LEGITIMACY and power politics

the american and french revolutions in international political culture

mlada bukovansky

Legitimacy and Power Politics

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The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture

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Mlada Bukovansky

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Some changes in the international system only reveal themselves if we accept the proposition that power politics is as much about ideas as it is about guns. This is not to deny the importance of guns, but rather to balance our attention so that we do not neglect the ideas that inspire and organize people in their common enterprises, which include war. This book focuses specifically on ideas about legitimacy, which constitute and empower political authority. How a human community legitimates political authority is a central feature of its collective identity.

My doctoral dissertation at Columbia University sought to test the proposition that revolutionary states become socialized into the international system. The findings were decidedly ambiguous. In writing this book, I followed through on a hunch that the American and French revolutions transformed the international system in profound ways, but that the mechanisms by which such a transformation occurred were largely undetectable by mainstream international relations theory. Since I embarked on the project, a body of international relations scholarship attending to the role of ideas has blossomed and become part of mainstream research in the field. I have been inspired by some of the pioneering minds in this wave of scholarship, and am happy to situate this book among existing and emerging works that attend to the role of ideas in world politics.

I never would have attempted this enterprise without the inspiration and example of two early mentors at Columbia University, John Ruggie and Friedrich Kratochwil. Their work and encouragement emboldened me in my own scholarship. Alexander Wendt's work, and his attentiveness and support, have greatly enriched this book. His patience in reading numerous drafts went well beyond the call of duty. I am also especially grateful to Joyce Appleby, Martha Finnemore, Nicholas Onuf, and two anonymous reviewers at Princeton University Press for their valuable comments on the entire manuscript. Numerous individuals have also provided insightful comments on portions of the manuscript and on the project as a whole, including Michael Barnett, Dan Deudney, Greg Gause, Rod Hall, Stephen Kocs, Michael Mastanduno, Janice Mattern, Chris Reus-Smit, Paul Schroeder, Jack Snyder, Hendrik Spruyt, and Bill Wohlforth. I profited as well from discussions in colloquia at Brown University, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Johns Hopkins, and Princeton. A generous grant from the Rockefeller Center for the Social Sciences at Dartmouth College facilitated archival research, and David Ware provided exemplary research assistance on the Concert of Europe. I am most

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Legitimacy and Power Politics

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The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture

Chapter One

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Introduction: The Transformation of Legitimacy

> As if anyone could forget that the sovereign power resides in my person only . . . that public order in its entirety emanates from me, and that the rights and interests of the nation, which some dare to regard as a separate body from the monarch, are necessarily united with my rights and interests, and repose only in my hands.[1]
>
> It was not the respite of a reign that would satisfy France, enlightened as she was then become. A casual discontinuance of the *practice* of despotism, is not a discontinuance of its *principles*; the former depends on the virtue of the individual who is in immediate possession of the power; the latter, on the virtue and fortitude of the nation.[2]

This book examines a major transformation in both domestic and international politics: the shift from dynastically legitimated monarchical sovereignty to popularly legitimated national sovereignty. In the 1770s, a loosely federated band of colonies succeeded in winning independence from one of the principal great powers in the European international system. In the 1790s, a new and inexperienced revolutionary regime in France was able to muster the resources for a major series of military campaigns—resources that had eluded the financially bankrupt "absolutist" monarch which that regime overthrew. A transformation of the terms of political legitimacy lay at the heart of both these events.

I seek to show how this transformation of political legitimacy came about and how it influenced the conduct of international politics. The best way to explain both the transformation and its consequences is to rigorously examine the complex interplay between elite discourses about political legitimacy and strategic struggles for power within and among

[1] Speech by Louis XV to the Paris Parlement, known as the "Session of the Scourging," March 3,1766, in John Rothney, ed., *The Brittany Affair and the Crisis of the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 175–76.

[2] Thomas Paine (1791), *Rights of Man, Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*, in Paine, *Collected Writings*, ed. Eric Foner (New York: Library of America, 1995), p. 444.

states. In other words, I show not only *that* culture, power, and interests matter, but precisely *how* they matter in a crucial case of international change. I draw on the insights of constructivist scholars who have shown that "anarchy is what states make of it" but go on to show how political actors can remake anarchy. My goal is not only to contribute to our growing understanding of the limitations of liberal and realist theories of international relations, but also to demonstrate how they can be integrated with insights derived from the constructivist approach to explain major change.

The key to this undertaking is to develop a better understanding of two major and often misunderstood or neglected concepts in international relations: political culture and legitimacy. Political legitimacy is conceptualized and contested through the medium of political culture. Insofar as legitimacy has international as well as domestic dimensions, the international system can be said to have a distinct, systemwide political culture. The political culture of the international system is that set of implicit or explicit propositions, shared by the major actors in the system, about the nature of legitimate political authority, state identity, and political power, and the rules and norms derived from these propositions that pertain to interstate relations within the system. In other words, we should use the term "culture" to refer to the shared knowledge of rules and norms that constructivist theorists argue is constitutive of the structure of the international system.[3] Those rules and norms are grounded in political legitimacy conceptions.

Political legitimacy—or the terms by which people recognize, defend, and accept political authority—is important to international as well as to domestic politics. Political legitimacy is a critical component of political power, because a government perceived as illegitimate by its own subjects will have more difficulty mustering the resources for international competition than a legitimate one—as the troubled reign of Louis XVI demonstrates. The terms by which people define political legitimacy also constitute the polity. Monarchs and their supporters legitimated their rule by reference to blood and divine sanction; they saw the sovereign realm as the king's patrimony, to be cared for and cultivated as such. Democratic

[3] Alexander E. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

governments legitimate themselves by the consent of the governed and conceptualize the polity as the body of the people, or a nation, making laws and governing itself through its representatives. The mode of political legitimacy defines the identity of the polity.

Political legitimacy also requires external recognition. When other states recognize a sovereign state they lend it legitimacy, and hence the capacity to engage in external relations: making treaties, engaging in trade, making war. In short, sovereignty is conditioned by legitimacy, and this has international as well as domestic implications. How one form of legitimacy ceases to be dominant in an international system and another comes to take its place is a question little explored in international relations; it deserves more attention.[4]

Explaining the Transformation

From the mid-eighteenth century onward, the political struggles of European and American aristocrats against the perceived despotism of their monarchs yielded a profound shift in how both leaders and subjects came to view the sources and terms of legitimate political authority. Bloodlines and divine sanction began to lose their symbolic power as sources of legitimacy; popular will—however nebulously defined—began its ascent as the ultimate source of legitimate authority. In their power struggles, monarchists and those who challenged them deployed the material and cultural resources at their disposal. A central resource for all sides was the complex and diverse body of discourse known as Enlightenment thought.

Enlightenment discourse gave meaning and content to domestic struggles for power within the state and to international struggles for power between states. That discourse facilitated a transformation in thinking about the terms of legitimate political authority. Because key late eighteenth-century political struggles—especially the American and French revolutions and the wars that accompanied them—were articulated in terms of Enlightenment discourse, one of the outcomes of those struggles was a new template for political legitimacy, grounded in the notion of popular sovereignty. That template was visible in both practical institutional changes and changes in political discourse in the wake of the revolutions and the accompanying wars. The challenge posed by the revolutions was not to specific monarchs, but to dynastic monarchy itself.

[4] A notable exception is Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), which delineates the development of sovereignty as the dominant form of political organization.

Over time that challenge came to penetrate the entire Euro-Atlantic states system and beyond.

We live in an era accustomed to taking Enlightenment conceptions of political legitimacy for granted. Equality, individual rights, the power of reason to resolve political and administrative issues, the necessity of checking the powers of government to allow civil society to flourish, and the notion that political authority—or sovereignty—ultimately resides in the people of a nation: all these notions, however imperfectly realized in practice, have come to dominate global political discourse. They are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as standards toward which all member states should strive. But historically, these standards of legitimacy emerged within a context dominated by a distinctly different notion of legitimate authority: that of dynastic, monarchical sovereignty legitimated by blood and divine sanction. How did this transformation from dynastically legitimated monarchical sovereignty to popularly legitimated national sovereignty come about?

Outside the field of international relations, standard explanations for the emergence of democratic legitimacy focus, in varying degrees, on the rise of markets, industrialization, and the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie in Europe. All these macrosociological phenomena may have been important factors, viewed in retrospect from a broad historical perspective, but they are not the focus of this book. The American and French revolutions are also seminal events in the emergence of democratic legitimacy, and therein lie some interesting puzzles. These revolutions occurred prior to the age of industrialization, and their "bourgeois" character has been challenged or at least qualified by the current generation of historians.[5] Further, the Enlightenment ideas that these revolutions attempted to put into practice predate the revolutions by several decades. How could these ideas simply be the reflection of changing material conditions or a newly empowered class interest when those new conditions were not yet apparent, when that class had not yet risen to power, and when the ideas themselves seemed to be far more popular with the nobility than with the bour-

[5] The literature is vast, but some good places to begin are Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969); Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1993); Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Terence Ball and J.G.A. Pocock, eds., *Conceptual Change and the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967). On France, see François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). For a concise historiographical review, see T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?* 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).

geoisie? In my view, transformations of legitimacy are not fully explicable by reference to social transformations such as the rise of the bourgeoisie or material transformations such as the emergence of capitalist markets.

In addition, the American and French revolutions were strongly influenced by, and in turn influenced, international politics; if we analyze them only as discrete "domestic" phenomena while neglecting their international dimensions we will not find satisfactory answers to the question of how democratic legitimacy came to challenge monarchical legitimacy in the international system as a whole.[6] In fact, if we take the international context into account, the assertion that democratic legitimacy was the strongest legacy of these revolutions becomes questionable. International relations theory ought to contribute something to our understanding of the transformation of legitimacy that was initiated by the late eighteenth-century revolutions.

International relations theory offers two broad perspectives to explain the late eighteenth-century emergence of democratic legitimacy or, more accurately, popular sovereignty. From a liberal perspective rooted in the Kantian tradition, the development of democratic legitimacy and the rule of law represents the progressive unfolding of human reason to create the political and legal conditions for greater and greater self-conscious human freedom. One by-product of this process is the progressive bureaucratization and rationalization of political life as described by Max Weber. Another is the spread of democratic peace. From a realist perspective, the innovations in late eighteenth-century political thought and practice—particularly the development of mass armies and the centralization and bureaucratic streamlining of the modern nation-state—yielded success in international competition, and were thus emulated in what amounts to a systemwide process of "natural" selection.

Although each of these perspectives provides a compelling explanatory schema, each is also limited in its capacity to shed light on the process and mechanisms by which the transformation of legitimacy came about. Nor do the liberal and realist approaches agree on what precisely emerged from the revolutionary period of the late eighteenth century. For liberals, democratization seems to be the main legacy; for realists, the outcome is better characterized in terms of mass mobilization, state centralization, and nationalism. Perhaps we are, in a very broad sense, approaching the "end of history" and the triumph of liberal democracy over other forms

[6] Works that stress the importance of international politics include T.C.W. Blanning, "Introduction," and William H. Sewell, Jr., "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case," both in *The Rise and Fall of the French Revolution*, ed. Blanning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

of governance, although this conclusion has provoked much debate.[7] Perhaps the sporadic, circuitous, violent, and often apparently irrational character of the process by which we are approaching the end of history may be explained away by Immanuel Kant's thesis that strife among men and among nations over time teaches them the necessity of coming to live peacefully under the rule of law.[8] But even for those who have faith in liberal progress, the Kantian perspective leaves many questions about the trajectory of the development of democracy unanswered.

Democratic legitimacy did not emerge victorious from the eighteenth-century revolutions, but neither was dynastic legitimacy reasserted in its traditional form. Rather, it was the idea of popular sovereignty—the notion that legitimacy must come from the will of the people—that proved the most potent, immediate legacy of the revolutionary wars and domestic struggles, though that legacy was strongly challenged by conservatives. Closely linked to this development was the idea that the people, rather than the monarch, constituted—and ought to constitute—the nation. Popular sovereignty and nationalism were not inextricably linked to the notions of democratic rule or even the rule of law. Although many revolutionary thinkers and actors did try to maintain those linkages, those in favor of dynastic legitimacy tempered by traditional noble rights could also justly claim to be on the side of the rule of law. Nor was monarchical rule, if checked by some version of representation and separation of powers, antithetical to Kantian notions of republicanism. Further and most important, the practical experiences of the domestic and international politics of the late eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century favored populist nationalism—often supporting authoritarian rule—as much as republican checks and balances and the rule of law. Whatever faith one might have in progressive liberalism, and however one might choose to define it, the specific contours of the changes in legitimacy that were born in the mid-eighteenth century and came to dominate the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are not adequately described, let alone fully explained, by the notion of liberal progress.

The realist view of a systemwide natural selection process working through international power struggles is difficult to discard in its broadest contours, yet this perspective also blurs rather than clarifies the process and mechanisms by which the transformation of legitimacy came about. In particular, the "natural" selection idea fails to to examine the origins

[7] Frances Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

[8] See Immanuel Kant (1784), "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent," in Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), especially the Seventh Thesis, pp. 34–36.

and early survival of the new variation of legitimacy—popular sovereignty—in the midst of the apparently hostile environment of dynastic legitimacy. In the eighteenth century, absolutist monarchy appeared to most strategists as the most effective way to mobilize the state for war. Contemporaries initially thought that the American and French revolutions would weaken rather than strengthen the military power of each state. Further, the defeat of Napoleonic France yielded neither a restoration of traditional forms of legitimacy nor an unambiguous victory for popular sovereignty, so if there was a selection mechanism at work it was not very precise. Even granting that over time the appeal to popular sovereignty proved an effective tool of military mobilization, we are still left with the puzzle of how this new variation of legitimacy managed to appear and survive long enough to prove its efficacy in a world dominated by absolutist, dynastically legitimated regimes. Finally, as I will discuss further below, realists fail to give an adequate account of the character of the system in which the selection process takes place, neglecting its cultural or ideological dimensions. An incomplete picture of the international system necessarily yields an incomplete picture of the mechanisms by which "selection" may occur.[9]

Both liberalism and realism provide broad templates by which we may organize our knowledge about international politics; this book does not challenge the power and utility of these templates. What I do challenge is the ability of either approach to adequately describe and explain the transformation of legitimacy from dynasticism to popular sovereignty that took place in the mid-eighteenth century, and that triggered a process of systemic transformation toward democratic legitimacy that continued into the twentieth century. The remedy I propose is fairly simple: by paying close attention to the discourses about political legitimacy, on the one hand, and the strategic struggles for power within and among states, on the other, we can develop a fuller descriptive and explanatory scheme for the late eighteenth-century transformation of political legitimacy.

