for land wore on, the right to territorial compensation began to apply not to aggrieved lesser sovereigns, but to the other Great Powers themselves. “By the later eighteenth century there was general agreement that if one state was about to make territorial gains, then the other great powers should join in and demand equal, or equivalent shares.”²⁶⁷ Thus, the right to consideration gradually became a key element of the balance of forces. In this century, it displayed an irenic aspect; in later periods, it would promote international conflict.

d. Social-Assertive Rights and Duties

Where the social-temperate rights and duties emphasized the fundamental likeness of the Powers—and the consequent tendency for them to club together—the social-assertive rights and duties tended to normalize their competition. Once claimed, Great Power was a status that had to be constantly and consciously maintained, both by the preservation of a plurality share of the systemic distribution of material capacity as well as through the continuation of certain behavioral patterns reflecting social status. This basic impulse for social and material self-preservation engendered two special claims. One was the right to a quasi-hierarchical diplomatic precedence. The other was the duty to balance the distribution of forces to preclude the rise of a truly hegemonic

²⁶⁵ This facilitation was a forerunner to the ‘safety valve’ later provided by African colonization as described in A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 256.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ McKay and Scott, 228. For a similar conclusion, see Craig and George, 20.

‘universal monarchy’. Together, these allowed the several Powers to cope with the disparities in capacity and prestige that divided them.

i. The Right to Precedence

As late medieval gave way to early modern, the traditional understanding of diplomatic precedence as reflecting a crown’s antiquity transitioned into to a new system of ranking based upon state power and prestige. As noted above, this was partly owing to the ability of a few wealthy states—the nascent Great Powers—to establish significant diplomatic networks of agents with the full ambassadorial title. Since diplomacy was thus linked to material capacity, the right to such networks and titles became a special provenance of the Powers.²⁶⁸ Importantly, it was a special sign of Great Power—held as it was over the lesser powers—as well as an elementary indicator of an ordering among the Powers themselves.²⁶⁹ Derived from the common Great Power pursuit of prestige, diplomatic primacy both reflected existing levels of prestige and registered changes in its international distribution.

The registering of one such change in 1661 brought Spain and France to the brink of war. Spain, whose long near-hegemony under Charles V and his descendants had earned it the highest titles and largest territories, expected pride of place in most diplomatic courts despite its decline. Louis XIV, just exiting his minority, issued

²⁶⁸ Venice, the only second-rank state to match the scope and significance of proto-Great Power diplomacy, reaped an outsized share of international prestige and influence as a result. It was a key mediator in 17th century politics, and was accounted an important political force long after its military power had declined. See Bernd Roeck, “The Role of Venice in the War and During the Peace Negotiations” in *1648: War and Peace in Europe* (Münster : Westfälisches Landesmuseum, 1998), 161-3.

²⁶⁹ Great Power monarchs addressed one another as ‘brother’, while rulers perceived to be of lesser stature merited only ‘cousin’. Osiander, 108.

instructions to his ambassadors abroad declaring that “*le roi ne se contente jamais de l'égalité, mais doit avoir la prééminence*” over the other crowns.²⁷⁰ When the Spanish ambassador and his retinue decided to assert their traditional right of precedence by force at a procession in London, the French resisted and a riot ensued that left dead from both sides on the streets and the French party in ignominious retreat. When the news reached Louis, he made preparations for war and severed diplomatic relations; the king of Spain was forced to publicly concede French preeminence before his court to avert hostilities. It was a significant victory for the French, and established Louis at the very outset of his active political life as the first monarch among the Powers.²⁷¹

Precedence is a difficult right to frame in modern terms, but it is important to recall that prestige was actually a goal in its own right rather than merely a means to some more elemental end. Though precedence would be among the first Great Power rights to weaken, the right to mark one's place in the formal-legal diplomatic hierarchy of Europe was an important component of an 18th century Great Power's self-understanding and, indeed, the fundamental ontological security of its statespeople. It is why Louis XIV took so many of the decisions that he did, why the electorate of Brandenburg schemed to claim a crown, and why Russia sought incorporation into the diplomatic system (among many other cases). The formalization of status through precedence was thus a method of concretizing not only changes in the distribution of material capacity, but the recognition of Great Power itself.

ii. The Duty to Balance

²⁷⁰ André, 55.

²⁷¹ Fallet, 61.

Finally, Great Powers understood themselves to be a part of a system (or republic) within which no single Power could establish a hierarchical ‘universal monarchy’. This ‘public good’ benefited all the system’s stakeholders by warding off the twin evils of chaotic transnational disorder and oppressive transnational order. The corollary of this realization was that the maintenance of division was the essential purpose of the system, and that its most powerful members shared the duty of balancing their forces so as to frustrate the ambitions of any over-mighty peer. This duty was not altruistic—Powers balanced not to aid their friends but to protect themselves—but its self-interestedness could not conceal its simultaneous status as a social tie contributing to the meaning and purpose of international power.

Few subjects have been commented on with such frequency as the balance, and examples of it in action readily spring to the mind of any student of international affairs; in this era, the coalition-building of the United Provinces, the defection of Britain from the anti-Bourbon alliance during the War of the Spanish Succession, and the collective reaction of the Powers to Britain’s time of troubles in the 1780s are all salient cases. Importantly, the duty to balance was derived from the rational operation of the international system and, just as in its first iteration in 15th century Italy, it frequently found itself at odds with the adaptive dynastic norms of patrimonial advancement and the need for glory. This tension made itself known at key junctures: in the Utrecht settlement’s invocation of balance as a limitation to the universal principle of inheritance; in the ‘diplomatic revolution’ that united France and Austria in contravention of decades of enmity; and in the successive partitions of Poland, which placed the requirements of Great Power aggrandizement and consideration ahead of legitimacy and law. A final

point is the tendency of the duty to balance to coopt and incorporate other Great Power rights and duties. As noted above, the right to consideration (and its accompanying practice of territorial compensation) became incorporated into the operation of the balance by century's end in concert with the growth of a territorial politics of spheres of influence. This propensity of the balance to gather up and guide the other rights and duties would grow in subsequent decades.

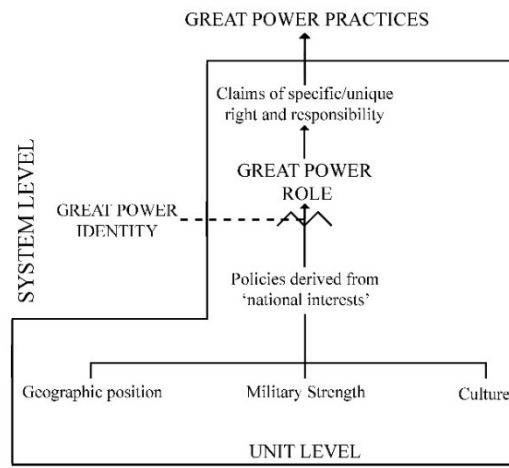
III. Great Power Roles

Each Power adapted the right- and duty-claims of the shared identity to its own social and material context. This translated the rights and duties available to the Powers generally into a specific *Great Power role* cognizant of parochial aspirations and limitations (see Figure 3.4). While the identity derives from general pressures operating more or less evenly across the whole of the international system, Great Power roles begin with a number of parochial concerns, including a particular state's geographic position, its military strength, and its domestic culture. From these myriad factors come the primary objectives, needs, and reasons of state—discrete 'national interests'. In turn, these interests are elided with the rights and duties considered proper to all Great Powers. Their combination produces a number of right- and duty-claims unique to a specific Great Power role.

In the long 18th century, there were three general groupings of roles. The first of these included those Powers whose domestic characteristics encouraged a focus on the accumulation of dynastic prestige. The second was comprised of those whose geostrategic positions encouraged a focus on the balance of power and the maintenance of a fluid system of European alliances. The third was unique to rising Powers. This

subsection will analyze these groupings comparatively, identifying the overall trends at work. Two general antitheses will guide a final analysis: the role's assertive or preservative character and its orientation toward either balancing or traditional norms.

Figure 3.4: Components of a Great Power Role



a. Dynasty, Prestige, and the Perils of Social Position

In the first grouping of roles, the domestic imperatives of states combined with their Great Power identity to produce an emphasis on dynastic advancement and territorial consolidation. France, Austria, and Spain all fell into this category, but their similarities did not make for identical outcomes. France pursued an active policy of dynastic aggrandizement that diminished only slightly over time. Spain, beginning from a position of weaker material strength and different geographic focus, vacillated between focusing on the desperate preservation of its existing empire and actively asserting itself as a traditional Great Power before finally settling into a strongly-preservationist siege mentality. Austria initially directed its role toward the preservation of what it saw as the

legitimacy of its imperial writ; ultimately, however, it came to accept the need to set aside tradition in the service of Great Power consideration and balance.

i. France: Dynastic Assertiveness and Gloire

France was particularly committed to feudal norms of dynasty and prestige. It thus centered its role on the dynastic and territorial aggrandizement of the Bourbon patrimony. Each of the primary inputs of French state interest in this period—its military power, its geographic position, and its culture—either enabled or impelled France to adopt policies aimed at the assertion of its aspirations to primacy. Materially, France held a plurality of the European distribution of capacity for much of this era. Though periodic difficulties in extracting and mobilizing said power would plague it, its unparalleled reservoirs of wealth, people, and material could only be restrained in wartime by a coalition of other Powers. Geographically, its Spanish and Italian borders were secure, and its eastern and northeastern borders were populated by a number of tempting imperial morsels far from Vienna but close to Paris. Such a situation was permissive of adventurism, and the French state—“fundamentally dynastic, *from the top to the bottom*”—reflected a wider French cultural emphasis on the aggressive acquisition of glory and prestige for one’s family.²⁷² The 1658 triumph over its much-envied Spanish rival finally erased the series of dynastic line failures, royal minorities, and freak accidents that—when combined with the turbulent wars of religion and aristocratic particularism that plagued it for almost a century—had long debased the prestige of the French crown and invited foreign intervention in French politics. A century had been lost in internal conflict, and the French state consequently had a multitude of grievances to

²⁷² Emphasis in original. Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV*, 337.

settle that were rooted in the desire to solidify its social preeminence after a long period in the wilderness. This was reflected in the self-consciously dynastic foreign policy adopted by Louis XIV in the Low Countries and Spain and by Louis XV in Poland; the “*end goal* in all of this was to strengthen the hold of the Bourbon dynasty on the realm and enhance its prestige on the international stage.”²⁷³

Unsurprisingly, the addition of the rights and duties disclosed by the Great Power identity to this volatile combination of domestic imperatives made for a pugnacious French Great Power role. The Great Power rights of inheritance, dynastic promotion, and the accumulation of prestige provided a dynastic impetus, a formal-legal justification, and a social incentive to glorify family and state by rolling back the House of Habsburg’s territorial position. For 18th century France, being a Great Power thus meant that it had a special claim of right over these regions—the Low Countries by the Bourbon right of devolved inheritance and the Netherlands by virtue of France’s right to avenge its prestige upon its upstart (and republican) former client. Later, the translation of these Bourbon rights further afield thrust upon France the necessity of defending claims to the Spanish and Polish thrones. That both these prizes were bridges too far did not matter because a special duty claim attached itself to Great Power France: French kings had to bow to the dictates of a “highly traditional sense of obligation and chivalry” to avoid losing face, prestige, and their claim to be the ‘sun court’ around which the rest of Europe rotated.²⁷⁴ Louis XV exemplified this element of French Great Power when he returned

²⁷³ Ibid., 10.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 361.

the fruits of France's conquests at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession, considering it beneath his dignity to barter them as would a "merchant."²⁷⁵

Successive defeats failed to convince France to modify its role and adopt a new understanding of its own Great Power, but the notion of European leadership was difficult to cast off for a state that saw itself as "the greatest European power and the focus of European civilisation."²⁷⁶ France did slightly relax its focus on dynastic legitimacy and reduced its formerly high level of assertiveness in international affairs, reflecting the realization that its ability to mobilize its material capacity was not proving equal to its ambitions.²⁷⁷ However, this shift toward a preservationist posture foreshadowed the sclerosis that began to take hold of the *ancien régime* in the last quarter of the 18th century—an economic and social ennui that ultimately insulated the substance of France's Great Power role from radical reform. When France intervened on the side of the American rebels to repay Britain for the loss in prestige it had suffered in 1763, prestige was the primary element it claimed at the negotiating table for the peace that followed. Similarly, French support of the Dutch Patriot Revolt echoed Louis XIV's policy of *gloire* and aggrandizement despite the revolt's political principles; in this case, however, France was unable to effectively intervene because it was bankrupt. This probably spared it a war with Prussia and Britain, but also dispelled what was left of France's international reputation. Along with it vanished the role of dynastic aggrandizer that had guided its policy for over a century.

²⁷⁵ "Sa Majesté très-chrétienne a le souci de faire la paix non en marchand mais en roi." Jean-Jacques Boucher, *Le comte de Lowendal, Ulrich-Frédéric Woldemar: Maréchal de France, 1700-1755* (Paris: Lanore, 2012), 173; Anderson, 2, 207-8.

²⁷⁶ Anderson, 5.

²⁷⁷ In 1748, Louis XV finally ended France's long support for the Stuart family as a part of the settlement ending the War of the Austrian Succession; Charles Edward Stuart was arrested and exiled to Switzerland. Anderson, 208.

France's special relationship with dynastic right and its fixation on the duties associated with being Europe's preeminent state reveal something important: when a Power stands in the first rank of the first rank, there can be a troubling combination of power-political temptation and social pressure to exhibit certain behaviors. A powerful state is encouraged by the logic entailed in its social understanding of power to act in a certain way because to act differently would be to undermine its status.²⁷⁸ In France's case, it was the leading dynastic, prestige-seeking state among a network of such states; this necessarily encouraged it to invest in policies along those lines. Eventually, blowback set in as it followed its natural, normative pursuit of its rights and duties straight into bankruptcy and decline. This shows how preeminence can be a heavy burden for a Power to bear.

ii. Spain and Austria: Dynastic Preservation

Spain and Austria, the other two dynastically-oriented Powers, had both emerged from the strife of the early 17th century chastened by the material and social shifts occurring around them. Consequently, the Great Power roles they adopted were aimed at the preservation of their respective territories and social statuses in the face of potential stagnation or decline. These two realms faced similar geographic and military challenges, including only tenuous control of their nominal dominions.²⁷⁹ Culturally, they shared a common Habsburg heritage harkening back to what were happier days for them both. They clung tightly to this legacy, a prideful focus on medieval traditions that would be a direct antecedent of the War of the Spanish Succession. Both were fiercely protective of

²⁷⁸ For long-cycle hegemonic trends, see Dennis Florig, "Hegemonic Overreach vs. Imperial Overstretch," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 1103-1119.

²⁷⁹ "There were never enough men to meet all commitments." Christopher Storrs, *The Resilience of the Spanish Monarchy, 1665-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 61.

the roles and prerogatives they had inherited from former times—Spain in the Indies and Austria and Germany—even as those prerogatives became more and more difficult to assert. Similarly, both came to recognize their increasing weaknesses, and both produced rulers—Joseph II and Charles III—whose attempts to reform and modernize their monarchies to restore greatness were ahead of their time. Both adapted the general Great Power identity to aid in their struggle against decline, but here they diverged. Spain was motivated by an entirely reactionary ethos based on the inherited concepts and practices. In contrast, Austria’s burst of reluctant amoral assertiveness under Maria Theresa—an event that inaugurated the extension of Austrian territory and Austrian interests eastward—was a difficult, but vital, step in slowing its decline relative to the other Powers by renovating its role.

Austria’s Great Power role was one of dynastic preservationism and the management of relative decline, first through the assertion of tradition-based rights and duties but later by an acceptance of new claims derived from power-political innovations. In the beginning, Austria was obsessed with claims derived from dynastic inheritance and the pursuit of prestige; indeed, the heart of its Great Power existence was its right to the elective imperial office.²⁸⁰ Similarly, its obligation to further the ancient claims of the House of Habsburg’s many branches led it to articulate a right to a special sphere of influence over the other German states. Its duty to manage the internal affairs of Germany by guiding its dynastic makeup occupied an enormous amount of Austria’s

²⁸⁰ When a non-Habsburg ascended the imperial throne for the first time in centuries, the Austrians wasted little time in occupying his Bavarian duchy. When he died, they made peace with his son—but only after he had renounced any pretensions to the throne and promised his support to the Austrian Archduchess’s husband in the next election. No one would again question the right of the Austrians to the imperial dignity.

attention and political capital, especially when Louis XIV was at the height of his ambitions for French royal dynastic absorption of the western imperial principalities. Similarly, Prussia's own Great Power role it threatened Austria's special German claims; an organized military power capable of defeating Austria was suddenly located within Germany itself, and it came complete with an alternative dynastic pole centered on the House of Hohenzollern.

In response, Austria began to gradually alter its Great Power role.²⁸¹ Where once it had been the bastion of European tradition and dynasticism—it now began to cautiously embrace the innovative rights and duties asserted by Britain, Prussia, and Russia.²⁸² Its humiliation by Prussia encouraged it to undertake a 'diplomatic revolution' and ally with its ancient French enemy. After its failure to cow Prussia and retake Silesia in the Seven Years' War, it resigned itself to a new balance of power within Germany based on the *fait accompli* of Prussian Great Power rather than the formal prerogatives of the Austrian emperor. In a particularly telling episode, Maria Theresa reluctantly committed Austria to a policy of collaboration with Prussia and Russia in the theft of Polish territory on only the flimsiest of legal pretexts. Frederick the Great's famous quip, "she wept, but she still took," aptly summarized Austria's difficult transition from feudal to modern international politics.²⁸³ Her successor, Joseph II, was less hesitant than his mother in adopting new ideas and now power-political methods, making the reform of Austria's confusing, semi-feudal government and diplomacy a primary aim of his

²⁸¹ Anderson, 212-18.

²⁸² Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, 34-5.

²⁸³ Various "elle pleurait, et prenait toujours" or "elle pleurait toujours mais elle prenait toujours." Davies, 390.

reign.²⁸⁴ Moving away from its former role as the defender of dynasty and traditional prerogatives (and its preference for traditional sources of order over modern ones), Austria instead began to embrace a proto-managerialist role based on Great Power collaboration. By the onset of the French Revolution, it had thus arrived at “a policy half of legality and half of piracy,” midway between old and new.²⁸⁵

Spain began just like Austria, a preservationist power content in its dynastic position and focused on the assertion of its traditional rights and duties.²⁸⁶ After the loss of its Belgian and Italian patrimony, it jerked toward an assertive policy of territorial and dynastic aggrandizement in an attempt to regain lost lands and lost prestige. By century’s close, however, its Great Power status was severely weakened; only in concert with France or Britain could Spain play the Great Power game. To the extent that a coherent role can be drawn from this varied history, Spain’s was focused around the recognition of decline and the eager desire not to manage, but to reverse it. Like Austria, it had to devote much of its energy in this period to the protection of a wobbly dynasty and the preservation of its prestigious Italian, Belgian, and American territories, areas where it strongly asserted a special right to regulate trade by special powers over foreign vessels. The other Powers generally assented to this special claim; despite a series of defeats in the global wars of the 18th century, the general colonial integrity of Spain would remain a

²⁸⁴ His scheme to transform German politics by bringing the duchy of Bavaria—long one of the Empire’s most contumacious electorates—under Austrian control and ‘compensating’ its duke with the strategic liability that was Austrian Netherlands remained, never realized, Austria’s primary international objective (even sparking a brief war with Prussia) until the French Revolution. Anderson, 6; Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, 27-30.

²⁸⁵ Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, 35. Osiander, claiming that Great Power innovation “without any reference to custom” only occurred later, at Vienna, misses this crucial—and far more continuous—development decades earlier. Vienna would only accelerate trends inbuilt into the dual moral-material right- and responsibility-complex from the beginning. Osiander, 233.

²⁸⁶ The task of Charles II was “essentially a ‘conservative’ one [aimed at] conserving largely intact the empire he inherited . . . [as well as] the maintenance of great power status.” Storrs, 13-14.

matter of recognized international custom that persisted even after Spain had clearly surrendered its Great Power position.²⁸⁷ To reverse its decline, it embarked on ventures of dynastic conquest in Italy and gambled much on a series of ‘family compacts’ first with Austria and later with France. Carried along into multiple wars, Spain’s eagerness to act as a Great Power gradually led it down the primrose path of French clientage.

In sum, the lesson to be drawn from the cases of Spain and Austria is that Great Powers experiencing relative or absolute decline face two paths. First, they can attempt to translate the special rights and duties they hold by virtue of their Great Power identity into particular claims of authority buttressing existing territorial and social arrangements. To an extent, this is merely the attempt to use any and all means to hold on to material capacity and social position. But it is also more since the declining Power will attempt to lend an aura of permanence and legitimacy to elements of its existence that would not have been so framed in more prosperous periods. A Great Power facing decline can thus try to embed the terms of its existence and the particularity of its role within the context of the system itself, justifying and legitimating its continued existence as a Power. Spain would ultimately repeat its claims about its colonies and the honor due it in Europe until the Powers finally decided that its role could be dispensed with.

However, Powers can resist this temptation and chart a different course by reconstructing their role. Austria sensed the threat to its relevance in Germany posed by its inability to manage Prussia; unable to recover its old prerogatives, it henceforth determined to, in the words of Maria Theresa, “*agir à la prussienne*.”²⁸⁸ After two failed

²⁸⁷ Only after several years of *de facto* independence in the 1810s and 1820s would Spain’s American colonies gain widespread European recognition; see Fabry, 49-68.

²⁸⁸ Seton-Watson, 147.

wars based on its hereditary right to Silesia, it reversed course and stopped talking about the legitimacy of its claims there. Instead, it acted to secure its future status by proclaiming, jointly with the young-blood Powers of Prussia and Russia, its right to a sphere, to consideration, and to act forcefully to secure its place in balance of power in tumultuous regions such as Italy, the Balkans, and Poland. It even accepted the dissolution of the Empire—its most ancient wellspring of rights and duties—with relatively good grace, securing in the process a leading position in post-Napoleonic Germany. Thus, the embrace of isomorphic Great Power innovation ably served even the most feudal of European courts.

b. Holland, Britain, and the Duty of Balancing

Britain and the United Provinces shared a role—and, in William of Orange, a ruler—for a significant portion of this period. Their similar geographic, military, and cultural circumstances conditioned them to define their Great Power experience around the European balance of power and their unique positions within it as coalition-builders and rectifiers of imbalance. In contrast to the traditional, dynastic roles asserted by France, Spain, and Austria, these roles were expressions of the increasing dominance of systemic thinking in international affairs.

The inputs of geography, military strength, and culture united the United Provinces and Britain. Geographically, they were both strong naval and colonial powers, with a sizeable share of their prestige and power deriving from overseas trade. Strategically, France was the central threat. Culturally, they had both escaped French clientage in the late 17th century by means of domestic revolution, and they shared a Protestant and commercial ethic that carried with it significant anti-Catholic and anti-

absolutist sentiment. Militarily, they were dominant naval powers who nonetheless had the material capacity and extractive capability needed to field armies equal to those of their continental peers, and both understood that French dominance of one would threaten the security of the other. Consequently, with the accession of the United Provinces to the status of Great Power through the restoration of William III and that of Great Britain through the rejection of James II, both sought to contain Louis XIV by means of international alliances and coalition warfare. This two-decade long undertaking would see them develop a nascent understanding of their special duty to manage the European balance of power.

Even before French power was fully contained, these maritime powers were spearheading initiatives to manage the seemingly imminent struggle over the Spanish succession, negotiating multiple partition treaties designed to ensure that the breakup of the Spanish empire would be balanced to preserve European stability. When these treaties failed to restrain the ambitions of the dynastic powers and brought about a global war, they likewise managed the conflict. They entered the war in support of the Austrian candidate to the Spanish throne, the emperor's brother. However, when the emperor died in the middle of war, his position was inherited by the very brother who had claimed the throne of Spain. For the maritime powers, the reunion of Austria and Spain would have been an unacceptable reconfiguration of the balance of power. When, after a long struggle, "France's capability had been reduced to that of a one-theatre power, like Portugal," and their goal of containment had been accomplished, Britain and the United Provinces exited the war.²⁸⁹ By abandoning Austria and its dynastic claim to Spain (the

²⁸⁹ By 1712, France's finances "had collapsed to a level commensurate with that of a second- or third-rank power." Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV*, 27, 235.

formal-legal basis of their coalition), the maritime powers chose to preference the needs of the systemic balance over the adaptive dynastic norms of legitimacy.²⁹⁰ Britain would further infuriate Austria by guaranteeing “ill-gotten” Prussian and Savoyard territorial gains after their later struggle against them in the War of the Austrian Succession.²⁹¹ There was a role based on the duty of the balance, before which all other concerns—including honor—were secondary.

Though the Netherlands withdrew from the balance of power and abandoned its Great Power role, Britain continued to promote measured, preservationist interference. It emphasized the importance of managing change through the promotion of Great Power amity, but its own desire to solidify the basis of its Protestant Hanoverian dynasty and the security of its overseas commerce came to cloud its thinking by mid-century.²⁹² After all, the Britain of 1720 had three important components that the Britain of 1690 lacked: a significant foothold on the continent (Hanover), Mediterranean strongholds (Gibraltar and Minorca), and unquestioned naval superiority. With these advantages came the temptation to disregard the balance in favor of British interests. It increasingly focused on the expansion of its trade and colonial territory and assumed, by virtue of its naval strength, special prerogatives over international maritime activity; in so doing, it helped to extend the scope of the European system across the Atlantic.²⁹³ This altered how it expressed its Great Power role, moving away from a focus on the systemic preservation

²⁹⁰ Worse still, the British fleet even assisted the Bourbons in suppressing pro-Austrian forces in Catalonia. Whig outrage over these derogations from tradition eventually forced Bolingbroke into exile. See Frey and Frey, xviii, xxiv.

²⁹¹ Anderson, 204-7.

²⁹² Andrew C. Thompson, “Balancing Europe: Ideas and interests in British foreign policy, c. 1700-c. 1720” in *Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe*, 273-5; Wout Troost, “‘To restore and preserve the liberty of Europe’: William III’s ideas on foreign policy” in *Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe*, 283-5, 289-98.

²⁹³ For Britain’s maximal rights at sea, see Anderson, 14-15.

of a stable balance and toward the assertion of a very traditional prestige-focused role reminiscent of the heyday of Spain's global empire. This role, based on colonial and imperial impulses, would be badly shaken by its losses in the American Revolution, but the expansion of its involvement in India shortly thereafter (under the same Charles Cornwallis defeated at Yorktown) expressed the continuation of this role even in the face of adversity.

Thus, roles based on the maintenance of the balance of power proved unstable over the course of 18th century politics. Of the Powers embracing them, one exhausted itself and determined that it had more to lose than to gain from its role while the other found that the restraint and consideration necessary for the role meshed poorly with an increasingly-predominant share of the distribution of material capacity. These cases demonstrate that the managerial spirit which lay at the heart of the 'holder of the balance' role was not yet sufficiently developed to overcome two important challenges: the alluring idea of 'splendid isolation' from the troubles of the international system and the temptation to aggrandize one's special rights and duties when in a position of material preeminence.²⁹⁴

c. Russia and Prussia: Assertion, Aggrandizement, and Legitimacy

The final category of roles embraces Russia and Prussia. Late-comers to Great Power, they shared an approach cognizant of their status as newcomers and outsiders. Their roles were consequently the least systemic-minded and the most parochial and self-focused of the Powers. Russia had originated outside of the European system, and had to fight a series of wars to come—territorially and conceptually—into Europe. Prussia

²⁹⁴ For a similar but more sweeping conclusion, see Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, 48.

gained its status by successfully challenging both its imperial overlord and the traditional norms governing international conquest. Militarily and geographically, they both earned their positions by the sword and were deeply concerned with the social and material precariousness of those gains. In Russia's case, this created a security dilemma that it tried to solve by consistent expansion. In Prussia's, widely scattered and non-contiguous holdings led it to develop a garrison-state mentality in which its very existence was predicated on the prestige of its arms. Consequently, their respective Great Power roles were shaped by the pursuit of prestige, spheres of influence, and, ultimately, a right to receive consideration from the older Powers.

Russia's Great Power role was expressed through the assertive, century-long project to expand its western hinterland and solidify its place in the European system discussed above. Initially, this was accomplished through simple conquest. But it quickly learned that the territories of the east were susceptible to institutionalized manipulation and informal control—the pen could gain it as much as the sword. Special claims to political and religious rights and duties actuated its policy, exemplified by the Treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji (1774):

[Its] most important clauses were those in which the religious and political imperceptibly blended. The right to erect a "Russo-Greek Church" in the suburb of Galata might at first seem insignificant, but it was the first concession of this nature since the Turks had established their rule over Christian subjects, and thus became . . . a symbol in stone of the rising power of Russia. The right of pilgrimage to the holy places . . . had a similar sentimental value. But most important of all was the loosely worded Article VII, which pledged the Porte to protect the Christian religion, and allowed the Russian minister to make representations "en toute occasion" in favour of those serving the new Russian Church. The Porte was bound to receive his remarks as coming "from a neighbouring and sincerely friendly Power." From this clause dates that ill-defined protectorate over the Orthodox Christians of the East which Russia was constantly extending by the treaties of the next half century, and which,

being blended of moral authority, true religious sentiment and naked imperialistic greed, was to survive in a new form even after the Powers had fought a war to end it.²⁹⁵

From this point forward, Russia's Great Power role would be concerned with the special political prerogatives it had gradually carved out in the course of its march westward: Russia as Orthodox protector and *de facto* overlord of the east. As its special claims to rights and prerogatives added up, its desire to have its prestige recognized by the powers of the west would impel it to demand recognition of its formal precedence and legitimacy. In the years leading up to the French Revolution, it almost succeeded in obtaining a guarantee of the German constitution (a right to intervene in support of the status quo throughout the entire Holy Roman Empire) that would have made it the arbiter of European politics.

