

# **The Atlantic Peace: European expansion overseas and the international system/international society dialectic**

## **Introduction**

This paper is concerned with the nature and implications of a radical transformation in the geopolitical relations of Atlantic seaboard powers, flowing directly out of the long-running and near-global conflicts of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and continuing through to the present day. The ‘Atlantic peace’ label refers not just to peace *within* the Atlantic basin and surrounding lands, but to peace more broadly *among* great powers with a long-term base in the ‘old Atlantic world’, established by European overseas expansion from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Given the geographical extent of that expansion by 1815, that means a peace among Atlantic European powers extending also across the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the south China sea.

From around 1600 to 1815, European overseas expansion was combined with recurrent wars between Atlantic seaboard powers over the spoils of that expansion, wars that increased dramatically in both scale and intensity after 1750. Beginning in the 1770s – around the start of what Christopher Bayly has called ‘the first age of global imperialism’<sup>2</sup>, there were also wars, with momentous long-term consequences, between Atlantic powers and European settler communities in the Americas. After 1815, European overseas expansion reached flood-tide, but there were no more wars between current Atlantic great powers (including the emerging settler-colonial great power, the

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<sup>1</sup> On this concept see J. R. McNeil and A. R. Karras, eds., *Atlantic American Societies: From Columbus Through Abolition 1492-1888* (London: Routledge, 1992), especially ‘The Atlantic world as a unit of study’ and ‘The end of the old Atlantic world: America, Africa, Europe, 1770-1888’ by Karras and McNeill respectively. For an argument that the original Thirteen Colonies of the U.S. should be viewed as an Atlantic ‘oldland’, which subsequently expanded into trans-Appalachian ‘newlands’, see James Belich, ‘The Rise of the Angloworld: Settlement in North America and Australasia, 1784-1918’, in Philip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis eds., *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 39-41.

<sup>2</sup>C.A. Bayly, ‘The First Age of Global Imperialism, c. 1760–1830’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 26 (1998): 28-47.

United States)<sup>3</sup>. This Atlantic peace held through World War I, World War II and the ensuing 40-plus years of the Cold War order (when a geographically truncated ‘West Germany’ effectively migrated from Central Europe into Atlantic Europe and an enlarged ‘Atlantic community’). It is still holding today and seems unlikely to break down in the foreseeable future.

Three important corollaries of this basic proposition are worth spelling out the start. First, because Atlantic great powers no longer fought each other after 1815, they no longer formed military alliances with each other’s ‘local’ opponents overseas. A crucial dimension of ‘balance of power’ geopolitics thus disappeared from conflicts between Atlantic powers and their overseas adversaries, allowing the former to establish their dominance over large areas much more easily than might otherwise have been the case. (For the most part, this meant that Europeans no longer allied with non-Europeans against other Europeans, as the French and British had regularly done in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But the same principle also applies to the lack of significant external military assistance to the South in the American Civil War).

Second, this sharp decline in balance-of-power constraints on Atlantic European expansion overseas coincided with a dramatic increase in logistical capacities for territorial expansion flowing from the industrial revolution. Once again, the resultant pattern after 1815 was almost the direct reverse of the pattern before 1815. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, much of the globe had effectively been *drawn into* a single military ‘field of forces’ through decades of relatively modest, pre-industrial logistical advances, combined with intense military competition among Atlantic European powers. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the combination of the new Atlantic peace with new industrial-era logistical capacities allowed vast overseas territories to be effectively *taken out of* the

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<sup>3</sup> On great power ranking and periodization, see Jack Levy, *War and the European Great Power System, 1495-1975*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1983), 8-49. I follow the conventional assessment that the United States was a ‘great power’ by the time of its war with Spain in 1898, but that Spain had not been one for over a century. The ‘current great powers’ restriction is designed to accommodate short-hand ‘tests’ of the Atlantic peace claim: however, there seems to have been remarkably little warfare among ‘old Atlantic’ European powers *in general* since 1815, given the geopolitical scale of their operation and the territorial booty at stake.

military field of forces and subsumed into ‘domestic’ territories claimed by a variety of European and European-settler powers.

Third, once established, the borders drawn in these post-1815 seizures of overseas territory by Atlantic European powers held firm, with one major exception and a few minor ones. The major exception was the US expansion in continental North America: but the great bulk of that was completed by 1853, and the borders thus established also held firm from that point. Overall, the ‘European international society’ regime of mutually-recognized sovereignty promoted a remarkably stable division of extra-European territories among Atlantic seaboard powers through to the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, whereas it spectacularly failed to promote a stable division of territorial sovereignties in much of continental Europe over the same period.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century carve-up of overseas territories laid down the geopolitical parameters for subsequent decolonization in European overseas empires, whether this produced more European settler states or –later in time but in far greater numbers – non-European successor states. Overwhelmingly, these decolonization outcomes were shaped by deals cut between individual colonial powers and local successor regimes – with or without some significant component of armed liberation struggle. There was nothing comparable to the general great power/international society ‘settlement’ of successor regime claims on the territories of old empires that occurred in eastern Europe – and to some extent the Middle East - after WWI.

With these corollaries in place, it is possible to be clearer about the overall structure of the argument, and about how it relates to existing ‘schools’ in Anglo-American IR theory. The most obvious *rhetorical* comparison is to narratives of ‘the X peace’ variety;

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Jackson states that ‘when Europeans began to penetrate non-European continents and oceans ... sovereignty was conveniently available for annexing new territories’. Agreement on an extra-European regime of ‘imperial sovereignty’ allowed Europeans ‘the certainty of a recognized title to foreign territory, rather than the uncertainty of holding it by force in competition with each other. European states consequently recognized each other’s empires while agreeing not to recognize non-European political authorities’. ‘Sovereignty in World Politics: A Glance at the Conceptual and Historical Landscape’, *Political Studies* XLVII (1999): 442. This argument collapses together European ‘continental’ expansion overseas, which acquired real momentum only after 1800, and European maritime expansion, which was underway centuries earlier and also predated any serious development of a modern sovereignty regime in Europe itself. I will try to show that Jackson’s picture becomes plausible only in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

and in this regard, my argument has a good deal in common with ‘long peace/Pax Britannica/hegemonic stability’ narratives and very little in common with ‘democratic peace’ narratives. The claim is not that states within a certain socio-political category ‘do not fight each other’ *sine die*: rather it is that states with a certain geographical and historical background - current great powers from the ‘old Atlantic world’ - regularly fought each other before a certain date but stopped fighting each other after that date. Indeed, I am not even primarily concerned with discrete *causes* of the Atlantic peace, for which I offer relatively crude and conventional explanations, but with its structure and longer-term implications: specifically its implications for how we view the global process referred to in ‘English school’ IR theory as ‘the expansion of international society’.<sup>5</sup> At least in terms of questions asked, my argument has more in common with this English school narrative than with either of the ‘X peace’ narratives mentioned above; and this judgment about theoretical affinities is reflected in the rest of the paper. There is an extended debate with English school authors and some significant engagement with American neorealist accounts of the Pax Britannica: but no further consideration is given to the question of the democratic peace’.