International Political Culture

International political culture is essentially a complex of rules about the conditions for legitimate rule and international behavior.[10] It is also the culture of the rulers or governments that are perceived as the strong play-

[9] For a more thorough account of systemic selection, see Hendrik Spruyt, "Institutional Selection in International Relations: State Anarchy as Order," *International Organization* 48 (Autumn 1994): 527–57.

[10] See especially Onuf, *World of Our Making*.

ers in the international system at any given time. Political culture legitimates the rule of those perceived as strong or efficacious; it also helps constitute the conditions for efficacy, because it is through cultural discourse that human beings register and interpret experiences regarding the exercise of authority, producing propositions about the reasons for success or failure that may then become lessons or norms for the future. Of course, an international system may display numerous forms of political legitimacy; it may be heterogeneous. But we will generally find some sort of common denominator whereby authority to rule and to conduct the external relations of the polity is recognized by other rulers. Mutual recognition is an essential feature of sovereignty. Even heterogeneous international systems have a political culture delimiting the conditions for being considered a legitimate "player" in the system. For example, even though a variety of regimes exists in the international system today, all are expected to have formal heads of state, embassies, armies, trade ministries, and so on. Nor, most important, does the fact of heterogeneity preclude the existence of a dominant regime type that is considered the most powerful and legitimate. Republics and monarchies coexisted in eighteenth-century Europe, but republics were generally thought of as weak and unstable, whereas monarchies were seen as better equipped to hold the place of "great power."

The existence in the system of a form of rule considered to be the most powerful and legitimate involves not only material but also cultural conditions. I will argue that cultural conditions help facilitate the accumulation of material preponderance; legitimacy is not reducible to material power but is in fact a crucial aspect of power. The existence of a dominant form of legitimate authority in the international system is a feature of its culture, and that culture is a feature of its structure.[11] The existence of a dominant form of legitimate authority thus indicates the presence of hegemony in the system. In my use of the term, hegemony does not simply signify the presence of a preponderantly powerful state; rather, it signifies the existence of a dominant form of legitimate authority.

Not all international systems are hegemonic in this "thick" sense, but even if a dominant regime type cannot be identified, the system can still be said to have a culture centered on shared legitimacy conceptions. Discourses legitimating political authority constitute a set of parameters that may be broad enough to encompass a variety of regimes. For example, international political culture today converges on the idea of "the people" as the ultimate source of political authority. But this does not necessarily mean that only democratic regimes are part of this culture. Communist

[11] For another, more abstract discussion of how a system's culture is its structure, see Wendt, *Social Theory*.

and even some authoritarian regimes have also claimed to derive their authority from the people. During the cold war, for example, the Soviet Union and the United States accepted certain common parameters in the discourse on legitimacy by competitively claiming that each respective political system best represented and provided for the interests of its people. Both regimes accepted and furthered the proposition that legitimacy ultimately derived from the people, while at the same time displaying very different—and in some cases deeply cynical—interpretations of how that proposition should be put into practice.

Although this example suggests that the parameters for what constitutes legitimacy may be quite broad, they are not so broad that "anything goes." This idea is perhaps best illustrated if we consider modes of legitimating political authority that are no longer thinkable. What ruling authority during the cold war or today (especially an authority governing a major power) would be able to claim that succession should be determined by heredity? Did even the most authoritarian leader in the twentieth century dare to rely solely on heredity as the legitimating principle allowing him to put a son or grandson on the throne? What state today would use the mechanism of dynastic marriage to extend its territorial holdings? What ruling authority today dares to rely primarily on claims such as the right of the conqueror, or papal sanction, to legitimate its rule? All these were once considered legitimate claims. Although the parameters of legitimacy delimited by the notion of popular sovereignty may seem broad (and the breadth of any legitimacy parameters will vary across different types of international systems and regional subsystems), they are parameters nevertheless. The empirical chapters of this book will examine the process by which these parameters were transformed, and also the changes brought on by the transformation—changes that may be discerned by considering what became unacceptable as much as by considering what became legitimate.

Political culture is not simply a property of individual states, delimiting the structure of political authority within each; it also constitutes the terms of their external relationships. Monarchical rule was legitimated domestically but also internationally, and the same is true of democracy. In a system of monarchies, domestically the monarch was the absolute authority; among other monarchs he or she was an equal, a rival, a potential ally or adversary, and furthermore a mother or father, sister or brother, cousin, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew. The monarch's absolute authority and his dynastic ties made others perceive him as a strong, viable participant in international relations. Absolute authority, honor, prestige, and dynastic ties were common currencies of power. But the monarch behaved, and was perceived, differently when interacting with his or her international "family" than when parading among his or her subjects. So

although domestic and international legitimacy may be rooted in the same conceptions of political authority, the rules and norms emanating from these legitimacy conceptions will differ in the international and domestic realms; the links between international and domestic legitimacy thus need to be investigated empirically.

Democratic legitimacy today, like monarchical legitimacy in the past, is thought to constitute strong, wealthy, and viable polities in the international system. Despite the fact that the notion of popular sovereignty has not eliminated contests about which regime type best serves the interests of the people (witness the unwillingness of China to democratize or to recognize democracy as the most viable and legitimate form of government), democratic legitimacy today contends for hegemony in the international system within a broader shared framework centered on popular sovereignty. The international political culture of popularly legitimated regimes is not so prestige or dynasty oriented as that of the eighteenth century; it embodies different purposes and rules.[12] This culture is hardly democratic; it remains elite driven despite the fact that the underlying legitimacy conceptions supporting the positions of the relevant elites remain "popular"—whether democratic, populist, or communist. Thus the linkage between democratic legitimacy as a domestic phenomenon and the international dimensions of this form of legitimacy requires empirical investigation.

The linkages between domestic and international legitimacy are deep, but complex and variable. The two domains are clearly co-constituted, but at the same time one cannot logically deduce the international rules from the domestic form of legitimacy or vice versa. For example, the Kantian tendency to reason deductively that, because of the nature of republican legitimacy at home, international relations among republics will inevitably reflect the logic of such legitimacy and be peaceful, does not do justice to the real-world complexities of the issue.[13] Each domain of interaction, domestic and international, exercises influence on conceptions of legitimate authority in a semiautonomous way, thus challenging the sort of reasoning engaged in by Kant when he argued that republican constitutions would yield peaceful, legally constrained relationships between re-

[12] For an extended analysis of varying purposes of the state, see Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*.

[13] According to Dan Deudney, the writings of Publius, particularly in the *Federalist Papers*, do a much better job than liberal theory in dealing with the real-world complexities of sustaining democracy. See Daniel Deudney, "Publius vs. Kant: Federal Republican Security vs. Democratic Peace" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Chicago, February 21–24, 2001).

publics.[14] Much as empirical cases might challenge the purity of Kantian logic, however, the core insight that domestic and international legitimacy are co-constituted remains compelling, and worth investigating further.

International political culture shapes strategic interaction because the terms of political legitimacy define who the dominant players are and what the stakes of their interactions will be. The terms of legitimacy are parameters by which certain means of acquiring and exercising authority—by heredity, dynastic marriage, and conquest, for example—are not accepted by domestic constituencies and other actors in the international system. To understand how political culture shapes strategic relationships in the international system, we need a way of conceptualizing the systemic dimensions and patterns of that culture. Much of the work involved must be empirical; the analyst must investigate the dominant rules and institutions of the period she chooses to study—in my case the mid- to late eighteenth century. But we need to gain some sort of analytical purchase on this complex phenomenon, a sense of what sorts of patterns to look for. Following a line of thinking opened up by the sociologist Margaret Archer, I argue that the political culture of the international system should be understood in terms of relationships of contradiction or complementarity between its key elements, which are legitimacy conceptions and the rules that political actors derive from them.[15]

In the cases presented here, I show how through the eighteenth-century revolutions and the responses to them, Enlightenment culture began to penetrate and transform international politics. At this time, Europeans in some regions began to experience and engage in a struggle that ultimately led to a shift in the terms of political authority: absolute monarchical sovereignty became less legitimate, and popular sovereignty became more legitimate. The initial challenge was not brought forth primarily by bourgeois advocates of popular sovereignty, however, but rather by advocates of constitutional checks on monarchical authority; these were usually the nobility or members of the upper strata of highly stratified societies. These challengers exploited contradictions between Enlightenment thought, particularly its republican aspects, and more traditional modes of legitimating monarchy.

At the same time, some absolutist monarchs cultivated complementarities between their absolutism and Enlightenment rationality. Thus changes in international political culture—the spread of Enlightenment ideas—led to changes in strategic relationships between key political

[14] Immanuel Kant (1795), "To Perpetual Peace, a Philosophical Sketch," in Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).

[15] Margaret S. Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

actors—between king and nobles, king and bourgeoisie, bourgeoisie and nobles, and finally bourgeoisie and "lower orders." These changed relationships produced new alliances, new rivalries, and new discourses and legitimating ideas. Those new strategic relationships and alignments would not have been possible were it not for the cultural medium and, in particular, the "discovery" of potent contradictions and complementarities in European political culture. To analyze international political culture, then, we should first study the relationships of either contradiction or complementarity between its various elements, especially when new elements penetrate that system. Second, we must identify the political actors who mobilize around the contradictions and complementarities of the cultural system in pursuit of their strategic interests. The theoretical focus of this book is thus the interplay of political culture and strategic interaction.

Plan of the Book

Chapter Two develops in some detail the theoretical framework introduced here. I refine the concept of international political culture, discuss how we identify such culture, and defend the analytic utility of the concept. I argue that culture is not an epiphenomenal residue of more "basic" material structures. We should not attempt to reduce culture to some specific configuration or power or class interest. But we should also avoid idealist reductionism: power configurations and power struggles can and do reshape culture. Ideas and power politics interpenetrate each other, but neither should be reduced to the other. Chapter Two both develops a conceptual "tool kit" to analyze the interplay between culture and strategy and defends the general theoretical viability and utility of this tool kit. The chapter generates propositions about the conditions under which we might expect the interplay between culture and strategy to produce either systemic continuity or systemic change, and ends with a discussion of the interpretive methodology deployed herein.

I then turn to the empirical application of my analytical approach. Chapter Three analyzes the political culture of old regime Europe, as it was penetrated by the Enlightenment. The culture of European monarchies was distinctive and Europe-wide; international relations in this period was more a "domestic" matter between dynasts than "external" relations between "foreigners." Just because it was domestic hardly means it was peaceful. Domestic disputes have their own brutality. After sketching out the contours of this system, I argue that several absolutist monarchs managed to co-opt Enlightenment thought to expand their administrative capacity, and allow the state to penetrate more deeply into society than it

had before. But social groups marginalized by this process also found fodder in Enlightenment thought, and used Enlightenment ideas to launch counterattacks on the legitimacy of the expansion of absolutist power. The chapter maps out key contradictions and complementarities between Enlightenment thought and traditional notions of monarchical rule, and identifies the political groups that mobilized around these contradictions and complementarities. This map of old regime European political culture highlights the seeds of transformation which were present even prior to the revolutions that shook the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Chapter Four examines the American Revolution in the context of a broader European political culture and international strategic struggles, especially between Britain and France. The Americans took up and reconfigured European political culture to suit their colonial context. In the struggle to gain and maintain independence, several possible models of how the United States should relate to Europe competed; how some came to be dominant and others marginal is a key focus. The Americans reconstituted European political culture through their domestic political struggles and their ambivalent, politically charged efforts to simultaneously gain access to European economic resources and disentangle themselves from Europe politically. Domestic and international political struggles of the early United States polarized along the fault lines of key cultural contradictions and complementarities regarding the nature of legitimate authority and the proper relationship between state and society. Those struggles facilitated the resolution of the question of how the United States should relate to Europe; they tipped the balance toward one form of resolution—nationalism and exceptionalism—rather than another—cosmopolitan universalism. The Americans developed innovative resolutions to contradictions present in a broader, Europe-wide political culture. News of such resolutions filtered back to Europe, though the effects were muted by distance. Nevertheless, the impact of the American Revolution on European political culture is undeniable, and the long-term consequences significant.

Chapter Five turns to the French Revolution. I review how that revolution was an outgrowth of the stresses and strains in prerevolutionary political culture, and how those stresses and strains were felt across Europe and not just in the French state. But the loss of old regime legitimacy was most glaring in France. I outline the specific cultural contradictions and complementarities that fueled the legitimacy struggle as the French *ancien régime* stumbled toward revolution. I then analyze the interactions of revolutionary France and Europe, assessing the nature and impact of the revolutionary wars and Napoleon. Because a number of competing explanations of the role of ideology in the revolutionary wars may be found in the historical literature, I address these and reassert the central

significance of political culture, even though liberal revolutionary ideology clearly gave way to a more militarized, nationalistic discourse. But the latter was ideology too, and it is important to show how, among the competing ideas of revolutionary political legitimacy, militarized nationalism came to win out over the more liberal cosmopolitan perspectives also present in the Revolution.

The concluding chapter builds on the theoretical perspective developed in Chapter Two and sketches out the longer-term international legacies of the eighteenth-century revolutions in legitimacy. I analyze the Concert of Europe, and argue that it cannot simply be understood as a reaction or restoration in the face of revolutionary challenges; rather, the statesmen of the Concert system drew important lessons about legitimacy from the revolutionary era and to some extent attempted to apply them. This holds true even as the forces unleashed by the eighteenth-century revolutions in legitimacy came to undermine the Concert system over time. I suggest how the complex view of political culture, developed here, can account for both apparently distinct outcomes. The chapter then reviews the way in which my approach relates to and extends current debates in international relations theory. I end with a discussion, derived from my analytical framework, of some potential sources of transformation in today's international system.

Chapter Two

■

International Political Culture and Systemic Change

Although strategic interaction is a well-developed area of study in international relations, relatively few authors have focused on the cultural dimension of international politics, let alone developed theories to delimit its parameters and influence.[1] In this chapter, I defend the use of the term "international political culture," develop a definition and explore its analytical implications, and theorize about the relationship between political culture and strategic interaction. Overall, I seek to make two contributions to international relations theory. The first is to demonstrate that patterns of political culture—the contradictions and complementarities between core rules or norms of the culture—constitute the conditions under which strategic actors engage in political struggles. Culture gives meaning and content to power struggle, in a structured way. The second is to theorize about how the alignments between cultural patterns and strategic polarization produce changes in the parameters of legitimacy within a given culture, which I argue is a type of systemic change.