Prussia's role focused on its quest for prestige in Germany. This had several components, including successful efforts at territorial aggrandizement that left it with widely-scattered, non-contiguous possession, eastward expansion at the expense of secondary states, and the maintenance of its army as the core state institution. Whatever lesser power paid the price, the real target in all of this was the hegemony of the Habsburg dynasty; as a Great Power, Prussia chafed at the formal superiority and prestige of Austria, and exerted every effort to attain at least practical equality in status and power. Its diplomacy within Germany was consequently centered on the manipulation of key German electorates in an effort to put together a counterbalance. To the extent that Prussia translated the general identity of a Great Power into unique claims of right and duty, it claimed a right to exist as a Great Power equal to Austria. This it did in spite of

²⁹⁵ Seton-Watson, 148.

feudal formalities, German law, international norms, and received wisdom.²⁹⁶

Consequently, it was the most 'rational' and modern of the Powers, initially asserting its state interests as it saw fit with only the thinnest of normative veneer. As it matured, it began to focus on the common Great Power right to consideration, using it to draw its onetime enemies into collaborative relationships. Having gained a measure of international acceptance, Prussia gradually settled down into a more traditional role based on the preservation of the prestige it had acquired through non-traditional means. This preservation was yoked to a reactionary sense of tradition, signaling a monarchical reaction to growing liberalism. When Dutch Patriots imprisoned the Prussian king's sister, he invaded over the objections of France and crushed the rebellion in the name of dynastic duty.²⁹⁷ Prussia had come full circle, once the disrupter of the status quo but now the defender of the traditional order.

The cases of Russia and Prussia illustrate how rising powers articulate Great Power roles designed to secure and concretize their new position. Having seized and proven its share of the distribution of power on the battlefield, Russia developed a complex series of special rights and duties designed to enshrine its sphere of influence in formal-legal terms through protectorates and treaty guarantees, adopting the language and practices of the European states-system. Prussia's story is much the same, though its turbulent rise through the middle of the 18th century was capped by somewhat less subtle processes of territorial predation. Once secure in its position, its policy turned toward a more traditional focus on the maintenance of its prestige and the legitimacy of its place

²⁹⁶ "The core and essence of the Prussian tradition was an absence of tradition." Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2006), xvi.

²⁹⁷ Israel, 1113-14.

among the Great Powers. In both cases, the assertion of status was matched by attempts to concretize it through peer recognition; having successfully upset the system—Russia by crushing Sweden, Prussia by humiliating Austria—these Powers were quick to adapt their behavior to prevailing standards. Importantly, however, in doing so they emphasized not old feudal traditions, but the rationally-intuited needs of power politics and international balance. Hence, the division of the east through partitions was carried out *by* Great Powers, *for* Great Powers and was based on the right of these powerful states to behave exceptionally and in concert. This was a right that was checked not by law, but instead by the rights and duties they held in relation to one another. As the strong did what they would and the weak suffered what they must, a nascent managerialism based on the special norms of Great Power interaction was gradually taking shape.

d. Conclusion: Great Power Roles Compared, 1648-1787

The Great Power roles of the long 18th century changed over time, and generalizable trends can be extrapolated from their historical development. The Powers that particularly embraced traditional norms of dynasty and feudal prestige found those principles to be untenable as time wore on. All had suffered significant defeats by mid-century, and each adjusted international behavior in recognition of the fact that hereditary right was being modified and partially subsumed by international balance. Austria underwent a significant change as it replaced force for legal argument in its approach to its eastern hinterland, a precursor to the later international *sangfroid* it would display in its post-Napoleonic redrawing of the European map. Spain, buoyed by the Bourbon accession, underwent a period of increased assertiveness in the 1720s and again in the 1750s. Defeated in both periods, it resumed a preservative stance under Charles III as it

sought to rebuild its domestic government and international prestige. France changed the least, altering its assertive and traditional international role only in response to two global defeats. Even then, the French policies and attitudes of the 1780s differed little from those of the 1710s save that dynastic legitimism counted for slightly less in the eyes of Louis XVI than in those of his great-grandfather. French support for rebellions against hereditary rulers might seem to indicate a rationalist turn, but even these were motivated more by an old-fashioned desire for prestige than by strategic calculation.

The two systemic balancing powers, Britain and the United Provinces, were more *sui generis*. The Dutch were in the game primarily to fend off universal monarchy and would do so by means of any alliance or backstab necessary; their role underwent no significant change before it was dropped entirely. In contrast, Britain grew more assertive as time wore on; after it had cowed its French and Spanish rivals in the Seven Years' War, it adopted a more imperial role that was less cognizant of the importance of balance than of its increasingly-preeminent status. The coalition this provoked against it, though successful, would not prevent this conception of the United Kingdom's Great Power role from reasserting itself in later years.

Finally, the rising Powers of Russia and Prussia were cast in a very cynical and calculating mold but grew conservative and traditional over time. Russia, concerned with establishing its respectability within Europe, strove to articulate its post-1721 westward expansion in western terms; this led it to establish a series of formal-legal rights, duties, guarantees, and protectorates through treaty. Together, these comprised a significant Russian sphere of influence the management of which encouraged Russian assertiveness along traditional Great Power lines. For its part, after years of hostility with Austria over

its theft of Silesia, Prussia would come to focus more and more on the preservation of the status it had compelled Europe to recognize by force of arms. This became possible initially as it chose to enter into a conciliatory process of active collaboration with its former rivals over the territorial disposition of the east and accelerated after the death of Frederick the Great had removed a militant ruler famous for his brazen disregard of traditional norms. At the same time, Prussia lost much of its vitality, transitioning from the role of *enfant terrible* of the states-system to being a powerfully conservative force eager for order.

Thus, the trend was one of convergence toward a middle-ground between rationally-derived, pragmatic norms and traditionally-received, inherited ones as well as between assertive and preservative attitudes toward system stability. By the outbreak of the French Revolution, the Powers had collectively abrogated many norms related to dynastic right and the pursuit of honorable prestige, yet they had also proven unwilling to abandon the old forms wholesale in favor of a pure balance of power system. Prestige still mattered, and the Powers still required one another's recognition and social esteem. Great Power thrones still remained largely inviolable, even if colonies and, increasingly, provinces were not. Precedence still demarcated Great Powers from lesser powers—especially as the right to consideration fostered Great Power collaboration against lesser states—even if the balance of power had on multiple occasions rendered the over-mighty 'preeminent' powers ineffective pariahs. War was endemic, but the stakes still remained low compared to the past or to what was to come. As the system of the classical balance of power drew to a close with the first coalition against revolutionary France, this supremely mild compromise between the legacy of the past and the politics of calculation

and power would give way to a much more unstable intermixture of change and continuity influencing and influenced by the right- and responsibility-complex of a new century.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROGRESS WITHOUT CHANGE: RISING POWERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

'Here's this huge [German] empire, stretching half over central Europe—an empire growing like wildfire. I believe, in people, and wealth, and everything. They've licked the French, and the Austrians, and are the greatest military power in Europe. I wish I knew more about all that, but what I'm concerned with is their sea-power. It's a new thing with them, but it's going strong, and that Emperor of theirs is running it for all it's worth. He's a splendid chap, and anyone can see he's right. They've got no colonies to speak of, and must have them, like us. . . . I don't blame [the Germans],' said Davies, who for all his patriotism, had not a particle of racial spleen in his composition. *'I don't blame them. . . . We can't talk about conquest and grabbing. We've collared a fine share of the world, and they've every right to be jealous. Let them hate us, and say so; it'll teach us to buck up and that's what really matters'.*

- Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903)²⁹⁸

The previous chapter documented how a complex of Great Power rights and responsibilities contextualized power through purposive identities and roles; its ordering influence was evident in the relatively continuous political configurations and controlled patterns of violence characteristic of the 18th century. This chapter moves forward to the 19th century to study how that complex was able to reproduce itself even in the face of that century's novel forces of change. It makes two important points. First, the international politics of this period was based on a *concretization of the Great Power identity into a quasi-formal social status*. Because of this concretization, Great Power status became a visible and self-conscious component of self-understanding among both policymakers and, eventually, among national populaces. This greatly increased the importance of the public enactment of a Great Power role expressing a sense of national mission. Second, greater institutionalization allowed a number of rising Powers—potentially system-shattering manifestations of this century's forces of change—to claim

²⁹⁸ Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service*, ed. David Trotter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 74, 90-1.

this ideal-typical status by adjusting their behaviors and self-understandings rather than by challenging its norms and expectations. Taken together, these two movements demonstrate how a complex of Great Power rights and responsibilities became even more central to international politics by conditioning how change was understood and institutionally expressed. By encouraging rising Powers to render their understandings and aspirations in right- and duty-terms, the expectations and consequences surrounding international change were sublimated, while the conflicts arising from it were directed away from the system's core and into the periphery.

This was a great success, and it promoted such peace and stability within the European core that thoughtful observers could seriously imagine that a progressive new epoch in international affairs had dawned. At the unit level, the Powers responded to this by shaping their thoughts and self-understandings ever more tightly around the complex that had made it possible, gradually making their status and roles into pillars of the ontological security of their states and nations. At the international level, this simultaneously promoted an increased emphasis on systemic international managerialism that pushed semi-archy toward hierarchy and informal governance toward formal oligopoly. These consequences of these shifts will be explored in the following chapter, which will explain how this further institutionalization of status and role relationships would eventually lead to the destruction of the complex through which it was expressed.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into two sections. Section I will provide a brief theoretic overview of how the Vienna settlement embedded revised concepts of *status* and *authority* within the identity and roles of the Great Powers. As moral and material distributions shifted around the Powers, this reification and institutionalization

of older concepts and practices created an ideal-typical vision of what it meant to be a Great Power, generally and specifically, that would be a point of reference and a source of governance amidst profound changes in domestic and international life. Section II will present case studies of rising Powers—those that benefitted from these changes—such as the French Second Republic and Second Empire, nationalist Germany, and Japan. Power transition theory would suggest that these states would be well-positioned to challenge existing attitudes and patterns of behavior, but the evidence presented here demonstrates that the lure of the *status* to be gained by the adoption of the existing Great Power identity ultimately encouraged them to formulate their behaviors and self-understandings in the mold of the traditional Great Powers, including through their assertion of unique roles expressing special *authority* claims. In each of these cases, the actors involved filtered processes of change—some gradual and pacific, others sudden and violent—through the interpretative complex of existing rights and duties. As a result, the number of Powers multiplied without serious disruption—evidence in the short run of the ability of a complex of rights and duties to reproduce itself peacefully.

I. Great Power after Vienna: Status and Authority

Every iteration of the European international system has been colored by its own unique “set of rules or norms...defin[ing] actors and appropriate behavior.”²⁹⁹ The previous chapter documented those operative in the 18th century, a complex of Great Power rights and responsibilities. However, the 19th century was qualitatively different from the arrangements that had come before it because of the shocks that had preceded it; the universalism of the French Revolution and the universal monarchy of Napoleon had

²⁹⁹ Stephen Krasner, “Organized Hypocrisy in Nineteenth-Century East Asia,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 1, no. 2 (2001): 173.

disrupted international politics in ways reminiscent of the 17th century, threatening in the process a radical remaking of continental politics. With these elements forcibly repressed, the victorious allies made a conscious decision at the Congress of Vienna not only to restore the Great Power concepts and practices of the old system, but to institutionalize the “habit of mind” from which they sprang as it had never been before.³⁰⁰ Not only were the old key elements of Great Power—an international dynastic system, a shared focus on prestige, the assertion of systemic interests, and the active participation in a balance of power—brought back, they were reinforced and visibly enacted before the eyes of a Europe subject to increasing nationalist and liberal pressures. This ‘opening up’ of Great Power was accompanied by an emphasis on frequent conferences of the Powers to address disorders in Italy, Spain, and even overseas, Great Power coalitions expressing collective managerial authority, and the quasi-legalistic enthronement of dynastic legitimacy as a (tentative) transnational duty principle; all of these lengthened the reach of Great Power politics past the antechambers of kings and into the parliaments of nations and even the homes of people. Thus, the consequence of this “moment of conscious international regime construction” at Vienna settlement was the *concretization* of the identity of Great Power—once simply a bundle of concepts, capabilities, and practices held internally by a select few states—into a social *status* recognizable by all.³⁰¹ It was no longer an obscure code of behavior ontologically-internalized by a dynastic elite; instead, it was now a public standard that could be written about, problematized, debated, and

³⁰⁰ David Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 4. For the Concert of Europe as an international institution, see Schulz, 45-8.

³⁰¹ Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13; for an example in contemporary international law, see T. J. Lawrence, “On the Primacy of the Great Powers” in *Essays on Some Disputed Questions in Modern International Law*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1885), 209-210, 228.

even legislated to order international politics. The myriad Great Power roles of the past now became mechanisms for the governance of geographic regions and issue areas; in this new ‘Concert of Europe’, roles expressed individual mandates that would together constitute a tighter, if still relationally-contingent and imperfect, measure of international governance based on active management by an oligopoly. These would express not only the purposes of individual Powers, but the will of a European Concert through delegated claims of *authority*.³⁰²

In the long run, as Chapter Five will detail, this transition from shared identity to ideal-typical status was particularly important because it pushed the semi-archival ordering of international politics in the direction of hierarchical Great Power rule. As Max Weber noted,

stratification by status goes hand in hand with a monopolization of ideal and material good or opportunities. . . . With an increased closure of the status group, the conventional preferential opportunities for special employment grow into a legal monopoly of special offices for the members. Certain goods become objects for monopolization by status groups . . . and frequently also the possession of . . . special trades. This monopolization occurs positively when the status group is exclusively entitled to own and to manage them.³⁰³

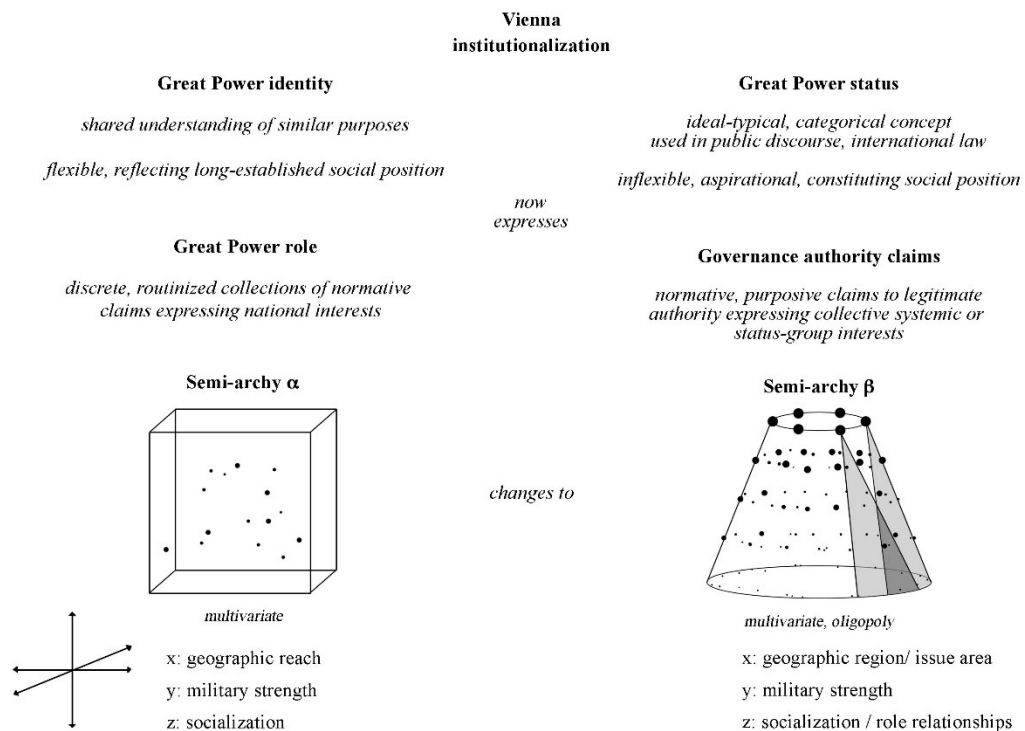
This is reflected in the reordering of semi-archy displayed in Figure 4.1. Here, semi-archy α , the multidimensional and loose pyramidal ordering born of numerous unit-level

³⁰² Lake differentiates between status and authority by labeling the former a non-zero-sum game and the latter a zero-sum relationship of control. Here, this corresponds roughly to the distinction between a shared Great Power identity holding general possibilities and strictures and a parochial Great Power role which requires clearer and more specific—and thus, less flexible—articulation. With Lake, these chapters concur that identity/status is generally less prone to violent contestation than role/authority for the simple reason that role/authority, being where the rubber of concept meets the road of policy, is usually the site where discrete interests will clash. However, the evidence presented in Chapter Five (the origins of World War I) suggests that when conflicts over identity/status *do* arise, they are much more likely to lead to systemic upheaval owing to their roots in longstanding contradictions in how rights and duties are configured within a system. See David A. Lake, “Status, Authority, and the End of the American Century” in *Status in World Politics*, eds. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 246-56.

³⁰³ Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 2, 935.

transactions, is transformed into semi-archy β , a tighter ordering in which an oligopolistic status group consciously and rationally acts to order the system through differentiated roles. The shaded areas reflect the expression of authority through the projection of Great Power roles across geographic spaces and conceptual issue areas. The darkly-shaded region represents where these roles overlap; as Chapter Five will detail, these areas of overlap can be competitive or cooperative, and can be important determinants of a system's character and fate.

Figure 4.1: The Vienna Concretization



Thus, the dynamism and flexibility offered by a semi-archival ordering based on constantly-shifting relationships was eventually traded for the short-term stability of the management of international change by a directorate of Powers. But it was between Vienna and the 20th century that this transformation occurred against a backdrop of material innovations reshaping violence capacity as well as moral innovations changing

international attitudes.³⁰⁴ These forces—liberalism, nationalism, industrialization, and globalization— would drag the Powers along in their wake while altering membership in the Great Power club.³⁰⁵ Amidst this churn, rising Powers confronted an ideal-typical Great Power status that could be pursued or rejected, and their choice was by no means certain.³⁰⁶ As an examination of relevant case studies in the following section reveals, however, that this period’s tremendous forces of change were ultimately directed into and sublimated within the existing the right- and responsibility-complex, an apparatus that encouraged new Powers to adopt the language, the practices, and even the self-understandings ‘proper’ to leading states.

³⁰⁴ For a catalogue of the dizzying advances in military technology in the 19th and early 20th centuries, see David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 15-40. The development of nationalist states and of international law will be discussed below.

³⁰⁵ The language of a ‘Great Power club’ has hitherto been largely avoided to forestall the impression of Great Power being a universally-recognized, clear-cut institutional category. As this narrative progresses to an era of greater institutionalization, however, this language becomes acceptable—rising states in the 19th century really did seek institutionalized membership in a clearly-demarcated group while those of the 18th century were more likely to just copy the behaviors and attitudes of other prestigious or successful states. The practical effect on international politics was much the same—hence we can speak of the meaning of Great Power earlier—but the conceptual pathways to this status were different. To wit, in the 19th century it was easier for a weaker state such as Italy to claim Great Power status than it would have been in the 18th since it could now simply register a bundle of prerogatives and duties by discursively *proclaiming* itself a Great Power with the consent of the existing Powers, where in the 18th century it would have been expected to first *prove* that status through action since the ‘Great Power club’ was far less institutionalized and defined, and consequently lacked a mechanism for the exercise of gatekeeping authority. The historian A. J. P. Taylor captured this phenomenon in a pithy footnote: When discussing Great Powers in the 19th and 20th centuries, “it becomes wearisome to add ‘except the Italians’ to every generalization. Henceforth it may be assumed” (Taylor, xxiii fn4). For relevant scholarship employing ‘club’ language in this modern sense, see the essays collected in T. V. Paul et. al., eds., *Status in World Politics*.

³⁰⁶ In sociological terms, this is the point at which actors recognizing a reference point in an established structure choose to be socially mobile and mimic it or instead to destroy or change it. Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, “Managing Rising Powers: The Role of Status Concerns” in *Status in World Politics*, 37-41.

II. Rising Powers in the 19th Century: Change and Conformity

A wide range of IR scholarship has concluded that periods of significant change in the relative material standing of states are times of particular tension.³⁰⁷ Sudden shifts leaving some states newly-empowered and others dissatisfied create an environment ripe for the sort of system-nonconforming behavior that could lead to violent contestation.³⁰⁸ The presence of strong feelings of revanchism or nationalism would logically contribute to this threat by both facilitating the extractive processes of the aggressive state (by promoting national enthusiasm and patriotism) as well as by intensifying the pressure placed on policymakers to resolve unsatisfactory geopolitical outcomes by force.³⁰⁹ By these standards, the 19th century was ripe for system revision as states formerly excluded from the identity of Great Power—post-Napoleonic France, the United States, and Japan—and states born of ideological ferment—Germany and Italy—began to confront a Great Power right- and responsibility-complex not of their making.³¹⁰ Yet, the revisionist and revolutionary impulses of these regimes ultimately found an outlet in their embrace of the established Great Power right- and responsibility-complex. By now sufficiently institutionalized to make it an excellent mechanism for the signaling of status and the exertion of authority, it provided an almost irresistible impetus for the socialization of rising Powers.³¹¹ Case studies will illustrate that the lure of Great Power status was

³⁰⁷ For a summary of Power Transition Theory scholarship, see Jonathan M. DiCicco and Jack S. Levy, “Power Shifts and Problem Shifts: The Evolution of the Power Transition Research Program,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, no. 6 (1999): 675-704.

³⁰⁸ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³⁰⁹ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 84-9. For the wisdom of the state itself cultivating these forces for material and moral advantage in war, see von Clausewitz, 184-190.

³¹⁰ William J. Brenner, *Confounding Powers: Anarchy and International Society from the Assassins to Al Qaeda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3, 244.

³¹¹ For socialization, see Brenner, 39-41.

sufficient to channel and temper the most strident forces of nationalism, guiding even revisionist and revolutionary entities to adopt traditional and conformist policies based in the articulation of socially-acceptable rights and duties. Even dissatisfied states could not conceive of their international programs outside of the milieu defined by the complex.

a. France

The revival of a revolutionary, nationalist republic in mid-19th century France would seem at first glance to portend the rise of a radical systems reviser, but a very different course would characterize its foreign policy. In attempting to actualize its national claim to the status of Great Power, the Second Republic and its imperial successor instead embraced the same shared Great Power identity that had been oriented toward suppressing it for decades.³¹²

France exemplifies how “status considerations are particularly salient when relative power relationships are changing.”³¹³ Its see-sawing fortunes from the Revolution to the July Monarchy had left it morally and materially paralyzed by mid-century.³¹⁴ Saddled with the suspicion and enmity of its peers as well as a national malaise, France had fallen behind the very nations it had once led; as a corrective, it would become the first Great Power to definitely adopt nationalism as a guiding element of its role, unlocking in the process new reserves of resources and new international

³¹² The continuity of policy between the Second Republic and Second Empire challenges power transition theories based on regime type differentiation such as that found in Daniel M. Kliman, *Fateful Transitions: How Democracies Manage Rising Powers, from the Eve of World War I to China's Ascendance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

³¹³ Deborah Welch Larson, T. V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth, “Status and World Order” in *Status in World Politics*, 29.

³¹⁴ For the startling decline in France’s once-preeminent population over the course of the Restoration, see Taylor, xxv-vi.

ambitions.³¹⁵ Would it pursue the path of its republican ancestor and bring revolution to Europe on the tips of its bayonets, abandoning in the process Great Power responsibilities for transnational commitments to nationalism and liberalism?

There was plenty of *prima facie* justification for those who feared just that. When revolutionaries overthrew the July Monarchy and established the Second Republic, they were theoretically declaring war on the entire Great Power system institutionalized at Vienna. French republicanism was itself a threat to the dynastic legitimacy that remained an important component of the meaning of 19th century Great Power, while its newfound assertiveness confounded the multitude of Great Power roles that had as their central tenant the suppression of the French revolutionary threat. France seemed unabashed on this point, quickly promulgating a public articulation of its right to exist. In a “Manifesto to the Powers,” the French foreign minister repudiated the Vienna settlement and claimed for the republic the right to full Great Power status despite its revolution, stating unequivocally that the revolution was beyond the regulation of existing treaties: “The republican form of the new government has not changed the place of France in Europe.”³¹⁶ Though of course it had, since France’s place in Europe had been debased since Napoleon’s fleeting return from exile had disrupted the proceedings at Vienna. Consequently, this formal repudiation of the Vienna settlement had, in Taylor’s words,

³¹⁵ As one scholar put it, for French revolutionaries of this period “France was not France except in the service of great causes.” William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 5.

³¹⁶ “*La forme républicaine du nouveau gouvernement n’a changée ni la place de la France en Europe, ni ses dispositions loyales et sincères à maintenir ses rapports de bonne harmonie avec les puissances qui voudront, comme elle, l’indépendance des nations et la paix du monde.*” Reproduced in Alphonse de Lamartine, *Trois Mois au Pouvoir* (Paris: Lévy, 1848), 68.

“put international relations on a *de facto* basis” by claiming an inherent place for republican France in the Great Power club.³¹⁷

Dramatic though this act was, the panic it inspired would prove unwarranted. France’s Great Power ambitions would ensure that the new *de facto* relations would take much the same form as the old *de iure*. Even though its very existence abrogated those same rules, the Second Republic nonetheless proved eager to signal that its behavior would be in line with existing Great Power norms and would not revert to the radical revolutionary or imperial ambitions of previous regimes. Instead, it would be driven by classical, status-seeking behaviors designed to mitigate the fears of its peers and replace them with respect for the stable, conformist tack it intended to take.³¹⁸ The formulation of its policies in right- and duty-terms provided an invaluable way to signal that its intentions were those of a responsible Great Power.³¹⁹ In the same manifesto that formally disavowed the existing European order was a proclamation of France’s intentions not to disrupt that order, informally obligating it to respect the same duties and practice the same responsibilities of consultative, considerate behavior as the Vienna treaties had mandated for all the Powers.³²⁰

This was not mere rhetoric, but was evident in the Republic’s early policy decisions. Despite its own nationalist self-justifications, the Republic proved less willing to actively support Polish nationalism than even its monarchical predecessor. It appointed an unfriendly ambassador to Berlin to discourage liberal reforms in Prussian Poland, and

³¹⁷ Taylor, 5.

³¹⁸ On status-seeking behavior and signaling among Great Powers, see Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, “Status and World Order,” 11-12, 21-3.

³¹⁹ For informational anxiety, rising Powers, and the “balance of perceptions,” see Kliman, 17-21.

³²⁰ Taylor, 4-5. For an explicit guarantee of the 1815 settlement by President Bonaparte, see Taylor, 41.

its foreign minister publicly managed expectations in this area by declaring that, though the French love “all the oppressed nations,” they love France more.³²¹ The Republic also renewed France’s traditional patterns of interference in the Near East when it reactivated the long-dormant “pre-modern juridical system” of capitulations in the Ottoman Empire established by the *ancien régime*.³²² Similarly, the one genuine opportunity France had to assert truly revisionist Great Power principles—aiding the liberal Italian forces in the Austro-Sardinian War—was lost thanks to the its unwillingness to abandon the traditional Great Power prerogatives of spheres, aggrandizement, and compensation: “it was impossible for the French to aid Italy without demanding Savoy and Nice for themselves.”³²³ Nor was the Republic’s conservatism limited to self-restraint. National honor was an important element in its policy that led to some unexpected episodes.³²⁴ In a particularly bizarre turn of events, it even honored the monarchy’s assumption of a particular French duty to defend the Papal States against Italian nationalism; consequently, “the first military action of revolutionary France after thirty-four years of apprehension was taken against a republic led and defended by idealists, and in favour of the most obscurantist tyranny in Europe.”³²⁵

It was clear within the Republic’s first year of existence that “the days of French idealism were over; the great revolutionary war [to remake Europe] would not be

³²¹ Taylor, 9-11.

³²² For the Second Republic’s return to form in Turkey, see Gabriel Leanca, “Conservatisme, révisionnisme et expérimentation politique: Napoléon III et la Question d’Orient (1850-1861)” in *La politique extérieure de Napoléon III*, ed. Gabriel Leanca (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2011), 157-164 (quote at 158); for national honor in Turkey, see Echard, 26.

³²³ Taylor, 19.

³²⁴ Jean-Pierre Pantalacci, “*L’empereur, le roi et le pape: les contradictions d’une diplomatie triangulaire*,” in *La politique extérieure de Napoléon III*, 186.

³²⁵ Taylor, 29.

launched.”³²⁶ Republican France would instead pursue the same Great Power policy as monarchical France, even renewing ties with its conservative nemesis, Austria, to signal its willingness to cooperate in the restraint of change and the pursuit of balance and order.³²⁷ Thus, the Great Power role the Republic envisioned for itself in practice boiled down to the assertion of very traditional Great Power rights—particularly in claiming French spheres of influence in border states under the guise of supporting liberalism and national self-determination—and very traditional Great Power duties—such as ensuring continuity with the previous regime’s international commitments. It was eager to embrace the prevailing understanding of Great Power rather than to use its irregular existence to contest and change that consensus. In response, the other Powers consented to the membership of a republican Great Power, altering their consensus understanding of what made a Great Power by admitting a degree of regime heterogeneity not before seen.³²⁸ This was new, but the Second Republic did nothing to alter the essentials of a Great Power politics based on traditional rights and duties. The same day the Tsar ordered troops into Hungary to put down a liberal rebellion, he formally recognized the French Republic.³²⁹

Even the Republic’s transition into an empire led by an unpredictable, adventuresome Bonaparte failed to change France’s fundamental commitment to traditional Great Power behaviors and attitudes. Of course, matters of precedence and diplomatic nicety—important components of Great Power politics-as-usual—were sources of particular anxiety for a monarchy of questionable legitimacy. For their part,

³²⁶ Ibid., 22.

³²⁷ Ibid., 22-3.

³²⁸ Aron, *Paix et Guerre*, 156.