### **‘Spatialities of power’, 1: ‘ensemble of worlds’ and ‘field of forces’**

In conventional IR language, this paper attempts a rethinking of IR orthodoxies about the intersection between the *historical evolution* and the *geographical expansion* of the modern international system. Before approaching the English school, therefore, I take up an important contribution to the critical IR debate by an historical geographer – John Agnew’s 1999 article on ‘mapping political power beyond state boundaries’.<sup>6</sup> Agnew starts with several problems in ‘the conventional understanding of the geography of political power’: notably its ‘timeless conception of statehood’ and its assumptions about ‘a fundamental opposition between “domestic” and “foreign” affairs’ in the contemporary world’. He then proposes a more flexible way of approaching the problem, based on the

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<sup>5</sup> On the English School, see Tim Dunne, *Inventing International Society: A History of the English School* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> John Agnew, ‘Mapping Political Power Beyond State Boundaries: Territory, Identity and Movement in World Politics’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28 (1999): 499-21.

historical interplay of four different models or patterns of ‘historical spatialities of power’.

The first and oldest model is that of an ‘ensemble of worlds’: a pattern of scattered ‘cultural areas or civilisations with limited communication and interaction between them’. Though each area has ‘fuzzy external boundaries’, each also nurtures ‘a sense of a profound difference beyond its own boundaries without any conception of the particular character’ of other areas.

Time is cyclical or seasonal with dynasties and seasons replacing one another in natural sequence. Political power is largely internally-oriented and directed towards dynastic maintenance and internal order. Its spatiality rests on a strongly physical conception of space as distance to be overcome or circulation to be managed.

The second model, also old but becoming widespread only in the era of European overseas expansion, is that of a ‘field of forces’.

This is the geopolitical model of states as rigidly defined territorial units in which each state can gain power only at the expense of others and each has total control over its own territory. It is akin to a field of forces in mechanics in which the states exert force on one another and the outcome of the mechanical contest depends on the populations and resources each can bring to bear ... All of the attributes of politics, such as rights, representation, legitimacy, and citizenship, are restricted to the territories of individual states. The presumption is that the realm of geopolitics is beyond such concerns. Force and the potential use of force rule supreme beyond state boundaries. Time is ordered on a rational global basis so that trains can run on time, workers can get to work on time, and military forces can coordinate their activities.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 506.

The third model is the ‘hierarchical network’ – essentially a world economy organized along core/semi-periphery/periphery lines - which begins its rise through the 19th century ‘in and around the framework provided by the state system’ (i.e. the then dominant ‘field of forces’). The fourth is that of an ‘integrated world society’, which acquires real significance only in the late-20th century and which - like the hierarchical network - will not be considered further in this paper.

**Figure 1: Historical Spatialities of Power and Atlantic Peace**

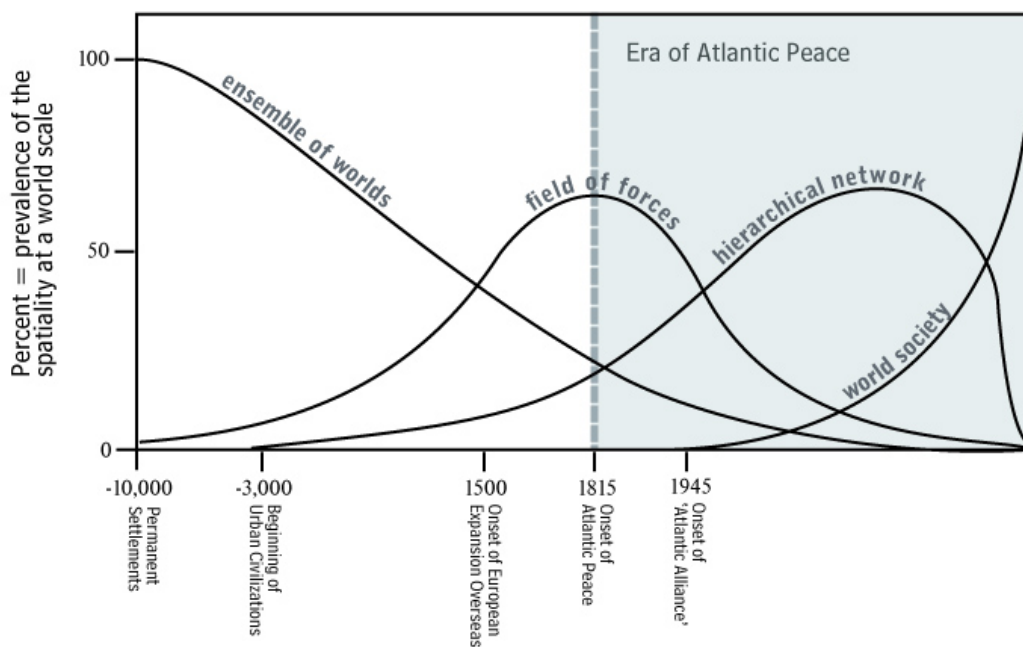


Figure 1 reproduces Agnew’s basic mapping of the long-term historical interplay of these four ‘spatialities of power’, with some significant changes to his internal periodization of the post-1500 era, and with my Atlantic peace era shaded in to the right of the diagram.<sup>8</sup>

This representation highlights the paradoxical proposition foreshadowed in the introduction about the progress of Atlantic European expansion by the early 19th century: on the one hand, it was rapidly breaking down the relative isolation of the large territorial cores in the pre-modern ensemble of worlds and definitively establishing a near-global

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 508 for Agnew’s original diagram.

field of forces; on the other, it was simultaneously implanting a new system of mutually-recognized sovereignties outside Europe, in which vast areas were being ‘domesticated’ by one or other Atlantic power, and effectively removed from at least the military arena of that same global field of forces.

