Empires and Nations in the Modern World: Shifting Political Orders

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Abstract

This essay traces the path of empires and nations as forms of governance, the eventual predominance of nations and disappearance of empires, and the contemporary interplay of large and small nations as the dominant form of global governance. It also gives attention to the rise of capitalist economic organization as a factor expanding empires and later encouraging nationhood. The essay emphasizes two stages in the emergence of nations: the emergence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of nations and eventually of the great powers, and the post-1945 emergence of nations as the universal form of government, consisting mostly of small powers, linked by the United Nations.

Keywords

In what direction is the political structure of the Earth headed? What should one expect and what should one recommend for the future of political relations? In a sense, the world has achieved a stable political structure: today's global political system gives an appearance of stability and even permanence. That is, the political structure of the twenty-first-century world relies on roughly two hundred national units of greatly varying size and power, linked through their membership in the United Nations and through their participation in a vast array of international organizations, some allied to the UN and others independent of it.

Yet the politics of today operate in a vastly different fashion from the politics of a century ago, when World War I was coming to an end. Further, during the century preceding 1918, the changes in global political organization matched or even exceeded those of the twentieth century. Looking back upon this record, would we not be imprudent to assume that our present conditions represent a stable political equilibrium?

While the biggest questions about global politics are forward-looking, one has no choice but to address those questions by considering the past. This article, therefore, traces the ancestry of the contemporary political order. It explores the interplay of empires and nations, the main forms of large-scale governance, in the era since 1500. Before the emergence of nations, empires had already existed for more than two millennia; they fluctuated in size, reaching a peak in extent in the early twentieth century. Nations began to form after 1500, mostly out of monarchies but also from breakaway imperial provinces and ambitious ethnic confederations; by the year 2000, nations encompassed virtually the whole world.

I seek to present this review as a global story of political change. To tell a global political story requires that one acknowledge European initiatives and events from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, yet it also requires that one minimize Eurocentric bias. For this reason, I seek to add substantial attention to Asian polities and Asian political developments, especially after 1750. That is, while European creation and domination of maritime routes did open the Atlantic to travel and link it with the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, the effects of changing commercial and political relations were universal.

Previous authors have written with breadth and depth on the global political system. I seek to draw on their work, as well as encyclopedic resources for details of political change.[1] The article is presented in six main sections. It begins with a highly compressed background on polities and governance worldwide, from 800 to 1500 CE. The second section, the most detailed, provides a narrative of the rise and fall of empires from 1500 to 1980. The third section narrates national polities and the accompanying national movements as their number

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1   Exemplified by the writings of Victor Lieberman (2003, 2009), Jeremy Black (2017), Ernest Gellner (1997), Benedict Anderson (2006), Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper (2010), Heather Streets-Salter and Trevor Getz (2016), Hans Kohn (1961), Geoffrey Parker (2013), Janet Abu-Lughod (1989), and Robinson and Gallagher (1961). Encyclopedic articles, notably in *Wikipedia*, provide useful categorizations of polities. In addition, this essay is intended to be stage one of a two-stage project. The second stage will introduce the expansion of global migration and the emergence of diasporas as substantial structures in global society and politics.

accelerated in several periods from the sixteenth century to 1980. The fourth section summarizes the fates of the many colonies created by empires, with some colonies becoming nations, others becoming part of existing nations, and all feeling the powerful influence of the capitalist empires during both colonization and decolonization. In the fifth and concluding section, I analyze the character of global politics in the postimperial era: the global politics of sharply varying nation states, national interconnection through international organizations, and the often-perilous balance of great powers with each other and with smaller nations. I also include some reference to the growing influence of corporate enterprise in global politics.

1   Polities and Political Change before 1500

Here is a compressed review of political change and fluctuation in the seven centuries from 800 to 1500 CE: a cross-sectional survey of polities, political fluctuation, and political change. As such, it is intended to provide the groundwork for distinguishing which post-1500 political changes were in fact novelties – rather than recurrences of earlier developments. In the various sections, the details of polities and their changes are discussed most prominently for Eurasia, but also with attention to Africa, the Americas, and Oceania.

The polities of the era from 800 to 1500 were capped by a succession of empires ranging from small to enormous. Alongside the empires (and at times consumed by them) were monarchies of medium to small size, polities organized through religious leadership, and ethnic structures governing through clans, lineages, and age-groups. There were also numerous communities that lacked any permanent political structure but which were commonly able to assemble an organization in an emergency.

The social conditions of polities, large and small, were interrelated especially through a variety of social, technological, economic, and cultural institutions. Households and communities consisted, most numerously, of peasant farmers and artisans, many of whom also raised domestic animals. Polities interacted with herders, foragers, and those artisans who were included in the two groups, with migrants who drifted between communities and with dependents and subordinates held within them. Elite families gained wealth and power through their control of land, their influence in exchange and commerce, and their prominence in ritual and religion. Various members of society developed specializations such as ceramics, metallurgy, literacy, religion, commerce, and shipping – and the waging of war. Most influential were monarchs and the courtiers or landowners who surrounded them. In Eurasia and Africa, most

households relied on iron and copper tools; in the Americas, metallurgy was in copper. Literacy and the use of horses were present throughout Eurasia and in almost half of Africa.

Over time, polities grew in number and extent. For the largest and best-documented polities, this growth tended to proceed at a modest rate, though with substantial fluctuations. As empires expanded, they conquered and incorporated three general types of polity – preceding empires, monarchies (both local and regional), and polities with ethnic organization (including nomadic confederations). Both empires and monarchies were governed by courts that centralized military power and elite cultural production. In Eurasia, Victor Lieberman's long-term survey of polities distinguishes an "exposed zone" and a "protected zone." The exposed zone was that of Inner Asia, with grasslands from China and Manchuria in the east to the Black Sea in the west. These grasslands were open to movements by armies of nomadic origin, who established universal empires in the agricultural lands within reach of the grasslands, that is in China, India, Persia, and West Asia.[2] The immense Mongol state and its successor states dominated the exposed zone from 1200 to 1550.[3] In contrast, the protected zone of Eurasia, isolated from the grasslands by waters and mountains, included Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, plus Western Europe and northern Europe. This was the zone of commercial empires (Srivijaya, Chola, Ryukyu, Yemen, and the Vikings). In the protected zone, polities were smaller, with a modest cultural gap between rulers and ruled, and with a stronger sense of inclusion (Lieberman 2021: 7). Beyond Eurasia, major polities in Africa arose along the Mediterranean coast and in the densely populated grasslands south of the Sahara, the fertile highland areas of the continent's east, and the major river valleys of its south and southwest. These included local and regional monarchies throughout the continent and a succession of empires in northern and eastern regions.

1.1   *Expanding Commerce*

The quantity and variety of commercial exchange grew considerably between 800 and 1500 CE – in Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas – but with substantial fluctuation. The conquests of the Vikings in Europe, Song in China, and

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2   The creation of stable, imperial administration within the grasslands began in the sixth century CE, as the GokTurk Khaganate maintained its structure for seventy years. For a millennium, empires of Eurasia were based alternately on the grasslands and on the adjoining agricultural regions (Lieberman 2003).

3   The Mongols' era of dominance was from 1200 to 1350; successor states included the Timurids, Ming, Ottomans, Golden Horde, and Tatars to 1550 or thereafter. Inclusion of Russian and Safavid states extends steppe domination still further.

Mongols in Eurasia show a pattern: military destruction of existing commerce, then commerce's expansion under the new regime. Maritime commerce grew with Mediterranean voyages to northern Europe and with voyages linking Arabia, India, Indonesia, and China (Grafe and Gelderblom 2010; Bajani 2020; Abu-Lughod 1989). Small changes in technology and social organization of commerce compounded, both in terrestrial and maritime trade, so that the social role of merchants became gradually more significant, even though they were less socially prominent than the kings and emperors of their day.