³²⁹ Taylor, 31.

the other Powers vacillated briefly but ultimately decided to give the new Emperor an opportunity to conform his bearing and rhetoric to established customs. In his first diplomatic receiving line, almost all the gathered ambassadors carried messages from their sovereigns addressing Napoleon III as ‘brother’. Only Russia stood aloof, addressing him only as ‘friend’. Napoleon did not allow himself to become provoked; instead, he famously smoothed-over the tension by telling the ambassador that “God gives us brothers, but we choose our friends.”³³⁰ This was a clear, public signal of Napoleon’s willingness to make himself and his regime acceptable to their desired peer group. Consequently, though he had an unquestioned desire to revise the international system, in practice Napoleon pursued thoroughly traditional policies linked to a relatively conventional French Great Power role as the counterweight to the established Powers.³³¹ In essence, “he wished to accomplish a revolutionary foreign policy without calling on the spirit of revolution, and to remodel Europe without a war”—a program that could only be accomplished through a Great Power politics based on prestige recognition, compensation, and mutual consideration. Consequently, “his favourite dream was ‘a general Congress of the great powers of Europe’ which would settle every question” pacifically and with mutual respect.³³² Neither hegemon nor prophet, Napoleon amounted to a colorful, but ultimately conventional Great Power leader.

That said, he and the advisers surrounding him were schemers quick to gamble on risky contests of prestige, propose convoluted territorial exchanges, and assert French spheres of interest far afield. In a characteristic incident, Napoleon picked a fight with

³³⁰ Ibid., 48-9.

³³¹ Taylor summed up the Empire’s grand strategy, such as it was: “revolutionary aim[s]...without the use of revolutionary means” (20).

³³² Taylor, 25.

Russia over the protection of Christians in the Holy Land; it was shot-through from beginning to end with the behaviors and cognitive patterns of an international politics bounded by norms of right and duty held by a select social class. Russia had secured the duty of protecting the Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire in an 18th century treaty, but Napoleon now advanced a grandiose French claim to the responsibility for the protection of Latin Christians in the same area—a responsibility that carried with it a right to intervene in the internal affairs of Turkey. In partnering with Britain to send a naval squadron to the Levant to ostensibly advance a special Great Power duty-claim (but moreover to advance a right-claim to a sphere of influence), France was employing one of the century’s most common Great Power practices, the naval demonstration as a signal of material superiority. It did so in pursuit of one of the century’s most essential elements of Great Power, prestige.³³³ This was to be achieved not just by successfully asserting a right to influence in Turkish affairs, but ultimately by achieving a long-elusive objective for many Great Powers: the humiliation of Russia, whose power and ambitions had long been feared, but whose dynastic connections and prestige had long subverted attempts to balance against it.³³⁴ A humbled Russia would—in Napoleon’s thinking—then be open to “a dramatic act of French mediation” (yet another Great Power practice); this would secure Russian support for a consensual redrawing of the European map through territorial exchanges (a characteristic Great Power practice, compensation) to be carried out by all the Powers acting in Concert (one of that complex’s key principles,

³³³ Russia’s opposition to France’s scheme was likewise rooted in prestige-concerns. Taylor, 51-2, 60.

³³⁴ For a status-centered explanation of the war focusing on Russia, see William C. Wohlforth, “Status Dilemmas and Interstate Conflict” in *Status in World Politics*, 125-32.

consideration).³³⁵ If this dizzying sequence of events was to somehow foster international progress, it surely would have been progress without change.

Of course, French mediation would not come to pass and the resulting war would be seen by Napoleon and his even more traditional advisers as an opportunity for glory and aggrandizement. The Crimean War was a return to 18th century form in that French war aims consisted of the capture and demilitarization of a key fortress, Sebastopol. Its reduction was considered essential to French prestige, and any thought of ending the war victoriously was scuttled by French intransigence on this point.³³⁶ As the war dragged on and it became clear that Napoleon's hopes for a new ordering moment to replace Vienna would not be forthcoming, he became obsessed with the city, even threatening to take personal command of the army if it was not captured. He needed a great victory so that he could make a prestigious peace. A later scholar summed up what distinguished Napoleon, the revolutionary emperor, from other Great Power monarchs of this period: "What, then, remained of the *rêve napoléonienne*? Apparently only two things, a predilection for the conference table and a determination that the table should be installed at Paris"—in other words, matters of French prestige.³³⁷ Napoleon secured his Congress of Paris, but abandoned his dream of building a new Europe using old tools.

For the remainder of his reign, these old tools would suffice. In subsequent years, French attempts to outmaneuver Austria would spur a flurry of proposals and counter-proposals for territorial swaps, balance of power reorientations, and sphere of influence revisions taken right out of the 18th century Great Power playbook.³³⁸ Aiming more at

³³⁵ Taylor, 54.

³³⁶ Echard, 45.

³³⁷ Ibid., 52.

³³⁸ Taylor, 86.

prestige than strategic gain, a series of French officials plotted to annex Belgium and Luxembourg in exchange for a complicated series of compensations for the other Powers in Venetia and Rumania.³³⁹ A vacillating Napoleon withdrew French troops from their long occupation of Rome as part of a territorial exchange with Italy, but then returned them to guard French prestige with nationalist revolutionaries threatened to capture the city.³⁴⁰ Most shockingly, the emperor made a grandiloquent (and uninvited) announcement during the Austro-Prussia war of 1866 that Austria had ceded its disputed Italian holdings to France and invited its formal mediation of the conflict; that Vienna had made no such offer was of secondary importance—what mattered was that France was enacting a role and asserting its identity as a status-conscious Great Power worthy of the burdens of European leadership.³⁴¹ This was a far cry from the revolutionary remaking of the continent around new international principles that many within and without France expected it to pursue. Indeed, the most ‘nationalist’ and ‘revisionist’ thing the Empire actually managed to accomplish in its short existence, the replacement of Austrian control of northern Italy with an Italian buffer-state, expressed the essence of this contradiction: France would support the raising up of a disruptive, nationalist revolution in Italy (led, oddly enough, by an established monarchy) in exchange for territorial compensation in Savoy and dynastic aggrandizement through the marriage of Napoleon’s cousin to a Sardinian princess.³⁴² This was a slight tweaking of the balance of

³³⁹ Lawrence D. Steefel, *Bismarck, the Hohenzollern Candidacy, and the Origins of the Franco-German War of 1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 4-6. Taylor, 173-7. For Rumania, the older English spelling is used in keeping with how contemporaries referred to it at the time.

³⁴⁰ Taylor, 155, 187.

³⁴¹ Napoleon’s brazen act ultimately bore fruit since Austria did end up ceding Venetia a few months later to France; this maneuver that allowed France to pass the territory to Italy—a state that Austria refused to recognize—and conclude the war. Taylor, 167. For domestic pressures and status-seeking, see 177.

³⁴² Taylor, 103, 117-18.

power in France's interest conducted relatively responsibly—no Power was dethroned or stripped of its status—and most certainly *not* a radical departure from the practices and concepts of the traditional Great Power system.³⁴³

Nor would imperial France be contented with Italian and Near Eastern entanglements. Once secure in its status—which it felt it was after policy successes in Russia and Italy—France would only think of maximally asserting its authority through the assertion of a Great Power role not dissimilar from that enacted by its Bourbon predecessor a century before. It meddled in Poland with the aim of creating a counterweight to Prussia, but found that its authority-claim there (based rhetorically on its patronage of national movements) was untenable without the backing of a Baltic Power; its reach having exceeded its grasp, it backed down in this theater for fear of further damage to its prestige.³⁴⁴ Similarly, the two Great Powers that served as its 'model states', Russia and Great Britain, both had extensive extra-European colonies around which a burgeoning international legal community was beginning to articulate "a right or duty to intervene outside Europe" for all the Powers.³⁴⁵ France, at the forefront of this movement, was eager to transform principle into practice. Always the speculator, Napoleon looked to Mexico, where the government had suspended interest payments to its Great Power creditors. Claiming a right to intervene, Napoleon occupied the country and—as a friendly gesture to Austria—helped place a Habsburg on a new imperial Mexican throne. Ultimately (and ironically) defeated by a liberal republican insurgency,

³⁴³ Echard, 295-6.

³⁴⁴ France's inability to effectively involve itself in Polish affairs as the *ancient regime* once had "shattered" its prestige. Taylor, 141.

³⁴⁵ Legists saw this as promoting a new "consensus gentium". If the lawyers sometimes disagreed on the opportunity or manner of conducting intervention, they never doubted its principle." Koskenniemi, 131.

Napoleon's *grande pensée* to establish a sphere of influence for France in the western hemisphere proved "*un authentique fiasco*."³⁴⁶ But it is in the end of this iteration of French Great Power that its character is most clearly revealed. When Prussian dynastic ambitions flirted with placing a Hohenzollern on the throne of Spain, even the withdrawal of their candidate was insufficient to satisfy the consideration owed to French honor:

If the French government had really been concerned with Spain or even with scoring a diplomatic success, the crisis would have been over. But the fatal theme of Bonapartist prestige had been launched and could not be silenced. . . . The Second Empire had always lived on illusion; and it now committed suicide in the illusion that it could somehow destroy Prussia without serious effort. There was no policy in the drive to war, no vision of a reconstruction of Europe on lines more favourable to France, not even a clear plan for acquiring territory on the Rhine. To arrest the unification of Germany, still more to dismember Prussia, went against every canon of Napoleonic policy, if such a thing still existed; that did not matter in the explosion of irritation and impatience. Like the Austrians in 1859 and 1866, though with less justification, Napoleon and his associates wanted war for its own sake, without thought of the outcome.³⁴⁷

The lesson to be drawn from the French example is that the lure of status and authority bound up with the prevailing notions of Great Power could condition even explicitly revisionist, dissatisfied Powers to behave conservatively. France was a re-invented, dissatisfied Great Power led by an inveterate schemer firmly convinced that nationalism would remake Europe³⁴⁸—but even this was not enough to turn its behaviors and mindsets far from the norms of the established Great Power identity, nor to shift its

³⁴⁶ Romain Delmon, "Les acteurs de la politique impériale lors de l'expédition au Mexique: l'écart entre la vision de Napoléon III et la réalité mexicaine," in *La politique extérieure de Napoléon III*, 75.

³⁴⁷ Taylor, 205.

³⁴⁸ Napoleon III believed so deeply in the Italian cause, for example, that he treated an Italian revolutionary that attempted to assassinate him as "a hero," even ensuring that the man's exhortation to Italy was published after his execution. In Taylor's words, "nothing could better illuminate Napoleon's character than this patronage of a revolutionary conspiracy even when directed against his own life" (101). See also Bruley's judgment that Napoleon aimed at nationalist revision in Europe but only with the structure of the Vienna treaties and Great Power equilibrium; Yves Bruley, "Le Quai d'Orsay et la crise polonaise de 1863" in in *La politique extérieure de Napoléon III*, 23. Echard concurs, stating that Napoleon had three goals: the "promotion of a sort of French moral hegemony in Europe, satisfaction of nationalities, and encouragement of European concert. Of these goals, the first two were dependent on the last" (303).

own Great Power role from its traditional patterns. The meaning of Great Power would remain virtually untouched by its awakening, while France's international role would express traditional rights and duties differentiated from the past only by their elaboration across wider geographic regions and issue areas. Whatever its rhetoric and whatever the psychological idiosyncrasies of its statespeople, Great Power France of the mid-19th century had no real interest in *systems* change, the overthrow of an entire way of international life. Instead, it sought only *systemic* change, the reorganization of the existing moral and material distribution to promote its relative elevation.³⁴⁹ In the final tabulation, the fact of French Great Power had more of an impact on France than it did on the meaning of Great Power. The Second Republic that began, in theory, as a force for systemic disruption eager to revise international politics along rational, liberal, and national lines ultimately ended—now an empire—with the capture of its emperor in a war fought over national honor. The need for the actualization of national greatness on the international scene thus impelled a formally-revisionist regime to channel its energies and practices into the prevailing mold provided by the general Great Power identity. France craved prestige, consideration, and dynastic advancement as much as ultra-traditional Austria. It fretted over the balance of forces as much as aloof Britain or lean-and-hungry Prussia. And though its Emperor ultimately achieved the Congress at Paris of which he had long dreamed, it “was not a European acknowledgement of the Second Empire; it was an acknowledgement of France as a conservative Power.”³⁵⁰

³⁴⁹ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, ch. 1.

³⁵⁰ Taylor, 89.

b. Germany

The French case was not the only instance of a power transition potentially threatening the established right- and responsibility-complex. Like the Second Republic and its imperial successor, the German Empire would seem at first glance to be a strong candidate for non-conforming behavior. After all, its very existence was based on the revision of moral and material distributions in central Europe, and its relationship to international rights and duties was of undoubtedly secondary importance to the ideological, nationalistic impetus that had called it into creation. Many Powers were scandalized by its very existence, and it was not immediately clear what place there would be for an entity of such overwhelming material capability within what was essentially the same complex of rights, duties, and typical behaviors that an upstart Prussia had only grudgingly adopted in the previous century. Would a national Germany aim at universal monarchy along the pattern of Napoleon I or Charles V?

Again, these fears were unfounded. The German nation was built around traditional Great Power from the beginning, and a traditional Great Power it would be. The multitude of German states, small and large, that dotted the post-Vienna international landscape had armies, bureaucracies, and ambitions—they lacked only unity, and unity on a scale as grand as the panoply of German-speaking peoples could only be actualized at the level of Great Power. The controversy over the duchies of Slesvig and Holstein—the first step toward unification—was formally based around old questions of dynastic inheritance and new ones of national self-determination, but these were only proximate causes. What was really at issue was “the question [of] whether the German nation could

assert its will as a Great Power.”³⁵¹ The cadre of Prussian administrators and German nationalists that desired to use the duchies as a test case finally found success, even dragging along an unwilling and highly-suspicious Austria, by adopting a discourse of rights—specifically, the right to establish order and execute the international treaties that justified intervention in Denmark³⁵²—and duties—both obligations to international order and law as well as a more novel and subjective duty to the German-speaking majority of Holstein. When the duchies question was eventually resolved, its true significance lay not in the transfer of principalities from one realm to another; rather, it was in the realization that the collective action problem that had plagued German supra-national entities since the Holy Roman Empire was indeed solvable by means of Great Power practices and concepts. In essence, Germany was gathering the elements of the universal Great Power identity unto itself and even formulating a localized Great Power role—all of this before there was a true ‘German’ state to which those concepts might be coupled.

After such a state was finally forged through a number of Great Power wars fought largely over questions of prestige and of Prussia’s Great Power role within central Europe, the temptations to German policy were tremendous. A state that possessed such material capacity and that had been created through the disordering of traditional alignments in Germany was something truly new in Europe, and it carried with it

³⁵¹ For German justifications, see Taylor, 12, 143.

³⁵² The Danes had changed their constitution’s order of dynastic succession. Since part of the duchies lay within the bounds of the German Confederation and both claimed to follow a strict Salic rule of succession, the act of federal execution carried out by the Germans had a significant basis in international law; what was unique was not its legality or illegality, however, but rather that Germany as a whole effectively claimed a right to enforce it without the backing of the non-German Great Powers. For special Prussian right-claims in the duchies and the attempt to establish a sphere of influence there, see Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 532.

enormous potential for further disruption still.³⁵³ Nevertheless, the German Empire quickly took its place as a highly conservative, conformist, and mimetic Great Power. Like the French Second Empire, it was eager to assert itself only through traditional methods.³⁵⁴ Henceforth, Germany would aim at order and stability in Europe to protect its own primacy, committing a significant portion of its Great Power role to the preservation of Austria as a Great Power by warding off challenges from Italy and Russia.³⁵⁵ This reflected another very traditional element of Great Power status-seeking as Germany used its diplomacy not just to arrange the European balance of forces but to claim the prestige of wise, measured, and productive international leadership. When Russia's defeat of the Ottomans triggered a war scare over the creation of a number of new, national states in Turkish Europe, Berlin even claimed the honor of hosting the Congress aimed at pairing back the Russian threat: "The congress of Berlin marked an epoch in where it met. . . . now Germany attained full stature as a European Power—and, with it, full responsibility."³⁵⁶ For the next two decades, Germany would be the pilot of European diplomacy, steering the course of events as had the France of Louis XIV; Bismarck, the framer of German Great Power, was a new Metternich guiding a Great Power system that, while different in its material distribution, remained very similar in its moral configuration of practices and standards to that which had come before.³⁵⁷

³⁵³ As Wilhelm II articulated years later, "if our Lord God did not have in store for us some great destiny in the world, then he wouldn't have bestowed such magnificent traits and abilities upon our people." Quoted in Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 591.

³⁵⁴ Taylor, 153, 178, 202; Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 511-12.

³⁵⁵ Taylor, 239; Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 85.

³⁵⁶ Taylor, 253.

³⁵⁷ Territorial exchange, consultation, conciliation of rivals, and conference diplomacy were cornerstones of both Metternich's and Bismarck's international system; the language of rights and duties continued to define diplomatic intercourse, and the active alignment of parochial Great Power roles was made the essential purpose of European policy. Taylor, 259, 282-3.

However, German prominence on the continent revealed a troubling caesura in its assumption of Great Power status: unlike Russia in Asia, Britain in the Middle East, France in Africa, and even Austria-Hungary in the Balkans, Germany lacked ‘world policy’. Bismarck preferred it this way, famously chiding a colonial enthusiast: “Your map of Africa looks very fine, but my map of Africa lies in Europe. Here is Russia and there . . . lies France, and we are in the middle; that is my map of Africa.”³⁵⁸ Bismarck understood what scholars would later deduce: when conflicts on the periphery came to overwhelm the focus on a pacific core, the system’s stability was put at risk.³⁵⁹ Thus, his pithy retort was actually a concise statement of how Great Power Germany was embracing restraint and managerialism as a part of its early role.³⁶⁰ For example, a dispute with Spain over the Caroline Islands in the 1880s was resolved when Bismarck, unwilling to inflict a defeat on the Spanish monarchy that would have undermined its stability, proposed papal mediation; Bismarck knew that the pope would side with Spain, thus offering him an avenue not only to preserve the status quo in Spain but to avoid the appearance *and* the reality of a German colonial policy.³⁶¹ For a time, this restraint gave Germany a privileged position to manage the tensions caused by the colonial expansion of the other Powers.

But Bismarck’s restraint was uniquely visionary. Eventually, popular sentiment—a force greatly increasing in importance during the latter half of the 19th century—would

³⁵⁸ Quoted in Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Bismarck: A Political History*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 228.

³⁵⁹ Edward Ingram, “Bellicism as Boomerang: The Eastern Question during the Vienna System” in *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*: Episode or Model in Modern History?.

³⁶⁰ “Bismarck wanted . . . grievance[s], not colonies” since grievances provided leverage for the settling of questions at the European core, not the colonial periphery. See Taylor, 295.

³⁶¹ Paul W. Schroeder, “Stealing Horses to Great Applause: Austria-Hungary’s Decision in 1914 in Systemic Perspective” in *An Improbable War*, 30.

drive German policy to undertake isomorphic colonial ventures of its own.³⁶² The ‘world policy’ argument was based on the mimetic requirements of Great Power status and the widely-held anxiety that Germany wasn’t meeting them; this was an argument that the restraint of the Bismarckian managerial role could not answer. Once the requirements of the concretized standard were conceded as essential, logic was easily overcome: “Germany needed a coaling-station for her non-existent fleet—and therefore a fleet to protect her coaling station.”³⁶³ Where France had speculated in Mexico, Germany would cast about for the territorial scraps unclaimed by the other Powers in Africa and East Asia. Utilizing the covering arguments of a ‘civilizing mission’ and pointing to the established maritime role of heavily-industrialized Britain and—tellingly—the similar role being adopted by the United States, Germany utilized the developing field of international law to argue that its need to act like a Great Power was a justifiable cause for the expansion of its global footprint.³⁶⁴

The German international law community saw colonization as a natural part of Germany’s development into a leading European power. No questions about the justification of expansion were posed: everybody did it and the only problem was that Germany had made its move late in the day.³⁶⁵

A massive naval building program followed, ostensibly to protect what worthless colonies it could find sitting about unclaimed by the early-bloomers.³⁶⁶ The Germans

³⁶² Taylor, 366, 372-3.

³⁶³ Ibid., 375.

³⁶⁴ For an example of German legal thinking justifying isomorphic of colonial and maritime Great Power rights based on the British and American cases, see M. F. Heinrich Geffcken, “L’Allemagne et la question colonial,” *Revue de droit international et de legislation compare* 17 (1885): 105-131; Taylor, 383.

³⁶⁵ Koskenniemi, 109, 146-168 (quote at 167).

³⁶⁶ Germany’s situation was mirrored in the case of Italy, an even later-comer: “‘I am not a collector of deserts,’ Benito Mussolini exclaimed in 1935, but in fact he was, for there was little else left that was collectible.” A. P. Thornton, “Great Powers and Little Wars: Limits of Power” in *Great Powers and Little Wars: The Limits of Power*, eds. A. Hamish Ion and E. J. Errington (Westport: Praeger, 1993), 18.

themselves recognized the perverse consequences of this illogical search for empty, vulnerable land but pressed on nonetheless.³⁶⁷ Their real aim was to foster the respect of the other Powers by proving that Germany could exert its influence over just as wide a range as they—and over just as important an issue-area as Britain’s longstanding claim to preeminent seapower.³⁶⁸ Trumped-up diplomatic trials of will in places long remote to German policy like North Africa and Micronesia soon followed as the Germans sought to “show that [they] could not be ignored in any question in the world.”³⁶⁹ Contemporaries recognized the potentially-disruptive consequences of German world policy but, once it had begun, German Great Power—and, thus, Germany’s understanding of itself—quickly became tied up with its naval and colonial programs; as one foreign ministry official put it when contemplating a reduction in its naval armaments, “No one here likes to renounce all ideas of great power.”³⁷⁰ The status of Great Power required a fleet, and a fleet required the assertion of colonial authority claims outside of Europe. This is where the conceptual elements of Great Power confronted the basic economic problem of geopolitical scarcity: though the German foreign minister might publicly proclaim—and even sincerely believe—that “We don’t want to put anyone in the shadow, but we too demand our place in the sun,” the reality was that there was only so much sun to left to

³⁶⁷ As Bethmann-Hollweg, the German chancellor at the time of the Agadir crisis, remarked sarcastically to Serge Sazonov, the Russian foreign minister, the compensation Germany had gained by its brinkmanship had “enriched [it] by an immense number of square miles of tropical marshes, in exchange for the acknowledgment of the exclusive rights of France over such a valuable country as Morocco.” Serge Sazonov, *Fateful Years, 1909-1916: The Reminiscences of Serge Sazonov* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1928), 41.

³⁶⁸ Taylor, 447.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 428.

³⁷⁰ Quoted in Michael Epkenhans, “Was a Peaceful Outcome Thinkable? The Naval Race before 1914” in *An Improbable War*, 122.

soak up by the late 19th century.³⁷¹ Consequently, Germany's attempt to actualize a Great Power role matching the geographic scope of its peers—essential, in its eyes, to the maintenance of true Great Power status—would lead to significant conflicts of authority.

c. Extra-European Cases

Thus, France had been unable to turn itself away from politics-as-usual and Germany had proven eager to outdo the established Great Powers at their own games of prestige, aggrandizement, and leadership. But there were other rising Powers outside of Europe—what would their distance, both geographic and cultural, mean for their encounter with the complex of rights and duties then bound up with the notion of Great Power? Japan would seem a likely candidate for the rejection of Great Power society-as-usual—the movement to ‘revere the Emperor and expel the barbarian’ that attended its nationalist awakening might have held out the possibility of a different way. Yet, in the event, “the groups of remarkable men who between them determined the aims as well as the structure of Meiji Japan thought of their country as a state, which they would make in to a Power; and for which they aspired, in due course, to the status of a Great Power.”³⁷² Fearful of foreign domination, Japan chose to mimic the very attitudes, behaviors, and foreign policy institutions it saw in the Powers that threatened its independence.³⁷³ Its early focus on attaining the identity elements of a Great Power was especially concerned with prestige and social acceptance. Thus, when the Boxer Rebellion in China provoked a rare joint mission backed by all the Powers, Japan pounced on the opportunity to use its

³⁷¹ Bernhard von Bülow, speech to the Reichstag on December 6, 1897, quoted in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 151.

³⁷² Sydney Giffard, *Japan Among the Powers, 1880-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), x.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, xiv, 2, 9-10.

own participation in the suppression “to reassert her claim to a leading place among the Powers . . . and to do so in circumstances which brought her considerable international credit and *réclame*.”³⁷⁴ Similarly, it launched adventurous crusades in Korea and China to carve out for itself a sphere of influence, contracted a Great Power alliance with Britain, and used a war against Russia to prove its prowess in military and naval affairs. Its attitude toward the Powers was calculated in all of these ventures to appear socially correct, demonstrating that racial difference was of minor significance compared to the combination of material capacity and social understanding that united this special caste. Japanese policy thus sought to display the standards of behavior connected with the status it sought (when a Japanese fleet sunk a number of Chinese troop ships at the outset of the Russo-Japanese War, it meticulously rescued the European officers commanding those ships) and also to show that it viewed Asia, as the Powers did, as a field for the expression of colonial and imperial impulses (it left the Chinese soldiers to drown).³⁷⁵ By the mid-1900s, Japan had thus successfully demonstrated that it could act like a Power and that its aim was not the revision of the Great Power system but rather its eager, mimetic adaptation to serve Japanese purposes. Consequently, Japan was accepted—at least for a time—as a full-fledged member of the club with contributions to make to international order.³⁷⁶ Said a Japanese official to a Westerner in the 1890s, “Other Eastern nations have cared chiefly to adopt from you your guns and means of defence. We have honestly tried also to understand your thought.”³⁷⁷ In that understanding, Japan

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 16.

³⁷⁵ Donald Calman, *The Nature and Origins of Japanese Imperialism: A Reinterpretation of the Great Crisis of 1873* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6.

³⁷⁶ The Japanese government even received multiple requests for Japanese troops to fight in Europe during the First World War, but felt its status was sufficiently secure to decline them all. Frederick R. Dickinson, “The View from Japan: War and Peace in Europe around 1914” in *An Improbable War*, 303.

³⁷⁷ Quoted in Giffard, 23.

acquired Great Power status. A cartoon in the British magazine *Punch* captured this well. In it, personified representations of the Powers are depicted encamped in China while a Japanese samurai gestures to the Chinese dragon in the distance; the caption reads: “Japan (addressing the Powers). ‘Delighted to join you, gentlemen; but permit me to remark that if some of you hadn’t interfered when *I* had him down, it would have saved all this trouble!’”³⁷⁸

Only the United States proved hesitant to adopt the identity of traditional Great Power. Though it possessed an undeniably-significant share of the material distribution and a policy of regional imperialism (essentially a Great Power role in all but name), it vacillated for decades between two contradictory understandings of America’s international identity. The first was the Great Power politics expressed most famously by Theodore Roosevelt. He aggressively asserted American interests abroad in the language of rights and duties while adopting hitherto-unseen European Great Power practices; he mediated the Russo-Japanese War at the Portsmouth Conference (a hemispheric first for the Powers), pursued a navalist policy aimed at proving American prestige and carving out a colonial place in the sun in the Pacific, presided over the opening of the Panama Canal, and sent his famous Great White Fleet around the world to announce America’s new global reach. In him, European leaders for the first time found an American leader expressing the same ideas as they in language comprehensible within the terms of right- and duty-based Great Power politics.³⁷⁹ Yet, a second notion of American identity lingered in the policies of his successor, Woodrow Wilson. Throughout his political

³⁷⁸ “Rubbing it in!” July 4, 1900, *Punch*, 10.

³⁷⁹ Kaiser Wilhelm II went through periodic spurts of great admiration for Roosevelt and sought to draw him into European politics, going so far as to propose a defensive alliance against Japan in which a German army corps would be deployed to the California coast. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 179.

career, Wilson maintained a consistent rhetoric of American ‘disinterestedness’, a theorized separateness from eastern hemispheric affairs that set the United States apart from—and made it superior to—traditional Great Power politics:

I take leave to say that some of the difficulties of our foreign relations in the last two years have been due to the fact that it was not comprehensible to some foreign statesmen that the United States really was disinterested. They had never heard of such a thing, and, in proportion as the United States demonstrates to the world that its influence in the family of nations is disinterested, it will have that part of power which does not come from arms, but comes from the great invisible powers that well up in the human heart. When the nations of the world come to love America, they will obey and follow America.³⁸⁰

There was much to this at both the elite and popular levels; at the outset of the First World War, “there was not . . . any discernible American will to power in August 1914 or any widespread expectation of it.”³⁸¹ Even as events in Europe encouraged Wilson to frame a unique, universalist Great Power role aimed at radically altering the rights and duties of traditional politics, he continued to maintain that America stood apart—even his allies were merely ‘associates’. Though Wilson himself would succeed in pushing through a reform of Great Power politics at Versailles, ironically his own nation was unwilling to take part in its new arrangement of international rights and duties. The United States retreated into isolationism, and would leave the question of its Great Power role to another day.

d. Conclusion

The quotation that opened this chapter is taken from a popular English work of ‘invasion fiction’ contemporary to Germany’s naval building program, *The Riddle of the*

³⁸⁰ Woodrow Wilson, “An Address in Chicago to Nonpartisan Women,” October 19, 1916, published in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* 38 (Aug 7 – Nov 19, 1916), eds. Arthur S. Link et. al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 488.

³⁸¹ Fraser J. Harbutt, “War, Peace, and Commerce: The American Reaction to the Outbreak of World War I in Europe 1914” in *An Improbable War*, 320.