Agnew’s essentially materialist approach, useful though it is as a general counterweight to the ingrained idealism of much orthodox IR theory, is not very helpful in addressing this particular paradox. However, his categories potentially open up an interesting debate with the English school international society perspective. I begin with three ‘first generation’ doyens of this school – and of the original British Committee on the Theory of International Politics - Hedley Bull, Adam Watson and Martin Wight.

### **‘Spatialities of power’, 2: ‘international system’ and ‘international society’**

Perhaps the most important collective work of English school theory, and the last major work flowing from the 25-year history of the British Committee, was *The Expansion of International Society*, edited by Bull and Watson (1984).<sup>9</sup> Its core problematic overlapped closely with Agnew’s ensemble of worlds/field of forces problematic, and there were important commonalities also in the broad analytical claims set out by Bull and Watson in their editors’ introduction to this work.

First, they effectively portrayed conditions outside Europe on the eve of European expansion as a continuation of a long-standing ensemble of worlds pattern. The greatest of these worlds were four ‘regional international systems’ distributed around the Eurasian landmass, all ‘built upon elaborate civilizations, including complex religions, governments, law, commerce, written records and financial accounts’. All encompassed a range of different ‘kingdoms and principalities’: but ‘all were, at least in the theory that underlay them, hegemonial or imperial’; and this hegemonial bias promoted the kind of

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<sup>9</sup> Hedley Bull and Adam Watson eds., *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

inward looking bias of political power - concerned primarily with dynastic maintenance and internal order -.which Agnew identified.<sup>10</sup>

Second, Bull and Watson were even more forthright than Agnew in asserting that the pre-existing world order outside Europe was transformed by revolutionary forces emanating from within Europe. These forces were associated above all with the progressive development of an 'anti-hegemonial' order in Europe: an entrenched interstate anarchy dominated not by one super-ordinate hegemon but by several roughly equal great powers. Anticipating charges of 'Eurocentric' bias, they offered the following defence:

The global international society of today is in large part a consequence of Europe's impact on the rest of the world over the last five centuries... It was the expansion of Europe that first brought about the economic and technological unification of the globe, just as it was the European-dominated international society of the 19th and early 20th centuries that first expressed its political unification ... Because it was in fact Europe and not America, Asia, or Africa that first dominated and, in so doing, unified the world, it is not our perspective but the historical record itself that can be called Eurocentric.<sup>11</sup>

Third, their periodization of European expansion effectively conceded that – at least in its early centuries – it was powered less by distinctive European ideas about sovereignty than by 'material' advantages in certain forms of military activity and power projection, accruing in particular to Europe's Atlantic seaboard states. In some general sense, they undoubtedly saw this European interstate anarchy as partly *constructed*, progressively shaped and refined by an emerging compact around the principle of 'constitutive' or *reciprocally acknowledged* sovereignty. But theirs was a weak constructivism, acknowledging a gap of centuries between the origins of the system – and its haphazard involvement in areas far beyond the core - and the maturing of its most distinctive ideas and practices.

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<sup>10</sup> Bull and Watson, 'Introduction', in *The Expansion of International Society*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

The European international society, it should be noted, did not first evolve its own rules and institutions and then export them to the rest of the world. The evolution of the European system of interstate relations and the expansion of Europe across the globe were simultaneous processes, which influenced and affected each other. Both began at the end of the fifteenth century...<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, though they did not spell this out here, Bull and Watson's account of the temporal and spatial dynamic of European expansion relied on a conceptual distinction between *international system* and *international society* – which had been elaborated elsewhere by Bull, in definitions subsequently described by Watson as 'seminal'.<sup>13</sup> Bull defined an international system in terms very similar to Agnew's field of forces: it required only that a group of states be in a condition of regular interaction and strategic interdependence, such that they could all in principle be embroiled in a general war. An international society required the forgoing plus a consciousness among the states 'of certain common interests and values', an agreement on a common set of rules and institutions embodying these values, and some additional measure of common culture. For much of the history of European expansion, Bull asserted, the boundaries of the system ran well ahead of the boundaries of the society. 'Turkey, China, Japan, Korea and Siam, for example, were part of the European dominated international system before they were part of the European dominated international society'.<sup>14</sup>

Some such conceptual distinction between 'system' (in the sense of a relatively un-institutionalized field of forces) and 'society' (in the sense of a field of forces modified by substantial agreement on common rules and values) is central to the argument of this paper. However, there are two important problems with the formulations quoted above. First, though Bull formally accepted that system preceded society in the history of European expansion, his main interest and all his detailed argument was focused on the

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7

<sup>13</sup> Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, (London: Macmillan, 1977), 9-10, 13-15.

development and internal logic of that latecomer international society. He showed no comparable interest in the question of when European expansion could seriously be said to start producing a coherent field of forces well outside Europe. However, his and Watsons' formal periodization – that 'the economic and technological unification of the globe' was the 'product of Europe's impact on the rest of the world *over the last five centuries*' – arguably predated by around 250 years the point at which European power resources became sufficient to exert such a revolutionary effect on the non-European world.<sup>15</sup> Second, his discussion of military and diplomatic encounters outside Europe *which fell inside the system but outside the society* dealt with straightforward two-way encounters – between Europeans and non-Europeans. This paper is more concerned with the intersection between such encounters and encounters between Europeans themselves outside the recognized boundaries of their society.

The most illuminating analysis of this question is provided by Wight, who died well before the publication of *The Expansion of International Society*, but who had produced major papers on this theme for the British Committee in the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> Wight's formal position might be called a strong constructivist one: that 'a states-system [his preferred term] will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members'.<sup>17</sup> In practice, however, Wight was typically less interested in theoretical consistency than in historical nuance, and his discussion of European overseas expansion highlighted both a critical convention governing the conduct of intra-European military conflicts outside Europe, and a critical transformation in the practical content of that convention in the century leading up to the onset of the Atlantic peace.