In Eurasia and the northern half of Africa, warfare relied especially on cavalry, with the individual horsemen preparing their mounts and joining for battle. Warming climate and expanding grassland facilitated cavalry forces from 800 to 1300. The construction of fortifications, especially walled cities, was a response to cavalry, one that required large-scale recruitment of labor. But other weapons and tactics played their part: the Mongols of the thirteenth century relied on their light cavalry, but they also needed iron foundries, siege engines, and naval fleets. From the late fourteenth century in Eurasia, gunpowder technology developed, enabling invention of artillery that could smash city walls, along with newly firearms-based infantry to accompany archery, spears, and swords. Especially as a result of artillery, the cost of large-scale warfare increased, and with it came further centralization of large states, reinforced by an ideology of the absolute and autocratic power of monarchs.

For much of the world, temperature and humidity rose from roughly 800 to 1300 CE, then declined from 1300 to 1800 CE, and rose rapidly after 1800 (www.ipcc.ch). The early period of rising temperature and humidity tended to support expansion of agriculture, population, and polities; but short-term fluctuations in climate could have opposite effects. This was the era of the Song empire in China and the Fatimid empire centered in Egypt. South of Egypt lay the Ethiopian Empire and to the west lay the Almoravids and their Almohad successors in the Maghreb; other African empires included Ghana and Mali, Zimbabwe, the Swahili states, and states of the lower Congo valley and the Nile highlands. Commercial networks linked regions of the African continent to each other and to the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean (Ehret 2016).

From 1300 to 1500, the period of declining temperature and humidity, Eurasia experienced the collapse of numerous polities, accompanied by pandemic disease. (A similar pattern struck the Americas in the sixteenth century.) Commercial expansion conflicted with war and political expansion. In this era of imperial decline – for instance, after the decline of the Mongol Empire – monarchies and other forms of localized polities regained their independence. In the exposed zone and then beyond, bubonic plague devastated China, Central Asia, Europe, West Asia, and also India and parts

of Africa. After the initial wave of plague, Eurasia's most potent political force was the empire of Timur; from 1370 to 1405, he destroyed Delhi, Baghdad, and the Golden Horde capital of Sarai. Timur further humiliated the Ottomans and Muscovy, then threatened the newly established Ming (Darwin 2007). In the west of the protected zone, the Holy Roman Empire nearly collapsed at the peak of the plague; in the east, Majapahit was the principal commercial state based on Java, from 1293 to 1527, while Vijayanagar led a Hindu renaissance in south India. Muslim merchants traded among Yemen, Oman, and Calicut; Islam expanded into the eastern Indian Ocean ca. 1500, at much the same time as Portuguese merchants arrived (Lieberman 2009).

The year 1500 is commonly taken as a moment of transition in world history, especially because of the voyages of Columbus and da Gama. It is important, however, not to exaggerate the significance of that moment. First, as has been shown here, for virtually no region of the world did the year 1500 reflect a sudden beginning of states and politics. The period from 800 to 1500 CE saw the continuation, fluctuation, and expansion of long-established, steadily transforming, and often contradictory patterns in polities and commerce. Second, the interactions of politics and commerce were divided into a period of climatic warming and demographic expansion before 1300 and a period of cooling, demographic decline, and political troubles from 1300 to 1500. Third – and of importance here – while absolutist states were remarkably prominent in the early modern world, such absolutism did not suddenly appear in sixteenth-century Europe. Instead, absolutism arose throughout Eurasia as the result of a longer and more global process of change in polities, commerce, and the technology of warfare.

2 Waves of Empires, 1500–1980

Empires existing in 1500 included the Ottoman Empire (founded 1300), the Ming Empire (founded 1368), the Holy Roman Empire (founded 962), Songhai (founded 1465), Ethiopia (founded 1300), and the Aztec (1428) and Inca (1438) empires. After 1500, a major expansion of empires took place. The already large Ottoman Empire (1512) grew larger, Muscovy expanded substantially (1505), the Safavid state was formed out of a Persian social movement that linked Sufis and shi'a (1501), and the Mughal Empire was founded in North India (1526). In addition, two overseas empires were created by Portugal (1500) and Spain (1520). As of the late sixteenth century, this full set of empires had grown to control perhaps one-fifth of the surface of the Earth: the Ottoman Empire,

Ming China, Mughal India, Solomonid Ethiopia, Safavid Persia, Tsarist Russia, Spain's empire (in Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific), and Portugal's (Brazil plus small colonies in Africa and Asia).

In the early seventeenth century, Dutch, English, French, and Danish merchants and warriors expanded by sea. In imitation of the Spanish and Portuguese, they opened settlements in the Americas and trading posts in Africa and the Indian Ocean. The Dutch seized Portuguese colonies and tried unsuccessfully to force Ming China to expel Portuguese merchants and allow Dutch trade (Streets-Salter and Getz 2016: 111–95). In mid-century, the Dutch and English fought three wars for European commercial supremacy.[4] By the end of the century, expanding Russian and Qing regimes (the latter ruled China from 1644) agreed in 1689 to a border drawn north of Mongolia and of the Amur Valley watershed. In an important innovation of that same year, William of Orange, the *stadthouder* or monarch of the Netherlands, and his wife, Mary of England, became joint monarchs of England. The resulting Dutch–English alliance of states and merchant interests – with common pro-merchant policies in each of the national states and their empires – laid the groundwork for a collaboration that would include other nations and their mercantile elites in expanding industrial production, worldwide commerce, and military power (Scott 2018: 225–35; Brandon 2015: 256; Manning 2020: 182–83).

2.1   *Empires, 1700–1850*

In the eighteenth century, empires declined almost as much as they expanded. The Qing state was the exception: it incorporated Tibet and Xinjiang in the 1750s, becoming the world's largest empire in area and definitely in population. The other autocratic empires expanded little or declined. The Safavid state fell in the 1720s but was replaced by the warlord Nader Shah; the Mughal state diminished and was largely replaced by the Maratha state of western India (Bayly 2004: 91; Gordon 1993). The Russian Empire did not expand until late in the century, when it seized much of Poland and Ukraine. The overseas colonies of Western European states remained small and huddled along coastlines, even in the Americas. By the end of the century, Britain had small territories in North America, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, and Australia; the Netherlands held Asian islands and small colonies in Africa and the Caribbean; and France held small lands in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean. The overseas empires of Spain and Portugal changed little in extent. But

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4 Anglo–Dutch wars took place in 1652–54, 1665–67, and 1672–74; the English seized New Netherland in 1664.

important transformations had taken place among the European empires. The regimes of Britain and Netherland continued their two-dimensional collaboration, linking merchant elites with the state and linking the commercial policies of the states. Elsewhere, the dynastic empires of Europe and Asia sought to monopolize rather than share power.