Sands.³⁸² In it, Davies—an amateur navalist convinced that Germany was up to no good along its treacherous northern coastline—tricks an old school chum at the Foreign Office, the narrator, into helping him reconnoiter its shallows. Along the way, they discover fiendish German sailors, damsels in distress, and, ultimately, a fleet of shallow-bottomed boats being inspected by the Kaiser himself in preparation for a surprise assault on England. But the words that emerge from Davies’s mouth as he describes the German threat are not those of condemnation. Rather, they are of praise for “the greatest military power in Europe” with a “splendid chap” for an Emperor determined to acquire colonies. That these acquisitions could be bad for Britain Davies certainly recognizes, but—though he is determined to fight the Germans and foil their anti-English plans (“Let them hate us, and say so; it’ll teach us to buck up and that’s what really matters”)—he cannot bring himself to condemn his enemy: “*We* can’t talk about conquest and grabbing. We’ve collared a fine share of the world, and they’ve every right to be jealous.”³⁸³ This perfectly captures how the complex of rights and duties shaped change throughout the 19th century by promoting mimetic, status-seeking behaviors rendered in terms of mutually-comprehensible right- and duty-claims embedded in authoritative Great Power roles. Though violence and conflict were normal and necessary components of this socially-

³⁸² Among the more intriguing places one finds the effects of this era’s always-tense but ultimately-restrained Great Power conflict is in how the many near-misses that did not result in upheaval were ultimately sublimated within popular culture. In Britain, this period was heavily influenced by spy fiction and paranoid popular scares of German fifth columnists among both the highly-placed (such as the case Sir Edgar Speyer, a privy counselor of German extraction hounded from British society in 1914 in part because his telegraphic address was ‘Spy, London’) and among common citizens (German waiters were particularly suspected of being trained agents of the Kaiser). For the earliest example of invasion fiction, see George Tomkyns Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); for Speyer and an overview of how German Great Power psychologically warped English attitudes, see Antony Lentin, *Banker, Traitor, Scapegoat, Spy?: The Troublesome Case of Sir Edgar Speyer* (London: Haus, 2013).

³⁸³ Childers, 74, 90-1.

interpenetrated semi-archy, they were also normatively-bounded and tempered by the mutual recognition of status and the rights and duties that properly went with it.

Thus, the right- and responsibility-complex mediated the ambitions and grievances of the rising Powers, directing their consequences—and their potentially disruptive changes—into a status-seeking, isomorphic reproduction of itself. Nationalist in motivation and endowed with the material capacities of heavy industrialization, these rising Powers set out to make their national visions reality. However, they did so not by revising the semi-archival, right- and duty-based international system, but rather by creating themselves in the image of the Great Powers that had once defeated, suppressed, and even colonized them. Outfitted with rights and duties, holding colonies and chairing conferences, these new nationalist entities would outdo their mature peers in the enactment of national roles cognizant of the behaviors and justifications proper to Great Powers. Thus resulted what Lebow labeled a “continuity in values” between the 19th century and the past, an enduring focus on status, standing, and society that “helped to mute the consequences of major changes” without blocking them entirely.³⁸⁴ Attending this continuity was a deepening of commitment to old ideas that had seemingly translated well to new circumstances; Powers invested more heavily than ever in their respective roles, incorporating them and the fact of their Great Power status within the core of their self-understandings. The nations and peoples lurking beneath the policymaking apparatus of the state reciprocated, adopting discourses of national roles in international politics and taking ownership of the collective place in the world. As the following chapter will show, this constituted the *ontological securitization* of Great Power status—national existence,

³⁸⁴ Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 308, 311.

for both policymakers and peoples, was increasingly defined by reference to the routines and institutionalized understandings of a complex Great Power rights and responsibilities.

The lesson that can be drawn from this experience is that the shared Great Power identity was a powerful inducement to mimetic behavior and attitudes even in ‘hard cases’ such as Japan or republican France. New Powers were admitted to the club once they had demonstrated a commitment to its shared identity elements and had rendered their national roles in comprehensible, conformist right- and duty-terms. The meaning of Great Power itself was sheltered from serious revision because the deep institutionalization of Great Power politics had, by this point in time, ensured that its prestige and standing correlated closely to a widely-accepted, but highly parochial and Eurocentric understanding of how states should behave. This corroborates the findings of Lake, who found that “status is, within limits, a multi-sum good that can be granted to a (flexible) number of great powers without significant loss to other high-status states.”³⁸⁵ With the exception of minor changes such as opening up membership to a republic or a non-white state, Great Power could thus remain highly resistant to change as long as that status was attainable (through good behavior) by those rising Powers that had benefitted from bursts of material and moral development. But this came at a cost as the expansion of the club combined with the destruction of physical and conceptual distance brought on by industrialization and globalization; as the 20th century dawned, there were more Great Powers than ever before, all obsessed with status and all seeking to assert authoritative Great Power roles over geographic regions and thematic issue areas. Without real change in how Great Power worked, contradictions began to build up. Over time, rising tensions

³⁸⁵ Lake, 268.

over issues such as colonial territory and spheres of influence would illustrate just “how little room remained at the table” for these latest Great Powers.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁶ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 143.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUCCESS, ANXIETY, AND CRISIS

The protagonists of 1914 were sleepwalkers, watchful but unseeing, haunted by dreams, yet blind to the reality of the horror they were about to bring into the world.

- Christopher Clark³⁸⁷

I. Great Power Roles, Authority, and Ontological Security

Since the rising Powers had accommodated themselves so successfully to the routines and concepts of Great Power politics, there wasn't much Great Power war in the latter half of the 19th century. There were, of course, many war scares, crises, blunders, and near misses, but these were usually resolved through the time-honored Great Power processes of consideration, compensation, and spheres of influence. The right- and responsibility-complex around which Great Power politics was built had established a more pacific arrangement of international order than had ever been seen, a semi-archival distribution of authority ordering international politics. Different Powers had differing levels of authority in different issues areas, and none could be said to be *prima inter pares* at all times, in all places, and on all subjects—nor was any single Power sufficiently over-mighty to fight the rest simultaneously. But beneath the surface of this system, the competitive expression of authoritative Great Power roles among an ever-increasing number of states was locking in contradictions; these would, in the long run, make the system more dangerous and unstable. The sublimation of these tensions without resolution made this a “great age of European deceptions, not an age of European peace.”³⁸⁸

³⁸⁷ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 562.

³⁸⁸ Taylor, 90.

This chapter examines geographic and issue area tensions to show how late-19th and early-20th century Great Power roles were becoming mutually-exclusive points for the contestation of overlapping, incompatible authority claims. They were the natural consequences of a right- and responsibility-complex that conditioned manifestations of change within an international system (e.g., rising, revisionist Powers) to adapt their self-understanding and behavior to traditional forms; their desire for upward social mobility earned them membership in a club that had less and less room to accommodate the new authority claims their roles brought with them. Crowding followed as the older Powers engaged in a sort of arms race, but with authority claims rather than weapons. As authority claims began to overlap, the *ontological security* the Powers had achieved through the long-run institutionalization of their roles was placed in jeopardy.³⁸⁹ The moral arms race of authority claims and status became a material one of guns.

a. Ontological Security and Great Power Role Dyads

The notion of ontological security assumes that “security-seeking between actors is, in part, a search for cognitive stability and routinized behaviour, allowing for identity stability and the reduction of anxiety.”³⁹⁰ After the French Revolution and the fall of Napoleon I, the ontological security of the Great Powers had been shaken so badly that the mechanism by which Great Power behavior had been formerly been routinized—the right- and responsibility-complex—was made an even more formal and vital component of international relations at the Congress of Vienna. A common Great Power identity

³⁸⁹ Ontological security, a concept used across multiple academic disciplines, can be briefly defined as “security not of the body but of the self, the subjective sense of who one is, which enables and motivates action and choice.” Mitzen, 344.

³⁹⁰ Martin J. Bayly, “Imperial ontological (in)security: ‘Buffer states’, International Relations and the case of Anglo-Afghan relations, 1808-1878,” *European Journal of International Relations* 21, no. 4 (2014): 817.

united those within the club and established cognitive stability, while the individual roles of each Power expressed routinized rights and duties conducive to Great Power managerialism. It was a tidy arrangement that greatly reduced the anxiety that naturally resulted from seeing one's centuries-old traditions—for a dynastic elite, their very world—upended by a Corsican. Peace and stability followed, with only a few serious interruptions, for a century. But the introduction of exogenous forces of change over this century—nationalism, industrialization, and globalization—brought with it a new distribution of material capacity and a new set of rising Powers. As shown in Chapter Four, rather than attempting to alter the nature of the system outright, these Powers adopted conformist, socially-mobile attitudes. The right- and responsibility-complex as reaffirmed at Vienna consequently survived this transition without serious alteration. Once these new Powers had claimed the *status* of Great Power, they set about formulating national roles claiming special rights and duties just like any other member of the club. However, because Great Power had now become a quasi-legal status, the rights and duties expressed in relation to it were now particular claims of international *authority*—usually justified as managerial and rendered in the language of legitimacy—over geographic regions and issue areas.

The introduction of rising Powers and their new authority claims into the established complex of rights and duties greatly increased the anxiety of the older Powers, who found that the game had changed under their very noses. Where once a few enclaves in Africa or China or the Adriatic were sufficient proof of status and authority, the 'shrinking of the world' by means of technology, ideology, and the claims of new Powers increased the quantitative and qualitative requirements of Great Power status.

Most significantly, the fact that these were visible changes in the nature of status linked up portentously with domestic ideological ferment: Great Power was now a subject debated in parliaments, in coffeehouses, and in private homes.³⁹¹ A regime's role in the wider world—now subject in part to popular politics—became a pillar of its self-understanding; its routine international behaviors—the actualization of its status and the expression of its authority—likewise became more important to how the a Great Power justified itself to its own people. From this ferment, a scramble ensued amongst the Powers not just for territory, but for outlets for *the authoritative expression of national purpose outside the state that, in turn, reinforced a sense of ontological security within the state*. The Great Power role backed by claims of right and duty thus became a pillar of ontological security not only for a privileged, high political class as it had previously but for the modern 'nation' itself.

These roles were routinized behaviors and attitudes aimed at reinforcing the status and authority of Great Power abroad and at home, and out of the scramble to promote them developed a number of Great Power relationships that regularized relations between pairs of Powers to such an extent that it is possible to speak of them as institutionalized dyads. These dyads originated at points of ontological tension along the fault lines of the different Great Power roles. When Great Power roles overlapped or ground up against one another, peace was at risk; these dyadic relationships normalized and institutionalized these conflicts, sometimes cementing conflictual attitudes and sometimes promoting the cooperative resolution of authority contestation. In all cases, however, these dyads linked

³⁹¹ The role of periodicals such as *Punch* magazine in popularizing Great Power politics through colorful, personified caricatures of international incidents deserves wider attention than it has received, evidence of the need for more scholarship standing at the intersection between popular print and visual culture and international affairs. An example is provided above in the case study of Japan.

the ontological security of both the Powers involved with the particular geographic or issue area because the institutionalization of these relationships was a way to relieve the anxiety that came with uncertainty.³⁹² Many of them are well-known under different names. The Anglo-German naval arms race, for example, has long been portrayed as a key factor in the development of a pattern of alliances conducive to a cataclysmic war.³⁹³ However, the heart of the issue was not who had more dreadnoughts, but rather two incompatible Great Power roles, each seeking to assert authority claims over oceans and coasts outside Europe. Germany, the most materially-capable state on the continent, had proven its Great Power mettle by being both victorious in war and responsible in its presidency of the international system of the 1870s and 1880s. It felt, however, that the status of Great Power generally and its own particular role required an independent navy and extra-European empire to match. This desire for naval independence was the key source of discord. Britain—long devoted to its maritime Great Power role and the freedom it offered it from continental affairs—was fully prepared to concede Germany a colonial sphere in Africa and the Pacific without interference, but could not stand for a German fleet powerful enough to assert those colonial rights in case Britain should ever change its mind and object to Germany's program. Germany likewise could not square Great Power status with naval dependence on anyone—even a nation admired and even beloved by its often-Anglophilic Kaiser—because that meant that its Great Power status and the authority of its role would be conditional, and therefore false. Thus resulted a conflictual dyadic relationship in which the projected role of Great Power Germany was unobtainable within the context of the existing role of Britain. Its massive expenditure on

³⁹² For ontological security and role as relational concepts, see Mitzen, 355-9.

³⁹³ Epkenhans, 126.

its navy—a significant driver of domestic politics in the early 19th century—would be called into question. The prestige it had staked upon its links to India, South Africa, Australia, and Canada would be debased as those links became unsure and contingent, and its under-investment in both its army and its continental partnerships would be thrown into high relief as its naval role lost its uniqueness. For Britain to admit an equal (or near-equal) on the sea would challenge its Great Power *raison d'être* and, indeed, throw into question the identity of the British nation.³⁹⁴ Churchill's first speech to the House of Commons as the First Lord of the Admiralty summed up this attitude: "The maintenance of naval supremacy is our whole foundation. Upon it stands not the Empire only, not merely the commercial property of our people, not merely a fine place in the world's affairs; upon our naval supremacy stands our lives and the freedom we have guarded for near a thousand years."³⁹⁵ For both of these Powers, the certainty of an institutionalized, dyadic relationship of competition based on an arms race was thus preferable to the uncertainties and anxieties of an indeterminate relationship that could quietly debase their status and authority. Despite a surprising paucity of genuine antipathy on either side, it was easier for Britain and Germany to confront one another as power political rivals than to stomach the anxiety of not knowing where they stood; 'better the devil you know' than the associate who might have designs on your role.

A contrasting dyadic relationship is that of Russia-Britain, which transitioned from competition to cooperation. Here, a century of extra-European expansion placed the roles of the two Powers in direct conflict in central and eastern Asia. This was a very old

³⁹⁴ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 319-320.

³⁹⁵ Winston Spencer Churchill, Speech to the House of Commons, November 10, 1911, quoted in Epkenhans, 115.

rivalry that had come into focus soon after the British had been ejected from the Thirteen Colonies and turned their eyes toward Asia. In 1791, they warned Russia over the annexation of the Black Sea city of Oczakov. Though the British government did not know the exact significance (or lack thereof) of the city—“Pitt only investigated the importance of Oczakov *after* he had decided to fight for it”—it was eager to check Russia’s southward drift toward what it saw as an outlet for the expression of its own role.³⁹⁶ Catherine the Great’s response threatened war and told the British to stay out of the Middle East entirely; this argument, “once accepted, would ring the death knell of Great Britain as a Great Power.”³⁹⁷ Consequently, the dispute lingered on at varying degrees of intensity for a century as the two Powers established over time a competitive dyadic relationship based on mutual danger. Russia could threaten Britain’s Persian and perhaps even its Indian territories with all the might of its seemingly inexhaustible human resources; Britain could choke off Russia’s international trade, raise continental coalitions against it, and humiliate it through targeted amphibious operations.

Unsurprisingly, this competitive dyad proved insufficient to relieve the mutual ontological anxieties bound up with such a wide-ranging, Power-defining colonial contest. George F. Kennan captured this anxious sense of distance: “To each of them, the other appeared as a species of malevolent but unmovable object on the international horizon . . . a factor that of course had to be reckoned with, but not one with which one could communicate to any good effect.”³⁹⁸ How can one reckon with an incommunicate

³⁹⁶ Allan Cunningham, “The Oczakov Debate,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 1, no. 3 (1965): 224, 234.

³⁹⁷ Edward Ingram, “India and the North-West Frontier: The First Afghan War” in *Great Powers and Little Wars*, 37-9 (quote at 39).

³⁹⁸ George F. Kennan, *The Fateful Alliance: France, Russia, and the Coming of the First World War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 126.

other? A solution finally presented itself as tensions increased in the latter half of the 19th century. The foundation for a new, cooperative Anglo-Russian dyad was finally provided by three factors: the expansion of German influence toward Baghdad, the Anglo-Japanese alliance and Russia's defeat in 1904, and increasing tensions in Persia, which threatened to cause a crisis.³⁹⁹ Britain thus embarked on a "transition of profound significance" by abandoning its traditional hostility to Russian colonialism in general and agreeing to mutual spheres of influence in Persia specifically.⁴⁰⁰ Russia responded by removing the Damoclean sword it had held over the head of Britain's empire in the Middle East and India. The ontological security of both Powers was now locked into a dyad of mutual dependence, showing how the anxieties provoked by their common vulnerabilities could only be resolved by a relationship of trust and interlocking, mutually-respected rights and duties over areas where their Great Power roles overlapped. This allowed them to ensure the security of their expansion regions, thus preserving the routines and patterns of self-understanding provided by the enactment of their roles. The words of one British official in 1914 could apply equally to both Powers, "It is absolutely essential to us to keep on the best terms with Russia . . . as were we to have an unfriendly or even an indifferent Russia, we should find ourselves in great difficulties in certain localities where we are unfortunately not in a position to defend ourselves."⁴⁰¹

Other dyads reflected these conflictual (France-Germany) and cooperative (France-Russia; Germany-Austria) patterns, often anchored by points of geographic and issue area role overlap (see Figure 5.1). What is important in each of these situations was

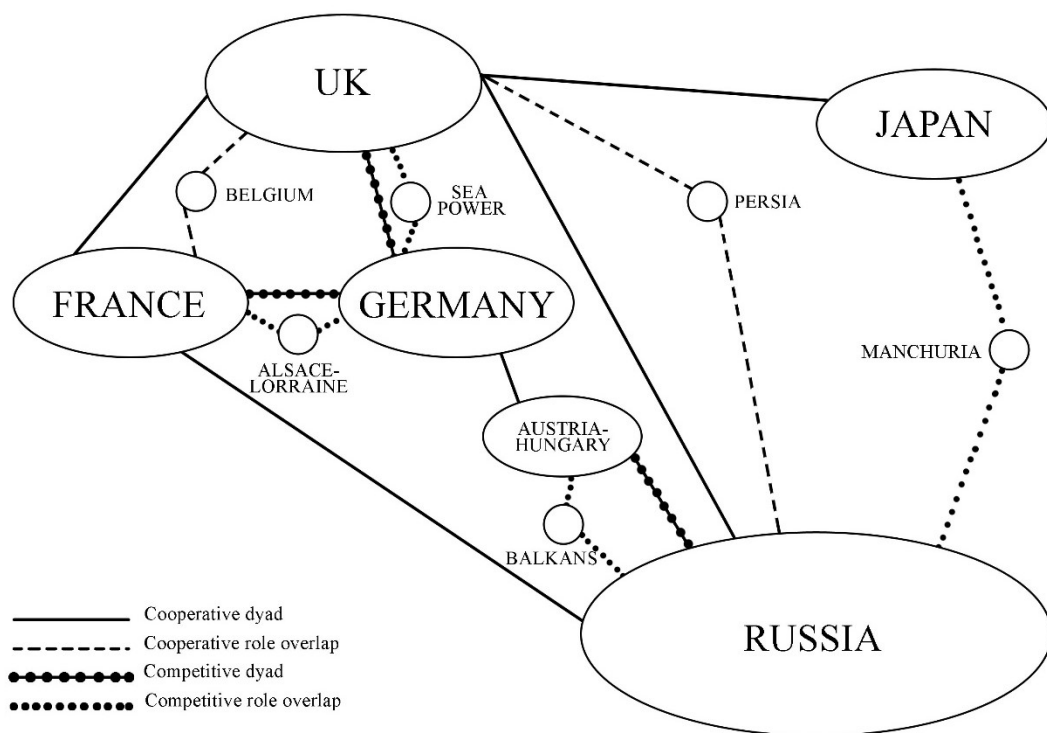
³⁹⁹ Taylor, 441-6.

⁴⁰⁰ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 250.

⁴⁰¹ Harold Nicolson, May 25, 1914, quoted in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 324. Further primary source quotes to this effect can be found at 546; see also 538-9.

the manner in which the ontological security of two Powers became uniquely linked in the course of conflict or cooperation over a geographic region or issue area of vital importance to both parties. These linkages would be very important for the development of Great Power politics in the early 20th century. To illustrate their consequences, the competitive Austria-Russia dyad will be studied in detail.

Figure 5.1: Great Power Role Dyads in 1914



b. Austria-Hungary: The Indispensable Conglomerate?

A Czech historian once opined that “truly, if the Austrian empire had not existed for ages, it would be necessary, in the interest of Europe, in the interest of mankind itself, to create it with all speed.”⁴⁰² To understand the reality behind this statement, it is

⁴⁰² Francis Palacký, reply to the German National Assembly, 1848, quoted in Joachim Remak, “The Healthy Invalid: How Doomed the Habsburg Empire?” *The Journal of Modern History* 41, no. 2 (1969): 132.

necessary to explore how Austria-Hungary, the mid-19th century reincarnation of the Habsburg dynastic conglomerate, was actually willed into existence based on the needs of Great Power politics.⁴⁰³ Indeed, what history records as the Austro-Hungarian state was really the embodiment of a Great Power role that went in search of a people (or peoples) willing to take it on.⁴⁰⁴ Aimed at the maintenance of order and balance at Europe's vital crossroads of the Russian and Ottoman Empires, the Balkans, the assumption of this role would shape Austria-Hungary's international and domestic existence before ultimately contributing not only to its own destruction but also to that of the right- and responsibility-complex that had birthed it.

The chief building block for the Austro-Hungarian Great Power role was the failure of the earlier roles of the Austrian Empire. No other early 19th century roles were spoken of as frequently, as openly, and as cogently of that of Austria, a state that was not only *said* to have an 'Italian mission' and a 'German mission' but that actually backed up these claims, often forlornly, by both words and arms. At first glance, these 'missions' might seem elementary covers for simple, land-grabbing imperialism, but they were actually rooted in a complex Austrian Great Power role constituted by the circumstances of the post-Napoleonic settlement. To suppress the revolutionary threat, Austria was the special proponent of the Vienna settlement's reconfiguration of France's domestic and

⁴⁰³ To avoid excessive repetition, the entity known in its time as the 'Austro-Hungarian Monarchy/Realm (*Monarchie/Reich*)' will be referred to here interchangeably as Austria-Hungary (or simply Austria when the meaning is clear), the Habsburg Empire, the Dual Monarchy, or more simply the Monarchy. This follows established practice among scholars of a truly *sui generis* entity: two states in a real union that had a common foreign policy but separate domestic structures united only by a monarch and his council.

⁴⁰⁴ "Nearly every important political and diplomatic issue in the monarchy had dual faces: external (*Aussen*) and international (*Innen*). In an unusual fashion, much of the content, style and operational approaches to policy issues were the product of the constant tension and interplay between domestic and foreign policy considerations." Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), 10.

international existence. In Italy, the Austrian mission was to serve as a bulwark against disorder by holding down the truculent northern principalities and keeping watch over the unstable Bourbon kingdom in the south. In Germany, Austria was a pillar of decentralization and tradition. It preserved the legal and territorial status quo by tempering Prussian adventurism while maintaining the existing configuration of central Europe by frustrating German nationalism. Austria did these things because, though its ministers sometimes “cared little or nothing for Austria’s . . . ‘mission’ [they cared] much for her prestige” and recognized that without it, geopolitical circumstances could turn against the Habsburg conglomerate.⁴⁰⁵ Thus, Austria invested heavily in its managerial Great Power role even as its domestic divisions gradually debased its material position.

Insecure at home, Austria nevertheless found ontological security in its longstanding missions abroad. But these missions ultimately failed beginning with the acceptance of a republican Great Power France, thus revealing that “the Powers generally . . . had ceased to believe in the moral validity of the treaties of 1815 and hence in Austria’s European mission.”⁴⁰⁶ Within a decade of this crack in the Viennese façade, Italy and Germany were both united in the wake of Austrian defeats. These debasements of Austria’s international role created an ontological *insecurity* about the purpose of the Austrian conglomerate at home and abroad; this would ultimately lead to its transformation into Austria-Hungary when the central European ethnicities of Austria and Bohemia—formerly the heartland but now just the western hinterland of a primarily-eastern state—were forced to concede virtual autonomy to the Magyars of Hungary. Yet, the Habsburg monarchy survived because this diverse, patchwork empire was made of up

⁴⁰⁵ Taylor, 168.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 87.

a collection of nationalities that, though often squabbling, had a common fear of what they labeled “Russian universal monarchy.”⁴⁰⁷ Consequently, the Dual Monarchy functioned as a collective security system against Russia that simultaneously provided a basis for domestic order among these competing groups, what one scholar called

a protective umbrella under which eleven nationalities could live, argue and struggle with each other, and yet feel secure that their futures would be protected against external challenge. In fulfilling that responsibility the Habsburgs gained their *raison d'être*, gave currency to the importance of international politics in the life of the monarchy and conferred legitimacy upon political arrangements that—on their face—were anachronistic.⁴⁰⁸

To counter the Russian threat, Austria-Hungary, like Austria before it, had to be a Great Power. But Great Powers needed roles giving them scope for the expression of authority claims, and Austria was fresh out of central European missions. Blocked to the north, the west, and the east, there was only one outlet left for the repair of its prestige and the articulation of a cogent Great Power role. Fortunately for the new Dual Monarchy, the other Powers (save Russia, still weak and sulking from its defeat in Crimea) were uniformly supportive of the maintenance of Habsburg Great Power status and the channeling of its energies toward a new geographic venue.⁴⁰⁹ Unfortunately, this was Europe’s most insoluble problem, the Balkans.⁴¹⁰ Here, centuries of incongruent

⁴⁰⁷ Francis Palacký, quoted in Remak, 132.

⁴⁰⁸ Williamson, 32; see also Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 70-2. In the words of an Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, “Austria becomes ungovernable” the moment that Russia controls Turkish Europe. Quoted in F. R. Bridge, “The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, 1900-18” in *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marian Kent (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 31.

⁴⁰⁹ This support was not always enthusiastic. Schroeder has labeled this ‘negative Austrophilia’, “meaning thereby not positive support for Austria from other powers or their active willingness to defend it, but at least their grudging, half-contemptuous recognition that whatever its virtues and shortcomings, Austria fulfilled functions in the European system difficult or impossible to replace.” Schroeder, “Stealing Horses to Great Applause,” 39.

⁴¹⁰ Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 554; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 78.

cultural and political conflicts had created a dangerous situation that could only be managed by cooperative or hegemonic Great Power governance.⁴¹¹

This was a match of necessity. No other Power's security—physical or ontological—was so intimately related to this troubled region as that of Austria-Hungary. The nationalist pressures gradually eroding Ottoman authority carried serious implications for it as well: when Serbs and Rumanians and Croats under Ottoman control spoke of their own ethnic communities, they understood those communities to also include their theorized kin living under Habsburg rule. Similarly, forces at work in Russian domestic politics saw opportunities for strategic and cultural aggrandizement by supporting Slavic and Orthodox nationalism at the expense of the Ottomans and the Hungarians, a potential expansion of Russian authority that threatened to encircle the Dual Monarchy.⁴¹² Consequently, the proper functioning of the Habsburg collective security system required action to ameliorate these problems. Austria-Hungary thus turned to the management of this troubled region out of both practical necessity—the need to use its own Great Power influence to block Russia—and ontological need—the need for prestige, the need to actualize a role, the need for a purpose beyond simple survival after humiliation and revolution.

Vitality, the re-foundation of the Monarchy's ontological security upon a Balkan Great Power role was consecrated by the other Powers, a group that had been deadlocked over this issue for some time. Despite decades of trying, the 'Concert of Europe' had

⁴¹¹ For a typology of conflict outcomes in the Balkans based on territorial congruence/incongruence and different levels of Great Power involvement (cooperative, conflictual, disengaged, hegemonic), see Benjamin Miller and Uri Resnick, "Conflict in the Balkans (1830-1913): Combining Levels of Analysis," *International Politics* 40, no. 3 (2003): 365-407.

⁴¹² Williamson, 172.

been unable to even “[agree] on a definition of the Ottoman Empire,” let alone manage the consequences of its European decline.⁴¹³ With simple partition out of the question short of a general war, some form of responsible Great Power management amidst the authority vacuum in Turkish Europe would be required to stave off turbulent Balkan nationalism, Russian aggrandizement, and, ultimately, a Great Power war over the Straits.⁴¹⁴ Austria, ejected from its central and southern European enclaves, stood properly positioned to frustrate these eventualities; at the same time, its internal instability would dampen any desire to swallow the Balkans whole since active aggrandizement in the region offered little tangible gain to an empire already consumed by ethnic and nationalist controversies.⁴¹⁵ As the status quo Powers hoped, Austrian officials proved eager to limit territorial entanglements in the Balkans in favor of maximizing the prestige it would gain from maintaining stability and order; there was instead broad consensus that the Austro-Hungarian role should be informal, diplomatic, economic, and civilizational rather than imperial.⁴¹⁶ When the Congress of Berlin assigned Austria-Hungary the administration of the chaotic Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it did so with the assumption that they would be quickly annexed. Instead, the Monarchy promoted stability and continuity by assuming responsibility for the implementation of reforms in the name of the Sultan; it would take three decades before its cautious leaders finally exercised their right to annex the territories.⁴¹⁷ This

⁴¹³ For the four conflicting “varieties of Ottoman Empire” that led the Powers to talk past one another, see Ingram, “Bellicism as Boomerang,” 217-20 (quote at 217).

⁴¹⁴ Taylor, 235.

⁴¹⁵ As Andr assy, the Monarchy’s foreign minister in the 1870s put it, “The Hungarian ship is so overloaded [i.e., with nationalities problems] that any addition whether a hundredweight of gold or a hundredweight of dross would sink it.” Quoted in F. R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866-1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 62.

⁴¹⁶ Bridge, “The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire,” 32-3.

⁴¹⁷ Williamson, 27, 62.

responsibility to Balkan stability has been called *le beau rôle*, or as one British minister put it to his counterpart in Vienna, “you lead, we follow you.”⁴¹⁸

Yet, the popular perception of this role was not as credulous. As an Austro-Hungarian foreign minister explained to a foreign guest:

This is just now our great anxiety. In the West we are believed to mean conquest, which is absurd. It would be impossible to satisfy the two great parties of the empire, and we have, besides, the greatest interest in the maintenance of peace. Nevertheless, we do dream of conquests, but of such as in your character of political economist you will approve. It is those to be made by our manufactures, our commerce, our civilization. But to realize them we must have railways in Servia, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Macedonia, and above all, a junction with the Ottoman system, which will definitely connect the East and West. Engineers and diplomatists are both at work. We shall get to the end soon, I hope. When a Pullman car will take you comfortably from Paris to Constantinople in three days, I venture to believe that you will not be dissatisfied with our activity. It is for you Westerns that we are working.⁴¹⁹

The civilizational duty expressed here was at work within many of the Powers, and the foreign guest could add without hesitation that this attitude could drive Austrian policy beyond the limits it hoped to set for itself: events could “force Austria to take a step forward. . . . States which are mixed up with Eastern affairs must go further than they wish: look at England in Egypt! This is the grave side of the predominant position which Austria has secured in the Balkan Peninsula.”⁴²⁰ The Austrians themselves realized this, and consequently shouldered their parochial duties there with significant trepidation. That fear was counterbalanced by the realization that they had no real choice but to play the role of a Great Power if Austria-Hungary was to maintain the prestige and material capacity necessary to have a voice in European affairs generally; as a foreign office memorandum put it in 1884, “We have only the East. . . . We cannot allow the completion

⁴¹⁸ Taylor, 321, see also 279.