It was a mistake, Wight argued, to see either the European self-understanding or the practical reality of this process in terms of an expansion by European powers into a 'periphery of politically empty spaces'. Instead, he advocated a 'dual' or 'stereoscopic'

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<sup>15</sup> There is now an extensive literature arguing that the global power balance - except in warfare at sea - did not really start to shift towards Europe till the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. A recent work bringing many of these arguments together is John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire Since 1405* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Posthumously published as Martin Wight, *Systems of States* ed. Hedley Bull, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

perspective on the growth of the system, which highlighted the existence from the outset of 'two concentric circles, European and universal'. Inevitably, the conventions which Europeans developed in regard to the outer circle reflected the overwhelming importance of maritime geopolitics in the early centuries of their expansion - with the most 'regular and important' being a distinction between *paix maritimes* and *paix continentales* and an associated principle of 'no peace beyond the line'.

This distinction started with the Peace of Chateau Cambresis in 1559, when European logistical and power projection capabilities were still very primitive. In negotiating this peace, France and Spain agreed to insulate their European settlement from their continued conflict in the Americas by means of a 'a verbal agreement, which formed no part of the treaty', on a geographical line beyond which 'acts of hostility would not violate the treaty and whoever was strongest would pass for master'. This convention of 'the "amity lines", which divided the zone of peace from the zone of war"', was increasingly appealed to by other powers, notably Britain in its long overseas duel with France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By this point, the British in particular were starting to acquire much more serious capacities for global power projection, and the practical content of the convention expanded to reflect this.

Its original meaning was negative and concessive; it acquired a new meaning, positive and permissive. 'No peace beyond the line' became almost a rule of international law, giving freedom to plunder, attack and settle without upsetting the peace of Europe. Its original application, moreover, was to the West Indies, the realm of those whom [European international law] was to designate as savages; but it was soon extended to the East Indies, where the great European companies circled around the kingdoms of the barbarians. <sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-125.

### **‘Spatialities of power’, 3: system, society and the construction of international/domestic space**

At first glance, a rule among Atlantic European powers that there were no rules beyond the line seems an unpromising basis for the kind of far-reaching and stable ‘domestication’ of overseas territory alluded to above. However, by facilitating a momentous 19<sup>th</sup> century transition from maritime attack and plunder (and mercantilist trade) to control and settlement in extended inland territories, it did indeed help to provide such a basis. A final theoretical fix on this paradox of the Atlantic peace may be achieved by temporarily surrendering materialist assumptions altogether, and asking how the relationship between ‘domestic’ and ‘international’ space would appear if we took literally a strong constructivist account of the origins and expansion of the modern international system.

‘Constructivism’ has become a name to conjure with in IR theory only in the last decade or so, associated particularly with Alexander Wendt’s claim that ‘[international] anarchy is what states make of it’ - not a pre-given predicament but the product of a particular cultural choice.<sup>19</sup> But constructivism *avant-la-lettre* dates back almost fifty years in English school discourse, to C.A.W. Manning’s resolutely idealist and a-historical account of *The Nature of International Society* in 1962, which described international society as a real society of ‘notional entities’, with an existence ‘in effect’ if not ‘in fact’, generated by common agreement on a game of ‘lets-play-states’.<sup>20</sup> An extended riff on Manning’s formula, linking it closely with the ‘Westphalia’ narrative about system origins, is provided in Cornelia Navari’s contribution to *The Reason of States*, a seminal 1978 collective work of ‘second-generation’ English school theory.

Is there not something very odd about the ‘state of nature’ which constitutes international relations – namely the fact that it did not always exist? The fact that it was an *established* state of nature which emerged out of something that went before.

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is What States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics’, *International Organization* 46 (2) Spring (1992): 391-426.

<sup>20</sup> C.A.W. Manning, *The Nature of International Society* (London: G.Bell and Sons, 1962), 13-23, 165-69.

The story of its emergence is usually told through the story of the emergence of the state, and this is, of course, true. But not in the sense of an inward-gathering of forces. That .. is an *etatiste* myth. The story could just as well and, indeed, rather more accurately be told from the outside in, through the image of a number of princes sitting in a field uttering the words, *cuius regio, eius religio*, words of which they all understood the meaning and some of the implications: a compact, in short, which began the great state of nature.

And indeed, the state of nature did have to be founded. It was scarcely natural to the men of the time that social organisation be cut off from external authority, formed into billiard balls and the space between emptied. The notion of the state as a billiard ball is a convention; it was instituted. That condition of affairs is maintained by other conventions, such as non-intervention and recognition which were also instituted. To say simply that the space between is 'empty' is not true. It is 'empty' in the sense that the state is for certain purposes a billiard ball. But the space is full of the convention which maintains that image. It is also full of the convention that human societies must become states for certain purposes.<sup>21</sup>

If one takes Navari's argument literally, the international anarchy as a physical zone of war does an impressive vanishing act. The reasoning behind this claim is exemplified in Figure 2, which attempts to map the critical variables along two axes: inside or outside European/civilized international society; and inside or outside the *institutionalized zone of international anarchy* as recognized within the rules and conventions of that international society. (With the latter axis the normal rhetorical parallel between inside/outside and domestic/foreign is reversed, since territory recognized as 'domestic' falls *outside* the acknowledged international anarchy which ideally constitutes the legitimate arena for international warfare).

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<sup>21</sup> Cornelia Navari, 'Knowledge, the State and the State of Nature', in *The Reason of States: A Study in International Political Theory*, ed. Michael Donelan (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), 119.