At mid-century the Seven Years' War (1756–63) pitted France against Britain in a general struggle of the European powers, one that involved the two nations' overseas empires and then that of Spain as well.[5] France was wealthy and populous but ruled by a dynastic autocracy. Britain, with a state benefiting from wider social alliances, was able to raise taxes that financed a superior navy (Kennedy 1987). Britain emerged supreme in war and then led in forming the early stages of a capitalist system – with intensive production, capitalized commerce, efficient financing, and a strong military.[6] While English factory production of cotton textiles has received the most attention, England's full capitalist process included silk textiles in Bengal and sugar in Jamaica, allied with Netherlands industry and banking as these grew with production and trade in Java. In the same era, intensive slave production of sugar expanded in Spanish Cuba and French Saint-Domingue, exceeding that of British Jamaica.[7] The United States, recognized as independent in 1783, adopted a three-pronged pro-capitalist policy, with industrial production and overseas trade in the Northeast, slave production of cotton in the South, and imperial expansion to the West (North 1966). In sum, these were the elements of the fledgling system of a global capitalist economy in the late eighteenth century: links of merchants and states, factory production, labor recruitment, national polities, empire, colonial exploitation, and long-distance trade.[8]

Once the powerful French monarchy collapsed from within, beginning in 1789, Europe entered a quarter century of revolutionary turmoil and war. Wars and regime changes convulsed the continent; global naval war was conducted between Britain and France (Bayly 2004: 96–99). In the most grueling and deadly of all the wars, slaves rose in 1791 to destroy slavery and defend their freedom, creating what became the independent nation of Haiti in 1804

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5   The competing camps were Britain and Prussia against France, the Habsburg state, and Russia, with the larger alliance eventually including Spain.

6   For a review of recent analysis of the British industrial revolution, see Wrigley 2018.

7   Otherwise, absolutist France, Spain, and Portugal sought modest reforms. That is, neither the Spanish nor French monarchies had policies of allying with merchants, although the merchants and planters of Cuba and St.-Domingue gained exceptional power and wealth in the late eighteenth century (Bayly 2004: 92–95; Kennedy 1987).

8   On Australia as a British penal colony, see Hughes 1986. On smaller empires of the eighteenth century, see Hämäläinen 2008; and Law 1991.

(Geggus 2001). The French Republic abolished slavery overseas for a time, yet maintained an empire within Europe. Napoleon, the brilliant general, dictator, and then monarch of the French, ruled through absolutism but also through reliance on social movements (Hopkins 2018: 70–72). The United States, a neutral power in commerce during most of the long naval war, prospered greatly in industrial production and in slave production of cotton. Once again, France failed to establish its dominance of Europe and the oceans; the British seized French, Dutch, Spanish, and other colonial territories in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia (Bayly 2004: 125–32).

Despite the global warfare, the world of 1800 was not yet under European dominance. Britain had lost the United States, the English East India Company made only marginal gains in its Second Maratha War, and the French, Spanish, and Portuguese were losing all but tiny pieces of their empires. Instead, the new empires of the dawning nineteenth century were based on Asian and African polities. The Qajar state, founded in 1795, expanded Persian rule to the north and east, while the Qing Empire maintained its maximal territorial extent until the 1850s. Beginning in 1805, Muhammad Ali Pasha built an empire in Egypt that conquered Sudan and Arabia and nearly took Istanbul before a decisive British intervention in 1842 reduced his holdings to Egypt alone. The Sokoto Caliphate, formed in 1804 in the north of Nigeria, governed millions for a century; Kamehameha conquered all of the Hawaiian Islands by 1795; the Imerina state ruled most of Madagascar from 1820 to 1897; the Zulu state was predominant in southern Africa from 1816 to 1879; and the Ethiopian Empire reached its peak in the 1890s.

After the defeat of Napoleon, pro-capitalist states and capitalist empires expanded, without yet equaling the dynastic empires in size or influence. The biggest imperial expansion, from 1800 to 1850, was the acquisition by the United States of the remaining three-fourths of North America's lands south of the 49th parallel and north of Mexico.[9] In the Old World, pro-capitalist Britain and the absolutist Habsburg Empire presided over the Concert of Europe, a tense negotiation of that continent's post-1814 political arrangements (Jarrett 2013). Most interpretations of the Concert of Europe emphasize the conservative nature of its political choices; an interpretation focusing on institutions of capitalism suggests instead that the expansion of constitutional monarchies

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9   The United States gained title to all lands from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River (north of Florida) in 1783. After 1800, the United States gained title to the Louisiana Territory in 1803, Florida in 1819, Texas in 1846, much of the Oregon Country in 1846, and the Mexican cession (the land from Texas to California) in 1848. Occupation and control of these lands came later.

marked a step along the path that Britain was following (Bayly 2004: 139–41; Manning 2020: 204–211). Postwar France became a constitutional monarchy with wider social alliances and a pro-capitalist policy, seeking to expand its overseas empire; France launched a conquest of Algeria in 1830, though it took twenty years to complete.[10] The Netherlands underwent complex wartime political changes, lost colonies to the British, and then emerged from the wars as a constitutional monarchy.[11] The English East India Company finally vanquished the Maratha in 1818, then rapidly subdued the rest of India. Britain obtained control of Malaya by occupation and by treaty with the Dutch; this treaty enabled the Dutch to reconquer Java and then expand their East Indies empire to other islands. Singapore became a base for British shipping, exchanging Indian opium in China to support the purchase of tea (Streets-Salter and Gertz 2016: 260–61). Brazil declared independence from Portugal in 1822, becoming an empire with a constitutional monarchy and building capitalism through slavery (Adelman 2006: 344–93). Spain's American colonies, after fifteen years of warfare, gained independence in decisive battles of 1823, yet faced decades of struggle in setting their national policies (Adelman 2006: 258–307).

Slavery played a contradictory role in the early nineteenth century. It was central to the economies of the United States, Brazil, the Caribbean except Haiti, and the Dutch East Indies. Britain abolished overseas slave trade in 1807 but did not emancipate slaves until 1838. The East India Company abolished the legal status of slavery in 1843 – meaning that it did not emancipate slaves but did decline to recapture runaways. Overseas slave trade came to a virtual halt in the Atlantic in 1850 but continued in the Indian Ocean and in Africa.

The biggest turning point in early nineteenth-century imperial expansion was the Opium War of 1839–42, in which Britain rejected China's attempt to halt the import of opium, labeling it an obstruction of free trade. British forces seized Chinese cities and the island of Hong Kong, and compelled Chinese recognition of free trade and treaty ports, including import of opium. This forceful imposition of open trade on the world's largest state, on capitalist terms, set the pattern. Britain followed up with the 1846 abolition of the Corn Laws,

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10   Belgium gained independence from the Netherlands in 1830 and formed a constitutional monarchy in 1831; Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1830, then gained a monarch in 1833 and a constitution in 1843.

11   The Batavian Republic (1795–1806) nationalized the Dutch East India Company, taking over its financial and territorial resources. From 1806 to 1810 the Netherlands and the East Indies were ruled by the French, with a massive forced-labor program to build a road across Java. Then in 1811, Britain seized Batavia and all of Java. At the end of the war, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the *stadthouder*, was recognized by the powers (Streets-Salter and Getz 2016: 260–61).

which had restricted grain imports for the benefit of landowners. British food prices declined, so this application of free trade helped win popular support for imperialism (Bayly 2004: 136–38).[12]

2.2   *Empires, 1850–1920*

From 1850 to 1920, the expansion of capitalist-governed empires rose to a flood tide.[13] An imperialist ideology now became a set of priorities linking the supporters of empire. This ideology emphasized the cultural superiority of European civilization, a hierarchy of racial categories, free trade as a justification for military intervention, and the battle against slavery (which also provided an excuse for intervention). Racial hierarchy was imposed worldwide within the expanding territories of the capitalist empires, reaching a peak in the early twentieth century. In Latin America, less directly under imperial rule than other continents, racial hierarchy took the form of campaigns of "whitening" for populations of color.[14] The global slave population reached its peak in the 1850s and 1860s, then declined. In the Americas, formal emancipation took place gradually, with the first such emancipations dating from the late eighteenth century and the last from 1888 (when Brazil officially freed all enslaved people in the country). Meanwhile, the imperial powers at once opposed and tolerated slavery.