⁴¹⁹ Emile de Laveleye, *The Balkan Peninsula* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887), 5.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

of the Russian ring from Silesia to Dalmatia. A Slav conformation of the Balkan peninsula under Russian material or moral protection would cut our vital arteries.”⁴²¹ The combination of the ontological dangers attached to staying out of the Balkans with those of being involved there clouded its policies even as its Balkan role grew more deeply institutionalized by the passage of time.

On-the-ground Austro-Hungarian management in the Balkans took a variety of forms. The new Great Power role expressed the same parochial rights the old Austrian Empire had carved out of its long relationship with the Porte; the Monarchy had a say in Turkish custom rates, in the Turkish postal system, and a special right (the *Kultusprotektorat*) to the patronage of Albanian and Macedonian Catholics.⁴²² There was also a host of new duties ranging from shoring up Ottoman authority against Russian and nationalist threats to moderating the often-turbulent behavior of its own clients. Serbia, its chief proxy in the region, was an almost constant source of tension. When the Serbs launched an unprovoked invasion into Russian-leaning Bulgaria and were handily defeated, it was Austria that stepped in to prevent the Bulgarians from launching a counter-invasion and involving Russia.⁴²³ When the Serb government began a series of imprisonments and executions of liberal politicians, it was Austria that stepped in to secure clemency for those wrongly accused of treason.⁴²⁴ When a Serbian king publically announced that he would abdicate and allow Austria to annex his territory, it was the Austrians that hastened to change his mind in the name of promoting “a flourishing and

⁴²¹ Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office memorandum, August, 1884, quoted in Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo*, 103.

⁴²² Bridge, “The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire,” 33.

⁴²³ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 79; Taylor, 305-6.

⁴²⁴ One of the men freed thanks to Austrian intervention was Nikola Pašić, the man who led Serbia to war in 1914. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 18.

independent Serbia.”⁴²⁵ This was moral and material wisdom joined together: the Dual Monarchy had no moral desire to aggrandize its respectable, managerial role—and it lacked the material strength to confidently do otherwise. Similarly, the Monarchy acted as a coordinator of European balance in the region, as when Emperor-King Franz Joseph took it upon himself to negotiate and maintain over a span of decades a secret alliance with the unpredictable king of Rumania; these secret links formed “a non-Slavic barrier” separating Russia from its would-be client ethnicities in the Balkans and, crucially, barring its way to European Turkey.⁴²⁶ The Monarchy could also cite this role to justify police actions when necessary. For example, when contumacious Montenegro refused to desist in the siege of a key Ottoman costal city, Austro-Hungarian ships staged a naval demonstration in protest that was later joined by the other Powers, convincing even Russia to abandon the aggressive Balkan principality.⁴²⁷ In the words of an Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, the broad contours of this Balkan policy thus aimed at “stability and peace, the conservation of what exists, and the avoidance of entanglements and shocks.”⁴²⁸

But Austrian managerialism would be challenged by the unpredictable tides of Balkan nationalism when these nationalities decided to liberate themselves from Turkish rule. The resulting Balkan Wars first established a new collection of Balkan states at Turkey’s expense, then saw those same states fight it out amongst themselves for the fruits of victory; however, the real loser in all of this was Austria, whose diplomacy

⁴²⁵ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 79.

⁴²⁶ Williamson, 96.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 136.

⁴²⁸ Count Berchtold, quoted in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 112.

proved incapable of directing events at crucial points in the conflict.⁴²⁹ By the end of the Second Balkan War, the empowered nationalist states were proving increasingly resistant to Austrian influence. The sectarian massacres that followed the defeat of Bulgaria by its Balkan neighbors were carried out despite the Monarchy's condemnation, while Serbia's serious (and Russian-backed) efforts to forge a union with Montenegro augured a united anti-Habsburg front aimed right at Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴³⁰ By 1914, the Austrian ambassador to Belgrade was summing up the prevailing view of Serbia, once a loyal client but now self-aggrandizing and brutally imperialist: "murder and killing have been raised to a system in Serbia," which was not to be counted among the "civilized states."⁴³¹ Austria-Hungary's role as benign manager of the Balkans was disintegrating.

This process of decay was not just the result of Russia's reoriented and disruptive Great Power role (discussed below). Instead, the Powers collectively gave it both passive and active encouragement. The Balkans, once seen as a Pandora's box that had to be either managed by a restrained Austria or consumed by a crusading Russia, were increasingly viewed in partisan terms. A symbolic turning point was reached when the multi-Power condominium over Macedonia (1903-1907)—a conservative partnership designed to preserve Ottoman authority while curtailing sectarian violence—began to fragment. Originally conceived as a Concert-backed, Austro-Russian led effort to preserve order, over time the other Powers began to defect from this collective agreement to support more radical solutions based on currying favor with either the nationalists (Britain and Russia) or the Sultan (Germany); Austria-Hungary was left alone in its

⁴²⁹ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 43.

⁴³⁰ Williamson, 173.

⁴³¹ Quoted in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 113.

determination to hold a middle ground.⁴³² The creation of rival alliance blocs only intensified the tendency to view the region in zero-sum, power-political terms “rather than as a continental geopolitical ecosystem in which every power had a role to play.”⁴³³ The introduction of France to the region as Russia’s key ally provided a dangerous accelerant to the nationalist fires that had long-simmered in Belgrade. As early as 1905, the French were using their Russian ally’s improved position to replace Austria as Serbia’s supplier of armaments and loans, positioning Serbia as a partner not just of Russia but of the entire Entente system.⁴³⁴ Given the importance of international loans and armaments contracts to spheres of influence during this period, France and Russia were now directly subverting Austria-Hungary’s sphere of influence.⁴³⁵ Indeed, by 1914, France was such a strong backer of the Russo-Serbian alliance that observers were surprised that the French ambassador to Belgrade could even summon the courage to protest a series of sectarian massacres carried out by the Serbian army.⁴³⁶

The Entente’s financial, cultural, and military assertiveness altered the place of the Balkans in European politics writ large. Formerly, it had functioned as a quasi-colonial region for Austria-Hungary, the one Power without a colonial outlet. Since Great Powers knew that “they must now and then exert themselves and be seen doing so,” the ability of the virtually landlocked Dual Monarchy to express its Great Power role there

⁴³² Bridge, “The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire,” 36-7.

⁴³³ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 288.

⁴³⁴ This French interference sparked the ‘Pig War’, a customs conflict between Austria-Hungary and its former client that lasted for three years. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 29. It was no coincidence that the Serbian evacuation from Albania in 1913, the result of an Austrian ultimatum, was quickly followed by yet another French loan capitalizing on Serbian resentment; see Williamson, 153-4.

⁴³⁵ For international loans and the hypothecation of state functions by the Great Powers, see Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 30.

⁴³⁶ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 113.

was an important foundation for its Great Power status generally.⁴³⁷ All the Powers had their parochial ‘little wars’ for territory and prestige outside of Europe, and the Monarchy’s desire to stabilize its southern frontier was hardly non-normative when compared with the assertive, extra-European record of literally all the other Powers.⁴³⁸ Yet, as the Balkans developed from a troublesome colonial backwater into a vital element in the wider European alliance system, it became more and more difficult for Austria-Hungary to ‘exert itself’ there without risking war. A managerial Great Power role requires a certain amount of institutionalized discretion and leeway for the Power involved; when a rival alliance bloc interposed itself in southern Europe, Austria-Hungary’s authority claims were debased and its role undermined. Indeed, it was one thing for Napoleon III to assert a prestige-based right-claim to influence in a faraway principality like Rumania based on Great Power France’s promotion of a “just and civilizing cause.”⁴³⁹ It was quite another for President Fallières of the Third Republic to arm and finance Serbia and then to publicly hail King Petar of Serbia as ‘King of *all* the Serbs’ (“including, implicitly, those living within the Austro-Hungarian Empire”).⁴⁴⁰ The first was a natural expression of Great Power authority, certainly competitive in its way but normatively-bounded and comprehensible within the right- and duty-claims common to the time. The second was far more serious because it was akin to questioning the legitimacy not only of a Great Power role consecrated by the Powers collectively, but of a Great Power’s right to exist. Austria-Hungary—confronted by a Franco-Russian policy that was, in an official’s words, “aggressive and directed against the *status quo*”—thus

⁴³⁷ Thornton, 17.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁴³⁹ Quoted in Seton-Watson, 267.

⁴⁴⁰ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 94.

had every reason to be ontologically insecure.⁴⁴¹ Even its ostensible allies—Germany and Italy—began meddling in Ottoman affairs in ways contrary to Austro-Hungarian interests and disruptive of the routines of its role.⁴⁴² Italy even went so far as to undermine the *Kultusprotektorat* in Albania, a special Austrian right dating back to 1606.⁴⁴³ The other Powers were abandoning their support of a mission they had assigned Austria-Hungary decades earlier. Facing apathy and outright hostility, the Dual Monarchy's ability to act declined, and its prestige followed.⁴⁴⁴

During the run-up to a British parliamentary election in 1880 unusually concerned with issues of foreign policy, William Gladstone exclaimed against Austria with his usual vehemence: “There is not an instance, there is not a spot upon the whole map where you can lay your finger and say: ‘There Austria did good’.”⁴⁴⁵ Ever in search of progress in the backyards of the other Powers, Gladstone was missing the point. It was in the eventualities Austria was keeping *off* the European map that its international value was found. By keeping Russia out, the Turks in, and the Slavs quiet, Austria was fulfilling an indispensable mission not only for its own Great Power status but for European politics in general. That this thankless task fell upon the Power the least materially-equipped to carry it out would help engender numerous contradictions in the development of Great

⁴⁴¹ The quote comes from Baron Giesl, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Belgrade in 1914. Quoted in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 114.

⁴⁴² Italy's seizure of Tripoli in 1911 was especially devastating, undermining stability across Turkish Europe, while Germany's inability to comprehend the threat posed to the Dual Monarchy by nationalist agitation led it to misconstrue where their interests overlapped and where they did not. Williamson, 43, 54, 144; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 234, 290.

⁴⁴³ Bridge, “The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire,” 35. For later Italian anti-Habsburg machinations in the new Albanian state, see Williamson, 166-7.

⁴⁴⁴ For the gendered implications of Austria-Hungary's gradual ‘effeminization’ through inaction leading up to Sarajevo, see Ute Frevert, “Honor, Gender, and Power: The Politics of Satisfaction in Pre-War Europe” in *An Improbable War*, 242-3.

⁴⁴⁵ He contrasted Austria, “the unflinching foe of freedom,” with Russia, “the friend of Slavonic freedom.” W. E. Gladstone, “Fourth Midlothian Speech,” March 17, 1880, published in *Political Speeches in Scotland*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot, 1880), 41.

Power politics there. As the Balkans began to respond to the call of nationalism and its peers began to see opportunities for aggrandizement there instead of insoluble problems, Austria-Hungary's ontological security—and quite literally, its very existence—would be put at stake.

b. Russia: Anxious Giant

The single biggest challenge to the rights and duties of the Austro-Hungarian Great Power role would come from its competitive and ultimately dyadic relationship with the rights and duties of Russia's Great Power role. Just as the former was reformulating its domestic structure and international role to address the problems of eastern European nationalism, the latter was also in search of a new mission. Previously, Russia had assumed the role of European *gendarme*: the enforcer of Great Power legitimacy and the final guarantor of bayonet-backed stability against 'the revolution'. However, chastened at Crimea and forced to back down from its traditional influence over Turkey, Russia abandoned its previous role and withdrew from the conservative mission it had advanced outside its own borders in places as diverse as Belgium, Hungary, and the Balkans.⁴⁴⁶ Instead, it redirected its traditional emphasis on territorial expansion—related, of course, to the classic Russian security dilemma by which territory was seized to defend territory previously seized—to new lands. It turned its attentions eastward, to Siberia and eventually China, and westward, to an economic and eventually military relationship with the French designed to improve its position in its ongoing Great Game with Britain.

This would change in 1876, however, as Slavophile forces at the Russian court combined with favorable geopolitical circumstances in the Balkans to reorient Russia's

⁴⁴⁶ Taylor, 75.

expansionist posture toward its role as protector of the “children of Russia”—the nationalities of European Turkey.⁴⁴⁷ Russia’s expansionism toward the Straits latched on easily to the pan-Slav nationalism then coming to a head in the decaying Ottoman Empire; the latter provided a facilitating justification for the former, while the former offered a practical means to achieve the latter after centuries of European waffling on the liberation of ostensibly Christian territories under Ottoman occupation.⁴⁴⁸ Henceforth, Russia’s role would be oriented around what Tsar Alexander II had called its “sacred mission:” intervention in the Balkans to support the extension of Russia’s sphere to the Straits and beyond, its territorial aggrandizement through the establishment of dependent client states, and the civilizational promotion of Orthodox nationalism.⁴⁴⁹ This was no mere alteration in policy. Rather, it was a deep-seated embrace of a role deriving from the macro-level understanding of Great Power as a status entailed with prestige, duty, and rights and the parochial situation of a Russia in which both rulers and ruled were motivated by a strong sense of religious and cultural obligation as well as a chauvinistic belief in a national destiny of imperial expansion.

The first step in the actualization of a Slavic Russian role was a Russo-Turkish war inaugurated shortly after the Tsar’s southward reorientation in 1876. Surprisingly, the Ottoman army showed signs of life, delaying the Russian advance to the Straits for so long that Russia’s victory felt like defeat, especially since the Tsar had gone to war “for reasons of national pride and of Panslav sentiment, not to achieve any practical aim.”⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁷ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 36; Taylor, 238.

⁴⁴⁸ The interlinked nature of these two objectives—the Straits and the fostering of Balkan client states—is often missed by scholars in search of an either/or causal force for Russian involvement in the First World War. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 279-80. For an example of an either/or argument, see Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011), 239-240.

⁴⁴⁹ Taylor, 239.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

Istanbul remained Turkish, Russia's gains (especially the brief existence of a 'big' Bulgarian state) were rolled back by the other Powers at the resulting Congress of Berlin, and Austria's role as manager of the region was reinforced by its mandate to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina and the consolidation of a Serbian state within the its sphere of influence.⁴⁵¹ Chastened again, Russian policy reluctantly conceded to Austria managerial control, though it struggled mightily to maintain a measure of influence in Bulgaria and at the Porte to keep the Straits closed to foreign navies (so weak was its own navy in the Black Sea).⁴⁵² However, its Balkan ambitions were merely placed in remission; the Great Power role that Russia had taken on would instead be pursued using the new tool of a French alliance freeing Russia to act against the forces frustrating its authority claims in Turkey: Austria, Germany, and Britain. To work around his stalemate in the Balkans, "the autocrat of all the Russias stood to attention for the Marseillaise; and that hymn of revolutionary nationalism was played in honour of the oppressor of the Poles."⁴⁵³

This significant moment of development in Russian international politics reflected an understanding of how, as the foundations of the autocratic regime at home began to grow unsettled, its Great Power role was increasingly vital to its ontological security. Orthodox and pan-Slav sentiment ran high among the people and within the Russian court, and the patriarchal understanding of imperial authority meant that the duties of the Tsar to the nationalities of the Balkans were very real motivators of state policy. The containment of Russian eastward expansion by the Japanese (and the domestic revolution

⁴⁵¹ At Berlin, Austria-Hungary gained "a mandate [representing] the public endorsement by Europe of Austria-Hungary's role as a guardian of order in the Near East." Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo*, 92.

⁴⁵² Russia's efforts included, at one point, the kidnapping and forced abdication of a Bulgarian prince, but his successor proved unwilling to accept the status of a client. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 126; Taylor, 304; Williamson, 116.

⁴⁵³ Taylor, 336; see also Kennan, 9.

that followed) and the barrier to southern expansion provided by the British only intensified the ontological necessity of Russia's Balkan role: "the Balkans remained . . . the only arena in which Russia could still pursue a policy focused on projecting imperial power."⁴⁵⁴ This was the mirror image of the situation then prevalent in Austria-Hungary, a contradiction of grave import: "Once the Balkan Slavs were astir, the Russian government dared not let them fail; Austria-Hungary dared not let them succeed."⁴⁵⁵ That Russia's desperate southeastern orientation crossed directly in the path of Austria's own 'last-chance' role ensured that tensions would result; Russia's role of aggrandizement and Austria's role of managerial stabilization—both essential to their existence not only as Great Powers but as stable states—seemed locked into a competitive dyad and destined to clash.⁴⁵⁶

The two Powers recognized this contradiction, and both took small steps to stave off its consequences through cooperation in some of the more turbulent situations that plagued the Balkans.⁴⁵⁷ But when Balkan nationalism began to permanently erode the foundations of Austro-Hungarian management in the 1900s, this spurred a renewal of Russian efforts to supplant the Monarchy's authority claims with its own Great Power role, Slavophile in ideological orientation and geopolitically aimed at the Straits; this was "the military version of national liberal neo-Slavism, 'The shortest and safest operational route to Constantinople runs through Vienna . . . and Berlin.'"⁴⁵⁸ The first step in this process was a diplomatic coup separating Serbia from its traditional status as an Austrian

⁴⁵⁴ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 87.

⁴⁵⁵ Taylor, 229.

⁴⁵⁶ For the role of the largely anti-Austrian Russia bureaucracy in fostering long-term tensions, see Kennan, 123-4.

⁴⁵⁷ Williamson, 59; Taylor, 370.

⁴⁵⁸ The quote comes from Yuri Danilov, a Russian army planner. McMeekin, 26.

client. When a cadre of revolutionary military officers hacked to death the Serbian king, queen, and several top cabinet officials in 1903, they brought to power a weaker monarch unable—and, egged on by Russia, increasingly unwilling—to restrain popular Serbian nationalism. This movement envisioned a unified ‘greater Serbia’ that would encompass large swaths of the Balkans. Since the Serbian nationalist vision of what made one a ‘Serbian’ was rather loose and consequently maximalist, its ideological program naturally targeted the Habsburg Empire—especially its Hungarian component—for dissolution and reincorporation into a pan-Serb empire.⁴⁵⁹ This set its interests not only against Austria’s conservative, managerial role but against its very existence. Russia—humiliated by Japan in 1904 and shaken by a subsequent revolution, pounced on this opportunity to express its debased Great Power authority. It began serious efforts to add Serbia to its sphere, directing that state’s militant energies in the process toward expansion at Austria’s expense.⁴⁶⁰ When a favorable geopolitical shift presented itself—Austria-Hungary’s gestures of goodwill toward the new Serbian regime, including being the first Power to recognize the regicide government, had been rebuffed—the Tsar pounced. It seemed a small thing at the time, but the entire mental map of Great Power roles that had defined the development of the modern Balkans had been rewritten.

Austria-Hungary’s formal annexation of long-occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 definitively exposed the divisive nature of these conflicting roles. It did not matter that the annexation exercised an Austro-Hungarian right that had been formalized in

⁴⁵⁹ The stridency of the territorial claims attached to Serbian nationalism—the fanciful “mental maps that informed elite and popular understandings of Serbia’s policy and purpose”—is covered in detail in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 33-42. In a way, little Serbia had formulated its own Great Power role based around a sacred authority claim of ethnic duties and rights; it lacked only the material capacity necessary to back up its vision, which it found in a Franco-Russian alliance.

⁴⁶⁰ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 80, 159.

multiple treaties and, ironically, had only been exercised at the suggestion of Russia's own foreign minister in his attempts to strike a bargain over the Straits.⁴⁶¹ The Tsar quickly disavowed this provocative suggestion, but it was too late; Russia's policy blunder had offended its own sacred role publicly. Amidst outcries in St. Petersburg and Belgrade, a crisis developed and a joint Russo-Serbian mobilization followed.⁴⁶² The Russians had thrown down the gauntlet over their Balkan position, and Austria answered it with both mobilization and with the threat of revealing Russia's own complicity in the *casus belli*—a threat that would have further discredited Russia's position and the authority it claimed by virtue of its Balkan role. But even the combination of Austro-Hungarian mobilization, the fact that Russia had ceded Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Dual Monarchy on multiple occasions, and the threat to reveal Russia's hypocrisy to the world was insufficient to stop war; instead, German intervention was required to compel both Russia and Serbia to back down and recognize the annexation. The Great Power roles of Austria-Hungary and Russia had now proven irreconcilable without resort to the armed mediation of a third Power. This was "a turning point in Balkan geopolitics. . . . from this moment onwards, it would be much more difficult to contain the negative energies generated by conflicts among the Balkan states."⁴⁶³ Henceforth, a humiliated Russia's Balkan mission and its ultimate aim—the creation of a Balkan League directed ostensibly

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 187-9.

⁴⁶² Bridge notes that the Bosnian annexation sprung from the "fundamentally conservative motives behind Austro-Hungarian policy." Turkish reformers had called for a parliament, and the annexation was designed to prevent a clash from developing over the provinces that would destabilize the entire region and possibly lead to a revolution in Istanbul. Turkey was compensated financially for the annexation, and Russo-Serbian protests were based more on the frustration of those states at a lost opportunity to destabilize the Habsburg monarchy by provoking a controversy than on any genuine outrage about the annexation *qua* itself. Bridge, "The Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire," 38-9; for the bizarre complicity of a rouge Russian minister, see Taylor, 450. See also Schroeder, "Stealing Horses to Great Applause," 34-9.

⁴⁶³ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 86.

at the Porte but really at Vienna while Russia itself took the Straits—would be a do-or-die affair.⁴⁶⁴

The remainder of this narrative of Russian assertiveness coincides with that of Austro-Hungarian decay outlined above. By 1913, Russia's ambassador to Belgrade—the town's unofficial 'king'—was publically calling out the Dual Monarchy as the new 'Sick Man' of Europe and predicting its collapse would be brought on just as swiftly by Serbia as its Ottoman predecessor's had been by the united Balkan states.⁴⁶⁵ This was no idle boast; rather, "Russian imperialists were dead serious about dismembering Turkey—and . . . Austria-Hungary too."⁴⁶⁶ Wrote a Russian foreign minister to Belgrade, "Serbia's promised land lies in the territory of today's Austria-Hungary," an empire in "decomposition."⁴⁶⁷ This was—or, rather, *should have been*—beyond the pale.⁴⁶⁸ Certainly, under the normal operation of Great Power politics, some measure of Russian influence in Belgrade and some competition over Austria-Hungary's southern sphere would be relatively normative behavior. But this was more than a simple realignment of forces, and much more than a chess match between friendly rivals over an important geostrategic point. This was an extraordinary, maximalist leap that went against the grain

⁴⁶⁴ There was an element of misdirection at work in the Russian role. Russia wanted the Straits for itself, and had been prepared to fight even its Bulgarian client to keep all other parties out of Istanbul (the king of Bulgaria wanted to restore the Byzantine empire and actually kept the regalia of a *basileus*—made specially by a theatrical costumer—in his closet in anticipation of achieving this goal). To keep the Slavs away from the Straits, it was thus necessary to turn their attentions north to the 'oppressed' nationalities of the Dual Monarchy and away from the rump European portion of the Turkish empire. McMeekin, 95; Williamson, 78; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 260-2.

⁴⁶⁵ Williamson, 174.

⁴⁶⁶ McMeekin, 21.

⁴⁶⁷ Sergey Sazonov, May, 1913, quoted in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 350.

⁴⁶⁸ Schroeder likens the traditional conception to "a high-stakes poker [game] played by heavily-armed men out to win but nonetheless aware of conventional limits on their bets and tacitly in agreement on the importance of keeping all essential players in the game." Russia, however, was increasingly playing "the board game Monopoly, in which players aim to maximize gains through the elimination of rivals." Schroeder, "Stealing Horses to Great Applause," 25.

of centuries of right- and duty-based Great Power politics. Even Napoleonic France—the *bête noire* against which the Vienna system had coalesced—had not been threatened with obliteration.

But, from a different angle, Russia’s assertion of its own role made this a natural leap to take: this had become a battle of ontological existence for the Tsarist state.

Geographically, Russia could only expand by fighting the Japanese, the British, or the Ottomans; given the importance of successful expansion to Russia’s self-understanding, this left little room for maneuver. Economically, the vital Russian interest in maritime trade through the Straits (75-80% of its wheat exports traveled that route) meant that the status of the Straits was not merely one of high politics and ideology, but was instead closely linked to the lives of ordinary, increasingly-dissatisfied Russian subjects.⁴⁶⁹

Popularly, the debasement of Russian prestige by the Japanese and the subsequent 1904-5 revolution had led it to embrace nationalist, Orthodox, and Slavic popular energies at home as points of linkage between the people and the Tsarist government; the awakening of these social forces fostered a widespread belief “that responsible politicians had to protect the Great Power status of the Russian Empire, even if it might mean political and social ruin.”⁴⁷⁰ Concrete promotion of this status in what amounted to Austria-Hungary’s backyard was—however adventuresome—thus eminently necessary. Thus, the Russian role crossed-purposes with the Austro-Hungarian, producing tremendous tensions that put the basis of both their external and internal authority claims at issue. Failure to contain those energies could now only produce a general war of three or more Powers.

⁴⁶⁹ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 340.

⁴⁷⁰ Joshua A. Sanborn, “Education for War, Peace, and Patriotism in Russia on the Eve of World War I” in *An Improbable War*, 215.

c. Conclusion

By the time the Second Balkan War had reconfigured the eastern European map, it was clear that the Great Power roles that had long defined it had shifted drastically. Austria's role as Balkan manager, consecrated by both the European Concert and ontological necessity, was virtually inoperative; its former client, Serbia, had morphed into an imperialistic and bloody-minded client of the Entente, while the balance of forces had supplanted Great Power consensus as the minimalist ordering mechanism for the region. For its part, Russia had adopted a role aimed at the remaking of the Balkans into a collection of client states culturally dependent upon it and serving its strategic aims. These were more than mere policies, they were the cornerstones of the ontological security of both Powers. Austria needed to guide events in the Balkans not only to protect itself from the external threats of Russia and Balkan nationalism, but also to justify the many ethnic partnerships that constituted the Austro-Hungarian collective security system. Without the status and authority of a Great Power abroad, the purpose of the Dual Monarchy at home would be called into question. This empire of nationalities had based its Great Power role (and, consequently, its domestic stability) on the assertion of its particular authority over the Balkans; its final failure in this task would lead to its disintegration.⁴⁷¹ Similarly, Russia's turbulent 1900s had left it without an outlet for expansion and in desperate need of a mission linking the people with the Tsar in a collective mission; the promotion of religious and ethnic affinities combined perfectly with Russia's strategic and economic need to geostrategically reorient to (and revise the balance within) the Black Sea region. If it failed in this task, it would be definitively

⁴⁷¹ Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics*, 12-13.

contained—forcibly by enemies and passively by allies—on all sides; centuries of Russia’s expansionist, imperial Great Power role on two continents would thus be rendered defunct just as the forces of revolution, industrialization, and nationalism were calling into question the basis of Russian domestic life. The consequences of so many simultaneous shifts could prove disastrous.

The periodic moments of role overlap that revealed themselves in this Austro-Russian dyad show how the normal operation of a Great Power politics based on a shared status expressed through parochial claims of authority was sublimating rather than resolving dangerous contradictions. Though the system as a whole “displayed a surprising capacity for crisis management and détente,” it could not escape the fact that a changing social and material context had bequeathed it too many Great Power asserting too many rights and duties over too few geographic and issue areas.⁴⁷² As the domestic tensions so common in an age of nationalism, revanchism, and jingoism threatened the stability of the Great Powers, their individual roles gave purpose and direction to peoples increasingly crying out for it; the more the identity of the nation drew from the expression of its Great Power, the deeper that nation’s commitment to its parochial role became. Brittleness was the natural result, even as crisis after crisis was averted thanks to the consideration, compensation, and commonly-comprehensible vocabulary of rights and duties that had kept the peace for a century. This was a right- and responsibility-complex that worked, a semi-archy of largely peaceful social interaction. However, it did so only by self-replication, a multiplication of Powers and roles made all the more dangerous by the advances in technology and ideology that made possible a truly global

⁴⁷² Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 314.

politics. Old Powers were squeezed out, and had to go poaching in their neighbors' back yards. The incremental change this system promoted could not contain the contradictions springing from a smaller, more dangerous world. Systemic upheaval was growing ever more likely.

II. Rights, Responsibilities and the First World War

The First World War, in the words of one scholar, was “essentially a *traditional phenomenon*. It was, at its origin, a general war of typical character.”⁴⁷³ This statement may seem confusing given the exceptional brutality, the atypical, maximal claims, and the landmark peace settlement that came to characterize it. But, in reality, the origins of the war were neither obscure nor novel because they were put in place through the long-run operation of an international system consistently pressured by profound forces of change that engendered profound anxieties. This section elucidates an explanation for the war focused around the enactment of Great Power roles that, over a century of technological progress and moral innovation, had grown mutually-exclusive and ossified. This was a war of identity into which Powers long accustomed to the authoritative actualization of their roles across special geographic and thematic areas finally blundered as their mutual status as Great Powers—long interwoven, but increasingly tangled—became lastingly incompatible. This is a narrative of how the ontological *insecurity* of the Powers led to a general war.⁴⁷⁴ The culprits—if they may be called that—were a series of

⁴⁷³ Aron, *Paix et Guerre*, 271.