**Figure 2: international society and institutionalized international anarchy**

		International Society	
		Inside	Outside
Institutionalized International Anarchy	Inside	<b>A</b> <b>International anarchy</b>	<b>C</b> <b>Not international anarchy</b>
	Outside	<b>B</b> <b>Not international anarchy</b>	<b>D</b> <b>Not international anarchy</b>

There can be no international anarchy arena in either of the two quadrants on the right side of the diagram (since all terrain on this side lies outside the international society compact which generates this anarchy). There is also none in quadrant B on the left side (since this represents *the sum of the domestic territories* of the various sovereign states which are party to the international society compact). Moreover, if we ignore for the moment the complications posed by undomesticated ‘high seas’, quadrant B should account for *all* of the physical terrain on the left side (since under the ‘real estate’ convention prevailing in the international society compact, this should all be divided up among the sovereign territories of the various states)<sup>22</sup>. The international anarchy is therefore confined to quadrant A: but there is no physical terrain left to inhabit this

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<sup>22</sup> On this ‘real estate model’, see James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 19-20. Mayall notes that there are two contradictory trends in the ‘entailments’ of the principle of sovereignty: one towards the ‘territorial integrity’ and ‘non-intervention’; the other towards a right of military ‘self-policing’, including where necessary a right to violate the territorial integrity of a rival’s sovereign real estate. Obviously, I have emphasized the first of these trends in my literal interpretation of Navari’s formula.

quadrant. The international anarchy turns into a purely ideological or institutional space, and all connection between it and a physical terrain over which armies march and counter-march in wartime disappears. Finally, since there is no physical terrain left for international warfare, the original territorial settlement about who owns which bits of sovereign territory should hold indefinitely, with at least *international* war to change existing borders disappearing from the system.

In principle, this international anarchy vanishing act should have occurred at the very ‘foundation moment’ of the modern system, as the European princes joined forces to intone the magic words of the Westphalia compact. Moreover, the same vanishing act should have been repeated at each stage in the expansion of the system from this (continental) European starting point to its current global reach. Territories beyond the recognized boundaries of international society at any given point cannot provide an arena for orderly international warfare, however much military activity of a disorderly barbarian kind may be going on ‘out there’. Territories brought inside international society ought to enter as part of the domestic real estate of some recognized sovereign state: they can provide the arena for civil wars but not international ones. (Once again, this ignores the complication of undomesticated high seas, which becomes increasingly substantial as the system becomes increasingly global).

### **Foundation stories 1: ‘Westphalia system’ and Atlantic peace**

Interpreted in this literal fashion, the Westphalia system narrative quickly starts to sound absurd. The exercise highlights the point that it is not intended as a serious –even if very big picture - historical account. Rather, it is classic example of what Ernest Gellner calls a ‘world-growth story’, with an organicist, acorn-to-oak tree account of how system development takes place. Its starts from a highly idealized picture of a contemporary social order – in this case a global geopolitical order divided at least nominally into sovereign territorial states. It then scans backwards in time to find the earliest half-way plausible moment at which one might claim that the tiny seed containing the genetic code of the great tree was first planted<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup>Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964) 9-14

As Gellner points out, world-growth stories in general assume that the beginning and end of the story are inextricably linked by the unfolding of such a genetic code, and therefore make no serious inquiry into specific ‘structures’, ‘mechanisms’ or critical transitions along the way between beginning and end.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the Westphalia narrative involves a specific geopolitical bias – very different from the emphasis on long-term overseas expansion in the work of Bull, Watson and Wight – which marginalizes any idea of a critical transition in the ‘modern system’ flowing out of developments *outside Europe* in the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The territorial arrangements of the ‘Westphalia settlement’ were restricted to continental European (and predominantly central European) issues; and Britain, which would emerge as unequivocally the leading global power in the period from around 1750 to 1815, lay outside its orbit. The major wars and settlements after 1750 do finally begin to give the European system a near-global reach, which is still completely missing around the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. However, from the perspective of the Westphalia narrative that is irrelevant, since it is developments in European ideas and institutions, not developments in extra-European geopolitics, which provide the key to the foundation of the modern international system.

One might well assume that the reverse should hold true also: that the ‘myth of 1648’ would be a total red herring for this argument about the origins of the Atlantic peace<sup>25</sup>. However, I wish to argue that the literal reading of Navari’s Westphalia narrative offered above, though indeed absurd as a sketch of the geopolitical logic of post-Westphalia continental Europe, makes a surprising degree of sense if applied to interactions among Atlantic seaboard powers outside Europe, in the aftermath of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna.

The continental European ‘power balance’ was a crowded geopolitical cage from which only Britain among Atlantic seaboard powers enjoyed the luxury of a genuine ‘offshore’

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 18. Gellner comments that the ‘general slogan’ for a critique of world-growth stories might be ‘structures explain, origins do not’.

<sup>25</sup> Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations*, (London: Verso, 2003).

detachment (at least until the rise of the US as a major power on the other side of the Atlantic).<sup>26</sup> There were several mutually reinforcing dimensions of this continental balance which – for major powers which were integral parties to it – helped to promote the kind of ‘recurrent and repetitive’, groundhog day struggle for power and territorial advantage depicted in simplistic realist accounts of international anarchy. Entrenched anarchy was itself a leading source of continuous innovation in military technology and organization, and of a broader dynamic of ‘competitive emulation’ in economic and political organization. Innovation in logistical and power projection capabilities only served to tighten the cage for powers confined primarily to the European landmass - a process which culminated on the Western Front in 1914, when the contending armies were rushed to the front more quickly and efficiently than ever before, only to spend the next four years locked in a territorial stalemate and a brutal war of attrition.

Other sources of instability flowed directly from the Westphalia territorial settlement, which – despite its retrospective reputation as the founding moment of a global system of sovereign territorial states - actually entrenched in central Europe a quasi-mediaeval jumble of small, weak states which were progressively swept away over the next two centuries. The fragmentation of west-central Europe delayed by centuries the formation of a large, powerful ‘German’ state in that region. It probably also reduced competitive emulation pressures on the large, ramshackle Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which soldiered on with a quasi-mediaeval political and social structure until the late-18<sup>th</sup> century, when it was completely removed from the map by its more ‘modernized’, absolutist neighbors. Finally, the prospects of any single power establishing a stable ‘hegemonic’ preponderance in continental Europe were seriously compromised by the capacity of ‘offshore balancer’ powers – first Britain but eventually also the US – to intervene in the most critical continental struggles in the name of ‘preserving the balance’.<sup>27</sup> Between 1648 and 1945, there were wars involving two or more great powers every generation or two and, as a consequence, repeated changes to territorial settlements

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<sup>26</sup> For a classic German statement of this view of continental European geopolitics, see Ludwig Dehio, *The Precarious Balance: The Politics of Power in Europe, 1495-1945* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963).