Through much of Asia and Africa, including the areas under British, French, and Dutch rule, many people lived in slavery even after 1900. Though reforms of slavery were periodically announced, there was rarely a formal emancipation. Corporations began to loom large as institutions, especially after 1850; they rapidly took on importance in the capitalist economic order and became influential with imperial states, for instance in railroad construction.[15]

By 1850, Denmark and Prussia had shifted to constitutional monarchy and pro-capitalist policies. National unification and constitutional monarchies led to new regimes in Italy (1860), Japan (1868), and Germany (1871), after which

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12   The United States, after annexing California and its Pacific ports in 1850, sent naval expeditions to Japan in 1853 and 1854, demanding access to trade. Japan agreed to open two treaty ports in 1854 and four more in 1858, with the arrangements modeled on the Opium War settlement in China.

13   For maps emphasizing the limited size of European empires until their post-1850 expansion, see Manning 2020: Maps 7.2–9.2.

14   The literature on racism in modern history is huge; for a concise overview, see Fredrickson 2002.

15   British acts of 1844, 1855, and 1856 created corporations; US states gradually adopted laws creating corporations, beginning with New York in 1811.

each nation sought to expand its empire.[16] Longer-established empires sought to adjust to the expansion of capitalism, yet without broadening their autocratic government. Qing China, the Ottomans, Russia, and even Qajar Persia and Ethiopia were similar in this regard. Russia was the most curious empire, part autocratic and part capitalist: it took no steps toward constitutional monarchy until 1905 but built its armaments industry.[17]

The Second Opium War (Arrow War) of 1856–60 confirmed the system of expanding capitalist access and control of the economies of every world region. The first war had been an assault by Britain alone, but this time France joined in and eventually military support followed from the United States and diplomatic support from Russia (Bayly 2004: 138). The sharing of capitalist initiative was then demonstrated further, as the war settlement included the opening of treaty ports at Tianjin to Britain, France, the United States, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Belgium.

From the 1850s, Britain extended control over the states of the Persian Gulf, South Arabia, and Yemen, justifying their domination by the fight against slavery. France conducted a series of wars in Southeast Asia beginning in 1862, gaining control of what became French Indochina by 1893. The Dutch steadily conquered the outer islands of the East Indies, including a brutal seizure of Bali. Japan colonized Hokkaido in 1869, the Ryukyus in the 1870s, Taiwan in 1895, and Korea in 1910 (Morris-Suzuki 1998). In North America, Canada gained nationhood in 1867 as a dominion within the British Empire, initially consisting of four provinces hugging the St. Lawrence Valley and estuary.[18] In 1870, Britain transferred all the rest of North America to Canada as colonies: out of these territories, portions were later incorporated into existing and new provinces.[19] The United States purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867, seized Hawaii in 1893, and in 1898 defeated Spain to seize the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and (briefly) Cuba. Meanwhile, the western territories of the United States were gradually incorporated into the nation as states. The indigenous peoples of

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16 Prussia led in creation of the larger German Empire but retained its identity within the empire; the king of Prussia was also the emperor of Germany from 1871 to 1918.

17 Russia conquered Black Sea lands from the Ottomans and seized lands in the Caucasus (Georgia, Dagestan, Azerbaijan, Armenia) from the Qajar state. Russia completed the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1904, after fourteen years of construction.

18 The provinces were portions of today's Ontario and Quebec, plus Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

19 Additional provinces, in order, were Manitoba, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and (in 1949) Newfoundland and Labrador. Northwest Territories and Nunavut remain colonies.

Canada and the United States, however, were not granted national citizenship until much later. Several Latin American nations followed similar imperial policies: Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Colombia identified "territories" as colonies, only gradually incorporating most of them into the nation.

Further, the Russian Empire advanced its frontiers throughout the nineteenth century. In every decade it seized territories: from Persia in the Caucasus, from independent khanates and Afghanistan in Central Asia, and from China in the Pacific region. A Danish firm built the trans-Siberian telegraph, reaching Vladivostok in 1871 and continuing on to Japan. The Trans-Siberian railroad and telegraph line, constructed from 1890 to 1904, followed the 1860 border. Then, after Russia attempted to seize Port Arthur and all of Manchuria in 1898, it met defeat by Japan on land and sea in 1904 and 1905. That was the end of Russian expansion and, soon, of the Russian Empire.[20]

One more momentous change was the rise of revolution in south China in 1911 and Mongolia's seizure of independence in the north. Rapidly the Qing Empire collapsed in 1912, to be replaced by the Republic of China under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen.[21] China, however, faced thirty-five years of disorder before a firm regime gained power.

In retrospect, one can see that empires reached a peak as of 1914 but immediately became caught in a downward spiral. World War I was a struggle among imperial states. In the war settlement, the Austrian empire was balkanized, yielding independent nations; the German Empire was abolished, yielding a truncated Weimar Republic. The Ottoman and German colonies were divided up among the British, French, Japanese, and the British dominions. The Russian empire, overthrown by a social movement, gave way to a new – and perhaps imperial – type of state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The last of the Ottoman Empire was overthrown by a Turkish national movement in 1922 after three years of war with Greece. The League of Nations formed in 1919, but did not include Germany, Austria, the Ottomans, the United States, or Soviet Russia, though most of these did join later, at least for a time.

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20   Russian interests had not ended. At the Yalta Conference near the end of World War II, the Soviet Union gained Allied agreement to its control of Manchuria and Port Arthur; the Soviets occupied Manchuria from August 1945 to May 1946, then deferred to the Communist Chinese.

21   Zhuoyun Xu gives a useful account of the revolution in the context of an overview of Chinese history (Xu 2012).

2.3   *Empires, 1920–80*

The nineteenth-century European vision of a collaborative imperial leadership of the world had broken down. Soviet Russia arose and gave support to revolutionary campaigns aimed at overthrowing imperial and pro-capitalist regimes. At the same time, the USSR invested in the capitalization of its economy to a degree far exceeding that of imperial Russia: the Soviets developed their own national and imperial policies. In another sort of challenge to the imperial order, the militarist trio of Germany, Italy, and Japan became aggressively imperial powers during the 1930s. The Japanese seized Manchuria and followed with the invasion of China. Italy and Germany joined the civil war in Spain, Italy conquered Ethiopia, and Germany seized Austria, Czechoslovakia, and half of Poland. That final conquest was followed by general warfare from 1940, as the Allies struggled to keep the Axis from reallocating global empire. All of the contending empires relied on racial discrimination, but the Axis powers made extreme claims of racial and civilizational superiority. In this war, empires and nations fought each other at all levels; the result was total defeat for the Axis powers and their policy of extreme racial hierarchy.

As a result, empires in general were discredited. By 1980, all of the empires were virtually gone. Individual terminal dates for empires included 1943 for Italy, 1945 for Germany and Japan, 1962 for France, 1975 for Portugal, 1992 for Russia, and 1997 for the United Kingdom with the return of Hong Kong to China. For the United States, a date for end of empire is difficult to set because of substantial overseas military bases and continuing intervention, as in Afghanistan.[22] The empires had been replaced by nations of one sort or another. China, Persia, Russia, the United States, and Brazil now existed as great nations, no longer as empires; Ethiopia may be included here. Four more great nations – India, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Indonesia – had gained independence (the first three from Britain, and the last from the Netherlands).