⁴⁷⁴ The definition of ontological insecurity, to which this narrative later returns, states that it “set[s] in motion political and social processes . . . reproduc[ing] and reactivat[ing] conflicts. . . . generat[ing] pressures for the reinstatement of conflict narratives and practices . . . provid[ing] consistent, firm, and non-negotiable answers to existential questions about being and acting, through friend/enemy distinctions and securitization. Ontological insecurity undermines trust and accentuates the perception of general threat from the outside world. It, thus, creates a setting conducive to the manipulation of this distrust by political actors, who act to re-channel this anxiety into specific and habituated fears. Ontological insecurity may hamper the negotiation process by leading parties to elevate minor outstanding aspects of

overly-institutionalized Great Power roles that, over time, came to express mutually-exclusive authority claims over issue areas and geographic regions. This ‘crowding out’ process was greatly exacerbated by the concretization of the conceptual and behavioral elements of the shared Great Power identity into an externally-visible, quasi-legal social status that closely linked the ontological security of the state—and, increasingly, of entire societies—to the actualization of visible Great Power. Because “actors prefer relationships they have practiced and recognize, even if attachment to these relationships maintains conflict or reproduces other harmful, but recognizable and certain, situations,” the long-run operation of the right- and responsibility-complex from which these roles sprang dis-incentivized receptiveness to structural change by linking it to ontological anxiety.⁴⁷⁵ With the Powers unable to change their specific roles for fear of losing their ontologically-vital shared status, their complex of rights and responsibilities grew brittle. In their fundamental unwillingness to abandon the security long provided by their roles even as they became contradictory, it would finally break, giving way to a great upheaval.

A recent history of the July Crisis labels its participants “sleepwalkers, watchful but unseeing, haunted by dreams, yet blind to the reality of the horror they were about to bring into the world.”⁴⁷⁶ In the same vein, this section characterizes the Powers as actors: absorbed in their unique roles, self-conscious of and fearful for their status, and unable to empathize with those sharing their stage. They would recite their lines to perfection—

the deal to existential issues, generating new issues of discord beyond the ones addressed by the conflict resolution process. It may also empower spoilers of the peace processes.” Bahar Rumelili, “Introduction” in *Conflict Resolution and Ontological Security: Peace Anxieties*, ed. Bahar Rumelili (London: Routledge, 2015), 2-3.

⁴⁷⁵ Dmitry Chernobrov, “Ontological Security and Public (Mis)Recognition of International Crises: Uncertainty, Political Imagining, and the Self,” *Political Psychology*, forthcoming (2016), 3.

⁴⁷⁶ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 562.

their claims and justifications and goals honorable and just and, to them, imminently necessary; but, over time, they had begun to recite past one another. What was once a Europe of dialogues became a Europe of monologues, and it was in the natural, flawless recitation of their soliloquies that the Powers finally brought down their own curtain. A century of role-building based around a shared status had built a Europe of too many Powers and far too many incompatible claims of right and duty. When these contradictions came to a head in such a way as to threaten the self-understandings of multiple Powers at once, the Powers behaved as Powers traditionally have: they resorted to material capacity to protect their moral existence.

a. The First World War as a Conflict of Status and Authority

The July Crisis of 1914 was the moment at which a century of highly attenuated, right- and responsibility-mediated international change contained within the roles of the Great Powers finally failed. Great Power status was by this point an important state asset. As in the case of Austria-Hungary and Russia, it could even be a vital determinant of domestic social and political cohesion. Like any asset, however, it could be lost. As the wars of the 19th century had demonstrated, moments at which Great Power *status* and *authority* were called into question were dangerous. Traditionally, this danger had been mediated by the limitation of these conflicts to only one of these two attributes at a time. The Crimean War was a thus conflict over authority in Turkey rather than a serious challenge to the membership of any particular state in the Great Power club; Russia, defeated, nevertheless remained a Great Power and a cohesive political entity. Similarly, the wars that ejected Austria from Italy and Germany were wars over particular Great Power authority claims in particular regions—the battlefield determined that Italy and

Germany had rights and duties in those areas that superseded those of Emperor Franz Joseph, and he accepted these decisions as honorable not only because they had been ratified by force of arms but also because they left intact an Austro-Hungarian core still worthy of Great Power status. In contrast, the Franco-Prussian war had been a war over status, but not over any particular authority claim. After all, France declared war over issues of national prestige (recall that its authority claim over Spain had been accepted by Prussia and that the war was fought over the perceived insolence of Prussia's acceptance of this fact rather than an actual conflict of interest). For its part, Prussia's real ambition—to unite Germany around it—was aimed at the realization of Great Power status for a new German state that would coalesce around its claims. Germany triumphed, gaining Great Power status and two French provinces but otherwise leaving France's Great Power authority claims unmolested (e.g., a Hohenzollern did *not* end up on the Spanish throne in contravention of France's right-claim to forbid such a match). France was angered and humiliated, but its status was not revoked as it had been after Napoleon.

What made the wars that sprang from the July Crisis different was its simultaneous involvement of interlocking status *and* authority disputes that combined to create a series of unprecedented ontological security dilemmas for that touched multiple Powers. Scholars have written in the past of the 'domino effect' of alliances in 1914; it was not the alliances *per se* that made the difference, however, it was the cascading challenges to the *authority*, the *status*, and, ultimately, *the ontological security* of the individual Powers involved that created a general upheaval in the span of a mere month. In this way, centuries of embedding rights and duties so deeply into the fabric of European politics that they began to constitute not only the reality of that politics, but the

ontological basis of the actors that carried it out, fed back upon itself. What had been a mediating and normalizing force older than the international system itself thus became the author of its destruction, an ontological security dilemma from which all the Powers could not possibly escape with their status and roles intact. Thus, the Powers went to war because they could not do otherwise without changing the behavioral patterns and cognitive routines that defined how they understood themselves and their purposes.

b. The July Crisis as an Ontological Security Dilemma Cascade

The Great Powers had invested heavily in their respective roles, building them into the foundations of their domestic politics and institutionalizing them in their foreign affairs. Longstanding dyadic relationships between different sets of Powers were now firmly established amidst an international environment characterized by scarcity of material and moral space; though not set in stone, they provided a powerful disincentive to responsive change. By July 1914, the competitive role dyad of Austria-Russia had grown particularly heated. Further, it was linked to wider European security arrangements through the bipolar alliance bloc system, which itself expressed a number of other important role dyads, cooperative and competitive, defining the geopolitical landscape. This was a potentially dangerous situation; if a crisis were to somehow threaten a zero-sum revision of this conflicting dyad, it could trigger a cascade of ontological security dilemmas among these interlocking role relationships that would engulf the entire system.

The Sarajevo assassinations provoked just such a crisis by creating a situation in which Austria-Hungary's Great Power status—and, thus, the ontological security of its peculiar existence—was directly threatened. Succinctly put, “the Sarajevo tragedy arose

from the Monarchy's crisis of authority in Bosnia, and this crisis seemed a microcosm of the Habsburg predicament as a whole."⁴⁷⁷ The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand was more than a simple terrorist outrage; rather, it was a calculated political maneuver, an assault on the existence of a Habsburg Great Power dependent upon its assertion of authority in the Balkans to support its Great Power role, its Great Power role to maintain its Great Power status, and its Great Power status to buttress the cohesion of the Habsburg quasi-state. Such a confrontation had been predicted in Vienna and Budapest since the Russian reaction to the annexations; this attitude prophesied that "unless you are willing to surrender, sooner or later you will have to fight for the survival of the traditional political order in Europe."⁴⁷⁸ That do-or-die moment for its Great Power status arrived with the Sarajevo assassinations.

That the Dual Monarchy's dissolution could be seriously portended from the loss of one imperial heir was the result a combination of factors, many relating to the central place of its Great Power role in the constitution of its domestic legitimacy. The first element making it so was the *impossibility of an effective judicial or diplomatic resolution of the situation* because these avenues either did not exist or did not provide a viable path for Austria-Hungary to obtain honorable satisfaction of its Great Power rights. The first salient point to made in this area is that there was no supra-national legal authority with the competence to take on this case; the Serbian state, not just specific Serbian citizens, was on trial for inciting the incident as well as for possibly organizing and carrying it out. What court could judge these accusations? What investigating

⁴⁷⁷ Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics*, 12.

⁴⁷⁸ Günther Kronenbitter, "The German and Austro-Hungarian General Staffs and their Reflections on an 'Impossible' War" in *An Improbable War*, 155.

authority had competence to collect evidence—especially when the Serbs themselves refused to meaningfully cooperate?⁴⁷⁹ Further, these charges were not mere speculation or a pretext for profitable aggression. The Habsburg decision-making apparatus knew—even if it could not prove from afar—that the plot had originated on Serbian soil, had been backed by elements within Serbian military intelligence and probably the Serbian government itself.⁴⁸⁰ Indeed, the Serbian government itself had issued a cryptic warning to this effect prior to the attacks. Further evidence for each of these charges existed at the time of the event—including an un-coerced confession from one of the terrorists—but Serbia’s refusal to offer real cooperation with the Austro-Hungarian authorities in a subsequent investigation scotched any hope for a proper judicial resolution in the Monarchy’s courts.⁴⁸¹ Instead, Serbia was quick to spirit potential witnesses out of Belgrade and deny their existence.⁴⁸² A century would pass before scholars were able to confirm just how deep the plot was intertwined with official Serbia, but for Austria the case was as open and shut as it could possibly be as long as the Serbs themselves refused to cooperate. Finally, there was widespread doubt among the Habsburg elite that a judicial or diplomatic solution could ever accomplish Austria-Hungary’s overarching objective: the shoring-up of its Great Power status. This thinking, articulated in the crown council during the crisis, noted that “A purely diplomatic success . . . would have no value at all, since it would be read in Belgrade, Bucharest, St Petersburg and the South

⁴⁷⁹ “The glib denials from Belgrade suggested that the Serbian government was not, and would not perform the role of, a partner or neighbour in resolving the urgent issues raised by the assassinations.” Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 391.

⁴⁸⁰ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 453.

⁴⁸¹ Serbia’s response is chronicled in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 387-91.

⁴⁸² Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 390.

Slav areas of the monarchy as a sign of Vienna's weakness and irresolution."⁴⁸³ This would only contribute to the erosion of both the foreign and the domestic basis of the Habsburg collective security system, threatening the breakup of a Monarchy unable to behave as a Great Power.⁴⁸⁴

Austria-Hungary had only arrived at this particularly perilous situation of prestige politics thanks to the second significant element, *the gradual abandonment by the other Powers of their support for its Balkan role*. Prior to 1914, this abandonment had been subtle and halting, as discussed above. But after the Bosnia-Herzegovina annexation—a diplomatic victory for the Monarchy even if one obtained on the strength of German threats—Paris, London, and St. Petersburg turned increasingly anti-Austrian. The reaction of Europe's *responsables* to the Sarajevo outrages vividly illustrates the isolation of Vienna and Budapest. The French president, visiting Russia shortly after the attacks, publicly snubbed the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, even taking the extraordinary steps of rebuking the Dual Monarchy for wanting an inquiry into Belgrade's role in the plot, charging that it was responsible for endangering peace, and warning that Serbia's friends in Europe would look out for it.⁴⁸⁵ For its part, Russia—whose own representatives had links to Serbian military intelligence's black operations in Bosnia—denied "Austria's right to insist on any kind of satisfaction from Belgrade" and encouraged its 'little

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 424; for the Monarchy's evaluation of its own position as "a position of constraint" after the assassinations, see 397.

⁴⁸⁴ The parallel between July 1914 and September 2001 is striking. Both incidents involved acts of terrorism against symbols of national prosperity, cohesion, and strength, both originated from terrorist groups that were state-sponsored, both straddled the line between acts of judicial illegality and international war, both saw the use of ultimatums issued by the aggrieved state to the state harboring the terrorists, and both provoked invasions as means of obtaining satisfaction for the crimes. The difference, of course, was that the latter was given legal cover by the United Nations and was strongly backed by a large alliance bloc (NATO), while the former had no international legal body to which it could appeal and only a single real ally to support it.

⁴⁸⁵ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 445.

brothers' in Serbia to resist militantly.⁴⁸⁶ More importantly, it sponsored “a seamless counter-narrative of the event at Sarajevo” painting Serbia as the victim of Habsburg anachronism (and eliding its own “sponsorship of Serbian expansionism and of Balkan instability in general”) and successfully popularized it throughout Europe.⁴⁸⁷ This was but the latest entry into what had become by 1914 a “widely trafficked narrative of Austria-Hungary’s historically necessary decline . . . [that] gradually replaced an older set of assumptions about Austria’s role as a fulcrum of stability in Central and Eastern Europe, disinhibited Vienna’s enemies, undermining the notion that Austria-Hungary, like every other great power, possessed interests that it had the right robustly to defend.”⁴⁸⁸

Importantly, the third and final element that transformed Sarajevo from a tragedy into a dire challenge to Austria-Hungary’s very existence was *the loss of the man who most clearly recognized this narrative and sought to counter it with energetic action, Franz Ferdinand* himself. He was an energetic reformer, a navalist eager to bolster Habsburg prestige, and a friend to minority nationalities within the empire, whom he wished to accommodate through a far-reaching transformation of the Monarchy into a federal state that would have created many Slav-majority jurisdictions.⁴⁸⁹ Princip himself justified his attack as a measure designed to prevent Ferdinand from carrying out his reforms and preventing the creation of a pan-Slav state.⁴⁹⁰ In this light, the ontological challenge posed by the assassination of the Habsburg heir is much clearer. In Clark’s words, “it was not just the extinction of the person Franz Ferdinand that mattered, it was

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 428; see also 406-12, 480; McMeekin, 47-9.

⁴⁸⁷ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 411.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 558.

⁴⁸⁹ Williamson, 36; Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 107-9, 381.

⁴⁹⁰ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 49.

the blow to what he stood for: the future of the dynasty, of the empire and the ‘Habsburg State Idea’ that unified it.”⁴⁹¹

If, a moment of decision had been forced by the assassinations, then why did Austria-Hungary choose war? The evidence presented here strongly points to a loss of ontological security following not only the assassination of a vital cog in the complex machine of the Dual Monarchy’s government, but decades of uncertainty about its ability—and, especially, about the willingness of its peers to support—its role in a theatre essential to Great Power status and thus its national cohesion. The breakup of the Habsburg entity—the failure of the collective security system that held it together—was a terrifying, even unthinkable prospect to many within and without the empire. The uncertainty of what would happen after this occurred—and, recall, decision makers in Vienna and many other capitals were convinced that this hour would be at hand if the Serbs were not suppressed and the Russians turned back—stripped Austria-Hungary of its ontological security. As Jennifer Mitzen pointed out, “Where an actor has no idea what to expect, she cannot systematically relate ends to means, and it becomes unclear how to pursue her ends.” In such cases, even “harmful or self-defeating relationship[s]” can provide outlets for the routines and familiar cognitive patterns necessary for clear understanding of one’s place in the world.⁴⁹² Unable to satisfy its status and role judicially, abandoned by most of its peers, and fearful of the permanent undermining of its Great Power status—the external superstructure holding in the tensions of its numerous nationalities—Austria-Hungary had little alternative but to act like a Great Power and assert its role and its right to exist in the face of an unruly secondary state in

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 380.

⁴⁹² Mitzen, 342.

its zone of special responsibility.⁴⁹³ With circumstances turning against it, war against Serbia “was the only serious choice left available. . . . It was therefore a rational choice, though made too late and executed badly, to attempt something drastic to change the rules and alter the tilt of the table [i.e., of the international system], even at the risk of knocking it over and ending the game.”⁴⁹⁴

An ontological security dilemma ensued: Austria-Hungary had to fight Serbia to protect the routines and cognitive patterns of its role and status, but in doing so could only threaten those of its Russian neighbor. Given its fear of the future, it could only understand the former of these dire conditions.⁴⁹⁵ Thus, the ontological security dilemma facing Austria-Hungary set off a cascade of similar crises of ontological security that ultimately transformed the Third Balkan War into the First World War. If the Dual Monarchy’s position in 1914 boiled down to ‘fight Serbia or reconsider not only its longstanding Great Power role but also its Great Power status and thus its existence as a political entity’, Russia faced a similar dilemma. It was not that there existed an immediate threat to the physical security of Russian territory from Austria-Hungary’s potential punishment of Serbia—the occupation of Belgrade would, on the contrary, actually tie down the Dual Monarchy and hamper its ability to make war in the east. Rather, time-worn mental patterns of national ambition (directed at the Straits) and

⁴⁹³ Wrote Franz Joseph to Wilhelm II, “after the recent terrible events in Bosnia . . . there can be no further question of bridging by conciliation the difference that separates Serbia from us, and that the policy pursued by all European monarchs of preserving the peace will be at risk for as long as this hotbed of criminal agitation in Belgrade remains unpunished.” July 2, 1914, quoted in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 401. For the issue of British-backed mediation and how it could not possibly offer Austria-Hungary reasonable satisfaction, see *Ibid.*, 495.

⁴⁹⁴ Schroeder, “Stealing Horses to Great Applause,” 23, 25.

⁴⁹⁵ “Perhaps the most striking defect of Austrian decision-making was the narrowness of the individual and collective fields of vision. The Austrians resembled hedgehogs scurrying across a highway with their eyes averted from the rushing traffic.” Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 429. See also Kronenbitter, 155-6.

ideological justification (the support of the Slavic states) had become ossified in the Russian political imaginary; a major reversal in the Balkans would obliterate years of successful diplomatic work and leave Russia without a geographic direction in which to expand and thus without a coherent Great Power role with its attendant authority claims of special rights and duties. A Great Power without authority was hardly a Great Power at all, and anything that placed this status at risk was unthinkable. This was true for all the Powers of this period, but especially for Russia, which had barely survived a crisis of status still fresh in its memory, the popular revolution that had followed its humiliating, debasing defeat at the hands of the Japanese. The Russian government had chosen to embrace the rush of nationalist, mass political sentiment in the aftermath of the revolution by tying the concept of the Russian nation to the Tsar and the national mission in the Balkans.⁴⁹⁶ Sazonov put it to the Tsar bluntly, proclaiming that “[Russia] would be considered a decadent state and would henceforth have to take second place among the powers”⁴⁹⁷ if it turned its back on the Balkans, lamenting also to the Council of Ministers that “Russian prestige. . . would collapse utterly.”⁴⁹⁸ It would be the Japanese War all over again.

Russia thus began the July Crisis with no intention of supporting any claims Austria-Hungary might make on Serbia as a result of the assassinations; the reactions of its officials at home and abroad were noted for their disregard of diplomatic protocol and basic manners, evidence that the consequences of Serbian guilt and Austrian victimhood

⁴⁹⁶ For Russia’s tumultuous attempt to use nationalism to the government’s advantage after the Russo-Japanese War, see Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).

⁴⁹⁷ Quoted in Sanborn, “Education for War, Peace, and Patriotism in Russia on the Eve of World War I,” 224.

⁴⁹⁸ July 24, 1914, quoted in McMeekin, 234.

verged on the unthinkable for its policymakers.⁴⁹⁹ Russia's commitment to its Balkan role easily thus overrode the empathy one might otherwise expect from the most autocratic and traditional of the Great Powers. Instead, there was great anxiety about the potential results of inaction and great hope for the fruits of firm action against the Habsburg conglomerate. Fear counseled war. Inaction would undo its diplomacy in the Balkans by humbling its Serbian client; worse, since Austria-Hungary was unlikely to take Serbian territory for itself, there was a real possibility of partitioning Serbia among the other Balkan states, perhaps the beginning of an anti-Russian bloc organized by Vienna to bar it from the Straits. Were that to occur, Russia would be definitively contained at a series of maritime choke points by upstart or weak Powers (Britain and Turkey at the Straits, Britain and Germany in the Baltic and North Sea, and Japan and Britain in Asia). For an industrializing nation dependent on maritime commerce, this would have been a destabilizing, delegitimizing state of affairs.⁵⁰⁰ For a nation long accustomed to expansion and promises of destiny, its containment and isolation would be ontologically disorienting—and the Russian nation had already seen too much disorientation in the 20th century. Were its Great Power status to be again imperiled, Russia could easily find itself once more in the dangerous atmosphere of 1905. It was in this spirit that the Tsar and his

⁴⁹⁹ At St. Petersburg and at Russian consular missions abroad, there was a knee-jerk reaction of hostility to Austria-Hungary even before it had articulated any formal claims or ultimatums against the Serbs. Russia even used the occasion to imply that its own experience with terrorism somehow made the Dual Monarchy's claims less valid. Noted one scholar, "It took a certain chutzpah to claim, after the Sarajevo outrage, that Russia was the real victim of terrorism. Sazonov was clearly up to the challenge." McMeekin, 49.

⁵⁰⁰ The fragility of the Russian economy and its dependence on external maritime trade was itself a security dilemma of sorts. The navy's plans to expand and modernize after the Russo-Japanese war—justified in light of the vulnerability of Russian maritime commerce—outraged the Tsar's finance minister: "he warned that the navy's plans would push up either taxes or borrowing unacceptably, and that the destruction of the economy would finish Russia as a Great Power." In this way, the search for a navy befitting Russia's status could actually threaten the very status it was developed to protect. Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War*, 147.

advisers resolved to deny Austria-Hungary the satisfaction it required, for this satisfaction could not be squared with Russia's own ontological security.

These fears dictated what response was thinkable for the Russian state after the assassinations, so it is no surprise that the Russians ordered full mobilization against both the Monarchy and its German ally.⁵⁰¹ This they did out of both calculation—they were certain Germany would not sit out a Russian invasion of Austrian Poland—and out of a desire for a general settling of accounts that would alleviate Russia's virtual containment. The Tsar articulated a set of war aims remarkable for the scale of their revision as they tried to solve all of Russia's security problems, physical and ontological, at once. Together, they offer a fascinating look into how Russia's Great Power role would seek to remake Europe while pursuing the same traditional, expansionist aims it had used for centuries: Austria-Hungary to be demolished, with the Habsburgs allowed only Salzburg and the Tyrol ('Austria' would not even possess Vienna), Germany to be disassembled into a number of small states (a Balkanization that would allow St. Petersburg to repeat the same processes of penetration that it had deployed in southern Europe), the culmination of a Russian "historic mission" to reunite the old lands of Poland under the Tsar, and the establishment of a Russian protectorate over Istanbul (this was prior, of course, to Ottoman entry on the side of the Central Powers).⁵⁰² All these revisions—including the elimination of two Great Powers—had the same goal: the opening up of new areas for the effective expression of Russian authority claims satisfying its role and providing it with self-assurance. Russia would expand to keep its Great Power status, to

⁵⁰¹ The official Tsarist record of the crisis falsified the mobilization dates to make it appear that Austria mobilized against Russia first. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 509.

⁵⁰² McMeekin, 88-96.

find space over which to exert its national missions, to placate an unsteady populace, and, ultimately, to survive as it had for centuries—through growth. In the event, however, Russia was unable to assert these claims and these fears ended up being justified: the empire of the Tsars disintegrated from within.

Long confronted by the classic security dilemma in its colonial expansion, Russia's actions in July 1914 only perpetuated the ontological security dilemma cascade touched off by the assassination of the Habsburg heir. By mobilizing against Germany before that Power had taken any measures of its own, against Austria before it had mobilized in the east, and by activating its alliance with the French, Russia made clear that the conflict would not be localized to the Balkans.⁵⁰³ Like their Austro-Hungarian allies, the Germans had only their routines, their fears, and the certainties of their dyadic role relationships to rely upon in the face of this new development. In this case, the sudden and unprovoked Russian mobilization against Germany played right into the ontological weak spot of German security: its fear of encirclement. This had plagued German planners since the inauguration of the Franco-Russian alliance, and the bellicose, uncompromising noises being made in both St. Petersburg and Paris left little room in the German policy imaginary for creative solutions for the maintenance of the status quo. Berlin could not lose Vienna, its only firm ally on the continent, without finding itself

⁵⁰³ The argument that Germany 'started the war' as a preemptive measure against Russia has been conclusively disproved by archival research. Unfortunately, much of the IR scholarship dealing with the July Crisis continues to unquestionably accept the 'Fischer thesis' of German war guilt that dominated diplomatic historiography in the mid-20th century. Too many valuable scholarly contributions consequently miss the agentic, causal role of both Austria-Hungary (often overlooked as Berlin's 'junior partner') and Russia in beginning and expanding the conflict. As Clark notes in a lucid historiographical critique of the Fischer thesis, paranoia and imperialism were common to literally all the actors involved in the July Crisis, and all were affected to one degree or another by the logic of preemption. See Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 557-562. For an example of the unquestioning acceptance of German guilt in IR scholarship that would otherwise be able to contribute much to our understanding of the July Crisis, see Steve Chan, "Major-power Intervention and War Initiation by the Weak," *International Politics* 47, no. 2 (2010): 163-185.

surrounded. Further, Germany was still a powerful status quo voice eager to defend the prerogatives of Great Powers in secondary states, and therefore felt Austria-Hungary was justified in policing the region in which its role granted it special interests; whatever interests Russia's own role there granted it would surely be overridden by the principles of monarchical and Great Power solidarity.⁵⁰⁴ When it became clear that this was not the case, Germany mobilized and activated its war plans for a quick war to subdue France followed by a long one to defeat Russia. This was a logical decision based on its deep-seated fear of a limitless army of Russian peasant-soldiers threatening it from the east; it did not have the strength to wait for a French attack in the west *and* hold off the Russian army—even a neutral France would have posed an unacceptable threat by requiring a guarding force to be left in the west. Since Germany pictured the war in the east as a titanic showdown of uncertain resolution, it could not allow France to divide its forces. Thus, it resolved to strike France through neutral Belgium because any other plan would have resulted in a two-front war German policymakers were certain it would lose. Encirclement would have been achieved, and Germany would be caught in a Franco-Russian pincher movement which would crush it and leave its Great Power status—perhaps even its status as a single nation—at the mercy of French *revanchistes* and Russian 'hordes'.

Finally, the ontological security dilemma reached out to encompass Great Britain. Strictly speaking, despite the avowedly anti-German feelings of the British leadership, British participation on the side of the Entente was not a given.⁵⁰⁵ The Balkans remained

⁵⁰⁴ A full analysis of Germany's reading of Russia in relation to the assassinations is found in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 415-23.

⁵⁰⁵ The British press initially took a strongly non-interventionist stance, especially the liberal papers which blamed Russia for the crisis. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 492.

peripheral to Britain's wider Great Power role, and the Franco-Russian alliance could field forces that, at least on paper, were superior to those fielded by the Central Powers. Yet, a combination of interests and relationships counselled war to protect Britain's main wellspring of ontological security, its imperial Great Power role. The single most important element was its cooperative role dyad with Russia. Britain's continuing vulnerability to Russian attack in Asia was very much on the minds of the Foreign Office in the months leading up to the crisis, leading the British ambassador to St. Petersburg to point out to London that "Russia is rapidly becoming so powerful that we must retain her friendship at almost any cost. If she acquires the conviction that we are unreliable and useless as a friend, she may one day strike a bargain with Germany and resume her liberty of action in Turkey and Persia. Our position then would be a very parlous one."⁵⁰⁶ The loss of its empire to which this note alludes would have completely upended centuries of the behavioral routines and cognitive patterns comprising the British role, and consequently disrupt its ontological security; in light of this, the British decision to defend its interests by "appeasing and tethering Russia" through a dyadic relationship was logical.⁵⁰⁷ To prevent the destruction of this dyad, Britain would have to ensure that Russia won the war, but also that it did so with British help.

A second important impetus for war came from Britain's commitments, moral and material, to the defense of Belgium and France. When Lloyd George told an audience a few months later that "National honour is a reality, and any nation that disregards it is doomed," he was explaining how this moral commitment to one's friends was actually a

⁵⁰⁶ George Buchanan to Arthur Nicolson, April 16, 1914, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, vol. 10, no. 2, eds. G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), 784-5.

⁵⁰⁷ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 347.

motivating factor as Britain evaluated the circumstances of July 1914.⁵⁰⁸ Though all the Powers valued national honor and cited it in their declarations of war, only Britain found itself with sufficient freedom of action for it to become a significant factor in an evaluation of the merits of belligerency and neutrality.⁵⁰⁹ In case of Belgium, British policymakers quickly determined during the July Crisis that they were not legally obligated by the 1839 Treaty of London to defend Belgium from attack, and there was even talk of permitting a German violation of Belgian territory provided they stayed away from Antwerp. The actual German invasion, however, was not an orderly stroll through Liège on the way to Paris. Rather, it sparked fierce Belgian resistance that turned what the Germans hoped to portray as a temporary derogation of international law in the name of national self-preservation (recall, those Russian ‘hordes’ would soon be arriving in Pommerania) into a full-scale invasion of a neutral state within Britain’s sphere of influence, and consequently a direct challenge to its Great Power authority claim there. There was also much made of Britain’s moral commitment to France, which had denuded its northern coast of defenses and sent its fleet to the Mediterranean as a result of its British alliance; how could France defend itself from the powerful German navy if Britain abandoned it? The only answer was some form of protective action, such as interdicting the German fleet. The foreign secretary gave a widely-acclaimed speech to this effect during the crisis which has been credited with helping shift opinion toward British intervention.⁵¹⁰ Thus, Britain’s physical security—at least in the short term—was not really at issue in 1914, but it still had to confront a pair of questions related to its

⁵⁰⁸ David Lloyd George, “Honour and Dishonour,” speech delivered at The Queen’s Hall, London, September 19, 1914, *Honour and Dishonour* (London: Methuen & Co., 1914), 2.

⁵⁰⁹ For justifications based on honor in the 1914 belligerency declarations, see Frevert, 235-6.

⁵¹⁰ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 542-4.

ontological security: if the Entente were to succeed without it, what would become of its empire in the face of an unchecked Russia? If the Entente were to fail, what would become of Britain's honor and standing? These elements of Britain's self-understanding—its imperial role and its reputation—were thus sufficient for the cascade of ontological security dilemmas to reach out and propel it to war.

c. Theoretic Implications

The contingent international order provided by this semi-archival, right- and responsibility-based ordering had its moment of truth in 1914. It failed its essential purpose, the maintenance of restrained Great Power competition, but not it did not fail in its operation. Indeed, the cascade of ontological security dilemmas that paved the way to world war grew naturally out of tensions inbuilt within the roles of the Great Powers and the authoritative claims of rights and duties they asserted through them. The Great Powers of the 19th century did not just enact their roles, they internalized them, linked them together with the other members of the Concert, and relied upon the time-honored practices of consideration, compensation, and cooperation to sublimate the competitive tensions inherent to an international politics of moral and material scarcity. In the end, this complex of rights and responsibilities did not really fail the Powers; rather, it was a victim of its own success. It was not the Powers cared too little for these principles. Rather, they cared too much.