[1] The literature on strategic culture is growing, but notions of international political culture are rare. See Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19 (Spring 1995): 32–64; Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder: Lynn Rienner, 1996); Alexander E. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), chaps. 4 and 6; John Meyer et al., "World Society and the Nation-State," *American Journal of Sociology* 103, 1 (July 1997): 144–81.

In Chapter One, I defined political culture as a set of propositions about legitimacy, identity, and power, and the rules about behavior derived therefrom. In order to theorize about systemic change from a cultural perspective, we need to identify patterns within a cultural system; those patterns structure the cultural system and make evolution of a culture possible.[2] My analysis of systemic change centers on relations of contradiction and complementarity between core legitimacy conceptions in a cultural system. Political actors focus on—some would say construct—relations of contradiction and complementarity when they deploy cultural resources in their political struggles.[3] For example, contemporary international political culture—as codified in the Charter of the United Nations—embraces both the principle of human rights and that of sovereignty as exclusive jurisdiction over a specific territory. Political actors may choose to exploit the potential contradictions between these principles in their strategic struggles. Advocates of broad interpretations of human rights norms challenge the inviolability of sovereignty. In so doing, they may choose to argue that the two principles are logically (and morally) incommensurable, thus asserting a contradictory relationship between the principle of sovereignty as exclusive jurisdiction and that of universal human rights. But human rights activists may also seek out complementarities between human rights norms and sovereignty, so as to pursue their aims without alienating the major actors in the international system, which still define themselves as sovereign states. These are strategic choices in legitimacy struggles. Relationships of contradiction and complementarity in a cultural system constitute opportunities for strategic behavior. Actors may polarize against each other along the cultural fault lines of contradiction, or they may form coalitions on the basis of cultural complementarities.

When cultural resources enable political actors to contest not just the legitimacy of a specific ruler or ruling group but, more fundamentally, the dominant mode of legitimating rule in the system, then those actors are seeking to transform the parameters of legitimacy and are pushing for systemic change. The French revolutionary challenge, fueled by Enlightenment thought, was not to a specific monarch but to monarchy itself. Whether such a challenge will be successful depends on numerous conditions and contingencies, and culture in and of itself is not enough. But

[2] See Margaret S. Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Using different language, Jeffrey Legro evokes the notion of cultural patterns—albeit in a domestic context—in his discussion of epistemic change. See Legro, "Whence American Internationalism," *International Organization* 54, 2 (Spring 2000): 253–89.

[3] I address below the question of whether relations of contradiction and complementarity exist independently of actors' constructions.

without the discursive, cultural resources it would not be possible or even thinkable to push for such fundamental transformation. The cases examined in this book provide some inductively derived observations as to when legitimacy contests are more likely to yield widespread transformation; I develop and discuss these observations later in this chapter and in the concluding chapter.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to substantiating the argument that international relations has a culture. I argue that what is distinctive about constructivist and international society views of international relations—their focus on how shared rules and norms shape international politics—necessitates a more explicit focus on rules and norms as patterned complexes, or as a culture. I also review the use of the idea of political culture by two historians whose work complements constructivist thinking, and has strongly informed my own approach. Subsequently, I specify how we might empirically delineate the constitution or shape of international political culture. I then develop an analytical case for the argument that culture cannot be reduced to material or power relationships, an argument that I substantiate in the empirical chapters. After specifying and defending my use of the term "culture," I discuss how strategic political action interacts with culture, and how the interplay between the cultural and strategic dimensions of the international system might generate either continuity or change in the system. Finally, I describe the methods I used in conducting the research for the case studies that follow.

The Cultural Dimensions of International Politics

We live in a world of power struggles; I have no argument with realists on that score. But power resources can be discursive or symbolic as well as material. The parameters that delimit the identity of legitimate political authority or behavior are articulated in cultural terms, and these parameters constitute a dimension of power.[4] A change in the distribution of power in the international system is likely to entail changes in both the symbols of might and the articulation of right. Witness the wave of discourse, in the wake of the cold war, touting the virtues of capitalism and democracy. But cultural change in the international system cannot be reduced to changes in the distribution of capability; the cases studied in this book suggest that cultural change may in fact precede and facilitate changes in the distribution of capability.

[4] See Bruce Lincoln, *Authority: Construction and Corrosion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

A number of international relations theorists have laid the groundwork, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, for conceptualizing the cultural dimensions of international politics. "English School" theorists such as Martin Wight, Hedley Bull, David Armstrong, and others have argued that international relations is more productively viewed as a society (however rudimentary) than as a "state of nature."[5] For Wight, society was tighter among the Christian, European states and looser (sometimes approaching a state of nature) between Europeans and non-Europeans. For Bull, almost all international relations are rudimentarily social. Bull and Adam Watson have further argued that the Eurocentric international society is replicating itself and spreading throughout much of the world.[6] For the sociologist John Meyer and his colleagues, world society and world culture are real phenomena that construct nation-states.[7] Both liberal and constructivist theorists of international relations have made significant inroads showing how rules and norms shape or constitute international politics.[8] Finally, a number of scholars have addressed the phenomenon of strategic culture in analyzing military relations.[9] All these approaches stress the importance of rules and norms in shaping the international system.

In contrast, neorealist and some historical materialist approaches underplay the role of rules and norms in favor of what we might call the material dimensions of the international system. When most neorealists refer to the distribution of capability as the key component of international structure, they evoke the so-called objective dimensions of power, conceptualized in physical, materialist terms—weapons, population, in-

[5] Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (1978; London: Leicester University Press, 1999); Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Barry Buzan, "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School," *International Organization* 47 (Summer 1993): 327–52.

[6] Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, eds., *The Expansion of International Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[7] Meyer, et al., "World Society and the Nation-State."

[8] Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); Wendt, *Social Theory*; Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: Of the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[9] Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture"; Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and Military Doctrine: France between the Wars," *International Security* 19 (Spring 1995): 65–93; Stephen Peter Rosen, "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters," *International Security* 19 (Spring 1995): 5–31.

dustrial capacity, geographical location.[10] Similarly, a historical materialist view of the international system will focus on the mode of economic production, and, for example, the division of the world into core and periphery based on patterns of production.[11] The common thread in materialist approaches is a strong skepticism regarding the role of ideas, rules, and norms in society. That skepticism does not mean that these theorists see rules and norms as unimportant. Rather, materialist approaches tend to view rules and norms as being contingent upon, and thus reducible to, material configurations of power or resources. The analyst who studies rules and institutions without also studying the material conditions that underpin them should be written off as a naïve idealist.[12] For neorealists, rules and norms in the international system are simply the by-products of underlying distributions of material power; international institutions depend on the rule of a hegemonic state.[13] For a historical materialist, rules and institutions reflect the interests of the dominant class, whose dominance is rooted in a specific mode of production.

The cautionary note sounded by materialists—that we need to look at the interests and power configurations which support rules, norms, and institutions—is unobjectionable. But it becomes problematic when skepticism leads to neglect of the cultural (or "ideational") dimensions of the international system. National interests and power configurations are subject to reasoned debate (though it may be the debate of just a few elites).[14] The relative distribution of capability is not always obvious; it requires analysis. If it requires analysis, then it requires discourse, and some common understandings about the nature and purposes of power. If discerning the distribution of capability requires discourse, then the calculation of that distribution is "cultured." Our beliefs, shaped by the culture in which we live, influence our perceptions and calculations of the distribution of capability. Before the French revolutionaries proved themselves capable in war, European elites generally believed that the Revolution would weaken France. This perception of the impact of the Revolution on French military capability was shaped by a culture that

[10] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979).

[11] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, 3 vols. (New York: Academic Press, 1974–1989).

[12] The classic realist work that lays out this critique is Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1951). Significantly, Carr also categorizes marxists as realists, because of their historical materialism.

[13] Kenneth Waltz's work is just one example. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

[14] See Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Jutta Weldes, "Constructing National Interests," *European Journal of International Relations* 2 (September 1996): 275–304.

believed that only absolutist monarchies could viably compete in great power politics.[15]

Constructivists make a strong case for understanding international structure as a "social" structure, rather than simply as a material structure derived from the distribution of capability.[16] Ideas and discourses are crucial components of how the international system is structured, in this view, because they shape how actors interpret the system. If we consider scientific discourse to be a part of culture (as I think we should),[17] then it becomes even clearer that what counts as a resource in one generation may not do so in another, and thus what constitutes a threat varies across time and place. For example, eighteenth-century British diplomats observing a large importation of mast-quality timber by the French may have perceived a heightened level of threat; today such importation would have little meaning to the security establishment. Since technology itself is the product of scientific discourse (and is therefore "cultured"), this example illustrates the importance of attributing meaning to resources in order to understand power. Constructivist insights suggest the need for alternative analytical descriptions of the contours of the international system, but they do not in and of themselves constitute a theory of systemic change (more on this below), even though they have often been misread to mean that change is easy because ideas are somehow thought to be more malleable than material facts.[18]

The idea that international politics has a culture is complemented and reinforced by other observers. In his magisterial study of the international history of late eighteenth- to mid-nineteenth century Europe, Paul Schroeder has articulated a rich, cultured concept of international system that contrasts with the emphasis of neorealist international relations theory on anarchy and distribution of material capability: " 'System' in international politics means here essentially what I understand Michael Oakeshott to mean by the constituent rules of a practice or a civic association: the understandings, assumptions, learned skills and responses, rules, norms, procedures, etc. which agents acquire and use in pursuing their individual divergent aims within the framework of a shared practice."[19]

[15] See Chapters Three and Five.

[16] Alexander E. Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of World Politics," *International Organization* 46 (Spring 1992): 391–425; Wendt, *Social Theory.* See also Onuf, *World of Our Making*; Katochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions*.

[17] See especially Karl Popper, "Of Clouds and Clocks," in Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

[18] John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19 (Winter 1994–95): 5–49.

[19] Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. xii.

This definition has led another respected historian, Tim Blanning, to argue that what Schroeder calls a "system" corresponds precisely to the idea of "political culture" articulated by Lynn Hunt; Schroeder accedes (in an aside) to this terminology.[20]

Hunt's definition of political culture, developed in her study of the French Revolution, does resemble Schroeder's definition of system: "The values, expectations, and implicit rules that expressed and shaped collective intentions and actions are what I call the political culture of the Revolution."[21] Moreover, Hunt's conceptualization is explicitly designed to avoid the type of reductionism that treats politics as epiphenomenal to deeper social or structural forces. She resists explaining the character of politics "by reference to society."[22] In her words: "Political practices were not simply the expression of 'underlying' economic and social interests. Through their language, images, and daily political activities, revolutionaries worked to reconstitute society and social relations."[23] Although Hunt is referring to "domestic" politics, her notion of political culture accords with broader theoretical approaches that resist structural reductionism and give play to culture and political discourse as a constitutive, relatively autonomous domain. In asserting the relative autonomy of political culture, Hunt addresses the marxist interpretation of the French Revolution. Schroeder, in contrast, addresses a realist-dominated view of international structure as polarity and distribution of capabilities among dominant powers. The reductionism he challenges is thus of a different sort than that challenged by Hunt, yet both reject pure materialism—indeed, reductionism of any kind—and assert the irreducible and thus distinct nature of a discursively constituted political realm of norms, rules, and meanings.

Although both Schroeder and Hunt evoke intersubjective elements to flesh out their ideas of political culture, their conceptualizations of the substantive content of that culture are quite different, largely because of the different domains each investigates. Schroeder's "system" or culture is akin to Michael Oakeshott's civic association—or what Terry Nardin, drawing on Oakeshott, calls "practical association"—based on rules of interaction but no common substantive purpose.[24] Hunt's conception,

[20] T.C.W. Blanning, "Paul W. Schroeder's Concert of Europe," *International History Review* 16, 4 (November 1994): 708; and Schroeder's response in the same issue, p. 747.

[21] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 10–11.

[22] Ibid., p. 12.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), second and third essays; Terry Nardin, *Law, Morality, and Relations of States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

however, is closer to Oakeshott's conception of *universitas* or Nardin's "purposive association"—a set of rules delimiting the pursuit of a common purpose. Thus the term "political culture" may denote very different types of association, or political society. Nevertheless, in both cases the term connotes the discursive, intersubjective aspects structuring that society. Against a purely Aristotelian view of politics, I would argue that both *civitas* and *universitas*, both practical and purposive association, are political, and thus both are shaped by political culture. The international system may have a political culture without displaying a community of purpose.

The political culture of the international system is generated and mutates through discourse, and political discourse itself proceeds in relation to the propositions and norms of a specific political culture, and in relation to the lived experiences of the participants in discourse and practice. Thus culture and discourse refer to the same domain—an arena where propositions, norms, and values are put forth, debated, and discussed, sometimes in terms of how they fared in practice. Discourse refers to the process whereby cultural propositions and values are generated and debated; culture is the intersubjective structure or overall pattern of knowledge and beliefs held by a society at any given time.[25] But how do we identify the culture of international politics?

Political Culture as a Discourse on Legitimate Authority

The realm of international relations may seem so heterogeneous as to lack any common cultural elements at all. Or culture may be an aspect of international relations, but it may be so varied and heterogeneous that we cannot theorize systematically about what difference it makes to patterns of behavior. Against these views, I argue that wherever we find sustained interactions among political units that mutually recognize each other's existence, we can find cultural patterns that may at least yield better analytical descriptions of the character of the system itself.[26] A further theoretical step—one supported by the case material presented here—would be to show how the cultural patterns influence strategic behavior. This line of inquiry boils down to two basic questions: how do we identify the cultural dimensions of the system, and how does culture influence strategic relationships between the actors? I can treat the first

[25] On treating culture as a system, see especially Archer, *Culture and Agency*, chap. 5; see also Popper, *Objective Knowledge*. For a discussion of "dominant epistemes" that evokes a similar notion in the context of foreign policy, see Legro, "Whence American Internationalism."

[26] This is elegantly illustrated in Christian Reus-Smit's *Moral Purpose of the State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

question fairly thoroughly in abstract theoretical terms, while I can make empirically informed suggestions, but not fully supported theoretical generalizations, about the second question.