Yet the transition to a world of independent nations was not smooth. Empires sought to remain empires. Long wars of independence were necessary for Algeria, Vietnam, and Portuguese Africa; wars of independence failed in Malaya and the Philippines. In imperial Iran, Prime Minister Mossadegh sidelined the shah and nationalized the oil industry in 1951. He was overthrown in 1953 through secretive US intervention, so that the shah became absolute

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22   A. G. Hopkins argues firmly and effectively that American empire came to an end, not simply because of decolonization of most of its colonies, but because "imperial globalization" was replaced at roughly 1980 by a global system of "postcolonial globalization." Hopkins 2018: 692–706, 719–20.

ruler for twenty-five years. The empire was overthrown by broad social revolution in 1978 and 1979, resulting in the formation of an Islamic republic. In Ethiopia, the empire survived a brief colonization by Italy, but fell to a military-led national republic in 1974, though with a tumultuous post-imperial history of regional and social conflict.

An important complication of the rapid collapse of empires after 1945 is that it took place at the same time as the Cold War confrontation of two camps of nations, in which the United States led a dominant pro-capitalist coalition and the Soviet Union led a weaker but growing coalition of pro-socialist states, most led by communist parties. For present purposes, however, I treat the collapse of empires, the wave of decolonization, and the Cold War confrontation as three separate processes, each requiring a separate description. Tracing the interactions of the three processes, in this framework, is an important but subsequent issue.

3   Nations and National Movements, 1500–1980

As of 1500, virtually all substantial states were autocratic, ruled by monarchs who arrogated all power to themselves. While small states and ethnically governed polities commonly shared political responsibility, the monarchs of large states claimed absolute power, though they made alliances with certain nobles, landowners, and religious authorities. In response to this peak in autocracy, a series of long battles unfolded after 1500 as merchants and other elite groups – as well as commoners – claimed the right to participation in the affairs of governance.

Nationhood needs to be defined both in theory and in practice. In theory, the earliest national states or national monarchies were qualitatively distinctive polities, in that they relied on explicit alliance of the monarchy with selected social strata – especially merchants – within the polity. National states such as constitutional monarchies had a broader base of social support than did autocratic monarchies.[23] In practice, however, *nationhood* increasingly meant

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23 A further issue within nations is citizenship, the existence of a common legal system for all those recognized as citizens. Still another step is that toward democracy, in which all citizens have a right to participate in governance. But nations need not be democracies. In the world of today, there are several members of the United Nations General Assembly that are governed as absolute monarchies but still have the flags and Olympic teams of nationhood.

that an existing community of states accepted a given polity's claim to nation-hood. Using this simple rule of thumb, I argue that it is possible, from 1600 on, to distinguish national states (representing a national constituency) from absolutist states in which the monarch alone ruled. I therefore assume that the first national state was the Netherlands, which took on the status with its signing of a treaty with Spain in 1609; the second national state was England, beginning with the accession of William and Mary in 1689 (Scott 2019: 225–35). That is, they gained diplomatic equivalence with France, Spain, Portugal, the Habsburg state, Denmark, Russia, and the Ottomans, but the formal rulers of the Netherlands and England were distinct because they also maintained informal constitutional ties with merchants and other social strata.

Once the first national states emerged, the institutions of nationhood evolved along numerous and complex paths, interacting with empires.[24] Table 1 defines the main paths to nationhood, from 1500 to the present, with examples. Almost all the nearly two hundred nations now in existence traveled one or another of these paths. In two types of cases, national states took form through discourse within a single state. In the first of these (#1), independent communities were able to coalesce and form a national state. More commonly (#2), a discourse within an existing monarchy could lead to the regime's adoption of a constitutional form, giving recognition to influences outside the monarchy. The rest of the processes have taken place within existing empires. Decolonization included two means by which a formal imperial colony could establish independent national status. It took place (#3) through wars of independence on the initiative of national movements or (#4) by decree on the initiative of the imperial power.[25] Incorporation of colonies (#5) was their recognition as provinces within the governing nation – this significant process has too often been neglected.[26] Some colonies, especially small territories (#6), have remained in colonial status even at present. Finally, whole empires (#7) declared themselves to be adopting national identity, as with Brazil in 1889 and China in 1912.

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24   The institutions of nationhood were thus somewhat different from the rights of citizens and the concept of democracy. For instance, the idea of universal manhood suffrage did not become prominent until the French Revolution. For a valuable analysis of democracy, see Kloppenberg 2016.

25   These two paths to decolonization commonly interacted. Thus, the war that led to independence for Algeria in 1962 had brought about the independence of Morocco and Tunisia in 1955 and 1956.

26   In the United Kingdom, England and Scotland formed a union of independent states, while Wales and Northern Ireland were incorporated colonies.

TABLE 1   Definition of multiple paths to nationhood

Outside a monarchy:
1. Coalescence of communities to form a nation (Cherokee, Liberia, Germany)

Within a monarchy:
2. National movement presses monarchy to accept constitutional constraints, by recognition of special interests (merchants) or citizenship in general (England, Japan, Denmark, Thailand)

Within an empire:
3. Decolonization of a colony through warfare led by a national movement (Netherlands, United States, Haiti, Spanish American nations, Vietnam, Algeria)
4. Decolonization of a colony by imperial decree (India, Pakistan, Ghana, Latvia)
5. Incorporation of a colony by imperial decree, to become a unit of the governing nation (United Kingdom, Wisconsin, Manitoba, Martinique)
6. Colonial status remains unchanged (Virgin Islands, American Samoa)
7. Empire decrees itself to be a nation (Brazil, China, Russia, Turkey, Persia, Ethiopia)

What factors provided the impetus for expansion of empire and for the emergence of nations? For expansion of empire, I have identified two types of impetus, which I label as *dynastic* and *pro-capitalist*. The *dynastic* impetus was the ancient and inherited desire of monarchs to seize power and expand their territory and wealth: it persists today in the few remaining absolute monarchies. The *pro-capitalist* impetus emerged only with the new economic and political institutions of the modern era. It required both a national alliance linking economic elites with the ruling political elites and cross-national alliances with other nations, as they shared in the objective of expanding the full capitalist system.

For movements to build nationhood, I also identify two types of impetus: I label them as *pro-capitalist* and *pro-citizenship*. The *pro-capitalist* motivation for nationhood is much the same as that for empire, but it is restricted to the national level: in it, economic elites seek stable alliances with political elites in order to build wealth and property within the nation. The *pro-citizenship* motivation, shared by those who would be citizens of the nation, arises from community organization, seeking expanded social welfare for citizens. Those with pro-capitalist motivation – empires, merchants, and corporations – were sometimes initiators and participants in national movements, as in the United States and Brazil. More commonly, movements for decolonization were generated by pro-citizenship movements, as with Indonesia, Kenya, and Algeria (Jansen and Osterhammel 2017).

TABLE 2   Recognition of nationhood, by region and time period[a]

	Europe	Americas	Asia	Africa	Oceania	Totals
Pre–1760	4					4
1760–1849	8	21		1		30
1850–1919	16	3	2	1	2	24
1920–44	5		5	2		12
1945–2000	23	13	39	48	11	134
2001+	1		1	1		3
Totals	53	37	47	52	13	207

a   For details to Table 2, listing individual nations by name and date of recognition, see Patrick Manning, "Recognition of Nationhood by Region and Time Period: Table 3," World-Historical Dataverse, https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/U6Q4U8.

Table 2 summarizes the recognition of nationhood, according to these simplified criteria: it lists the number of nations that gained recognition as members of the community of nations, by region and by time period. For each of five periods, the table lists the number of newly recognized national states.[27] The following discussion, period by period, identifies cases in which national movements accompanied the creation of the national state – or failed in the effort to do so.

3.1   *Up to 1760*

Newly recognized national states: Netherlands 1609, England 1689, Sweden 1719. Elite collaboration in governance; later pressure for democracy and citizen participation in governance.