In abstract terms, July 1914 saw a contradiction in role relationships that could not be easily papered-over brought to a head by a crisis uniquely-positioned to create an ontological do-or-die moment for a particular Power. This first Power, concerned for its domestic stability and Great Power status, sought to protect its ontological security

through war with a secondary state. This created an ontological security dilemma because, though this Power did not *seek* a Great Power war, the act of shoring up its own ontological security indirectly threatened that of a second Power. This second Power's role was also intimately concerned with the secondary state—indeed, its domestic legitimacy was tied up with its position there in a mirror-image of the first Power. These two Powers happened to belong to different alliance blocs, themselves expressing other dyads, competitive and cooperative, deeply implicated in the social construction of this period's international politics. Thus, “the conflicts of the Balkan theatre became tightly intertwined with the geopolitics of the European system, creating a set of escalatory mechanisms that would enable a conflict of Balkan inception to engulf the continent.”⁵¹¹ Within a month, all the relevant dyads had been activated as the arguably defensive belligerency of each Power—each trying to protect its status and self-understanding—threatened the forcible alteration of behavioral patterns and cognitive routines built into the ontological security of other Powers.⁵¹² As a result, the complex of rights and responsibilities that had grown organically for centuries was abandoned in favor of a general war that finally brought on the systems change that Great Power politics had staved off for so long.

To conclude by mapping this abstract summary onto actual events, it is useful to return to Bahar Rumelili's definition of ontological insecurity articulated in a footnote at the beginning of this section. It is clear that July Crisis—a product of centuries of Great

⁵¹¹ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 242.

⁵¹² “Like nearly everyone else in this crisis, the Russians could claim to be standing with their backs against the wall.” Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 515.

Power rights and responsibilities—bore all five of hallmarks of a conflict originating in a loss of ontological security:

1. [Ontological insecurity] set[s] in motion political and social processes . . . reproduc[ing] and reactivat[ing] conflicts. . . . generat[ing] pressures for the reinstatement of conflict narratives and practices . . . provid[ing] consistent, firm, and non-negotiable answers to existential questions about being and acting, through friend/enemy distinctions and securitization.

Austria and Russia, both shaken by military defeat and domestic instability, reformulated their Great Power roles by claiming special collections of rights and duties across the same geographic area, the Balkans. Neither could afford to totally withdraw these claims once they were staked, especially after geopolitical developments elsewhere redefined the region as an essential periphery for both. Since influence over this region was important to the enactment of their respective self-understandings as Great Powers, there resulted a self-reproducing situation of conflict.⁵¹³ Though this conflict narrative could be mediated and sublimated by the traditional right of compensation and the duty of consideration, it could never be totally overwritten as long as claims important to each state's ontological security overlapped in a mutually-exclusive fashion. A friend/enemy distinction thus came to prevail rather than a cooperative, managerial partnership, and a securitized dispute followed.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics*, 12-13.

⁵¹⁴ For Carl Schmitt, the "political enemy [is] the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. These [cannot] be decided by a previously determined general norm. . . . [The enemy] intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence." *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 27.

2. *Ontological insecurity undermines trust and accentuates the perception of general threat from the outside world.*

As this situation worsened over decades, particularly after the Serbian palace coup in 1903 and the Austro-Hungarian annexations in 1907, the anxiety both Powers felt over their positions in the region manifested itself in policy papers, military plans, and armaments purchases as the perception of threat grew more acute. Austria-Hungary felt abandoned by its Concert partners and was increasingly turning to unilateral action as its primary policy tool in the region. At the same time, Russia had watched uneasily as the Balkans had grown more unstable after it had backed down over the Bosnia-Herzegovina annexation and over more recent crises related to the creation of Albania. The result was increasing concern among Russian policymakers over their longstanding ambitions to control the Straits. Even though these setbacks took place far from actual Russian territory, did not directly implicate Russian physical security, and did not lead to particularly advantageous gains for a rival Power, what mattered is that Russia's trust in cooperation had been diminished and its perception of an ontological threat to its role subsequently increased.

Both Powers drew grave lessons from these events about the need for assertive action to defend their roles. Thus resulted “a kind of temporal claustrophobia that we find at work in the reasoning of many European statesmen of this era—a sense that time was running out, that in an environment where assets were waning and threats were growing, any delay was sure to bring severe penalties.”⁵¹⁵ This fear extended to the allies of both Powers, whose positions in cooperative Great Power role dyads linked their ontological security to the outcome of the competitive Austria-Russia dyad. Germany, the Dual

⁵¹⁵ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 247.

Monarchy's only real ally, lacked confidence in its partner; this was detectable by the Habsburg policymakers themselves, and only intensified their fear of backing down from what they saw as the honorable assertion of their role. Similarly, the Germans were increasingly eager to ascertain "the true level of threat posed by Russia," and used the July Crisis as a method of "testing for threats" by waiting to observe what military measures Russia took before taking any itself (ceding, in the process, its ability to influence events). When intelligence reports began to filter back that a secret general mobilization was underway in Russian Poland, this was all the Germans needed to confirm their worst fears about Franco-Russian encirclement.⁵¹⁶

The July Crisis was likewise characterized by France's deep-seated concern about its Russian ally's uncertain strength and resolution. France had been greatly disturbed by Russia's failure to aggressively assert its position during the Balkan crisis of 1913. This strongly encouraged French policymakers to reinforce the perception of external threat in St. Petersburg as a way of stiffening Russian resolve; when the French President visited that city in July 1914, he carried with him a message of aggressive support that French policymakers hoped would encourage Russia not to back down from a potential conflict. So great was French anxiety over its Russian ally—a state in which the French nation had invested millions of francs and years of ambition—that its "security credo" could be summarized as "the alliance is our bedrock; it is the indispensable key to our military defence; it can only be maintained by intransigence in the face of demands from the opposing bloc."⁵¹⁷ The incompatibility of the Austria-Russia dyad in the Balkans thus extended beyond those two Powers to their immediate associates, activating the

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 418-419 (quote at 419).

⁵¹⁷ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 442

ontological security dilemma within the cooperative France-Russia and Germany-Austria dyads and encouraging both alliance blocs to feel as though the July Crisis posed a threat worthy of war.

3. *It, thus, creates a setting conducive to the manipulation of this distrust by political actors, who act to re-channel this anxiety into specific and habituated fears. . . .*
5. *It may also empower spoilers of the peace processes.*

In this ontological security dispute, carried out in an atmosphere of universal fear and mistrust, voices calling for war on both sides were greatly empowered. As the Austria-Russia dyad grew more ossified and competitive in the early 20th century, policymakers in both camps linked its frictions to wider programs of national ontological security-seeking, channeling and attenuating their perceptions of what happened in, say, Belgrade so that it became essential to the resolution of disputes elsewhere. Among the Central Powers, particularly concerned with what they habitually saw as their gradual isolation and encirclement, this did much to encourage a resort to the general staffs of their armies.⁵¹⁸ These organizations had been living in an atmosphere of claustrophobia and fear for decades, and their solution was to call for the breaking out of the Entente snare by smashing it militarily; particular attention was given to the forecasting of Russian armaments and railway growth since these developments acted as a technological accelerant to a very old German and Austrian fear of endless Russian 'hordes' falling upon them from the east. On the side of the Entente, this situation conversely empowered radical civilian voices calling for the aggressive assertion of programs of national destiny, all desiring a successful confrontation with the Central Powers to resolve longstanding ontological insecurities directly derived from the

⁵¹⁸ Kronenbitter, *passim*.

nationalist, revanchist, and chauvinist sentiments that their polities had embraced. Alsace and Lorraine, the Balkans and the Straits: these issues were bundled together through decades of nervous, mounting anxiety over the Austria-Russia dyad. The fear thereby inbuilt meant that, for the French and Russians, the road to Strasbourg and Constantinople traveled first through Belgrade and Vienna.

Moreover, the pent up tensions of a long period of relatively pacific Great Power relations concealing significant role contradictions made many look on a major war as an opportunity rather than a catastrophe. For war-parties on both sides, the July Crisis presented above all a chance to finally resolve the contradictions that had built up over a century of the right and responsibility complex's operation—a chance to break and reformulate rules, to resolve ontological anxieties, and open up new geographic regions and issue areas for the assertion of Great Power roles. Kaiser Wilhelm II's resigned statement his generals upon discovering that his Anglo-German peace initiative was not going to succeed (he had even had champagne served to celebrate the localization of the conflict) captured the how the tenure of restraint and confidence was finally giving way to assertiveness and fear: "Now you can do what you want."⁵¹⁹

4. Ontological insecurity may hamper the negotiation process by leading parties to elevate minor outstanding aspects of the deal to existential issues, generating new issues of discord beyond the ones addressed by the conflict resolution process.

Finally, much of the rhetoric and procedure of the July Crisis revolved around the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia enumerating a series of reforms to redress violent irredentism and demands for joint Austro-Serbian action to investigate and prosecute the crime. When Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary, famously proclaimed it "the

⁵¹⁹ Quoted in Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 533.

most formidable document he had ever seen addressed by one State to another that was independent” he was encapsulating a particular side effect of ontological insecurity, the tendency to transform minor issues of dispute into accelerants of conflict.⁵²⁰ The ultimatum was hardly outside the norm of Great Power politics, and one cannot help but wonder what the Boers, or the Egyptians, or the Chinese would say in response to Grey’s assertion. However, in this context, with Russia and France already determined to block any measure of satisfaction for Austria-Hungary and promoting an aggressively anti-Habsburg counter-narrative, Grey’s reading of it elevated the specific demands to a level not in keeping with their real significance. What was really at issue was the satisfaction the Dual Monarchy demanded by reference to its rights as an aggrieved Great Power with a special Balkan role, not the wording or even the manner in which that satisfaction was ultimately provided. But Grey, dragging British foreign policy with him, focused on the ultimatum rather than the substance of the problem it identified. Consequently, no serious British proposals for mediation—i.e., those that offered any real chance of affirming Austria-Hungary’s right to address the Serbian threat *in any way*—were ever offered during the crisis. This was not because Grey was rabidly anti-Austrian nor because he wanted war in the Balkans; rather, they stemmed from the barrier to consultation and conciliation thrown up by the uncompromising wording of the ultimatum—a minor factor of discord that the circumstances of the ontological security crisis elevated to a position of outsized importance.⁵²¹

In conclusion, prior to 1914 all the Powers could obtain and hold their ontological security independently, a universe of absolute gains backed by a complex of rights and

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 456.

⁵²¹ Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, 455-7.

responsibilities sanctifying and legitimizing those gains. This was a delicate balancing act that ultimately gave way at Sarajevo—or, rather, at the reaction of Russia and France to Sarajevo, which foreclosed any possibility of Austria-Hungary maintaining even an outward appearance of imperial routine in the Balkans. Afterward, ontological security became a zero-sum game, first within Austria-Hungary, then between Austria-Hungary and Russia, then between Germany and France, and finally Great Britain-Germany and Great Britain-France. Dyads long in place linking together pairs of Great Power roles were activated, both competitive ones counseling war and cooperative ones disincentivizing resistance to it. The Third Balkan War became the First World War, and the First World War expanded outward in an ever-increasing cascade of fear and bloodshed.

V. Conclusion

To summarize, late 19th and early 20th century Europe was characterized by a semi-archival international system in which a small number of Great Powers possessed disproportionate shares of the systemic distribution of material capacity and colored their mutual relations with normative concepts of rights and duties. This established a shifting, multivariate, and relational order among them in which material ability was at times tempered, at times enhanced by purposive understandings of shared identity and parochial role. Within this system, partially inherited from centuries of past practice and partially institutionalized by the Vienna settlement, ‘Great Power’ had itself been reified to a point that it no longer merely reflected the moral and material changes that took place around it, but could actually influence the consequences of those changes by providing a concreteized *status* that states could claim in order to express their *authority*

over a geographic regions and issues areas. As in the past, these authority claims were rendered in the language of rights and duties and packaged into bundles of behaviors and attitudes forming parochial Great Power roles. Where this period differed from what had come before, however, was in the presence of exogenous forces of change such as nationalism, industrialization, and globalization. These called into creation new rising Powers; though they proved eager to socialize along traditional Great Power lines, their need to articulate their own roles and express their own authority gradually began to crowd the international system with increasing numbers of right and duty claims, national missions, and strategic necessities. The Great Power system struggled to hold these multiplying motivations together peaceably. Contradictions developed, roles became incompatible, and, ultimately, the Powers were unable to hold together a system in which Great Power competition was restrained to protect the ontological security of each Power, even losers in particular contests.

The theoretic implications of this narrative thus call attention to how the organic development of a semi-archival ordering of states reliant on an informal complex of rights and duties can accumulate contradictory social and material relations. Great Power politics is neither inherently conflictual nor inherently cooperative, but is rather determined by the compatibility of their respective roles and the incentives and disincentives disclosed by their shared identity. As changing social and material contexts multiply the number of actors claiming a concretized status and reduce the geographic and social space available for the expression of their special roles and authority claims, the ability of the system to promote isomorphism—a great ally in socializing new Powers and promoting non-discontinuous change in the short term—becomes a hindrance to it in

the long term by forestalling the innovative resolution of ontological security dilemmas and hardening competitive and cooperative role dyads into alliance blocs increasingly focused on zero-sum, relative gains. As a result, the system becomes increasingly sensitive to points of sublimated tensions and particularly prone to cascades of ontological security dilemmas. When this cascade historically began in July 1914, it provoked an upheaval that would shatter the right- and responsibility-complex's conceptual and operation components, bequeathing a legacy to international politics that—as the concluding chapter will explain—still shapes it to this day.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

At first we sang of how we would knock the hell out of Helgoland and hang the Kaiser and march over there and clean up the mess them damn foreigners had made.

- John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (1952)

The power of the United States is a menace to no nation or people. It will never be used in aggression or for the aggrandizement of any selfish interest of our own. It springs out of freedom and is for the service of freedom.

- Woodrow Wilson

Sir Humphrey Appleby: Minister, Britain has had the same foreign policy objective for at least the last 500 years: to create a disunited Europe. In that cause we have fought with the Dutch against the Spanish, with the Germans against the French, with the French and Italians against the Germans, and with the French against the Germans and Italians. Divide and rule, you see. Why should we change now, when it's worked so well?

- "The Writing on the Wall," *Yes, Minister* (1980)⁵²²

I. Summary

These chapters have traced how a complex of international rights and responsibilities came to define the identity and roles of the Great Powers, thus exerting a significant influence on the development of international relations. This complex was deeply rooted in the contingencies of European history, growing organically out of the anarchy of the early Middle Ages. There, overlapping relationships of rights and duties mediated violence and insecurity, first at the micro-social level but later at progressively wider levels of political life. This ordering feudal *habitus*—discourses of purposive rights and duties ontologically contextualizing material capacity—would exert an enduring influence on how the emerging international sphere was understood and operationalized; as feudal conglomerates gave way to autonomous states, it was to these concepts that

⁵²² John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (New York: Viking Press, 1952), 183; Wilson, "An Address to a Joint Session of Congress," *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 46 (Jan 16 – Mar 12, 1918), 324; "The Writing on the Wall," *Yes, Minister*, British Broadcasting Corporation (London: BBC2, March 24, 1980).

they turned to make sense of themselves. As a result, this creedal inheritance of rights and duties was combined with the rational imperatives of modernity to create an international system of sovereign states.

Though formally anarchical, this system was actually ordered by a sophisticated social arrangement of Great Power relationships based on mutually-comprehensible rights and duties. These were expressed through a shared identity as well as a number of differentiated roles unique to individual Powers. This was a semi-archival order, a pluralistic compromise that straddled extremes by providing a measure of contingent governance without creating a strict, hierarchical ordering of the units based on any single variable. It admitted the rights of law as well as force; it confessed transcendent responsibilities to higher principles as well as duties to commit necessary evils in the name of greater national and transnational goods. There was violence and injustice within it, but they were tempered by a minimal set of normative and material checks that generally kept the system balanced and minimally governed; there was cooperation and moral unity within it as well, but never to such a degree that the independence of the members was threatened by a supra-national, universalist alternative. The material abilities of its Powers were understood in light of their moral commitments to their peers, to the political community around them, and to their own self-understandings. These encouraged certain behaviors, discouraged others, and kept European international activity rooted in a shared political culture that promoted mutual recognition, consideration, and restraint among its members. This was viewed as a precious public good by many, and over time this arrangement was institutionalized to the point that the internal identity of a Great Power became a reified social status, while the roles of rights

and duties expressed by the individual Powers came to exert legitimized ordering authority across regions and issue areas. Viewed from the late 19th century, this long arc proceeding from feudalism to the Concert of Europe could even seem to be a sort of divinely-instituted evolutionary process by which the ‘circle’ of violent material capacity and anarchical self-seeking was ‘squared’ by the moral structure of the Great Powers’ status and authority. Wrote one legist:

It is not merely that the stronger states have influence proportionate to their strength; but that custom has given them what can hardly be distinguished from a legal right to settle certain questions as they please, the smaller states being obliged to acquiesce in their decisions. At present this right is in a rudimentary stage; but it tends steadily to increase in importance. Great living statesmen build their best hopes for the just and peaceful settlement of international disputes upon the preservation of the European Concert; and the European Concert means nothing more or less than the agreement of the six Great Powers. . . . [I]t is impossible to hold any longer the old doctrine of the absolute equality of all independent states before the law. It is dead; and we ought to put in its place the new doctrine that the Great Powers have by modern International Law a primacy among their fellows, which bids fair to develop into a central authority for the settlement of all disputes between the nations of Europe. . . . [The Concert] is a natural and healthy growth. It has sprung without any forcing out of the circumstances of modern Europe; and therefore it possesses a chance of permanence. It is probably destined to become more and more effective as the desire for a peaceful settlement of their quarrels increases among the nations; and it may in some far distant time develop into that Supreme Court of International Appeal, for which statesmen, philosophers, and divines have longed throughout the last three centuries.⁵²³

However, this was not to be. The relatively continuous development of the right- and responsibility-complex since early modernity ultimately came to grief on the fruits of its own success. It survived the transition from a Europe of dynastic Powers to a world of nationalist ones, continuing an unprecedented period of peace, stability, and growth—but it did so only by reproducing old structures overtop of new territories and new nations. Rising Powers wanted status and authority on the same terms as their established peers,

⁵²³ Lawrence, 227, 232.

while these established Powers found themselves challenged to keep up with the changing requirements of status and role. This wasn't substantive development, but rather simple replication. The behavioral routines and cognitive patterns of the complex did not evolve as the moral and material contexts of the 19th century went through their own profound transformations; instead, the same essential ideas and practices that had been in operation for centuries were simply expressed by an ever-growing number of Powers across a now-globalized field of competition. In essence, the capacity of states to do violence and the capacity of ideas to challenge old forms were growing exponentially, but the routines of international politics were experiencing only additive increase. This incongruity made an upheaval event possible as the system crowded itself out: more Powers meant more roles expressing more authority claims of rights and duties, and this would necessarily multiply areas of tension and points of potential conflict in a system with greater violence potential than ever before.

Yet, the fact that a radical upheaval event was possible did not mean that it was inevitable. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the complex across the centuries had been its ability to promote the reconciliation of tensions through mutually-recognized rights and duties of restraint, consideration, compensation, and coordination. What changed this was the moral shift that took place *inside* the Powers during the 19th century. The rights, duties, and roles of kings had been transferred to the nations they ruled. Popular politics inflamed the conduct of Great Power politics by publicizing it, promoting the concretization of its status, expanding its ability to reach the average citizen through elections and conscript armies, and making formerly dynastic roles into national ones. This union of Great Power roles with nationalized, popular foreign policies drastically

raised the stakes of Great Power competition by making the expression of a role important to the self-understanding not only of a dynastic elite, but of entire nations. Rights and duties thus embodied not only the policy of broad political communities, but their respective senses of *ontological security*: the routines, cognitive patterns, and assumptions by which they situated themselves in the world. Thus, conflicts over issues and regions that might seem at first glance peripheral to a Power's physical existence could easily become serious tests of rights and duties essential to a Great Power role and, thus, to a nation's sense of existential purpose and social position. These conditions gravely strained the ability of a common discourse of rights and duties to provide a mediating mechanism for disputes; increasingly, the reconciliation of tensions was replaced with their simple sublimation. This endangered peace because it brought the system closer to the sort of zero-sum competition that would encourage a Power that felt threatened to abandon the relational, semi-archival ordering of international politics provided by norms and relationships and instead resort to a purely-material program of violence to make itself ontologically and physically secure. This linkage of Great Power role to the ontological security of national states provided the conditions necessary for a crisis that could rapidly engulf the system, shatter the complex, and threaten the many compromises—moral and material, anarchical and hierarchical—held together beneath the umbrella of an imperfect semi-archy.

In the event, this mechanism was triggered by a situation in the Balkans brought to a head by a plethora of historical, cultural, and material contingencies. The ontological self-understanding of Europe's most contingent Great Power polity was put under threat; to resolve this threat, Austria-Hungary asserted the rights and duties of its role by

declaring war on Serbia. This threatened the role of Russia, which threatened Russia's ontological security. Russia was thus given a choice: sublimate these tensions as it had done in the past and risk (as it saw it) permanent ontological insecurity, or abandon the relational, semi-archival arrangements that had guided Europe for a century in favor of a decisive resolution through a contest of material capacity—a general war of the type not seen since Vienna. In selecting the latter, it was prioritizing its understanding of its own essential purposes—rendered, of course, as rights and duties within a role—over the shared rights and duties that kept the Great Powers collectively at peace. The point had finally been reached at which relationships and norms could no longer satisfy the status and authority needs of all the Powers at once. Someone would have to finally and definitively lose; something had to be shaken up in either the moral and material distributions of international politics or in how the international system coped with disparities within them. Thus, the units of the system finally abandoned the uncertainties and anxieties of semi-archy for the clarities of an international politics based on a combination of force and moral absolutism.

From medieval Francian peasants seeking security by obligating themselves to men with horses to Great Powers agreeing to normalize and bound their behaviors through a shared identity built around a discourse of rights and duties, the story of how Great Power politics acquired its normative standards traversed a millennium of European history. Established in its highest, most institutionalized form to date in the 19th century, it ultimately contributed to the upheaval that would be its undoing. The First World War, a conflict born of right- and duty-claims correlated to the states with the greatest material capacity, shattered the complex that held these three components

together. All that remains is to examine how this post-war development decoupled rights, duties, and material capacity in international politics, and to discuss the influence of this movement on contemporary affairs.

II. Great Power Rights and Responsibilities in Contemporary International Politics

In the centuries leading up to the First World War, European international order had been an informal affair. The Great Powers shared a political culture built around certain common and differentiated rights and duties that, on the whole, tended to mediate anarchy and bound competition. This resulted in norms-based relationships that held together a relational, semi-archival ordering that stood somewhere between both a formal anarchy in which the system had no discernible patterns of order or governance and a clear, command-based hierarchical ordering of the states. This worked, in that Europe's states and peoples prospered over the long arc of the 2nd millennium; but its imprecision, its contradictions, and its propensity for unjust outcomes often frustrated legists and other parties searching for some form of order that was less contingent than the society of the Great Powers. In their view, the horrors of the Western Front stemmed directly from this strange intermixture of premodern normative concepts with the existential anxieties and tremendous violence capacity of the modern Great Power and states-system. The notion that the rights and duties of Great Power politics-as-usual boiled down to "might makes right" was linked directly to the narrative of Germany militarism and Austrian atavism that won the day when the guns fell silent in 1918.⁵²⁴ Spurred on by the entry of the United States into the war as an 'associate' of the allies, the enthusiasm for a peace that would abandon the old ways for something new reached a fever pitch. What Kennan later

⁵²⁴ Anson Daniel Morse, *Civilization and the World War*, eds. Anson Ely Morse, Margaret D. E. Morse, and Margaret Hincks Morse (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1919), 120.

called “this dread plague of ununderstanding [sic] Americans” first descended upon European shores with the arrival of Woodrow Wilson bearing a message of progress and reform—the elimination of “the method of the Congress of Vienna [to which] we cannot and will not return” and of “the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of power.”⁵²⁵ The ship that bore the “young, scholarly, sanguine and idealistic” American negotiating party carried solutions to Europe’s ancient problems; it was an “argosy of peace . . . whole libraries, in heavy oak packing cases, crammed the hold: the bulkheads groaned, the stanchions strained under the collective weight of their erudition.”⁵²⁶ The crowds that greeted its presidential passenger “regard[ed] him as something akin to the Prince of Peace, without inquiring too precisely into the meaning of peace.”⁵²⁷ George Bernard Shaw, inquiring somewhat more closely, proclaimed Wilson “the man of principle,” a “living engine [bringing] the entirely mystic force of evolution” to a benighted Europe of “Opportunists.”⁵²⁸ Change—forestalled, sublimated, and redirected for a century—had finally arrived; the last casualty of the war would be the complex of Great Power rights and duties that had created it.

The story of the Versailles treaties and their international system is well-known and needs no detailed recounting here, but it is worthwhile to consider the particular consequences of the changes they wrought in how states internalized concepts such as

⁵²⁵ Kennan is quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2011), 176. Wilson’s words can be found in “An Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” February 11, 1918, published in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson* 46 (Jan 16 – Mar 12, 1918), eds. Arthur S. Link et. al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 318-24; for the Wilsonian critique generally, see Antony Lentin, *Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and the Guilt of Germany: An Essay in the Pre-history of Appeasement* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), 3-9.

⁵²⁶ Lentin, *Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and the Guilt of Germany*, 30.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵²⁸ George Bernard Shaw, *What I Really Wrote About the War* (London: Constable and Company, 1931), 315.

status and authority, identity and role, and right and duty. If the governance of international violence through an informal complex of norms had led Europe to four years of slaughter, then it was a logical response to shatter this complex, redistributing its components and reconfiguring international relations into a cooperative regime based on formal law. This was the idealistic program the Americans brought with them, but though the traditional complex linking rights, duties, and material capacity was successfully broken apart, its constituent components were not destroyed. Rights, duties, and material capacity continued to drive state behavior, but in patterns that differed from what had come before—only their traditional patterns of linkage were suppressed. The tragically imperfect formalization of right and duty at Versailles coincided with a turning-away of the materially-preeminent states from the norms-based mediation provided in the past by a close-knit peer group of Great Powers. Because of these two movements, right, duty, and capacity would be less coherently bound up in a complex of purposive norms and behaviors than they had been in the past.

The international ordering that emerged from Versailles exchanged the dynamism and informality that had animated the right- and responsibility-complex before its gradual decay for a rigid collective security system based on a significant reconfiguration of normative principles.⁵²⁹ The League of Nations regime treated international responsibility as a quality independent of compensatory right, and international right as a quality possessed independently of duties and abilities. New states were formed based on nationalist right claims; that these states could not possibly hope to muster the material capacity to defend themselves from their larger neighbors did not matter. A regime of

⁵²⁹ Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 283-4.

shared responsibility for world peace was put into place, but excluded some of the former Great Powers most likely to endanger it; Germany and Russia, despite their continuing possession of tremendous reserves of human and material resources, were essentially exiled from international society and left bereft of legitimate roles. Conversely, other materially-capable states, such as Britain and France, were assigned specific duties and rights outside of Europe through the mandate system; though the regime under which they were exercised changed, their traditional Great Power roles remained the same save that they were formally charged with a duty to uplift those territories they had forcibly seized and colonized. Of course, the new order had little to do with the United States, whose citizenry's "hostility to the idea of yet greater responsibilities" eschewed any institutionalized involvement in Great Power politics writ large—this even as it maintained both a newfound global material preeminence as well as a role based around a civilizing mission in its own hemisphere.⁵³⁰ Its lack of commitment to the League and its systems matched its earlier reluctance to engage with the right- and responsibility-complex of the past. And, of course, Japan's claim to status of Great Power was actually debased under this regime as the codification of international practice through League documents and armaments treaties ultimately introduced an avenue for racial difference to mark Japan out as separate from the club; this led to its withdrawal from the international normative system in favor of a program of naked conquest in Asia. The deficiencies of the League in many areas helped pave the way to the Second World War, but its inability to facilitate a level of Great Power 'buy-in' at least equivalent to the earlier right- and responsibility-complex it replaced must rank near the top of this list.

⁵³⁰ Lentin, *Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson and the Guilt of Germany*, 46.

Another war was the short-term consequence of these reforms, which collectively amounted to the wide-ranging revision of a very old arrangement of norms and behaviors correlated to a select group of states called the Great Powers. In the long run, however, it would become clear that the concept of Great Power itself had been muddled by this intrusion of conscious planning into what had hitherto been a largely organic developmental process. The most striking example is of course the creation of the United Nations Security Council as the directing organ of the League's successor. At first, this might seem a newfound institutionalization of Great Power rights and duties. In reality, however, the institution of the Security Council—a formal-legal, command-based directorate—broke sharply with the traditions of previous centuries by making the preeminence of a small group of states an irrevocable, unchanging position of privilege endowed with special legal rights binding on other states but lacking any equally binding duties. As a result, it became a forum for the adjudication of superpower—a term whose very existence points to the debasement of the traditional Great Power status—disputes rather than a true expression of a dynamic complex of Great Power rights and duties; the paucity of change in its permanent membership despite changing moral and material distributions strongly indicates that it is a modern innovation rather than a new expression of a traditional complex. Indeed, the Great Power status and identity of the past actually required more, behaviorally and conceptually, from those that claimed it than does Security Council permanent membership today if for no other reason than that the Great Power status of the past could be lost due to bad behavior or material weakness. As a result, Security Council permanent members are just as likely to undermine international order as support it, and in some cases are even more prone to defenestrating

their militaries and international aid programs than some second-tier states. Tenure can be a useful tool in some fields, but it has not traditionally been a privilege of Great Powers for precisely this reason.