<sup>27</sup> See the discussion of ‘offshore balancers’ in John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York; W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 42; 234-66.

dating from the last war or the war before that. Even the relatively peaceful century 1815-1914 produced fundamental changes to the distribution of territory in central Europe.

In the overseas peripheries of the expanding European field of forces, conditions were almost the reverse of this. There were relatively few powerful European players to begin with, and no predominantly continental power could intervene decisively to preserve an overseas 'balance', as offshore Britain could to preserve a continental 'balance'. Major Atlantic powers which were also directly embroiled in continental struggles were unable to concentrate on offshore expansion to the degree that was possible for Britain, which enjoyed clear long-term advantages in this area despite a relatively late and hesitant start. By around 1805 France - the main offshore competitor to Britain in the previous century - had dropped decisively off the pace, as Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands had done well before this. In regard to overseas territorial claims, indeed, France temporarily fell back even further than the other three: they all retained significant overseas territories after 1815, whereas France had lost all its major claims by dint of being on the losing side in the last great round of extra-European competition with Britain.

Continuous innovation in military organization, technology and logistics also worked differently outside Europe. In the early centuries, no doubt, it fed the offshore competition among Atlantic European powers, and this reached a crescendo in the final, protracted contest between Britain and France. However, from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century it also began to lift the Atlantic powers as a group increasingly clear of military competition from indigenous powers in the extra-European world, and with the growing global impact of the industrial revolution after 1850, a widening gap became for a time a chasm. As the decisive victor in the 'great imperial and naval Armageddon' of the Napoleonic wars,<sup>28</sup> Britain was now clearly preponderant in the global maritime contest and controlled a pivotal Asian power base in the Indian sub-continent: but it was never so preponderant

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Duffy, 'World Wide War and British Expansion: 1793-1815'., in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume II: the eighteenth century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 203.

that it could simply dictate to all its competitors over so vast a distance.<sup>29</sup> France was temporarily removed as a significant offshore player; ‘united Germany’ did not yet exist; and much of the Americas had passed into the formal political control of a cluster of ambitious but initially weak settler regimes.

There was also a critical shift in the land/sea balance of the geopolitics of European expansion overseas. While intra-European conflicts were fought out mainly at sea and around a limited number of strategic coastal enclaves, ‘factories’ and plantation islands, control of the latter was always relatively precarious and they changed hands regularly.<sup>30</sup> However, ‘the seaborne part of European expansion was over by 1788, when the groups that seized control of oceanic communications also conquered the best overseas coasts and river valleys’. 19<sup>th</sup> century European advances were extraordinary, but they ‘were achieved inland inside North America, Asia and Africa’ and involved expansion ‘by land rather than by water’<sup>31</sup>. At precisely the time that Europeans were ‘going onshore’ in unprecedented fashion on the other side of great oceans, the ideological and legal framework was in place to facilitate the surgical removal of ‘new lands’ overseas from the legitimate arena of intra-European warfare. Concepts of territorial sovereignty were far more advanced in ‘European international society’ than in 1648; and new ideas of national or popular sovereignty were now abroad – totally ignored in the continental settlement in 1815, but tailor-made for the settler-colonial carve-up of territory in the Americas.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> By 1815, the British navy was equal to all its major rivals combined, including the new US navy, and this remained essentially the case for the next 70 years. The army in India had grown almost three-fold, to 227,000, between 1783 and 1815. It remained around this level through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, financed by Indian taxation, and was regularly used to bolster the British imperial position in the Indian Ocean and East Asia. *Ibid.*, 201-6. The growing impact of the industrial revolution produced even more extraordinary power advantages. By 1860, British ‘energy consumption from modern sources (coal, lignite, oil) ... was five times that of either the United States or Prussia/Germany, six times that of France, and 155 times that of Russia!’ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 151.

<sup>30</sup> John Mearsheimer makes a lot of ‘the stopping power of water’. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 44, 83-4, 114-28. It seems more accurate to speak of the stopping power of extensive land ‘territories’ held on the other side of substantial bodies of water. This combination became pronounced in the geopolitics of European overseas expansion only in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>31</sup> George Raudzens, *Empires: Europe and Globalization, 1492-1788* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999), 156.

<sup>32</sup> See Dorothy Jones, *License for Empire: Colonialism By Treaty in Early America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

The stage was set for a real-world approximation of the foundational moment described in Navari's Westphalia narrative: but almost two centuries later and far from Europe rather than in the continental heart of Europe. The princes (and republicans) sat down to the game of 'lets-play-states'; there was sudden appropriation - as 'domestic' space - of vast territories far from the old core; and an almost seamless transition, within these vast territories, from a principle of 'no peace beyond the line' to a principle of 'no [international] war beyond the line'. This, I wish to argue, is the secret of the Atlantic peace.

### **Foundation stories 2: Pax Britannica and Atlantic peace**

Despite the borrowing of Navari's 'princes' metaphor, my Atlantic peace foundation story differs from her Westphalia system narrative in two crucial respects. First, it replaces an evolutionary, acorn-to-oak tree model of system development with a revolutionary 'plate tectonics' model, suggesting that many of the basic parameters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century world order were laid down in a single seismic shift in power relations, of near global extent, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Second, it suggests that among the old Atlantic powers there was one clear hegemon presiding over the global share-out of territory - namely Britain. In both these respects, there is a definite overlap with hegemonic stability/Pax Britannica narratives about a 19<sup>th</sup> century 'long peace': but once again, the differences are arguably more important than the similarities.