The most basic legitimating concept in international political culture is sovereignty. A number of authors have developed rich descriptions of international society by focusing on sovereignty as a constitutive principle of the international system.[27] But the sovereignty principle is quite elastic, and so limiting the concept of systemic change to a change toward or away from sovereignty as a constitutive principle strikes me as too general. We need finer-grained criteria for delimiting systemic cultural principles.[28] The crucial questions to ask about the international culture, if sovereignty as a general principle is held constant, are questions about the nature of political authority, or legitimacy. Legitimacy is the meaningful, cultural substance of sovereignty, just as territory or population is its material substance. Sovereignty is conditioned by the terms of legitimacy. In the mid-eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century European system, sovereignty in the general sense was a constant, but the mode of legitimating sovereign authority and the sources of sovereignty came to be contested.[29] I argue that this contestation sowed the seeds of a systemic change—a change in the parameters of legitimacy, or parameters delimiting the identities of the actors in the system, and the rules of interaction between them.

The focus on political legitimacy links international relations to domestic politics more tightly. Political authority cannot be legitimated domestically without addressing the problems of foreign relations. Although modern sovereigns recognize no higher authority (except, in the early modern period at least, the Christian God and in some cases the pope), they do generally recognize each other's authority within their respective territories. Thus anarchy does not imply that legitimacy is irrelevant; mutual recognition of legitimacy is in fact crucial to the constitution of an anarchic states system.[30] International strategic interaction is grounded in

[27] See Bull, *Anarchical Society*, pp. 8–9; 36–37; Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, eds., *State Sovereignty as a Social Construct* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996); J. Samuel Barkin and Bruce Cronin, "Changing Norms and the Rules of Sovereignty," *International Organization* 48 (Winter 1994): 107–130; Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Christian Reus-Smit, "The Constitutional Structure of International Society and the Nature of Fundamental Institutions," *International Organization* 51 (Autumn 1997): 555–89; Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[28] A first-rate effort to do just this is found in Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*.

[29] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, p. 9.

[30] See Thomas M. Franck, *The Power of Legitimacy among Nations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics," *International Organization* 53 (Spring 1999): 379–408.

a core conceptual framework delimiting the nature of sovereignty. Only those who are empowered to legitimately speak for the state may generate the types of threats and promises integral to the conduct of international relations.[31] The struggle of early American leaders to be taken seriously in European courts reflects how fundamental the claim to political authority is for the conduct of treaties, alliances, and even war. Others must understand and recognize such authority. Anyone can claim to be the king of Prussia, but only he whom others understand to be such is likely to be taken seriously.

Victory in battle, seizure of a territory by force, revolutionary violence, or a coup's *fait accompli* can enhance and even lead to the assumption of sovereign authority, but this is rarely the sole necessary and sufficient condition for it. Rather, a coup or a revolution must acquire the trappings of legitimacy in order to sustain political power over time.[32] This was one of Machiavelli's messages to the prince: if seizing power is easy, holding on to it will be difficult.[33] This applies both to sustaining authority internally and to international legitimacy. Even Napoleon, arguably at the height of his power, chose to abandon Josephine (whom by all accounts he really loved) and marry an Austrian princess—why? To gain legitimacy in the international system. Sovereignty is simultaneously a claim to power and to legitimacy, both domestically and internationally.

By legitimacy I refer not to some abstract conception of right but, rather, to the norms of a specific cultural system at any given time. To identify the political culture of an international (or indeed, domestic) system, we might begin with the following questions:

1. What or who is the locus of legitimate political authority, empowered to act on behalf of the collective?
2. How is the political unit conceptualized; that is, what constitutes the collective, the "we" that the collective defines?
3. What are the internal limits of political authority, and how are they established?
4. What are the external limits of political authority, and how are they established?

[31] Hendrik Spruyt's thesis that sovereign states gained legitimacy over other forms of rule because of their ability to make credible commitments is relevant here. Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[32] On legitimacy and power, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2 vols., ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.; Steven Lukes, *Moral Conflict and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); Lincoln, *Authority.*

[33] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses* (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

The answers to these questions should begin to provide a picture of the system's culture, especially if we can identify some common denominators among the answers. To roughly sketch the answers for the late eighteenth century: (1) dynastic monarchs bore political authority, the king or queen symbolized and acted for the collective, and only the monarch was a "public" person; (2) the political unit was conceptualized as a sovereign state, composed of distinct social orders—seen as corporate bodies—wherein the monarch represented the sovereign whole; (3) the internal limits to authority were negotiated between the monarchy and corporate bodies by a combination of force and law; (4) the external limits were negotiated by dynastic ties and alliances between monarchs, force, and international law.

The answers to these questions are rarely simple, however, and can be highly variable even in a given time and place. Political culture provides not definitive answers, but rather a set of parameters, focal points, or even points of contention around which political discourse revolves.[34] We may identify many forms of legitimate authority in an international system. But we also find limits to heterogeneity. Beyond the territorial "bottom line" of what it takes to be recognized as a sovereign unit in the current international system, there may be additional institutionalized layers delimiting what it takes to be a legitimate sovereign in a world of sovereigns. Why did Napoleon feel the need to acquire the trappings of dynastic legitimacy, when he already held territorial sovereign power? If he thought that the marriage would secure a more compliant Austria, this particular form of instrumental thinking was only possible because dynastic legitimacy was dominant in the system. He needed to manipulate this particular mode of legitimacy rather than some other in order to achieve his aims. Perhaps he calculated that a marriage contract would achieve his strategic aims more effectively than some other sort of treaty. This is an example of how international political culture might exercise pressure on strategic choice.

Discerning the Dominant Mode of Legitimacy in the System

Since international relations comprises numerous sovereign units claiming autonomy from one another, the question of what constitutes the

[34] In making a cultural argument about Israeli foreign policy, Michael Barnett uses the notion of "frame" in a manner similar to my use of the term "parameter" here. See Michael N.Barnett, "Culture, Strategy, and Foreign Policy Change: Israel's Road to Oslo," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, 1 (1999). See also see David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

dominant mode of legitimacy in the international system as a whole is more complex and difficult than a query about the mode of legitimacy within a specific state. The question must be addressed empirically; beyond territorial sovereignty, a system of sovereign states may or may not display a dominant way of legitimating sovereign rule. If a specific mode of sovereignty appears to be dominant in the system, then we can delineate a "thick" or hegemonic international political culture. I define a hegemonic international culture as one in which a specific mode of legitimating authority is dominant, shared by, and institutionalized within the major powers in the system. In eighteenth-century Europe the dominant mode of legitimacy was dynastic monarchy. All the great powers in the system adhered to this mode of legitimacy, until the French Revolution upset the pattern. Thus a first cut at discerning the dominant political culture of a particular international system is to identify the dominant powers in that system and ascertain the modes of legitimacy institutionalized within them.

But not all international systems display the relative homogeneity of eighteenth-century Europe; how do we identify a dominant international political culture in a more heterogeneous system (if indeed it is possible to do so)? Further, if the only way to identify a dominant mode of legitimacy is to look at the type of regime displayed by the dominant powers, then my view of political culture could be seen as additive rather than as emergent (in the sense that adding up the legitimacy modes of the dominant powers yields international political culture), and also reducible to material power (in the sense that material dominance is the characteristic from which dominant culture derives). I will discuss these issues more thoroughly below, but first focus on the problem of empirically identifying the dominant political culture.

Practically speaking, we have little choice but to begin by identifying the dominant powers in a particular system; they are the key agents of the dominant political culture. But referring to regime type alone may not yield an accurate characterization of the system's culture; legitimacy cannot be reduced to regime type. Rather, the discourses legitimating political authority at home and abroad constitute a set of parameters that may be broad enough to encompass a variety of regimes. Cultural parameters in the contemporary international system entail that rulers derive their authority from the ruled, rather than (for example) from a God or gods, or the pope, or amassing the most money, or some other source such as the drawing of lots or priestly reading of sheep entrails. But within those parameters (legitimation by the ruled) a great deal of variation and contestation might be possible. As I will argue, this variability and elasticity of culture should not be interpreted as being infinite, thus rendering the idea of culture so indeterminate as to be useless in shaping the contours of

a particular international system. The elasticity of culture may itself be a source of conflict, as when different interpretations of some common norms yield competition, or it may be a source of cooperation, when agreements are reached by papering over differences using highly elastic language in a treaty. What I emphasize is the importance of studying the medium (culture) through which such competition and cooperation take place in its own right, as having a structure and substance that influence the interactions of the actors in a social system.

It would be naïve to attempt to completely detach political discourse from the power structures that underpin it. The most visible and influential legitimacy conceptions in a given system are those of the great powers in that system. Eighteenth-century debates on the limits of monarchical authority in France resonated throughout Europe because of the power wielded by the French state; the debates opened up under the Gorbachev regime in the Soviet Union had systemwide impact because of the Soviet Union's superpower status; and debates in the United States today on, for example, the limits of presidential authority in foreign economic policy resonate beyond U.S. borders because of the global influence the United States enjoys. The content of the dominant international political culture may be distilled from such debates. But because in the modern world political discourse easily seeps beyond borders and may draw participation from those outside the dominant states, it is also worth paying attention to the voices emanating from weaker or more "marginal" areas. The example of the discourses of the American Revolution and framing of the Constitution suggests that it would be naïve to dismiss the possibility of a revolutionary change in political thought—or a counterhegemonic challenge to the dominant form of legitimacy—originating in a peripheral region, especially since the world today is even more tightly wired together in communication than it was in the eighteenth century.

That said, the success of the dominant states in a system is likely to be perceived at least partly as the result of the legitimacy norms to which they adhere, because legitimacy constitutes authority and authority wields power. Legitimacy norms are thus deeply implicated in the power structure of the international system; they are seen as conditions for being a great power. Eighteenth-century statesmen found it inconceivable (until the French proved otherwise) that a great power could be anything but a monarchy, because everyone assumed that only monarchies could muster sufficient resources for war and other forms of influence in the international arena. Today the criteria for great power status may be different, but they can be derived from studying the way in which dominant states legitimate their authority and status. Thus popular support of the regime, a flourishing economy, and (for now, at least) nuclear weapons constitute key elements of great power status.

Like power, legitimacy is a variable. It only acquires substantive content in cultural propositions and theories about the nature and proper extent of political authority. The first place to look for these propositions is in the political discourses and debates taking place within the great powers of the system. But we must also look beyond that, at the way these debates are played out in more "marginal" areas. Counterhegemonic challenges may arise in these areas. Counterhegemonic challenges may also arise within the hegemonic states themselves, especially if those states experience legitimacy contests internally. In either case, in the process of discerning the dominant mode of legitimacy by looking primarily at the great powers, we should not conclude that political culture is simply a reflection of the power configuration.

Culture Is Not a Reflection

Realists of all stripes share a legacy with historical materialists in their tendency to argue that culture and institutions merely reflect more fundamental relationships of power or production. In its crudest form, "power reductionism" would state that "cultural" propositions about the nature of political authority are by-products of a particular configuration of power. Challenges to such authority reflect the interests of the challengers; the cultural content of such challenges is irrelevant. In the empirical chapters, I make the case against reductionism by providing historical evidence for the impact of political culture on power relationships. Here I address the theoretical dimension of the issue.

The reductionist view rules out rather than investigates the possibility that political culture shapes social and political practice. But we should at least investigate that possibility, for several reasons: (1) the existence of dissent and critique; (2) the recurrence of similar cultural themes under a variety of material conditions; and (3) the differential rates of change observable in the cultural milieu as opposed to the realm of sociopolitical interaction. If anything, the power reductionist view should hold for dominant ideologies, but even in that domain it can be challenged. As strong as a dominant ideology may be it is difficult to keep any and all minds from criticizing the rulers, or dissenting. When a ruler fails to live up to the standards of legitimacy that define his or her position, then those standards may become a resource for the opposition (this is what happened to Louis XVI); the possibility of critique shows that cultural resources may be used against those in power. Both the possibility of dissent, and that of alternative propositions and viewpoints regarding legitimacy, suggest that culture may elude power.

One might argue that if dominant ideologies about political authority are merely reflections of the interests of those in power, then ideologies of dissent merely reflect the desire of the subjected to gain power themselves. However true this proposition may be, it neglects the question of how the subjected came to elude the "brainwashing" effects of the dominant ideology long enough to transform themselves from subjects to challengers. If ideology is indeed merely a reflection of power, then how do the powerless come to develop an ideology? Further, the possibility of holding critical or dissenting ideas does not in and of itself imply that such ideas will be used to empower a disadvantaged group in a struggle against the dominant group; it may strengthen the group in power if dissent is presented as constructive critique.[35] In either case, cultural resources are fluid enough to elude, on some occasions, the groups that most benefit from them, and to be used against those groups. Hence culture must have some "autonomy" from the power base that it is supposed to serve.[36]

Moreover, a variety of material conditions can support roughly similar cultural frameworks.[37] If this is the case, then how can culture be epiphenomenal to specific material conditions or distributions of power? For example, the dominant strand of European political thought throughout the eighteenth century was the Enlightenment. Yet Enlightenment discourse permeated, and legitimated, both dynastic and revolutionary regimes. Rather than interpreting this flexibility to mean that discourse does not matter, we might acknowledge the relative autonomy of discourse from underlying material conditions and interests. Flexibility suggests a certain degree of independence from specific material configurations. As another example, the proposition "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" may be found in a number of social systems and historical contexts. We may interpret this observation as a sign of the universality of certain types of human experience. Realists make this claim about balance of power dynamics. But to argue that all cultural rules are merely reflections of a specific power distribution is to make a different claim. Certain types of cultural propositions transcend the material conditions of their instantiation insofar as they can be found in a number of very diverse "contexts"; this observation supports the realist idea that power struggles are endemic to the human condition, but at the same time it challenges the idea that specific power distributions are the definitive sources of cultural systems.

[35] See Archer, *Culture and Agency*, chap. 7.

[36] In addition to Archer, *Culture and Agency*, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). Williams's work is particularly useful for understanding critique and dissent.

[37] See Wendt, *Social Theory*, chap. 4.

Cultural systems develop according to their own logic and tempo. Once an idea is articulated and codified in the discourses of a society, it takes on a life of its own to the extent that it becomes subject to elaboration, criticism, contestation, testing, manipulation, and correction.[38] Progress of discourse in physics, for example, depends on strict criteria of proof, falsification, and demonstration. Government funding—the exercise of power—may speed research along. But it cannot, or at least not easily, affect the criteria for truth or the logical or empirical tractability of certain problems. The observation that political discourses evolve at a different rate than strategic political relationships—giving the former a relatively timeless quality in comparison to the latter—should also be evident to even a casual student of political philosophy. This is not to say that these discourses do not change, and that new concepts cannot be generated and old ones modified according to experience. But the progress of discourse does not necessarily occur in direct correlation to sociopolitical change "on the ground." Because of these general observations, I argue that we should not rush to reduce culture to some underlying power or production structure, but should rather try to examine the interplay between culture and those structures.