National movements: A Netherlands national movement began in 1568 and achieved recognition with the 1609 truce with Spain. An English national movement began with the Civil War in 1640 and gained recognition with the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89. A Swiss national movement gained recognition in 1648. A Portuguese national movement in 1640 (with English support) reestablished the independent and absolutist monarch of Portugal, which had been absorbed by Spain in 1580. Sweden established a constitutional monarchy in 1719, but returned to absolutism from 1772 to 1809.

27   While independence of colonies brought additions to the number of national states, incorporation of colonies expanded the size of existing nations. For this reason, Table 2 does not indicate the incorporation of colonies.

3.2 *1760–1850*

Newly recognized national states: United States 1783 (republic), Haiti 1804 (republic); Belgium 1831 (constitutional monarchy), Greece 1843 (constitutional monarchy), Denmark 1848, Prussia 1850. Dates at which Latin American nations gained recognition were: Argentina 1816, Chile 1818, Mexico 1821, Colombia 1822, Ecuador 1822, Venezuela 1823, Central America 1824, Peru 1824, Brazil 1825, Bolivia 1825, Uruguay 1825, Paraguay 1842.[28]

Failed national movements included those of: Tupac Amarú 1780–81 (Peru), Comuneros 1780 (Colombia), Cherokee 1730–1830, Poland 1790–93, Ireland 1798, Tippoo Sultan (Mysore 1780–99), Norway to 1814.

Successful national movements. United States 1775–81, Haiti 1791–1804; Spanish America 1810–25, Brazil 1822–25.

3.3 *1850–1920*

Newly recognized national states: Liberia 1847, Italy 1860 (incorporating numerous states), Japan 1868 (constitutional monarchy), Germany 1871 (incorporating numerous states). British self-governing dominions: Canada 1867, Australia 1901, New Zealand 1907, South Africa 1910. Norway 1905 (independence from Sweden), Mongolia 1911 (independence from China), Finland 1918 (independence from Russia).

Successful national movements: Germany, Italy.

3.4 *1920–45*

Newly recognized national states: Irish Free State 1923, Egypt 1922 (declared independent by Britain), Turkish Republic 1923, Iraq 1930, Lebanon 1943, Syria 1945.

Successful national movements: Ireland 1923, Turkey 1923, Lebanon 1943, Syria 1945.

3.5 **Since 1945**

Newly recognized national states: 12 for Europe, 13 for Americas (Caribbean), 33 for Asia, 49 for Africa, 12 for Oceania.

Failed national movements: Malaya, Greece, Kenya, Cameroon, Biafra.

Successful national movements: China, Indonesia, India, Vietnam, Algeria, Guinea, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea and Cape Verde, Bangla Desh, Eritrea, Baltic states, South Sudan, Timor-Leste, Caucasian states.

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28   There were complications for Central America (the federation broke up in 1829) and Gran Colombia (the federation of Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador broke up in 1829).

4   The Destinies of Empires, the Fates of Colonies

For close to three millennia, empires expanded and contracted, seizing territories from each other and expiring after varying lengths of time. That pattern was broken in the nineteenth century as empires expanded in parallel, reaching an unprecedented peak – roughly ten new empires formed at a global scale, in addition to five preexisting large empires, while an additional half dozen smaller empires arose at regional scale. The pattern was broken even more forcefully in the twentieth century, in that six major empires collapsed at the time of World War I, while twelve more empires – the last of them – disappeared as a consequence of World War II.[29] Empires, colonies, and nations were entangled in a three-century historical dynamic, its complex evolution marked by a great caesura in 1945, a year that is central to the transformation of empires and the national independence of colonies.

4.1   *The Destinies of Empires*
Dynastic empires rose and fell as autonomous, militaristic, and autocratic states that were generally replaced by succeeding empires with new dynasties. In the twentieth century, two of the remaining dynastic empires (Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire) broke apart into national states; four other dynastic regimes collapsed and were redefined as single national states (Persia, Ethiopia, China, and Russia), with all losing some territory.

Pro-capitalist empires developed out of a model created by Britain in alliance with the Netherlands in the eighteenth century. These new empires expanded in alliance with each other, all of them tied to the capitalist economic order, each of them dependent in varying degrees on the merchant class and even on the general citizenry. In the nineteenth century, a campaign of ten such imperial expansions succeeded in creating capitalism on a global scale.[30] The empires – through seizure of land, populations, and natural resources – became an essential element in building the capitalistic economy. Each empire's industrial base grew rapidly during the century, linking the economies of colonies and metropole. Of the huge numbers of colonies, some were incorporated into the governing nation. The requirements of empire and capitalism included the economic strength of industrial production and

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29   In the era of World War I: Spain, China, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, the Ottomans. In the aftermath of World War II: Italy, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Ethiopia, Portugal, Iran, USSR, Britain, United States.

30   Participants in capitalist imperial conquest included Britain, France, Netherlands, Russia, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Japan, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and Portugal. Autocratic Russia was more dynastic than capitalistic in conquest.

long-distance commerce, military and administrative power to intervene and govern, and ideological power to rationalize imperial governance and ensure moral superiority (Manning 2020).

The ideological dimension of pro-capitalist empire focused on national patriotism, civilizational and racial hierarchy, and social discrimination based on those principles. Slavery and other forms of forced labor were central to each empire. During the course of the century, reforms of forced labor were gradually adopted, though rarely with emancipation and full citizenship for those previously in servitude. Even as enslavement declined the ideology of racial hierarchy was reinforced, with social discrimination reaching a peak in the early twentieth century. The coordination of this campaign of imperial expansion by pro-capitalist states is not in doubt. Nevertheless, there have been ongoing debates as to whether the overseas empires brought any benefits: to capitalist producers, to imperial homelands, or to the colonized populations (Marseille 1984). More study of these questions, especially in a global framework, would be of value.

Empires provoked national movements, unintentionally, in various ways.[31] The national states that controlled empires gained far-reaching powers – such power generated envy within other polities. As the number of national states grew in the eighteenth century, communities around the world began campaigns to organize their sociopolitical communities with an eye to gaining recognition as independent national states. For those who lived within the boundaries of empires, they understood their colonial status to be subordinate: the options they faced were to remain in that status, to gain national independence, or to gain incorporation into the imperial homeland. During the nineteenth century, over a dozen Latin American colonies gained the status of independent nations, several Ottoman territories gained independent national status, and political thinkers on every continent urged creation of nationhood within Europe, Asia, and Africa.

During World War I, and in recognition of the views of colonial subjects during that great conflict, both Woodrow Wilson and V. I. Lenin gave support to the self-determination of nations as a war aim (Manela 2007). In practice, however, the idea was applied principally to people classified as white and living in Europe. Among virtually all combatants in both world wars, both military forces and civilians were organized through racial hierarchy. In the Second

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31   Social movements aimed at reshaping social priorities can be traced fairly far back in history, for instance to the Hussite movement in early fifteenth-century Bohemia, the English Peasant Revolt of 1381, and the anti-Mongol rebellions that brought the Ming to power.

World War II, however, the Allied powers found the need to rally forces against the Axis highlighting of racial hierarchy, and proclaimed the self-determination of nations for non-whites as a principal war aim. Indeed, people of color worldwide seized on World War II as an occasion to claim national rights and an end to racial hierarchy. After 1945, the global political order was facilitated by the United Nations, in which the leadership of big powers was recognized through the Security Council but the interplay of nominally national units provided the principal dynamic, in the General Assembly.