Beyond the innovation of the Security Council, however, two particular areas reveal how conceptual dissonance came to characterize the traditional concept of Great Power after Versailles. The first is the notion of ‘civilian powers’ pairing rights and duties with capacity that is not violent but rather economic or cultural. ‘Civilian powers’ are those claiming international rights and duties—often managerial in nature—similar to those claimed by the traditional Great Powers. However, these states contrastingly formulate their roles in light of “a moralistic aversion against the traditional ways of carrying out power politics, frequently combined with pacifist or near-pacifist inclinations [and] sophisticated soft power skills.”⁵³¹ Germany and Japan are the most frequently-cited examples of civilian powers. Both are former Great Powers with great wealth but with weak or underequipped militaries and constitutional and cultural prohibitions against the use of international force; both are likewise noted for their roles in international institutions, the promotion of trade, and the funding of humanitarian and other aid missions to troubled parts of the world. However, their label is in many ways oxymoronic. The ‘Power’ in Great Power has traditionally stemmed from material capacity—the resources needed to assert and maintain some claim—translated into the capacity to inflict violence; this translation was not the only way capacity could be expressed, but it was the final and therefore the ultimate test of status. This has been true

⁵³¹ Harald Müller, “Habermas meets role theory: Communicative action as role playing?” in *Role Theory in International Relations: Approaches and Analyses*, eds. Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull (London: Routledge, 2011), 68.

since the earliest resort to a normative complex of rights and duties in the Middle Ages and was true as recently as the early 20th century, where the ontological anxieties of Austria-Hungary and other Powers over the need to hold and express their material capacity through armed action vividly illustrated the fear that a lack of ‘power’ (violent material capacity) would correlate inevitably to a loss of ‘Power’ (the status). In contrast, the attribution of ‘power’ in ‘civilian power’ reflects a belief that “the term ‘power’ no longer means what it used to: ‘hard’ power, the ability to command others, is increasingly being replaced by ‘soft’ (persuasive) power.”⁵³²

This begs questions about the relationship of international obligation and right to the varieties of international capacity. The first question has to do with practical necessity and whether a state’s material capacity to carry out an ordering role can be efficaciously expressed in exclusively non-violent ways. The natural tools of civilian powers—embargoes, discursive protests, and social ostracism—can certainly be employed to exert international pressure, but their record of accomplishment is mixed at best and their ability to coerce without perverse consequences is likewise uncertain. This is perhaps why a state’s material capacity has traditionally been expressed through its maintenance and deployment of military force. In the past, Powers frequently looked to force as an invaluable tool for the resolution of the very sort of managerial obligations civilian powers aim to express; when the Vienna settlement anointed the British crusade to suppress the international slave trade—perhaps the most unambiguously morally-upright thing the Concert of Europe ever directed—it was to frigates and cannon that they

⁵³² Hanns W. Maull, “Germany and Japan: The New Civilian Powers,” *Foreign Affairs* 69 (1991): 92. For soft power outside the context of Maull’s formulation of civilian powers, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 267n11; Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), ch. 1.

resorted. Recognizing this, contemporary civilian powers have pioneered a sort of hybrid expression of material capacity through peacekeeping missions in which their shell militaries are deployed to geographic regions they desire to influence. Sometimes armed and sometimes unarmed, these peacekeeping missions are often symbolic assertions of 'Great Power-esque' roles on the part of the civilian powers that lack the means or the will to assert their claims more forcefully. Indeed, sometimes these peacekeeping forces must be transported by the militaries of more traditional Powers because the civilian powers lack the capacity to move and supply them. Of course, this raises a subsidiary question of whether or not civilian power can be a genuine alternative to Great Power if it must resort to some measure of military force and lean on the military forces of others to operate; this is not to discount the place of civilian powers in international order, but rather to ask if civilian power can be fairly considered a higher or more evolved (or devolved, for that matter) form of Great Power or whether it is a different phenomenon related only rhetorically to the older form. However one answers this question, it is clear that the post-Versailles decoupling of rights and duties from material capacity as it was traditionally expressed made possible the notion of pacifist 'powers', and perhaps even pacifist 'Powers'.

A second, related issue has to do with the distribution of international responsibility absent the traditional 'club' structure of states possessing the Great Power status. In past centuries, the members of this club individually expressed a selection of roles that, when put together, formed a sort of mosaic reflecting semi-archival order and international governance. There is no longer a true 'club' of Great Powers, both because permanent membership on the Security Council has created an entirely different, formal-

legal club with very different norms and a radically different understanding of what constitutes worthy membership and, perhaps more importantly, because the principles of international right and duty have gone through a profound transformation since 1914. Universalized, de-localized, and widely-publicized, these new principles counterintuitively make it much more difficult to apportion burdens and prerogatives effectively—or, as James Mayall put it, to clearly answer the question “Who is to pay the bill, and who ultimately must carry the can?”—than they were under the old right- and responsibility-complex.⁵³³

In the past, international duties that were particularly burdensome (as opposed to those that required a Power to do something it wished to do anyway) necessarily correlated not only to the absolute military or economic ability of a Power to fulfill them, but also to a number of contingent factors such as culture or geographic location. For example, Austria-Hungary’s role as Balkan manager made sense owing to both its geographic placement near the Balkans as well as its relative level of material capacity (strong enough to manage, but not strong enough to conquer and hold). Powers worthy of the status were expected to take some measure of responsibility for their local geographic regions as well as those in which their colonies, trade, and strategic interests encouraged their close interest; e.g., Japan did not join in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion *in spite of the fact* that it took place in a neighboring Asian country, but *because of it*. Contrastingly, in a contemporary international politics of transnational human rights and a theorized responsibility to protect (R2P), the exact distribution of the duties and prerogatives is far less historically and geographically contingent since these rights and

⁵³³ Mayall, 36.

duties are *universal* and thus widely-spread and non-localized; all international actors can claim them, not just a select group of Great Power sharing a coherent status and expressing managerial roles.⁵³⁴ At same time, since any state can assert these right and duty claims, the social and material incentives for Great Powers to uniquely internalize them are greatly lessened; the universality of contemporary notions of international rights and duties thus provides a convenient mechanism for the shirking of burden.

In this tragedy of the global commons, those states best equipped militarily, economically, and culturally to exert global influence—states that would have been Great Powers in previous eras—can more easily avoid the consequences of global disorder than in centuries past. This has gone hand-in-glove with the post-Cold War emphasis on coalitions and supra-national mandates in executing processes of international managerialism. Vivid examples are provided by coalition interventions in the Balkans and Libya. These have proven difficult to organize and successfully achieve precisely because the traditional European Great Powers—still rich, populous, and technologically-sophisticated states—have expressed equivocal and often conflicting attitudes toward their responsibility for the maintenance of order even in their own backyards; it has been much simpler to pass this burden along by assigning responsibility to collective, supra-national organizations—groups that have no sovereign material capacity of their own to

⁵³⁴ This is particularly evident in the duties assumed by small states in recent multilateral police actions. As Robert Gates, the American Secretary of Defense, noted in his famous Brussels speech, “In the Libya operation, Norway and Denmark, have provided 12 percent of allied strike aircraft yet have struck about one third of the targets. Belgium and Canada are also making major contributions to the strike mission. These countries have, with their constrained resources, found ways to do the training, buy the equipment, and field the platforms necessary to make a credible military contribution.” Robert M. Gates, “The Security and Defense Agenda (The Future of NATO),” Speech delivered at Brussels, June 10, 2011, available at <http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1581>.

call upon—while allowing European military capacity to stagnate.⁵³⁵ As US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates chided American’s European allies,

while every alliance member voted for [the] Libya mission, less than half have participated at all, and fewer than a third have been willing to participate in the strike mission. Frankly, many of those allies sitting on the sidelines do so not because they do not want to participate, but simply because they can’t. The military capabilities simply aren’t there.⁵³⁶

Thus, the cover provided by large organizations such as the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has further obscured the normative tethers connecting states possessing the material capacity—active and militarized or latent and ‘soft’—necessary to promote order with the special ownership of right- and duty-claims encouraging the actual commitment of those resources to obtain productive international outcomes.

Accountability for ‘responsible’ behavior is much harder to determine without consensus on the meaning of responsibility; this is exacerbated by the lack of a ‘club’ of widely-recognized social peers that can exert pressure for isomorphic, cooperative solutions to problems of international disorder.

Finally, there is the inverse of the problem of global responsibility shirking, which is the problem of global right and responsibility assertion. Versailles did not destroy the notion of national roles expressing parochial prerogatives and missions, it only disrupted the club of peers that normatively bounded and productively directed them. Indeed, national roles still exist, but where they once expressed apportioned managerial missions in the service of both a collective social class and parochial national interests,

⁵³⁵ This diminution of militarized material capacity was particularly on display during the Libya campaign, where the European participants—most in the process of making deep defense spending cuts—were running short on bombs to drop within the first month of the intervention, thus “highlighting the limitations of Britain, France and other European countries in sustaining even a relatively small military action.” Karen Young and Greg Jaffe, “NATO runs short on some munitions in Libya,” *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2011.

⁵³⁶ Gates, *loc. cit.*

contemporary roles are more likely to express simply the latter. Russia in the Crimea, the United States in the Middle East, France in Africa—all these states have justified interventions by reference to national roles. What differentiates them from the past, however, is that these interventionist roles are carried out absent the mediation and legitimation provided by a collectively-constituted and shared status uniting an elite, managerial peer group. The rights and duties claimed in reference to them are less likely to evidence a deep commitment to a *habitus* constructing international politics as a series of overlapping normative relationships. Though international politics is in many ways more conscious of norms today than in the past—as the ‘thickening’ of international institutions and the growth of a transnational understanding of law and ethics proceeds apace in many areas—those norms are less intimately bound-up with the material ability of great states than they were in the recent past.

The consequences of these developments for the future are unclear. The original Great Power right- and responsibility-complex was born out of a shared security problem, and in the post-Cold War era it is uncertain what security problems are sufficiently universal, pressing, and agreed-upon to unite a group of preeminent, materially-capable states that has never been more diverse behind a shared, norms-based identity. Indeed, were such a problem to convincingly present itself, it is not unlikely that the formal-legal mechanisms of the United Nations and the informal coordination provided by the various ‘Groups’ of industrialized nations might prove to be more direct and convenient paths to solving it. And that may be where the story ends—it is possible that the informal, semi-archival form of governance provided by the Great Powers of centuries past was simply

an historical anomaly contingent on a Eurocentric culture and very particular set of moral and material distributions that will never be replicated.

Yet, there are hints of cyclicity in contemporary events that might point to a renewed relevance for an order of normative spheres of right and responsibility shared among a select group of materially-capable states. Russia's recent burst of international assertiveness has been read by some as an attempt to prove itself once more a traditional Great Power expressing a traditional Great Power role.⁵³⁷ Indeed, the claims it has asserted in Crimea since its intervention there bear a striking resemblance to the mix of regional responsibility claims and nationalistic rights and duties the German Confederation employed in the duchies of Slesvig and Holstein long ago. What remains to be seen is if historical patterns will be repeated and a Russia "returned to power" will once again "rejoin the European family" by conforming to some of its prevailing norms and productively directing its assertiveness toward the productive, cooperative, and collective management of a common security problem, such as the disorder in the Middle East.⁵³⁸ Similarly, the United States finds itself again at a crossroads between visions of its role in the world not dissimilar to those it confronted in the early 20th century. Even among policymakers and citizens favorably inclined to an active American Great Power role adapted to an era of universal human rights and transnational international duties, there is a sense of disorientation and dissatisfaction with how these rights and duties have been apportioned and actualized; to once more quote Gates's 2011 Brussels speech:

President Obama and I believe that despite the budget pressures, it would be a grave mistake for the U.S. to withdraw from its global responsibilities. . . . With respect to Europe, for the better part of six decades there has been relatively little

⁵³⁷ Henri Froment-Meurice, "Poutine: politique et économie," *Commentaire* 39, no. 153 (2016): 75-79.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

doubt or debate in the United States about the value and necessity of the transatlantic alliance. . . . [But] the U.S. share of NATO defense spending has now risen to more than 75 percent—at a time when politically painful budget and benefit cuts are being considered at home. The blunt reality is that there will be dwindling appetite and patience in the U.S. Congress—and in the American body politic writ large—to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners. . . . Indeed, if current trends in the decline of European defense capabilities are not halted and reversed, future U.S. political leaders . . . may not consider the return on America’s investment in NATO worth the cost.⁵³⁹

Should skepticism along these lines for established international institutions become sufficiently deep and widespread—and indications of such a movement are visible in the United States, Europe, and in many potential rising Powers—it could ultimately undermine them, forcing a return to less formal forms of international violence-management and problem-solving. And there is always the possibility of new shifts in moral and material distributions that could change the present configuration of materially-capable states. There is simply no telling whether or not a Great Power club with a center of gravity outside of Europe would naturally adopt the mechanisms of the past, the mechanisms of the present, or establish a new order entirely.

Whatever the desirability of any of these potentialities, it is worthwhile to reflect on the more than one thousand year history of rights and responsibilities in Great Power politics. The linkage between these normative concepts and the capacity for international action has been and shall remain an important determinant of how the moral, purposive communities of states materially interact in an international system of both anarchy and order.

⁵³⁹ Gates, *loc. cit.*

APPENDIX ONE

GLOSSARY

<i>authority</i>	a claim of legitimate governance expressed through the rights and duties of a Great Power role; instrumental in the post-Vienna arrangement of international order, within which the missions of the several Powers came to collectively divide and manage global politics
<i>Great Power</i>	states that possess significant shares of the systemic distribution of material capacity and share common customs, practices, and normative attitudes; they are distinguished by their superior capacities for organized violence as well as by their collective understanding of one another as social and power-political analogs.
<i>Great Power identity</i>	a set of understandings shared by a system's leading states defining their characteristic norms and behaviors and deriving from three key material and social elements: the formally anarchic status of the international system and the consequent necessity of calculation and vigilance; a system's particular distribution of material capacity; and a system's distribution of ideas about social and political order.
<i>Great Power role</i>	discrete, routinized collections of normative claims and international behaviors through which the systemic Great Power identity is reconciled with the material and ideological idiosyncrasies of an individual unit; the point at which the geopolitical and social circumstances peculiar to the individual key actors—their unique 'national interests' as they are locally understood—make themselves known
<i>habitus</i>	(following Bourdieu) a self-reproducing complex of regulative and purposive understandings conditioning how actors understand their field (paraphrase from p. 34fn72)
<i>ontological security</i>	(following Mitzen) "security not of the body but of the self, the subjective sense of who one is, which enables and motivates action and choice" (p. 12fn32)
<i>innovative balancing track</i>	a developmental pathway of international rights and duties based on prescriptive innovations intuited from empirical behavioral patterns and rationally-derived from the distribution of material capacity prevailing with a system

<i>responsibility</i>	a normative expectation of international behavior internalized within a state's policymaking
<i>revisionist Power</i>	a state that has seen an increase in its relative material standing but refuses to accede to the existing normative understandings and expectations of the other Great Powers; examples include Revolutionary France and Nazi Germany
<i>right</i>	a normative assertion of the appropriateness of certain international behaviors
<i>rising Power</i>	a state that has seen an increase in its relative material standing; its adherence to the normative behavioral standards of traditional Great Power is uncertain; if it adheres, it becomes simply a Great Power; if not, it becomes a revisionist Power
<i>security dilemma</i>	a situation in which the pursuit of security by one unit threatens the security of another
<i>state</i>	any political community effectively asserting a monopoly on violence within its own territory; includes Powers and non-Powers
<i>states-system</i>	(following Bull) "A system of states (or international system) is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions, to cause them to behave—at least in some measure—as parts of a whole" (9)
<i>status</i>	a publicly-recognized, quasi-legal concretization of the shared Great Power <i>identity</i>
<i>adaptive dynastic track</i>	a developmental pathway of international rights and duties derived from a medieval creedal inheritance; an adaptation of the <i>habitus</i> to the material context of early modernity through the construction of large dynastic conglomerates
<i>schismatic confessional track</i>	a developmental pathway of international rights and duties animated by a hyper-creedal realignment of international allegiances in light of the splintering of the universal Church and the onset of radical reformation and revision of traditional political and religious principles

APPENDIX TWO

CHRONOLOGY

c. 800	<i>Vassalage and the Production of Feudal Order</i>	<i>In this period, anarchy and violence are mediated by resort to overlapping feudal relationships as raiders and nomads gradually settle and accept feudal norms. Importantly, vassalage is linked directly to violence capacity.</i>
877	Emperor Charles II makes vassalage relationships heritable	
911	Rollo the Norseman accepts French vassalization	
1000	Stephen I of Hungary accepts papal vassalization	
1066	Norman Conquest bounded and normalized by feudal norms	
1154	England, Normandy, and Aquitaine dynastically united	<i>Here, dynasticism and plural relationships create new high political combinations, leading to the flourishing of conglomerates like the Angevin Empire.</i>
c. 1200	<i>Reagglomeration of Rights and Duties to the Crown</i>	
1214	Battle of Bouvines confirms rights of French king in France	<i>Bolstered by these contradictions, feudal monarchy develops as the royal office the rights, duties, and relationships necessary to exert material control over its realm.</i>
1273	Rudolph of Habsburg elected King of Germany, beginning a six-century period of Habsburg consolidation of central Europe	
c. 1300	England absorbs Wales	
1397	Kalmar Union unites Scandinavia	
c. 1440	<i>Systemic Politics in Italy, Dynastic Unions in Europe</i>	<i>Newly-empowered monarchs use the norms of feudalism to build large, powerful dynastic proto-states.</i>
1469	Castile-Aragon united through marriage	
1494	French invasion of Italy ends systemic Italian politics, begins period of intense dynastic competition across Europe	
c. 1520	Empire of Charles V unites Austria, Burgundy, and Spain	<i>In Italy, this period is characterized by the innovative balancing of the first Great Powers.</i>
c. 1545	The Rough Wooing begins English efforts to absorb Scotland	

c. 1550	<i>Dynastic Upheaval and Wars of Religion</i>	<p><i>Religious conflict and dynastic upheaval follow from the changes wrought by feudal monarchy.</i></p> <p><i>Adaptive dynastic and schismatic confessional configurations of international rights and duties lead to violent competition bound by few norms.</i></p>	
1553	Succession of the Catholic Mary I to the English throne		
1554	Marriage of Mary I of England to Philip of Spain		
1556	Abdication of Charles V separates Spain and the Empire		
1562	French Wars of Religion begin		
1569	Rising of the North attempts to overthrow Elizabeth I and replace her with the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots		
1570	Excommunication of Elizabeth I of England		
1572	St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre intensifies French religious war		
1587	'War of the Three Henrys' divides France between royalist, Protestant, and international Catholic-backed factions		
1588	Spanish Armada attempts regime change in England		
1598	Accession of Henry IV marks religious settlement in France		<p><i>Exhausted by political, religious, and cultural conflict, Europe turns to a combination of dynastic tradition and rational, systemic politics.</i></p>
1603	Accession of James VI and I unites England and Scotland, cools religious passions		
1615	The 'Spanish marriages' mark a return to dynastic diplomacy		
1618	Beginning of what becomes the Thirty Years' War		
1624	Elevation of Cardinal Richelieu, proponent of <i>raison d'Etat</i> , signals the beginning of a new European system based	<p><i>The Thirty Years War upsets this peace, but the Westphalia settlement institutionalizes a mix of dynastic and rational international politics.</i></p>	
1648	<i>The Classical States-system</i>		
1661	Louis XIV proclaims a policy aimed at preeminent prestige	<p><i>The wars of Louis XIV reveal the primary elements of Great Power identity in this period: dynasty, prestige, the assertion of wide-ranging state interests, and the balance of power.</i></p>	
1667	The War of Devolution extends French territory eastward		
1672	The Franco-Dutch War continues France's expansion		
1683	The War of the Reunions continues France's expansion		
1688	The Nine Years' War begins		
1697	The Nine Years' War concludes with a pan-European coalition Having checking Louis XIV's territorial ambitions		
1701	The War of the Spanish Succession begins		

1713	Emperor Charles VI issues the Pragmatic Sanction allowing a daughter to inherit the archduchy of Austria and other Habsburg possessions	<p><i>This period is characterized by the textbook balance of power system</i></p> <p><i>Britain's role as explicit balancer is supplemented by an especially deep normative internalization of restraint, compensation, and consideration prevailing among the Powers.</i></p>
1714	The Congress of Utrecht ends the war	
1718	The War of the Quadruple Alliance checks renewed Spanish dynastic ambitions	
1733	The War of the Polish Succession, fought over dynastic and prestige claims by two competing coalitions, begins	
1738	The war ends through a peace built on compensation and conciliation	
1740	Maria Theresa accedes to the office of Archduchess; the War of the Austrian Succession (also encompassing several subsidiary conflicts) begins when Prussia contests her claim	
1748	The war concludes with Austrian territorial losses but also with international recognition of Maria Theresa's rights to her titles	
1756	The Seven Years' War begins as colonial contests spill over into continental affairs	
1763	The war ends with Britain's maritime and colonial role dominant	
1773	First partition of Poland	
1775	The American Revolutionary War begins	
1778	France intervenes on the side of the United States	
1779	Spain intervenes on the side of the United States	
1780	Russia creates the League of Armed Neutrality to balance against Britain's claims to special maritime rights during the war	
	The Fourth Anglo-Dutch War breaks out over Britain's claims to special maritime rights	
1783	The American Revolutionary War ends with American independence, but with only minor territorial changes for its French ally	
1787	The Dutch Patriot Revolt breaks out and is crushed by Prussia; France threatens to intervene but is materially incapable	
	The War of the Bavarian Succession fought over Joseph II's plans to extend Habsburg influence in Germany	
1789	Onset of revolution in France	
1792	War of the First Coalition against the Revolution	

1793	<i>Years of Revolution and Reaction</i>	}	<i>The many wars of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic empire radically reshape not only the map of Europe, but the patterns of international politics and domestic society.</i>		
1804	Coronation of Napoleon as Emperor of the French				
1815	<i>A World Restored</i>	}	<i>The implications of the Vienna settlement are operationally established by a series of Great Power Congresses. The principles articulated within it form the basis for this century's Great Power managerialism, but also reveal the limits of the ability of condominiums among the Powers to address the questions of liberalism and nationalism with only conservative answers.</i>		
	Quadruple Alliance treaty signed to united Powers against any future disorder in France				
1818	Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle normalizes relations with France				
	France joins the Quadruple Alliance, now directed against revolution generally				
1820	Congress of Troppau legitimizes Great Power intervention to support legitimate governments				
1821	Congress of Laibach legitimates Austrian intervention in Naples, but estranges Britain and opens a rift among the Powers				
1822	Congress of Verona legitimates French intervention in Spain, but leads Britain to adopt a policy of non-interventionism				
1823	French restoration of the Spanish Bourbons				
1848	<i>Rising Nations and Rising Powers</i>			}	<i>The forces of nationalism and liberalism foster a number of revolutionary regimes, and hint at the potential for German and Italian unification.</i>
	Revolutions motivated by liberalism and nationalism sweep both Europe and Latin America				
	Establishment of the Second French Republic				
	The king of Prussia is offered the crown of a united Germany, but rejects it despite his support of the nationalist cause				
	Russia intervenes to suppress the Hungarian uprising against the Austrian Emperor, but recognizes the French republic				
	First Italian War of Independence, fought between Sardinia and Austria, ends with Austria victory; the French republic does not intervene, signaling its willingness to conform				
	France successfully tempers its revisionism and is accepted as a member of the Great Power club. It then transitions into an empire and pursues a traditional program based on prestige, dynasticism, and spheres of influence.				
1852	Proclamation of the Second French Empire (Napoleon III)	}	<i>France successfully tempers its revisionism and is accepted as a member of the Great Power club. It then transitions into an empire and pursues a traditional program based on prestige, dynasticism, and spheres of influence.</i>		
1853	The Crimean War begins				
1856	The Congress of Paris concludes the war, revealing France to be an essentially conservative Power				

1859	France and Sardinian eject Austria from Italy	<p><i>New national states are created: Germany around an existing Great Power role and Italy around a national mission that lacked an immediate outlet for the expression of Great Power but did nothing to conceal the hunger of its leaders for that status.</i></p> <p><i>Austria's German and Italian missions are forcibly ended, and it suffers domestic revolution and reorganization as a result.</i></p>
1861	Proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy	
1864	The German Confederation, led by Prussia and Austria, occupies the duchies of Slesvig and Holstein based on nationalist and formal-legal right claims	
1866	Austria and Prussia go to war over the question of the duchies; Austria is ejected from Germany	
	Formation of the North German Confederation	
1867	Reeling from its defeats, Austria faces the prospect of a rebellion in Hungary; the <i>Ausgleich</i> , a compromise with Hungarian nationalists, reconstitutes the Austrian Empire as two separate states united by a common monarch and foreign policy	
1870	Franco-Prussian War breaks out over issues of French prestige after a Hohenzollern was almost placed on the throne of Spain	
	Emperor Napoleon III is captured; his regime collapses at home and the Third Republic is established	
	The North German Confederation becomes the German Empire	
1871	The Treaty of Frankfurt ends the war, transferring two French provinces to Germany	
1873	Bismarck establishes the League of the Three Emperors with the goal of maintaining peaceful Great Power relations on the continent; it would last, with one interruption, until 1887	<p><i>Stability and Great Power managerialism characterize this Bismarckian period.</i></p> <p><i>A stable Germany-Austria role dyad takes shape as Bismarck determines to preserve Austria-Hungary as an eastern-focused Great Power. Austria-Hungary's role in the Balkans is encouraged and formalized by the Congress of Berlin, itself a reaction to Russia's refocused Great Power role aimed at the Straits and the turbulent Balkan principalities emerging from the decay of Turkish order in Europe.</i></p>
1877	The Russo-Turkish war breaks out as Russia reaches for the Straits and fosters Balkan nationalism	
1878	The Congress of Berlin rolls back Russian and Balkan nationalist gains; Austria-Hungary is awarded Bosnia-Herzegovina and positioned with a new Balkan role designed to manage the disorder caused there by the decline of the Ottoman Empire and to bar further Russian gains	
1879	A brief lapse in the League leads to the Dual Alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary	
1882	Italy joins the Dual Alliance, inaugurating the Triple Alliance	
1884	The Berlin Conference touches off the scramble for Africa by delineating normative procedures for the managed, peaceful division of territory amongst the Powers	
1885	In the Serbo-Bulgarian War, Bulgaria successfully absorbs the former Ottoman territory of Eastern Rumelia; Austria-Hungary steps in to protect the defeated Serbs from Bulgarian reprisals	

1890	<i>Accelerating Tensions and Contradictions</i>
	Bismarck's guidance of German policy comes to an end; the German Great Power role begins to transition toward a focus on 'world policy'
1894	Russia—in need of support for its Balkan ambitions—concludes an alliance with France, ending that Power's isolation and providing a basis for its security against Germany; this locks in a cooperative France-Russia role dyad
1895	The Sino-Japanese War earns Japan an imperial zone in China and cements its status as a rising Power
1900	A joint force of all the Powers, several secondary states, and the United States intervenes in the Boxer Rebellion in China; the force operates under a single allied command structure
1902	An Anglo-Japanese alliance designed to contain Russia in Asia is concluded
1904	The Russo-Japanese War breaks out over conflicting spheres of interest in Manchuria; Russia suffers immediate setbacks
	The <i>Entente Cordiale</i> agreements between Britain and France
1905	Revolution breaks out in St. Petersburg
	The Russian fleet is annihilated at the Battle of Tsushima
	The Portsmouth Peace Conference ends the war and announces the United States's increased involvement in world politics
	The First Moroccan Crisis sparked by German interest in North Africa
1906	The Algeiras Conference resolves the Moroccan Crisis, but demonstrates Germany's increasing international isolation in its question for colonies
	The Tsar grants the Constitution of 1906 establishing the Duma
	Britain launched <i>HMS Dreadnought</i> , revolutionizing naval warfare and, by rendering existing navies obsolete, opening the door to a naval building challenge from Germany
1907	President Roosevelt dispatches an American fleet on an around the world journey as a demonstration of naval power
	Britain and Russia agree to spheres of influence where their colonial roles overlapped, thus transitioning a competitive dyad to a one of cooperation

Great Power roles begin to ossify as geographic territory for expansion becomes scarce and increasingly-active world policies among Powers such as Germany, Japan, and the United States leave less room for the non-zero-sum expression of authority claims.

Several dyads are locked in during this period: France-Russia, Britain-Japan, and Britain-Germany join the existing Austria-Russia and Germany-Austria dyads as fixed features of international politics.

One dyad, Britain-Russia, transitions from one of normative competition to one of normative cooperation.

1908 *Toward Decisive Change*

On the advice of the Russian foreign minister, Austria-Hungary annexes Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Russian government condemns this action, and mobilizes its forces in conjunction with Serbia

1909 German armed mediation forces the Russians and Serbs to back down and recognize the Austro-Hungarian annexation

1911 The Second Moroccan Crisis; Germany makes small territorial gains in Africa, but only at the cost of international esteem and the acknowledgement of a French protectorate over Morocco

The Italo-Turkish War reveals the weakness of Ottoman authority

1912 The First Balkan War; a coalition of Balkan nation-states partition much of European Turkey

1913 The Second Balkan War; the Balkan states join forces against their erstwhile Bulgarian ally, paring back its gains and aggrandizing themselves

1914 The Third Balkan War; Austria-Hungary intervenes in Serbia after a state-sponsored terrorist plot assassinates the heir to its throne

Russia intervenes in the Third Balkan War, triggering a series of alliances and dyadic role relationships that expand the conflict into the First World War

Ossified role relationships are now in full force, shaping how Powers react to circumstances.

The fundamental weakness of Ottoman authority and the growing power of nationalist, revisionist Balkan states leads to multiple crises, ultimately creating a cascade of ontological security dilemmas as the self-understandings of multiple Great Powers become incompatible with the status quo.

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