In practice, many hegemonic stability arguments contain their own large infusion of acorn-to-oak assumptions - a point exemplified very clearly by George Modelski's account of 'long cycles' of hegemonic leadership by successive Atlantic seaboard 'world powers'.<sup>33</sup> For Modelski, these cycles are the dominant rhythms of 'the global political system' which 'was "born" (or constructed) around the year 1500 and .. is still with us.'<sup>34</sup> The first world power is 16<sup>th</sup> century Portugal and the latest is the post-1945 United States. Each world power assumes responsibility for 'the management of global interdependence'; each goes through a cycle of rise and (except for the US as yet)

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<sup>33</sup> George Modelski, 'The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation State', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978): 214-235,

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

decline; and each hegemonic peace phase begins and ends with a series of hegemonic wars.<sup>35</sup>

Such a perspective obscures the exceptional position of old Atlantic powers *as a group* in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, for two distinct but inter-related reasons. First, it marginalizes the significance of British global preponderance by the same acorn-to-oak tree logic already noted in the Westphalia system narrative. The central explanandum and narrative endpoint is the 20<sup>th</sup> century hegemony of the United States, and Portugal's alleged 16<sup>th</sup> century hegemony provides the critical first step on the journey towards that end. The 'Pax Britannica', by contrast, becomes just one intermediate stage in the overall sequence of rising and falling world powers. It is rhetorically important in buttressing the claim that there *is* an ordered 500-year sequence, but not analytically important in the way that the start and end points are.

Second, Modelski's model marginalizes the concrete and local power capacities – *in specific regions and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century* – of states whose 'world power moment' comes either before or after that of Britain in the long cycle sequence. Because the name of the game is world power, and world power is indivisible, the model implies that the powers in question can be powerful only one at a time. Britain cannot rise until both Portugal and the Netherlands have fallen and Britain in turn must fall before the United States can rise. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the capacity of *all* Atlantic seaboard powers to dominate and transform overseas territories was dramatically increased, even if British power surged forward relative to the rest at the same time.

The Netherlands returned to the Indonesian archipelago as effectively a British client after the Napoleonic wars: but its capacity to shape that region to its own agendas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was far greater than its capacity *in the archipelago alone* – let alone on a global scale – at the height of its illusory 'world power' in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Similar comments could be made about a residual era of 'Portuguese hegemony' in Brazil, under a cadet branch of the Portuguese royal family until 1889 and inherited by a republican

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 215-7; 225.

settler regime thereafter. The geopolitical, economic and social transformation produced in continental north America by eight decades of domestic 'Pax Americana' – a period in which both European-indigenous wars and the intra-European Civil War were sequestered within the boundaries of sovereign US territory – is so obvious that it scarcely needs mentioning.

One could also point to a substantial set of inter-related 'regional hegemonies' nested within the genuinely global reach of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Pax Britannica - with its complex web of direct rule, indirect rule, protectorates, and settler self-government - and the embryonic settler hegemony in Australia provides a graphic example of the casual manner in which in which large-scale territorial change could be effected in this period. The first British settlement at Sydney/Port Jackson was in 1788, on the eve of Britain's last great contest with France. This was progressively extended into a scattered 'archipelago' of coastal enclaves around the perimeter of continental Australia and outlying islands, until in 1829 Britain finally annexed the whole continent. At this point the entire European population was around 56,000, overwhelmingly concentrated in the southeast, with a third of the total in Tasmania alone.<sup>36</sup> 'Ironically', Geoffrey Blainey concludes, 'Britain claimed the whole continent simply to claim a few isolated harbours astride trade routes',<sup>37</sup>

The last three attempts to establish strategic outposts in this initial stage were all around the tip of the vast 'Northern Territory': Melville Island, Raffles Bay and Port Essington, in 1826, 1827 and 1838 respectively. All failed and the British government, which was moving into a new era of strategic priorities, 'lost interest' thereafter. In 1836, a settlement at Adelaide in the extreme south initiated the colony of South Australia. The colony achieved internal self-government in 1857, when its population was still under 100,000; and between 1858 and 1862 the colonial government and local pastoralists subsidized overland expeditions which reached the northern coast. On the basis of these explorations they then laid claim to the administration of the Northern Territory. 'This

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<sup>36</sup> Wray Vamplew ed., *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987), 26.

<sup>37</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (Sydney: Sun Books, 1966), 96.

was bold indeed, for SA had a mere 140,000 people and half its own area was unexplored. But in 1863 the imperial government, having no better plan, reluctantly agreed to let them have it'.<sup>38</sup>

I have so far been emphasizing the 'domestication' aspect of European sovereignty claims overseas, to highlight the way in which vast territories were *taken out of* the military field of forces just when the industrial revolution began to transform the logistics of both warlike and 'peaceful' power projection, over land in particular. But precisely because there was also an overarching Atlantic peace which articulated the various islands of 'domestic' peace in India, Indonesia, north America etc, European overseas expansion also acquired distinct overtones of a global world society. At the heart of this society lay what James Belich calls the 'Angloworld':<sup>39</sup> but it transcended linguistic boundaries and for a time even seemed capable of smoothly incorporating the major new European power from outside the old Atlantic orbit - imperial Germany. The interplay between the new 'tools of empire' and a largely peaceful dynamic of competitive emulation among Europeans overseas is well summarized by Daniel Headrick:

Physicians in Africa published their findings in France and Britain. American gun manufacturers exhibited their wares in London [and] British experts traveled to America to study gumaking ... Dutch and British botanists journeyed to South America to obtain plants to be grown in Asia. Scientists in Indonesia published a journal in French and German for an international readership. The latest rifles were copied in every country and sent to the colonies for testing. The mails and cables transmitted to and from the financial centres of Europe up-to-date information on products, prices and quantities of goods around the world ... What seemed to work in one place, whether iron river steamers, quinine prophylaxis, machine guns or compound engines, was quickly known and applied in other places. In every part of

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<sup>38</sup> Graeme Aplin, S.G Foster and Michael McKernan, eds., *Australians: A Historical Dictionary*, (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon, 1987), 301, 371-3.

<sup>39</sup> Belich, 'The Rise of the Angloworld', 39-57.

the world, Europeans were more knowledgeable about events in other continents than indigenous peoples were about their neighbours.<sup>40</sup>

By the 1870s, on the eve of the next –and last – great outburst of European imperialism overseas, this was beginning to seem like the natural order of things. But it was not natural: it had been *founded* by a cluster of territorial settlements among the old Atlantic powers who were present at the creation, only a few decades earlier.