4.2   *Empires from 1945*

As the Asian national movements moved quickly to demand and to seize national independence at the end of World War II, it took the imperial powers a while to recognize that this was just the start point to a worldwide wave of decolonization. The empires had planned for colonial reforms, combining them with postwar reconstruction in the metropole, and hoped these would be sufficient to sustain the empires. In some cases the great-power response to demands for independence was orderly acquiescence, as in India and the Philippines. In other cases it was repressive force dealt by the military or police, as in Madagascar, Algeria, Malaya, and Vietnam. Even as these colonial wars continued, the imperial states soon realized that the claims for independence were irresistible, and that it was necessary to acknowledge most if not all of them.

The end of the imperial system as a whole passed more quietly than the end of individual empires. The term "imperialism" is still used to refer to the policies of great powers, though it is clearly inadequate. That is, the power of the United States, Britain, and France remains, though the empires are gone: surely a more specific term can clarify the relationship under study. I return to this question in the concluding section. On the other hand, powerful multinational corporations grew in the postwar era, dominating petroleum, other mining, banking, and manufacturing. These firms, controlled by CEOs and wealthy elites, were governed autocratically – they provided an imperial dimension to the postimperial world.

4.3   *Colonies before 1945*

In early instances of decolonization, the Netherlands broke away from Spain, the United States broke away from the British, and Haiti broke away from France. In the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire began to lose its colonies, losing Egypt to a powerful governor in 1805, and losing Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania to national movements that had external support from Britain and Russia. The Spanish colonies of mainland Latin America gained

independence through warfare led by national movements, beginning in 1810 and continuing to 1825. The Ottomans lost other territories to imperial conquest: Algeria to France beginning 1830, Tunisia to France in 1870, Libya to Italy in 1911, and the Hijaz, Iraq, and the Levant to Britain and France in 1915.

With the collapse of the German, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires in World War I, independence came to Finland, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Ireland. Britain and France, victors in the war, seized the remaining Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire during the war, but granted them partial independence before the end of World War II.

The term "balkanization" developed in the early twentieth century, referring to the small and mutually hostile polities of the Balkan Peninsula as they became independent of the Ottoman Empire. The term has been generalized to refer to the segmentation of colonies into smaller units at the end of colonial rule. In a comparative review, one may note that the United States did not balkanize as it gained independence; neither did Brazil. Spanish America balkanized at two levels. First, the various viceroyalties and *audencias* of Spanish America gained independence separately, though there was overall cooperation between the pro-independence forces of San Martín and Bolívar. Second, the two federations formed in Latin America each broke up: Gran Colombia broke into Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela in 1829; and the Central American federation broke up in two stages to yield Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, and El Salvador. The British dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa avoided balkanization; in 1920, Britain rejected a proposed dominion of four West African colonies (Langley 1973). Further, the Asian Arab lands of the Ottoman Empire were balkanized by the British and French conquerors.

Incorporation of colonies into the governing nation was an alternative fate. This was made part of the plan for the United States and was implemented systematically as the country's empire expanded and colonies gradually became states: thirty-five states were admitted to the union between 1791 and 1912.[32] Similar models followed for Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile: most but not all of the territories were admitted fully into the nation. Most of Canada consisted initially of territories in colonial status; they were admitted gradually to provincial status. In Australia, the Northern Territory still has territorial status. Spain incorporated the Canaries as a province in the nineteenth century. The Qing colonies of Yunnan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and

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32   The Northwest Ordinance of 1784 divided western US lands north of the Ohio River into territories (colonies) that would eventually be admitted as states.

Manchuria remained as colonies of the post-1912 Chinese Republic, although Mongolia quickly gained independence. The USSR incorporated the Russian colonies into republics in the Soviet system, seeking national status within the USSR for Ukraine and Byelorussia.

The governments of the new nations formed before 1945 included presidential republics in the Americas, parliamentary governments in British dominions, constitutional monarchies in nineteenth-century Europe, and parliamentary republics in twentieth-century Europe. For monarchies that existed within the British Empire, however, the British relied only on the sovereigns, so that when those lands became independent, they were ruled by absolute monarchs – such is the case for Brunei, the Emirates, Eswatini, Kuwait, and Qatar.

4.4   *Colonies after 1945*

As I have argued earlier, the end of World War II marked a great change in the history of nations, colonies, and decolonization. National independence, when it took place before 1945, took place in a world of racism and imperialism, in which people labeled as non-white could rarely hold positions of trust and almost never become leaders of governments, except for lands such as Thailand, China, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Haiti, which existed outside of the capitalistic empires.[33] Even as the imperial insistence on strict racial hierarchy began to weaken after 1945, officials carried on a discourse as to whether colonized individuals or groups "were ready for self-government."

Nationalist movements, expanding from the early twentieth century, gained great popular support during and after World War II. Leading influences in global capitalism, acting through the empires, found that they had little choice but to accede to demands for national self-determination. In the 1940s, the nations of Asia gained their independence. In the 1950s and especially the 1960s, the majority of African nations gained their independence. In the 1970s, the island nations of the world gained independence – in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific. Portugal held on to its colonies to 1974, but the results seemed inevitable; monarchies fell in Ethiopia (1974) and Iran (1978); Vietnam unified under communist rule in 1975. With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, most of its federated republics declared their independence.

The issue of balkanization arose repeatedly with post-1945 decolonization. The federations of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, created in 1905 and 1910, were segmented into eleven separate colonies in 1956, shortly

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33   In the republics of Latin America, people of color were among those elected to high office up to 1890 but not after.

before independence, in a collaboration between France's Ministry of Colonies and an allied African leader (Manning 1998:145). French Indochina broke into its constituent three nations with independence. Britain assembled federations of colonies in the postwar era, but most broke up on the eve of independence: they were for Central Africa, East Africa, and the Caribbean. The federation of Malaysia succeeded except that it expelled Singapore. In brutal civil wars, Bangla Desh broke away from Pakistan, Eritrea broke away from Ethiopia, and South Sudan broke away from Sudan; the split of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde was more amicable. Korea, Germany, and Austria were divided among the powers after World War II; Austria and Germany were reunified; Korea was to remain divided after a 1950–54 war of both regional and global powers. Indonesia had to recognize the independence of ex-Portuguese Timor-Leste, but otherwise avoided balkanization.

The incorporation of colonies into imperial homelands continued after 1945, but at a slower rate than before. The United States admitted Hawaii and Alaska as states in 1959; Canada admitted Newfoundland and Labrador as a province in 1949. France annexed Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana, and Réunion as departments of France in 1946; France had previously claimed Algeria as part of the metropole but released it in 1962. Portugal incorporated the Azores and Madeira as an autonomous region in 1976, after the Portuguese revolution. The Russian Republic, with its complex ethnicities in the east, faced difficult decisions. When a social movement in Chechnia sought to gain national independence, Russia more than equaled the violence of the rebels and successfully repressed the uprising.

In the forms of government for postwar decolonization, British and French rulers set up parliamentary republics as they left their colonies. Thus, Israel and India continue as parliamentary states. But the strains of neocolonialism and other difficulties of independence led commonly to military seizures of power and dictatorships. As these decolonized nations returned to civilian rule, they tended overwhelmingly to create presidential republics, so that this form of government is now predominant throughout the world. Nevertheless, Germany, Japan, and Italy reestablished parliamentary government after World War II. More generally, as new constitutions were written in the twentieth century after national upheaval, they tended to take the form of presidential republics – as with Russia, Iran, and many African nations. In the European and Asian countries in which communist parties came to power (also including Cuba), government took the form of a single-party republic, a people's republic. Relying on the logic of democratic centralism for party discipline and systems for limiting corruption, after World War II this system from the Soviet

Union was applied in various countries for periods ranging from four to seven decades. Nationalist regimes in African and Asian countries governed by this logic for shorter periods of time.