Culture as System

We need to understand the relationships between ideas in order to understand how ideas shape human societies. If we view culture as a system of rules and norms rather than as a unitary variable, we can come up with richer descriptions of international systems and with new ways of analyzing systemic change. People are equipped to see patterns in culture as in nature, and patterns mean relationships between elements. To refer back to the four questions for delineating a political culture, one might find that elaboration of the answers would yield a coherent account of legitimate authority (or, an ideology),[39] but the answers might also yield contested or even contradictory propositions. For example, if the political unit is conceptualized as a society of distinct orders, would it not be possible to argue that each order should have a voice in the government of the realm? Would it not then follow that the locus of legitimate authority should be threefold, rather than unitary? Political culture is made up of ideas and propositions that may be related to one another in various ways. Two types of relationships are particularly significant to this analysis: the relationship of contradiction and that of complementarity. When the rules

[38] See especially Popper, "Of Clouds and Clocks."

[39] I use the term "ideology" to refer to an especially coherent cultural system.

and norms of a political culture contradict each other, this constitutes an opportunity for certain types of social action; the same can be said of complementarities.

By cultural contradictions I mean pairs of rules or norms that cannot both hold true at the same time. For example, to say that sovereignty is divisible and to say that it is indivisible is to articulate contradictory statements about sovereignty. By cultural complementarities I mean rules or norms that can be seen to follow from or logically implicate each other in a mutually reinforcing relationship. For example, in Chapter Three I argue that Enlightenment rationalism and absolutist rule had strongly complementary elements. A highly coherent cultural system based on tightly complementary propositions may be called an ideology, but as I use it the term "culture" is broader than the term "ideology," because culture need not imply coherence. Contradictions and complementarities within a cultural system present opportunities to, and constraints on, political actors, substantively shaping the conflicts and interactions among those actors.[40] Cultural contradictions may pose problems and cause tensions in actors' lives; they may also be exploited in conflict. Complementarities may facilitate alliances and coalitions; contradictions may facilitate contests and power struggles. Contradictions may also lead to new syntheses and resolutions without undermining the status quo.

While the notion of contradiction has a legacy in social and political theorizing, that of complementarity has received less attention. I have found, however, that complementarities can be significant in generating conditions for systemic change. Complementarities may affect political contests when competing groups seek allies by asserting ideological affinity with them (such as the alliance between the radical nobility and the bourgeoisie in the French Revolution). Such alliances may disrupt existing distributions of power and thus lay the groundwork for systemic change.

The complex of rules and norms making up political culture is not static; human beings produce culture as they produce material goods. Material goods themselves are "cultured" in that their meaning is derived from cultural frameworks. We normally think of culture as art, and this provides a good example of how material resources and rules and ideas intertwine in the production of a cultural "object." But history and politics are also "objects"—interpretations and meanings of events are distilled in cultural discourses shaping the identity of a society. Through discourse and the writing of history, political actors and writers distill their shared experiences of war, alliances, trade, and diplomacy into cultural rules and propositions. Sometimes these rules are formalized in interna-

[40] Archer, *Culture and Agency.*

tional law and institutions, sometimes they remain implicit. When new propositions are developed, they may be related to existing cultural rules, producing either new contradictions or new complementarities. Or new propositions may be integrated into existing frameworks, as examples or affirming evidence for existing rules and propositions. For example, initially the development of nuclear weapons was interpreted as an extension of existing ideas about air power, and only after some time did the notion that nuclear weapons had their own "logic" come to dominate the strategic discourse.[41]

Human productivity makes possible, but not necessary, the development of new rules that may elude incorporation into existing frameworks. If new rules arise, they will be related to older rules and it will become possible for political actors to act on those relationships, whether they are deemed to be contradictory or complementary. Further, new interpretations of existing rules may call status quo ruling arrangements into question, leading to a legitimacy contest. This is in essence what the American Revolution did with the English constitution. Contradictions and complementarities in political culture, however they emerge, allow for the emergence of new rivalries and new alliances.

I do not claim that culture does all the explanatory work. It has to be made use of, strategically, by interested actors. Interests and strategies matter. But I do claim that interests and strategies are not sufficient to explain the manner in which political authority is constituted, and political contests conducted. Nor can culture be reduced to interest or strategy. Hence understanding the cultural system is an essential component of understanding international politics; it is not merely a "residual" that cleans up the random and unimportant variations for which interests cannot account. Rather, cultural contradictions and complementarities are critical enabling conditions for interest-driven political conflict and collective action.

When cultural contradictions align with strategic conflicts in the form of hegemony and counterhegemony, the seeds of systemic change are produced. Cultural contradictions may present opportunities for disaffected political actors to take on the entire system; the cultural contradiction provides a language through which to articulate a conflict. It may thus facilitate a polarization in which each side articulates an opposing ideology. Whether these opposing ideologies clash through war or simply seek to demonstrate their superior survivability, it is through this cultural engagement that the seeds of systemic change are sown. The French at-

[41] Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), chap. 1.

tempted to impose their revolutionary vision on Europe by means of war, the Americans, by means of example.

But contradictions are not the only mechanisms enabling systemic change. Complementarities may also do so, in a distinct way. It is possible for political actors to expand their power by finding new allies. Such an expansion of power may create new dynamics in the system, propelling transformation by destabilizing the relationships that were contingent on an earlier distribution of power, before the coalition came into being. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, the ideological affinities between reform-minded eighteenth-century *philosophes* and resource-hungry absolutist monarchs facilitated an expansion of state power that then generated a reaction among social orders whose privileges were being curtailed by the rationalization and extension of absolutist power. The extension of state power in this period was facilitated by both parties' recognition that the purposes of certain *philosophes* and those of the monarch were complementary.

Relationships of contradiction and complementarity are crucial for understanding the dynamics of a cultural system, but how do we identify such relationships? The sociologist Margaret Archer has claimed that the law of contradiction is an ontological, universal condition; all human societies develop a binary code so that the notions of "B" and "not B" are understood to be in logical contradiction.[42] A scholar of a more postmodern orientation might argue that logic is socially constructed and variable rather than universal. This is an interesting and vital ontological debate, but I venture only a few comments on this issue here. Even though it may be true that human beings ultimately "construct" logical relationships between ideas, at any given time individual humans face a cultural system wherein logical relationships between ideas appear to the individual to have a reality apart from his or her activity. If I peruse the Charter of the United Nations, I need not engage in the activity of social construction (at least not consciously) to notice that some of its norms are in tension, and perhaps contradict, each other. This observation may be possible because I have been socialized into thinking a certain way, but nevertheless the reality of the Charter, and the logical relationships between its various articles, appear to me to exist apart from my constructing activity.

Although the above argument may be challenged, I need not definitively answer the question of whether human observers construct logical relationships between elements of a cultural system, or whether those logical relationships are ontologically autonomous of the observing subject, in order to determine whether specific rules in a cultural system were viewed as contradictory or complementary by the relevant actors at a

[42] Archer, *Culture and Agency.*

given time.[43] I believe that a pragmatic approach is adequate for explaining the puzzle that is the core of this book: the shift in the dominant form of legitimacy from monarchy to popular sovereignty. That said, there are epistemological and methodological issues raised by the question of whether to treat cultural contradictions and complementarities as entirely constructed by strategic actors, or as having some objective reality; I discuss these issues in the methodology section at the end of this chapter.

Culture Is Emergent and Constitutive

By arguing that political legitimacy is central to international culture, I risk presenting an "additive view" of that culture: should we merely add up the various modes of domestic legitimacy among the great powers to come up with international political culture? No: culture is not simply the sum of its parts. I derive the analytical reasons for this from the sociological discourse on agency and structure; these reasons are summed up by the concept of "emergence.[44]" To say that social systems have emergent properties is to say that they have causal impact on their constituent units as a result of the fact of the units' interaction and combination. This means that units do not simply influence one another, but by interacting they generate a system with reflexive causal powers. The causal impact of emergent properties is reflexive on the constituent units; social systems transcend and shape their components. Archer makes an analogous argument for culture as a system with emergent properties.[45] In using a cultural medium to pursue their interests, social actors are shaped by that cultural medium.

Just as Kenneth Waltz attempts to conceptualize the system's structure as having emergent properties, so constructivists argue that international culture has emergent properties.[46] Alexander Wendt has shown how certain cultural "logics," such as Hobbesian views of "war of all against all," generate self-fulfilling prophecies.[47] Similarly, Christian

[43] Margaret Archer, in *Culture and Agency*, advocates analyzing cultural systems in terms of their contradictions and complementarities. I follow her lead but do not accept all her propositions about the "structuring" of culture. I am grateful to Nicholas Onuf for his suggestions on how I might proceed regarding these issues.

[44] See Archer, *Culture and Agency*; Wendt, *Social Theory*; Nicholas Onuf, *The Republican Legacy in International Thought* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chap. 8.

[45] Archer, *Culture and Agency.*

[46] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Wendt, *Social Theory.*

[47] Wendt, *Social Theory*, chap. 6.

Reus-Smit has argued that societies of states have "constitutional structures," or "complexes of values that define state identity."[48] These characterizations of structure highlight its emergent properties; they go beyond an "additive" notion of structure (or in my case, culture) and emphasize its power to shape the interactions of the units and, in the related concept that structure (or culture) is constitutive, their very identities.[49]

Because of the concept of emergence, it becomes possible to argue that the system puts pressure on actors not just to conform behaviorally, but in how they construct their identities. This dovetails with but goes beyond Waltz's view that the system socializes its units.[50] His socialization dynamic is behavioral: states emulate successful practices of other states, conforming to structural pressure. But states experience pressure not only to emulate successful behavior, but also to organize their domestic structures in such a way as to coincide with the dominant legitimacy conceptions of the day. In the wake of the end of the cold war, dominant states and international institutions all generate pressure on developing states to democratize and to liberalize their economies. The argument that successful behavior should be emulated may even require an implicit legitimacy or identity dimension insofar as the resource requirements needed to engage in certain practices may also entail certain domestic structural conditions, which in turn hinge on specific notions of legitimate authority and state identity. This is evident, for example, in the International Monetary Fund's broadening focus on "governance" issues above and beyond its traditional concern with monetary and fiscal policy. Governance concerns may require restructuring the state, while restrictions on monetary policy may only require that existing institutions behave according to certain rules.

Most commentators and practitioners in the mid-eighteenth century believed that only monarchs could mobilize sufficient resources to successfully play the game of international politics. The successful behavior—taxation, raising armies, claiming and trading away chunks of territory—required a particular form of authority in order to be practiced and legitimated. Further, to be recognized in the courts or ministries of other states, a state needed to acquire the trappings of legitimacy; the early American wish to avoid the intrigues of European court politics by playing a different sort of diplomatic game—or no diplomatic game—was quickly snuffed out by the pressures of the system. These pressures pene-

[48] Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*, p. 30.

[49] I am not conflating structure and culture here, but rather am applying to culture the same argument made for the emergent and constitutive properties of structure. This follows Archer, *Culture and Agency.*

[50] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 74–77, 127–28.

trate not only behavior but legitimacy and identity conceptions. But because socialization is cultural, it is never completely deterministic. The constraints of the cultural system may be manipulated. Such manipulation may sow the seeds of systemic change by facilitating the development of alternative forms of legitimacy.

Although realists have tended to neglect norms and shared understandings or reduce them to power distributions, neoliberal institutionalists appear well poised to incorporate norms, rules, and institutions into their analyses of world politics. The institutionalist view that norms are used strategically to further interests also meshes with my discussion of the strategic manipulation of culture. But many constructivists find the neoliberal approach to norms too limiting in its neglect of the constitutive dimensions of norms. Wendt argues that neoliberal institutionalist understandings of rules and norms rely on an individualist, rationalist framework, while constructivism adopts a constitutive rather than solely instrumental approach to norms.[51] For neoliberals, norms are variables that actors take into account in their calculations of how best to pursue their interests; norms and institutions may even help shape their ideas about which interests to pursue at any given time.[52] Despite the latter proposition's toehold in the constitutive domain, for neoliberals norms and institutions form an external incentive structure within which individual actors maneuver; norms only shape interests by bounding rationality, not by constituting individuality.[53] Culture helps us get what we want, but it does not make us who we are.

In contrast, constructivists argue that even though almost any norm may be approached instrumentally, the identities and interests of actors are themselves constituted by the norms of the social system. This insight applies to systems in which actors have fairly regular interactions; it is after all possible to conceive of encounters between human agents—such as "first contact"—which are presocial, and thus not "cultured."[54] But the Euro-Atlantic states system surely counts as a social system in the constructivist sense of the term, and is thus cultured, or constituted by shared rules. The constructivist view attributes deeper significance to culture than does the neoliberal view. Culture actually helps make the actors who they are.

[51] Wendt, *Social Theory*. See also Onuf, *World of Our Making*; Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions*.

[52] Robert O. Keohane, "International Liberalism Reconsidered," in *The Economic Limits to Modern Politics*, ed. John Dunn (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*.

[53] This point has been well made by Wendt in "Anarchy Is What States Make of It."

[54] See Wendt, *Social Theory*, chap. 6.

This proposition is crucial to my argument that international political culture constitutes the terms of political legitimacy, because political legitimacy defines the relevant actors as such. If this were not the case, then collective political agents such as states should be understood as the instrumental vehicles for the interests of some more fundamental unit of society: usually some conglomeration of individuals (as in the liberal view) or a dominant class (the marxist view). In the liberal view, individual interests (class interests in the marxist variation) precede collective identities, and those interests explain the collective identities.[55] In the constructivist view, by contrast, collective identities shape interests. Whereas individualists see society as the product of preconstituted, interacting individuals, constructivists claim that society itself is analytically (and, considering the basic requirements of raising a child to maturity, also physically) prior to individuality, and plays a crucial role in constituting it. Thus while neoliberal views of international norms, insofar as they are rooted in methodological individualism, suggest that a system is the sum of its parts, constructivists see the system as more than the sum of its parts, and as having a role in shaping those parts.