## Conclusion

This paper has explored what, in orthodox IR language, might be described as the intersection between the *historical evolution* and the *geographical expansion* of the modern international system. In practice, both these elements are intertwined in a single ‘acorn to oak tree’ narrative in much orthodox theory. ‘The system’ starts somewhere between 1500 and 1648, in a world of semi-mediaeval, overlapping authority structures, and evolves gradually towards a formal nation-state order - with carefully delimited ‘real estate’ divisions of national territory - by the late-20<sup>th</sup> century. Simultaneously, it expands geographically from narrowly European origins to encompass the whole globe. My Atlantic peace model rejects both elements of this package. Instead it suggests that much of the framework of the current global interstate order was laid down in a single great tectonic ‘event’: Bayly’s ‘first age of global imperialism’, from around 1760 to around 1830. Indeed, it virtually reverses the ‘European origins to global conclusions’ direction of the orthodox narrative, arguing that it was precisely the 19<sup>th</sup> century revolution in relations among old Atlantic powers *outside Europe* which first made possible a stable and wide-ranging implementation of this sovereign real estate model.

In one respect my Atlantic peace model draws heavily on English school reasoning about the foundation of the modern system/society, despite radical differences about when and where the founding took place. I have emphasized the importance of a developed regime of constitutive sovereignty in underpinning a collusive share-out of ‘new lands’ overseas

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<sup>40</sup> Daniel Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 208.

among old Atlantic powers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By contrast, the argument seriously challenges the idea of international society as a self-governing collective which continuously monitors its own geographical expansion, collectively setting and enforcing criteria which must be met by new candidates for 'entry' into its midst. The first great surge forward into land-based expansion overseas was monopolized by a few old Atlantic powers, with minimal opportunities for 'continental' members of European international society to influence its outcomes. Since old Atlantic powers stopped fighting each other after 1815, there were no opportunities to revisit the terms of the original territorial carve-up within the context of a general great power/international society settlement. Where territories were eventually transferred from European colonial empires to post-colonial successor states, this was mostly confined to a series of discrete decolonization sequences which were internal to one or other imperial order, even if the results were (sometimes) retrospectively endorsed by international bodies like the United Nations.

Since the main argument is so preoccupied with European overseas expansion in the first age of global imperialism, it is important to consider at least briefly two other instances of 19<sup>th</sup> century European imperialism which fall outside this rubric. One is Russian expansion eastwards into the steppe and desert zone of Eurasia; the other is the second great age of European imperialism – sometimes called simply *the* age of imperialism, which started around 1880 and carried through to the eve of World War I.

The Russian case seems to follow quite closely the model elaborated here. It also involved expansion from a perimeter - in this case a landward perimeter - of the inner geopolitical cage of continental/central Europe. Because Russia mainly laid claim to territories outside the maritime reach of old Atlantic powers there was limited potential for direct conflict, and where there was the issues were peacefully resolved: the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867; and the 1905 agreement with Britain to 'give' the mountainous territory of Wakhan to Afghanistan, so that it could function as a proper buffer state between their imperial possessions in central Asia.<sup>41</sup> As regards the longer-term shift from imperial expansion to decolonization, the model of a discrete, internalized

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<sup>41</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Dent Atlas of Russian History* (London: J.M. Dent, 1993), 61-1.

successor state trajectory also holds good for ‘Russia-in-Asia’. On the European borderlands of the Soviet Union, successor state outcomes in 1991 were shaped both by the Soviet regime of Union Republics and by legacies of the ‘Versailles era’ of new state creation after World War I. On the Central Asian borderlands, outcomes were shaped by Soviet-era arrangements about Union Republics alone.

The second age of global imperialism poses somewhat more complex problems, because it involved an attempt by united Germany to transcend a mainly Prussian continental past and enter the inner circle of old Atlantic maritime empires - both by speaking softly, as in German diplomatic leadership at the Congress of Berlin, and by carrying a big stick, as in the ‘naval race’ with Britain in the last decades before World War I. However, Germany’s career in this role was not only late in coming: it was also brief and – in contrast to the momentous German impact on continental Europe – relatively inconsequential for the long-term shape of the overseas interstate order. Germany’s overseas territorial gains before World War I were quite limited; they were lost in the post-World War I settlement and dispersed as League Mandates to Britain and its settler ‘Dominions’; and in the interwar period no German government was prepared to take up once more the cause of German maritime empire.<sup>42</sup> In practice, the main consequence of the second age of global imperialism was to further entrench the overseas territorial preponderance of the first-comer old Atlantic powers, and thus to make internal successor-state sequences within their empires even more decisive in shaping the territorial structures of the post-colonial international order.

The model elaborated here – of a collusive distribution of territory among first-comers, which forecloses options for later challenges by ‘outsiders’ to the legitimacy of the original settlement - is hardly a novelty in Anglo-American IR theory. It has enjoyed wide currency recently, though it is typically applied not to the *onset* of large-scale European territorial expansion outside Europe but to its *aftermath* – to the consequences of the post-1945 ‘decolonization revolution’.

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<sup>42</sup> Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, ‘Imperialism and Revisionism in Interwar Germany’, in *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities*, ed. Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 90-105.

This process, it is argued, has resulted in an effective freezing of recent and arbitrary territorial divisions over vast areas of the globe; and a widespread successor state ideology (supported by the General Assembly of the UN) that decolonization should be a ‘one-off’ process of territorial restructuring, confined to the ending of Western colonial control. The principles of territorial integrity and non-intervention – regarded as conditional principles to be honored in the breach in the traditional system – have been elevated to the status of political absolutes. Post-colonial states have been exempted from the ‘positive sovereignty/‘standard of civilization’ criteria applied to prospective entrants into international society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and for the most part they have also not had to face the empirical challenge of generalized international war. The result is a widespread phenomenon of ‘quasi-states’: states which would not survive outside the protection of a post-colonial ‘negative sovereignty’ regime, which requires *no more* of a government than that its sovereignty be recognized by its peers.<sup>43</sup>

This argument has quickly become one of the master narratives about world politics in the post-Cold War era, uncritically reproduced whenever a Western politician gets up to talk about the problem of ‘failed states’. It undoubtedly points to crucial contradictions in the implementation of the real estate model of territorial sovereignty on a global scale. But they are not new contradictions: they date back around 200 years, to the onset of the Atlantic peace.

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<sup>43</sup> See especially Robert Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).