Dictatorships, which became quite prominent during the interwar and wartime years, arose again in postwar Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. On the other hand, social movements have had some success in replacing dictators with representative governments, as in Eastern Europe and francophone Africa in 1989 and thereafter. Dictatorship, however, remains an unsolved problem in governance.

5   Post-Imperial Politics, since 1964

While great-power tensions dominate the headlines of the expanding system of global communications, the world of today is different from that of a century ago, when ten imperial powers held full power over the global political system. Partly because those imperial powers exercised their power ineffectively, the new system of global politics allows for many more voices. Yet the functioning and the direction of the new, nationally focused political system are not yet clear.

5.1   *The Group of 77*
The cumulative effects of decolonization revealed themselves in 1964 as a new group formed within the United Nations. The Group of 77 (G-77) announced itself on June 15, 1964, when the Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Developing Countries was issued by its seventy-seven signatories at the end of the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva. The resolution called for making the trade concerns of developing nations a higher priority, with equal votes for all nations in UNCTAD rather than weighted votes favoring big powers.[34] With this step, one may say that the era of national interplay had begun. With the United Nations as an arena for debate, "developing" nations launched their formal claim for recognition as an interest group and power bloc. The former imperial powers and their close allies were becoming, increasingly, a minority of the General Assembly. A few years later, the one major change ever to take place in the composition of the UN Security Council took place, when the People's Republic of China was admitted in 1971 to the UN and to a seat as a permanent member of the Security Council, by a vote of 76 in favor, 35 opposed, and 17 abstentions – on the 21st

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34   The United States and United Kingdom lobbied without success for weighted votes.

ballot. The other permanent members of the Security Council remained the United States, the USSR, Britain, and France.

The continuing stream of newly independent nations provided one dynamic of change at the UN and in the balance of world politics. This expansion in the number of national polities generated several related transformations in its wake. The Group of 77 (www.g77.org) met every year under a rotating presidency, usually in New York near UN headquarters, and adopted position papers. In a second dynamic, the oil-producing nations, allied as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, came to have substantial power in global economic relations from 1970. Thirdly, the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (en.unesco.org), with its focus on education, science, culture, and communication, became a forum for cultural discourse in the community of nations. A fourth approach was the G-77 proposal for a New International Economic Order, with discussions of global trade equity that continued into the 1980s (Borowy 2018). A fifth area of change was the growth in global bureaucracies (both inside and beyond the UN), which grew for multiple purposes, with membership distributed throughout the full community of nations.

The former imperial powers responded in various ways to the formation of the G-77 and the priorities that it formulated. Having acknowledged, willingly or not, the independence of so many new nations, wealthy nations sought new ways to protect their own interests. They invested in cultural ties to keep independent nations tied to former metropoles, and in efforts to create new international collaborations. Most prominently, in response to global economic changes, the great powers and great corporations formed new organizational structures in the 1970s, in large part to respond to the initiatives of ex-colonies. An annual meeting of economists at Davos, Switzerland, expanded in 1973 to invite finance ministers of big economies. The Davos meeting continued as the World Economic Forum of economic and political leaders. The same discussion led to an annual summit, beginning in 1975, of heads of state from the United States, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and West Germany; Canada soon joined to make it the "G7 summit."[35]

At both Davos and G7 meetings, organizers sought to create structures and to propagate a revised ideology giving more attention to corporate priorities. Neoliberal ideology caused substantial cuts in public services worldwide, campaigned against regulation of corporations, and rejected any adjustment of

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35   G7 meetings have been held in Europe, North America, and Japan. In 1977, the Soviet Union was invited to join what became the G-8; in 2014 the Soviet Union's successor, the Russian Republic, was suspended in response to its annexation of Crimea.

trade relations to benefit developing regions. Creation of the G7 and its variants has been another effort to strengthen the great powers at the expense of the full community of nations. By the 1990s, the United States sought increasingly to avoid working through the UN, with creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as one alternative. UNCTAD, formed in 1964, included all UN members in global trade negotiations, where WTO restricted its membership to wealthy nations. The G-77 has weakened over time, but its potential unity may become influential.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and 1992, the final great wave of decolonization led to the national independence of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. (Ukraine and Belarus also gained full national independence, though they had held UN membership since 1945.) As the USSR dissolved, there were calls for restructuring the Security Council, adding new countries and perhaps removing certain countries. The existing permanent members of the Security Council refused to change – they have since maintained that position.[36]

5.2   *Questions and Directions for the Twenty-First Century*

In the seventy-five years since 1945, considerable information has accumulated on the functioning of a global political system centered on governance within nations, a system in which empires no longer play a part. It is time for an assessment of the new system.

Has the creation of a global order of nearly two hundred states and no empires been beneficial to the functioning of global political relations? Has it been beneficial to social welfare of the global population? Or to the populations of nations that experienced decolonization? Has the existence of national states, with formal responsibility to citizen constituents, led to greater attention to health, education, and public facilities for citizens than was the case with imperial governments? Does global capitalism benefit from nationhood as it did from empire?

There are many complications to such an assessment. While no quick answer can be proposed here, it is possible to list some of the relevant factors to be assessed. National governments are commonly weak, dictatorial, short on funds, subject to coercion by corporations and larger states, and hence erratic in their delivery of services; ethnic and regional discrimination have grown within nations. On one hand, one may argue that national units do sustain a sense of national community that can have other benefits. On the other hand, national community may be undermined by the postcolonial situation: in one

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36   Immediately after the collapse of the USSR and Eastern European socialism, the European
         Union expanded to twenty-seven members.

incisive analysis, William F. S. Miles has examined the postcolonial legacies of several peoples whose lands were partitioned by British and French colonial boundaries, finding that the scars of the colonial order constrain their social advance and tie them to the metropole (Miles 2014).

As part of an assessment, what directions for global politics can be imagined? So far, it appears that the G-77 maintains its existence as a framework for discourse among the majority of the world's nations. At latest count, the G-77 has 134 national members. China, while not a member, associates itself with each of the policy statements of the G-77, which are identified as authored by "The G-77 and China." The G-77 maintains its base within the United Nations and supports the UN as a basis for global discourse; yet the G-77 has not greatly advanced its institutional strength.

One can imagine that the Atlantic-based G7 would seek to remain a power center as long as possible, hoping to dominate world affairs. But these nations, while wealthy, are not well positioned to grow in population or relative economic strength. Meanwhile, the smaller states will surely press for changes in global politico-economic structure. As a result, the G7 is perhaps becoming a regional rather than global center of power.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States became the world's lone superpower – an arguably unprecedented status and one that lasted little more than two decades before China's economic and political challenge was felt. Projections show that China now equals the United States in PPP-GDP and will substantially surpass the country in nominal GDP within a decade.[37] As such, China will face three choices: to reinvent empire and emphasize its own unique economic and political power, to give primacy to global collaboration as suggested by its alliance with the G-77, or to form an alliance with other big powers to compete with the G7. Regarding the latter possibility, China might ally with other such rising powers as India, Indonesia, Brazil, Korea, and Nigeria – or indeed with Japan, Russia, Mexico, Turkey, Spain, or Australia.

The United Nations is likely to persist, since it has long survived, though its current structure is antiquated. On one hand, it is difficult to see how a consensus for UN reform would arise. A global competition between the G7 and China would, in response, strengthen the influence of the UN as a mediator – if its structure and financing could be updated. The role of the Group of 77 in global negotiations might become that of a facilitator and guarantor of global consensus.

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37   Chinese population, however, is likely to soon begin a slow decline. Demographic projections show that Nigeria and Indonesia will surpass the United States in population by 2050.

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