Insofar as the culture of international politics consists in rules regarding and delimiting legitimate political authority, whether one takes a constructivist or a rationalist-liberal view rules makes a difference in how one understands the constitution of the system and systemic change. Individualist frameworks are highly appropriate for certain types of questions and cases.[56] But for the analysis of broad shifts in the parameters of political legitimacy a constructivist perspective, focusing on international political culture, is more fruitful. The Thomas Paine epigraph garnishing the introductory chapter suggests the difference: it was not an individual despot the French revolted against, but rather against the whole system of rule they thought despotic. Thus the revolutions were not challenging individual rulers and their interests; they were challenging the whole monarchical mode of collective identity, and presenting an alternative form of collective identity as preferable and more legitimate. Constructivists are better prepared than neoliberals to grasp this constitutive challenge, although neoliberal insights add important dimensions to constructivism in stressing the strategic use of cultural resources.[57]

Although it may be possible to defend a structural idealist position, asserting that culture contains within itself all the mechanisms for its evolution, I argue instead that we must analyze both the cultural system and how strategic actors manipulate and use cultural resources in order to

[55] See also the discussion in Hall, *National Collective Identity.*

[56] See the discussion in Wendt, *Social Theory*, chap. 4

[57] Barnett, "Culture, Strategy, and Foreign Policy Change."

understand systemic changes in legitimacy conceptions. To accomplish this we need to make two analytical moves that constructivist students of international relations have not yet satisfactorily made: (1) we need to understand the content of and relationships between ideas (in my view this entails moving toward an analysis of the culture of international politics); and (2) we need to pay more explicit attention to the instrumental uses of ideas, without thereby denying their constitutive nature. It is completely plausible to argue, for example, that a marriage contract creates or constitutes the roles of husband and wife, and that at the same time, particular individuals may enter that contract for strategic and instrumental reasons. Since the instrumental and constitutive interpretations of rules apply to different ontological realms (that is, to the institution of marriage in the former case and to the dynamics of a particular relationship in the latter), an observation of instrumentality does not negate the argument about the constitutive nature of some rules.[58]

Constructivists have stressed the constitutive nature of rules in order to distinguish their perspective from rationalist and instrumentalist views of ideas. However, the instrumental use of rules is what puts them into action, and opens the door to possible learning and transformation. To stretch the marriage example, the instrumental adoption of the rules of marriage by homosexual couples (so that they may claim the same legal benefits and rights as heterosexual married couples) may (if successful in the courts) contribute to a change in the institution itself. Thus no analytical framework for understanding international political culture and its transformation would be complete if it did not take into account the instrumental, strategic interaction of political actors.

Interplay between Culture and Strategy

System-transforming changes develop within a cultural medium; contradictions and complementarities in political culture provide opportunities for actors to mobilize in conflict or cooperation, in ways that may lead to systemic change. Culture thus shapes strategic relationships. But strategic relationships also shape culture. Rules about political legitimacy are likely to be elastic enough to be manipulated, perverted, and defied. Such manipulation is a source of creativity and change. Actors use the cultural medium in order to engage in political struggles, and in that engagement the medium itself may be transformed. Enlightenment ideas about legiti-

[58] For more on this, see Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions*; most of my observations on these issues are indebted to Kratochwil's pioneering work on rules in international relations.

macy were transformed in the domestic and international political struggles of the American and French revolutions. To fully theorize systemic change we need to understand not only how one form of legitimacy is related to another (the cultural dimension), but also how real actors deployed these different legitimacy conceptions in their power struggles. The idea is to understand the interplay of culture and strategy, not to reduce one to the other.

One example of the transformation brought on by the American and French revolutions is the change in the concept of republicanism from a mode of rule based on balancing the three constitutive "orders" of society to a mode of rule based on the protection of the individual rights and liberties of equal human beings. The deployment of republican principles, first in the American and then in the French context, made this shift possible. Another example is the French discovery that mass armies and nationalism were potentially stronger and more viable than the professional militaries with noble officer corps of the old regime.[59] The changes in military strategy were facilitated by changes in legitimacy conceptions, because promotion according to merit rather than class (for example) required a revolution in thinking about the rights of man and the sources of political legitimacy. In the deployment of these new principles in war, people began to realize the significance of the cultural changes.

The primary mechanisms of systemic change explored in this book may be thought of as legitimacy contests, or self-conscious confrontations between an actor or actors espousing principles of legitimacy contradicting the dominant principles of the time. The cultural system will facilitate a legitimacy contest if it contains contradictory conceptions of legitimate authority, but strategic actors must recognize and be capable of acting on those contradictions in order to make such a contest happen. A legitimacy contest may also be thought of as a confrontation between hegemony and counterhegemony, if the term "hegemony" is understood as a dominant form of rule rather than as a simple power distribution.[60] "Wars of position," or wars that do not involve a challenge to the legitimacy of a particular form of authority, are not system-transforming wars. A hegemonic confrontation, or a clash of legitimacy principles, suggests a deeper sort of contest: a contest over what form of rule constitutes the most viable, competitive unit in the international system. For a hegemonic war to be a truly hegemonic contest in this sense, it must entail competing notions about political legitimacy—it must be a legitimacy contest. France's revolutionary wars were a legitimacy contest, especially and most importantly

[59] See Barry Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security* 18 (Fall 1993): 80–124.

[60] See Onuf, *World of Our Making*, pp. 206–219.

at their outset. The cold war can be seen as a legitimacy contest, as can World War II (but not World War I). But a hegemonic legitimacy contest need not take the form of war (arguably, the cold war did not); it can instead be a slow contest of attrition and competitive demonstration of viability.

International relations theory is only beginning to develop adequate analytical frameworks to tackle the question of how changes in the dominant form of political legitimacy in the international system come about. Partly this is because many theorists do not regard such changes as important. For neorealists, the continuity of power struggle in the international system renders "domestic" phenomena such as legitimacy, which is associated with regime type, unimportant.[61] The most compelling realist theory to address the issue of systemic change is hegemonic war theory, but the research presented here demonstrates that such theory is too blunt a tool to capture the complexities of the actual transformations studied.[62] The French revolutionary wars may be thought of as hegemonic wars, but since the "conservative" powers were victorious, a realist would have to conclude that their outcome was restoration rather than systemic transformation—an interpretation I challenge in Chapters Five and Six. The American Revolution would of course not count as a source of systemic change from the perspective of hegemonic war theory, but I argue in Chapter Four that it did spark specific systemic transformations.

Among the theories that view forms of legitimacy as relevant to the system, democratic peace theory demonstrates a connection between democratic regime types and peace.[63] But it does not theorize about how democracy becomes the dominant regime type in the system, except to imply that progress toward democracy is historically inevitable. Thus liberal theory neglects to adequately study the messy process by which the democratic form of legitimacy has gained ascendancy in the system.

According to some critics, mainstream theories of international relations are not well equipped to conceptualize and explain systemic change

[61] The classic work in this vein remains Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

[62] The classic statement is Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[63] Examples of this vast literature include Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80 (December 1986): 1151–69; John M. Owen IV, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post–Cold War World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); James Lee Ray, *Democracy and International Conflict: An Evaluation of the Democratic Peace Proposition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995); Michael E. Brown, Sean Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996); Miriam Fendius Elman, ed., *Paths to Peace: Is Democracy the Answer?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

of any sort.[64] Recent historically informed constructivist work has attempted to tackle the issue. Reus-Smit demonstrates that variations in anarchic systems are discernible through analysis of different systems' constitutional principles, which are linked to shared conceptions of the moral purpose of the state.[65] Rodney Bruce Hall has shown that international relations in a system of dynastic territorial monarchies is structurally distinct from international relations in a system of popularly legitimated nation-states.[66] His focus is on how changes in collective identity—from "territorial sovereign" to "national sovereign" collective identity—lead to changes in the rules and norms of the international system. But while both Reus-Smit and Hall provide compelling demonstrations of the variability of anarchic systems, neither provides a theoretical purchase on the question of how or why the variations come about. For Hall, the answers to this question are complex and historically contingent; his concern is with the consequences rather than with the causes of these transformations; much the same concern permeates Reus-Smit's analysis.

One notable contribution to international relations theory that addresses the issue of systemic transformation directly is Hendrik Spruyt's *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*. Spruyt analyzes how the sovereign state came to dominate over other forms of political authority, namely, the city-league, city-state, and empire. He analyzes a period where sovereignty was but one form of political authority in competition with other forms, and delimits the reasons for the success of sovereignty vis-à-vis the others, on something of an evolutionary selection model. He argues, against scholars such as Charles Tilly, that the key selection mechanism was not war but rather the capacity to make credible commitments, which was optimized under the institutional structure of the sovereign state as compared with empire, city-state, or city-league.[67]

My own focus is similar to Spruyt's in the sense that I concentrate on the origins and mechanisms, rather than the consequences, of a transformation of the international system. But the transformation I study is not of sovereignty to something else, but of different modes of legitimating and conditioning sovereignty. Further, I am dealing with a context in

[64] John Gerard Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); R.B.J. Walker, "Realism, Change, and International Political Theory," *International Studies Quarterly* 31 (March 1987): 65–86; Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System," *International Organization* 48 (Spring 1994): 215–47; Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It."

[65] Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*.

[66] Hall, *National Collective Identity*.

[67] Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*.

which one mode of legitimacy was already dominant, and hence the question is not which of many alternatives will be selected, but rather how are new alternatives generated within a hegemonic system. Thus I am less concerned with evolutionary selection of alternative forms and more concerned with the genesis of viable alternative forms. There are elements of selection in my argument, which will become evident as the empirical cases are laid out, but the primary focus is on the genesis and survival of viable alternatives.

Strategic Behavior

Strategic behavior factors into my analysis of systemic change, insofar as it is shaped by and shapes culture. Most studies of strategic behavior in international relations draw two sets of boundaries, and factors outside of these boundaries are not given sustained analytical attention. First, actors' interests are seen as constant and, more narrowly though less often, preferences are assumed to be rank-ordered and transitive. Thus the complex bundle of drives and desires that makes up an "actor" is simplified and rationalized. The realist will tell us that states seek security above all other goods; this is unobjectionable, but what exactly constitutes security at any given place and time? Second, incentive structures are treated as exogenous and unalterable by human will. Incentive structures do require careful study in order to ascertain the proper strategic moves, but international relations theorists often treat these structures as objective necessities rather than analyzing them in terms of their historical contingency and social character.

The basic constructivist critique of realist and rationalist approaches to strategic interaction is that we cannot conceptualize relationships of power and interest without acknowledging at least some rudimentary framework of shared understandings or rules that make such relationships (even conflictual ones) meaningful and possible: this is the "social" or cultural element of the international system.[68] But constructivists' "discovery" of the socially constructed nature of international politics also threatens to conflate the strategic and the cultural; where realists see the structure of the international system solely in material configurations of power and interests, constructivists risk seeing the structure almost exclusively in the system's ideational content, or what I am calling culture.

I agree with constructivists such as Nicholas Onuf and Wendt that the structure of the international system cannot be understood without reference to ideas or rules, and that rules are constitutive of social order

[68] Wendt, *Social Theory*; Onuf, *World of Our Making*.

in international relations.[69] In analytically distinguishing culture and strategic relationships, however, I follow Archer's analytical dualism (rather than Anthony Giddens's "duality of structure") in arguing that we should be able to theorize about the interplay of interests and ideas rather than conflating these phenomena.[70] This holds even if we adhere to the proposition that identity conceptions constitute interests. Although there may be a plurality of ideas and interests at play in any given sociopolitical structure, the dominant legitimacy conceptions and rules constituting that structure will favor some sorts of interests and modes of action over others, and thus may be thought of as being in a distinct relationship to any given interest. In other words, dominant, institutionalized ideas about legitimate authority will stand in varying relationships to the interests of specific actors; some interests will be supported by these ideas while others will be marginalized, neglected, or discounted.

Because at any given time a dominant political culture has a specific relationship to the interests of actors in the system, favoring some and excluding others, culture and interests should not be completely conflated. This should be acknowledged even by constructivists who view rules as deeply constitutive of actor identities, and hence interests. But how is it possible to have interests opposed to culture if culture constitutes identities and interests? This is where the concept of hegemony, or a dominant culture, is useful, because it implicitly acknowledges the possibility of other cultural forms—Raymond Williams uses the terms "residual" and "emergent"[71]—which constitute interests outside of those served by the dominant culture. What we experience in the world is a layering of constitutive ideas, where some are dominant or hegemonic, constituting the rules of authority, and others are marginalized or simply neglected by the dominant culture. The latter may be discounted as "merely" subjective or particularistic, not worthy of public acknowledgment or protection.

But marginalized ideas may nevertheless shape the interests of marginalized actors. Nonhegemonic ideas may be residues of previously powerful cultural forms, or they may be new and without institutional foundation (emergent). I further argue below that even within a hegemonic culture, the existence of contradictions creates a space for contestation and for the conceptualization of counterhegemonic identities and inter-

[69] Onuf makes a good case for the term "rules," which has more specific connotations than the term "ideas." Onuf, *World of Our Making*.

[70] See Margaret Archer, "Morphogenesis versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action," *British Journal of Sociology* 33, 4 (December 1982): 455–83, for the critique of Giddens; and Archer, *Culture and Agency*, chap. 9 for the relationship between structure and culture.

[71] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*.

ests. In any case, because actors may experience their interests and hegemonic culture as distinct or disjointed—for example, experiencing the neglect of their particular interests by the public domain—their strategic relationships and behavior should be analyzed in relation to their culture, not conflated with it. That is why the interplay of culture and strategy is worth studying. Because of the insight that ideas constitute identities and hence interests, constructivist theorists risk conflating culture and strategy.

Strategic relationships may be culturally influenced both from the "inside" of states, in terms of the constitution of state interests, and from the "outside," in terms of the social construction of world politics. Further, since the medium of culture is somewhat fluid, it stands to reason that the discourses pertaining to the construction of state interests from the "inside" have some distinct linkages to the norms and expectations constituting international society itself. This line of thinking can apply to a wide range of policy choices, from the choice of ministers to issues of economic policy to questions about basic structures of governance. Domestic discussions of how to treat these issues may be influenced by "foreign" debates and concerns, and vice versa. For my purposes, the most highly charged and potentially system-transforming issues have to do with arguments about fundamental conceptions of legitimate authority.[72]

Legitimacy Contests

Contestation over legitimate authority is a strategic struggle, insofar as legitimacy is a component of power. But the stakes in legitimacy contests involve much more than is suggested by the idea of strategic struggle; they involve more than the aggrandizement or interests of a particular actor. Legitimacy contests are struggles over the terms by which future power holders will be defined and accepted. An anticolonial struggle is both a power struggle and a legitimacy contest, as is a revolution. Legitimacy contests may have a deep impact on the system insofar as they set the rules shaping political struggles over time, rather than merely shaping a particular distribution that can be challenged as soon as any actor musters sufficient resources. The outcome of a legitimacy contest may be exclusion of a particular type of actor (such as the nobility, for example) from engaging in the power struggle in the future. Legitimacy contests have constitutive effects rather than simply instrumental ones: not only would the outcome of a struggle to (for example) characterize the Third Estate as the

[72] For a penetrating analysis of the process of argumentation and its impact on world politics, see Thomas Risse, " 'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, 1 (Winter 2000): 1–39.

National Assembly of France potentially give its members more power, it would also define the process and criteria by which future power holders would be identified. The legitimacy contest is a contest over the terms of authority, and not just over who at that moment will claim power. Legitimacy contests may also define the rank ordering of interests within the political unit (for example, will foreign trade or self-sufficiency be a priority?), as well as determine who counts as a legitimate player in the game of international relations (for example, should the revolutionary envoys be accepted as legitimate negotiators for France?).

In a legitimacy contest, the very identities of the players are at stake—will the colonies remain colonies, or become a state; will the First Estate continue to be a political force—as is the rank order of their preferences. Descriptive studies of the constitution and transformations of collective identity are emerging in current scholarship.[73] But what generalizations are possible regarding the manner in which political culture, as a system of rules regarding legitimate authority, facilitates systemic change through strategic interaction? To address this question we need to look more closely at the concept of hegemony.

Hegemony

The concept of hegemony is one well-established way of integrating the cultural and strategic dimension: hegemony implies both power configuration and a certain culture—or shared knowledge structure—which reinforces that power configuration. But with its focus on material power transitions as sources of change, the concept of hegemony makes it difficult to account for changes in the system that have endogenous rather than exogenous sources. My case studies show that hegemonic systems may change without having one hegemonic state replace another, and that transformative dynamics may germinate within the hegemonic culture itself. In most theories of hegemony, the notion of coherence between material and institutional conditions and culture makes it difficult to assess idea-induced change. In contrast, I argue that the very incoherence and complexity of a culture, even a hegemonic culture, is a resource for strategic actors seeking to change either the culture or, more ambitiously, the distribution of power with which it is associated.

Realist, liberal, and Gramscian scholars have all conceptualized hegemony in different ways. Some students of international regimes argue

[73] Notable recent forays are Hall, *National Collective Identity*; Reus-Smit, "The Constitutional Structure of International Society" and *Moral Purpose of the State*; Michael N. Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order* (New York: Columbia

that even though regimes may reflect the power of a hegemon, they may endure after the hegemon's power has waned, and thus need to be understood as more than mere reflections of a distribution of power.[74] This reinforces the suggestion that hegemonic order is possible without a hegemonic state. The idea that international society is itself a hegemonic order, and the idea that a hegemonic state creates order, are not necessarily competing hypotheses. But the relationship between these propositions is ambiguous, because the degree to which a hegemonic state is necessary to the institution and maintenance of a hegemonic order has not been satisfactorily resolved.

We may address some of these ambiguities by arguing that hegemonic states are themselves nested in, and partially constituted by, the very orders that presumably depend on their power. The hegemonic state does not stand outside the hegemonic order, but is subject to it. The hegemonic state does have a special role within a hegemonic order, namely that of leader or "great power" rather than that of follower or weaker power. But leadership and great power status are roles contingent on the broader social order. The fact that the hegemonic state does not stand outside the hegemonic order provides one analytical justification for treating the concept of hegemony as transcending, and perhaps not even requiring, the rule of a hegemonic state. In other words, it is feasible to treat hegemony as an aspect of stable social order per se, and not entirely contingent on a hierarchical distribution of power with a single state at the top.[75]

This perspective allows us to see a system of several great powers as hegemonic, insofar as great powers have leadership roles in the system and those roles are constituted by the culture of the system itself.[76] Great powers do not stand "outside" the hegemonic order, simply imposing order on the weak, but acquire and sustain their own identities as a function of that order. In a realist world, however, absent a single hegemon of preponderant power we would be hard-pressed to see culture as anything more than a temporary by-product of a coalition of great powers. Since competitive balancing dynamics would soon take over, presumably the culture would easily unravel. But alternative views more sympathetic

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University Press, 1998); Legro, "Whence American Internationalism"; and Risse, "Communicative Action."

[74] See especially Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Stephen D. Krasner, ed., *International Regimes* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981); Andreas Hasenclever, Peter Mayer, and Volker Rittberger, *Theories of International Regimes* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. chap. 5.

[75] See Onuf, *World of Our Making*, pp. 206–219.

[76] For an interesting discussion of "dominant powers" and "great powers," see Wight, *Power Politics*, chaps. 2 and 3.

to the notion of several leaders exist; studies of great power diplomacy during the Concert of Europe, for example, strongly imply the notion of hegemony despite the presence of several great powers rather than a single hegemon. Competitive dynamics and even limited wars between the great powers may be part of the hegemonic order, but such dynamics are nested within a broader set of shared understandings as to the "rules of the game."[77]

I argue in Chapter Three that the old regime of eighteenth-century Europe was a hegemonic order, though it lacked a single hegemon. International relations today is also a hegemonic order, arguably with a single hegemon. But each order posits a specific form of political authority as legitimate, and the rules of the game of international relations are conditioned by these authority conceptions.[78] The assertion that cultural legitimacy conceptions constitute a dimension of hegemony raises new issues for students of international relations. A dominant form of political authority—because of its perceived efficacy—will facilitate socialization pressures even when dominant states are not actively pressuring others to emulate them. The cultural dimensions of a hegemonic order themselves have symbolic efficacy that may transcend the interests and intentions of the dominant powers. For example, possession of nuclear weapons is a symbol of great power status in the current system, and although the major powers want to stop the spread of these weapons, this has not eliminated the socialization pressures on at least a few states seeking great power status. A cultural view of hegemony takes us beyond the interests and intentions of the dominant powers in the system, even while allowing us to acknowledge that a hegemonic culture constitutes the dominant powers as such.

Beyond the literature on hegemonic stability and regimes, Gramscians such as Robert Cox and Stephen Gill address the issue of international hegemony in a way that is highly relevant to the arguments herein. In a seminal essay, Cox defined hegemony as a particular configuration, or historic bloc, wherein we find a "coherent conjunction or fit between a configuration of material power, the prevalent collective image of world order . . . and a set of institutions which administer the order."[79] Although it is possible to have a hegemony without a hegemon, a hegemonic culture does rest on a particular power configuration at any given time. But even

[77] See especially Schroeder, *Transformation*.

[78] Hall, *National Collective Identity*, makes the case for the relationship between collective identity conceptions (or what I would call modes of legitimacy) and international rules; I agree with much of his characterization of the linkages. The empirical chapters of this book show the linkages more precisely.

[79] Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States, and World Orders," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Keohane, p. 223 and passim.

Gramscian hegemonic theory treats the cultural and strategic elements of hegemony as a coherent and indissoluble whole, thus inhibiting our ability to theorize about the interplay of these elements.

What is missing in the Gramscian view is the sense that opportunities for polarization and dissent, and even of a counterhegemonic movement, may be nested within the cultural system itself.[80] Insofar as the hegemonic cultural system may contain contradictions, the seeds of possible dissent exist within the system itself. Further, if political agents find new complementarities between elements of the hegemonic cultural system and their own previously ignored or excluded ideas about authority or interest, dynamics may ensue that will put strains on the system from within, and possibly break it down (though alternatively they may reinforce it by bringing in new allies).

The hegemony of the European old regime rested on shared understandings about how the "game" of interstate relations was to be played and about the identities of the major players. Such rules were also rooted in the aspects of domestic structure that the great powers had in common.[81] Was this a form of the "coherent conjunction" posited by Gramscians? The old regime had a material base—namely, landed wealth—but the "coherence" between that base and its cultural expressions cannot simply be posited; rather, it should be investigated. Certainly one could link the territorial acquisitiveness of dynastic monarchs to the fact that land was the source of wealth for the aristocracy, for example.[82] Moreover, the concern with honor and prestige that characterized countless diplomatic maneuvers and deals may be linked to the estates-based social order.[83] These and numerous other observations support the notion of coherent conjunction between culture and material/institutional base. Problems arise, however, when we think about the changes taking place in the European culture at the close of the eighteenth century. Enlightenment thought did not easily "fit" with old regime structures and practices (though it was to some degree suitably adapted and manipulated by certain monarchs).[84] Further, the power base of the aristocracy was not the first thing to change in the eighteenth century. Arno Mayer—a marxist historian—even makes the argument that the old regime and its land-

[80] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*.

[81] See Mlada Bukovansky, "The Altered State and the State of Nature: The French Revolution and International Politics," *Review of International Studies* 25, 2 (April 1999): 197–216.

[82] See Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), for this analysis.

[83] See Chapter Three.

[84] See especially Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Oxford: Berg, 1988).

based hold on political power endured all the way to World War I, when it essentially self-destructed.[85]

What to make, then, of changes in political culture (fueled by the Enlightenment) that appear to occur without concomitant dramatic changes in the social order and material power base of estates and dynasties? And what to make of the related claim (albeit one referring to "domestic" politics), made by several noted historians of the French Revolution, that it was the transformation in political culture and not necessarily the rise of the bourgeoisie in and of itself that facilitated the restructuring of French society?[86] The Gramscian emphasis on coherent fit between material conditions, institutions, and ideologies seems empirically plausible and necessary for the identification of an actual historical hegemony, but analytically it makes it difficult to assess the relative weight of any one of the three factors in its own right, or to analyze possible variations in the "mix" of these factors.

That said, ideas are clearly rooted in material conditions at any moment in time. What we should reject in the historical materialist mode of analysis, following Archer's critique,[87] are two things: (1) the notion that the relationship between ideas and material conditions is necessarily one of base-superstructure, wherein base is determinant; and (2) the notion that the "fit" between base and superstructure is necessarily coherent. The dissonance between a cultural form and material conditions may be, as Karl Marx himself pointed out, a source of dialectical transformation. Still, from the historical materialist point of view the source of dissonance usually seems to come from changes in material conditions, which then find themselves in opposition to prevailing cultural frameworks. It is difficult, from a historical materialist perspective, to attribute major societal changes to tensions or contradictions within the cultural framework itself, although in my view that is precisely what should be investigated.

The Gramscian argument about hegemony as a "coherent conjunction" is thus useful for characterizing in a descriptive way the culture and sociopolitical relations of a particular international system, at a particular time. However, this descriptive proposition about coherence should not be extended into a causal claim about how a hegemonic order is sustained or altered over time. The neo-Gramscian view of hegemony needs a better account of how strategic struggle arises within a hegemonic system. If material base, institutions, and ideology all fit snugly to sustain hegemony, then hegemony should be self-sustaining, no strategic dissent from within should be possible, and we should only expect change via exoge-

[85] Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime*.
[86] See especially Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class*.
[87] Archer, *Culture and Agency*, chap. 3.

nous shock. This approach does not adequately explain the cases studied here; the evidence clearly shows that the revolutions were a part of European society and culture and not exogenous to it.

Continuity and Transformation

The discussion thus far has laid the foundation for thinking in general terms about the role of culture and strategy in systemic continuity and transformation. Continuity occurs when a hegemonic order—an order in which one mode of legitimacy is dominant—sustains itself, not only through socialization, but also through either suppression or neutralization of the stresses and strains brought on by any cultural contradictions existing or emerging within that order. For example, although Enlightenment thought had the potential to shake up and polarize dynastically legitimated monarchies, some ruling elites (including Frederick II of Prussia, Catherine the Great of Russia, and Joseph II of Austria) managed to suppress those elements that contradicted their own legitimacy, while playing up the complementarities between Enlightenment thought and more traditional ways of legitimating dynastic rule. This point is developed empirically in Chapter Three. Further, if legitimacy contests form part of the reason for an actual war, as was the case in the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon, then the victorious parties may strategically seek to suppress the ideologies associated with the losing side, as was the case with the Holy Alliance's stance toward the "liberalism" represented by the French Revolution. Contradictions within a hegemonic order may be strategically suppressed, in other words, and the presence of contradiction is not in and of itself a sufficient condition for initiating systemic change.

But contradictions are not always suppressed successfully, nor are challenging ideologies always adequately contained, even if their proponents lose a war. From a strictly materialist or power-reductionist view, a definitive event such as a lost war should ensure that challenging legitimacy conceptions are adequately suppressed, but the historical record indicates otherwise. Counterhegemonic legitimacy conceptions have a greater chance of presenting serious, system-transforming challenges under certain conditions.

I define systemic change as a transformation of the parameters of political legitimacy. This means that the identities of the units in the system begin to change, and that the rules governing their interaction are also transformed. Systemic change is rare, but I argue that the shift from monarchical to popular sovereignty is a systemic change because it involved a change in the fundamental legitimacy (and hence identity) conceptions modifying sovereignty. Sovereignty came to be institutionalized

differently over time, with emphasis on the people rather than on the monarch as the true holder of sovereignty. Such a sovereignty conception need not only legitimate democratic regimes, but may also legitimate certain forms of nationalist or communist authoritarianism, insofar as authoritarian leaders claim to derive their power from the people. Thus theories of liberal progress toward democracy and rule of law do not adequately explain the sometimes convulsive dynamics and perverse effects of the evolution of European civilization, although in all fairness Kant did argue that the path toward perpetual peace would be convulsive and indirect. Even so, I believe that it would be premature and perhaps obfuscating to adopt a Kantian teleology before attending to the sorts of cultural mechanisms outlined in this chapter.

A cultural conception of hegemony, as already discussed, goes beyond both hegemonic war theory and neo-marxist dialectics in identifying sources of systemic change. The confrontation between hegemonic and counterhegemonic claims about legitimate rule may occur in either the international arena only, with a challenging state presenting a united front to an international system organized around competing principles, or in both the domestic and the international arenas (that is, the legitimacy struggle may be conducted within the state and internationally). The most obvious possibility is that of a single state developing a new mode of legitimacy that enhances its power enough to shake up the entire system. France during the Revolution appears to be just such a case, but the dynamic was not so simple. My research suggests that legitimacy contests are more destabilizing to the system when they cut across state boundaries and mobilize groups within and across states, than when they are contained within state boundaries.[88] This cross-cutting dynamic makes the legitimacy contest more destabilizing, because what ensues is not just interstate conflict but also domestic strife, which has the potential to destabilize the power base of several states in the system. This problem was certainly recognized in eighteenth-century monarchs' fears of "revolutionary contagion" from France. Similar dynamics occur in the contemporary world, perhaps with greater frequency, as transnational social movements develop the capacity to challenge the legitimacy of existing governments.[89] But these struggles cannot simply be understood along class lines, and states factor into the dynamic as far more than the vehicles of class interests.

[88] See also Gregory F. Gause, "Sovereignty, Statecraft, and Stability in the Middle East," *Journal of International Affairs* 45 (Winter 1992): 441–69.

[89] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998); Paul Wapner, *Environmental Activism and Civic World Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

Although the cases I examine involve a system in which states were the major actors, the forces influencing international politics cut across states even then. These factors included not only the spread of markets but also the dissemination of culture (which is intimately related, but not reducible to, the spread of markets). The Enlightenment was a Europe-wide phenomenon, and as such no one state could be said to ultimately represent its ideas. Rather, Enlightenment thought and the reactions to it generated tensions and new alliances that cut across state boundaries by aligning certain social groups with each other across boundaries, even as more traditional state alliances continued to form and break apart. Although transnational alignments ultimately proved far weaker than national allegiances in this period, the case studies demonstrate that domestic divisions were crucial elements of the systemic transformation, and that transnational ideological alignments contributed, at times critically, to those domestic divisions.

Although cultural contradictions provide obvious fault lines around which a society can fracture and transform, cultural complementarities may also trigger strategic dynamics leading to legitimacy contests. If emerging cultural ideas facilitate the strategic alignment between groups that did not previously cooperate, the balance of power in a society may shift enough to generate impetus for change. For example, the French case shows how the Enlightenment facilitated an alliance between enlightened nobility and bourgeoisie that shifted the balance of power in France away from the court and the strict monarchists. This realignment in turn paved the way for the more radical changes that unfolded in the course of the Revolution.

We need also to consider how the example of a successful revolutionary state might become a symbol or icon for others to emulate, which is another important component of systemic change. This is perhaps the most straightforward dynamic examined in this book, and fits fairly neatly within the realist insight that successful practices, such as the mass army, will be emulated and thus selected at the systemic level. I challenge this perspective on two counts, and develop this challenge in some detail in Chapter Five, on the French Revolution, but will preview it here. First, the realist model may fail to explain how the novel practice (such as the mobilization of "the nation" for war on the scale of the *levée en masse*) came to emerge in the first place.[90] I argue that the powerful nationalist ideology that emerged in the French Revolution was made possible through the development and strategic deployment of Enlightenment culture and that such a development could not have been initially engineered

[90] In this I confront a rival interpretation of nationalism and the mass army found in Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power."

by heads of state, but rather came from below as a challenge to those very heads of state. Eventually, nationalism became instrumental to those in power, but initially it challenged them. Thus culture is not merely instrumental to state power, but may constitute and reconstitute its very foundations. Second, the type of transformation engendered by the successful practices of the Revolution was not just a shift in the balance of power in the system, but rather the beginning of a more fundamental transformation in the basic conditions for political legitimacy throughout the Euro-Atlantic world. Finally, the emulation process did not occur in the way that realist theory would predict—the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary wars saw more attempts at restoration of the old order than emulation of the new. I discuss this further in the Conclusion.

Although studying the political culture of the international system in the manner suggested here does not in and of itself generate definitive, deductive hypotheses about the conditions under which systemic change will occur, it does lend insight into necessary if not sufficient preconditions for systemic change. Further, the case studies seek to demonstrate that attending to the cultural dimension takes us a step beyond the currently dominant modes of understanding systemic change: realist selection models, hegemonic war theory, and theories of liberal progress.

Methodology

The complexity of the concept of political culture, with its constitutive dimension (that is, the fact that it helps constitute the identities of political actors as well as being instrumental to their interests), leads me to adopt an interpretive methodology. Much of my thinking on the international system and on culture is drawn from sociological, historical-sociological, and sociologically inspired constructivist international relations theory. But I do not claim to systematically test hypotheses derived from that theoretical orientation. Rather, the value-added of the approach adopted here lies in my development of a substantive argument about the rise of popular sovereignty as a viable form of legitimacy to rival dynastic monarchy, and the impact that this had on the rules and norms of international politics. Drawing in a primarily inductive way on my study of the period, I make a general argument about the role of political culture in shaping strategic interaction and setting the groundwork for systemic change. I muster evidence to show that liberal, realist, and historical materialist explanations for the eighteenth-century transformations do not fare as well as the approach adopted here, which focuses on the interaction of culture and strategy. I thus compare my argument with arguments derived

from competing, primarily materialist, theoretical approaches and argue that the cultural approach best fits the historical evidence.

I draw primarily on two bodies of historical evidence: history of ideas, on the one hand, and political and diplomatic history, on the other. Delving into intellectual history, I map out the elements of Enlightenment and old regime culture pertaining specifically to the conditions of political legitimacy and the way in which sovereigns are expected to interact with one another (that is, identities and rules of the game). I accomplish this by surveying the political discourses of the time and by assessing various subsequent interpretations. It does not require a great deal of digging to find such material, since European and U.S. literature was teeming with political tracts and commentary throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The danger for the analyst is to concentrate too much on one author or group of authors to the neglect of others who may also have been influential; constructivists in general need to be careful about how they survey the "ideas" that they argue are so important to international politics.

With respect to the period studied here, for example, some scholars have argued that the recent popularity of "republicanism" as a paradigm explaining the character of political thought in this period (and other periods as well) has produced biases in our characterization of such thought.[91] To acquire a balanced view, then, it is not enough to delve headlong into the works of a Montesquieu or a Thomas Paine. One should also become familiar with the work of the intellectual historians of the period, and the controversies that animate them. Such work brings to light authors who may be less known now but were well known in their own day.

On the basis of my survey of the intellectual history, I make judgments about the relationships of contradiction or complementarity between key propositions about legitimacy animating the discourses of the time. Concepts such as the source of sovereignty, the identity of the nation, the desirability of international commerce, the degree to which the people of one nation had cosmopolitan ties and obligations to those of another, the sources and status of international law, and so on were all being debated and contested during the eighteenth century. Propositions about these matters can be related to each other in terms of their tensions and affinities. To do so I consider the relationships between key legitimacy propositions, not just in terms of my own view of their logical complementarities or contradictions, but also by studying how these ideas were interpreted

[91] Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79, 1 (June 1992): 11–38; Joyce Appleby, "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43, 1 (January 1986): 20–34.

at the time. A methodological hazard here derives from one's ontological position about the status of logic.

As noted earlier, I draw on the sociological theory of Margaret Archer to flesh out the notion of culture as a system analyzable according to the relations of contradiction and complementarity among its central propositions. It is this complex, systemic aspect of culture that makes it a force both in producing systemic continuity—in constructing and reinforcing hegemony—on the one hand, and in generating conditions for systemic change, on the other. An important methodological issue, then, is how to identify contradictory and complementary elements of culture, for it is the relationship between contradictory or competing ideas and propositions in a cultural system that renders it possible for political actors to align themselves in specific ways in their strategic interactions.

The methodological issue easily becomes an ontological one: do logical relationships between relevant elements of the cultural system (in the cases studied here, beliefs about political legitimacy) exist independently of the will and activity of political actors, or are such relationships completely contingent on their construction by specific actors? At stake in this issue is the relative autonomy of the cultural system from its strategic manipulation. Ideas are always subject to strategic manipulation, but at the same time some ideas help constitute and frame the very identities of the actors and the broader environment in which they operate. This dual nature of culture makes it difficult to treat with a single methodology. Treating culture only as a strategic variable makes it difficult to treat culture as a constitutive factor shaping actor identities and environments. Yet treating culture as a purely constitutive phenomenon makes it difficult to analyze its strategic manipulation by actors, thus inhibiting, I argue, our ability to grasp how culture changes (since strategic manipulation of culture may be a source of cultural change). A dualistic approach to culture may be the answer.[92]

The dualism I have adopted leans toward the constitutive approach, which is in line with my constructivist theoretical orientation, but does not neglect the instrumental use and manipulation of culture. To avoid rendering a static picture of the system and its culture, I identify fault lines in that culture which make change possible—these are the contradictions and complementarities in the cultural system. In my view, the cultural system appears to actors as an objective reality, but one that they are more or less free to interpret. What does this imply about the ontological status of contradictions and complementarities? Do logical relationships be-

[92] For an exemplary attempt to adopt a dual methodology that takes into account both facets of culture, see Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture*.

tween propositions exist independently of the knowing subjects, or are they manufactured?[93]

Although I cannot enter fully into the theoretical debate on this question, I do consider its methodological implications. I will focus on the problem of identifying a complementarity by way of example, but the same methodological problems arise in trying to identify contradictions. Archer posits the existence of two types of complementarities in cultural systems. "Concomitant" complementarities are those in which a relation between two ideas is one of logical coherence and mutual implication: "invoking A also ineluctably evokes B, but since the B upon which this A depends is consistent with it, then B buttresses adherence to A."[94] The other type of complementarity Archer addresses is not treated in her analysis of the cultural system per se, but rather in her discussion of sociocultural activity that has an impact on the cultural system. In this arena, a "contingent" complementarity is a situation in which a cultural actor finds or adopts into one cultural system a logically consistent idea derived from an unrelated system. As an example, Archer points to Peter the Great and Catherine I "inspecting Europe for naval, military or educational techniques which would match Russian resources and promote Westernization."[95] In other words, social actors plunder other cultures for ideas consistent with those that shape their own context, in order to promote certain forms of development that are presumably advantageous to their strategic position. The logical relationship between these ideas is not the key issue, but rather their ability to "fit" with the existing aims and interests of the strategic actor.

While a contingent complementarity is constructed by strategic actors, Archer argues that a concomitant complementarity is a property of the cultural system per se, and depends on logical relations between propositions. The status of logic is independent of the activities of social actors; a logical relationship is an objective condition. The logical relationships between the ideas may actually constrain how actors think and behave. Although it is possible to hold contradictory ideas in one's own mind, this does generate certain strains. Political groups may polarize and be unable to cooperate if they hold contradictory ideas about legitimacy, while those holding complementary ideas may find it easier to cooperate. Thus the logical relationships between ideas may themselves have a causal impact on strategic relationships between political actors.

[93] For an extended discussion of this issue, see Archer, *Culture and Agency*, chap. 5; Archer argues for the objective status of logical relationships against the relativists, but she gives a fair summary of both positions.

[94] Archer, *Culture and Agency*, p. 153.

[95] Ibid., p. 220.

When one takes up an actual case study, it is not clear how to distinguish between concomitant and contingent complementarities. To do so first of all requires some sort of judgment about the degree to which ideas come from "independent" systems of thought. This is not problematic if we are considering the relationships between cultures that have had little or no actual contact until the complementarity is discovered. For example, twentieth-century environmentalists "discovered" complementary environmental ideas in indigenous tribal cultures long inaccessible to them. This is clearly a contingent complementarity, constructed by political actors. But in analyzing European development the distinction between a concomitant complementarity (that is, one that reveals a logical relationship between ideas in a specific cultural system) and a contingent complementarity (that is, one that is the result of two distinct cultural systems "meeting" in the mind and via the activity of a social actor) becomes problematic.

What, in the eighteenth century, was "traditional" and what was "modern" or "enlightened"? Were these two different cultural systems mixing over time, or do we see all Europe as one cultural system? Were the relationships between Enlightenment views of reason and traditional ways of viewing social order contingent (with perhaps traditional views being distinguished by their ancientness, and Enlightenment views by their novelty), or were they part of the same developing cultural system with its own logical properties independent of the observations of the actors? Or to take Archer's own example, what was "Russian" in the culture of Catherine the Great, and what was European? Given that Catherine herself was a German princess, on closer inspection the problem becomes daunting. Further, it is obviously possible to construct contingent complementarities out of propositions within one cultural system, especially if social actors were not previously aware of the full range of propositions embedded in that system.

If we treat all complementarities (or contradictions) as contingent, then my judgment as to what is complementary or contradictory may itself be challenged as a contingent, interpretive imposition on the data. No matter how hard I try to determine how strategic actors at the time were thinking about these ideas, denying the existence of concomitant complementarities entails admitting that the researcher is also a strategic actor who is fully implicated in the construction of contingent complementarities for her own purposes, and that her insights are not conditioned by any objective rules of logic. But if I hold on to the claim that complementarities and contradictions exist independently of the strategic activities of actors, I run the risk of reifying and detaching the cultural system from the activities of the agents that sustain it.

This dilemma cannot be resolved empirically, and thus the only way out, short of writing a long abstract book about it, is to take a reasoned position in advance. I take the position that treating the cultural system as a real entity is warranted, and that logical relations between cultural propositions are not invariably contingent and constructed. Most of this chapter has in fact attempted to defend such a position; the notion that culture has a semiautonomous existence that cannot be reduced to its material underpinnings or to the strategic interests of the actors producing it, and may thus shape the actors' identities and strategic struggles, fundamentally depends on it. To argue that contradictions and complementarities within the cultural system shape political struggles implies that I grant ontological status to the notions of contradiction and complementarity—that is, to logic. An insightful critic may thus accuse me of presupposing what I am trying to demonstrate—that culture has an impact on political life—but in fact what I am trying to demonstrate is that if we take this analytical position, then we can generate more satisfying explanations for the changes taking place in the eighteenth-century European international system.

My analytical stance thus shies from the purely postmodern conception that logic is socially constructed. This position grants ontological status to the cultural system and thus frees me from seeing culture purely as a tool for strategic manipulation (postmoderns are in the same camp as realists on this score). The distinction between culture as a system of ideas, on the one hand, and strategic action, on the other, would be unsustainable, and culture would be seen as a mere "tool kit," if I did not maintain the position that propositions in a culture stand in logical relationship to one another regardless of what the actors think or do with those propositions.[96] In other words, if we want to analyze the interplay of culture and strategy rather than reducing culture to a strategic tool, the more postmodern (and, implicitly, realist) position that all complementarities (or contradictions) are contingent and constructed is untenable. As the historian Jonathan Dewald puts it: "To treat culture as a utilitarian mechanism by which interests are justified and concealed allows little room for the causal force of culture itself."[97] At the same time, much of the material in this book analyzes the manipulation, and perhaps even the construction, of complementarities and contradictions by strategic actors.

Although I agree with Dewald's position, the interpretive method does not lend itself to a formal, systematic demonstration of the causal impact of culture. Despite this limitation, my case studies may be pre-

[96] On culture as "tool kit," see Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51 (April 1986): 273–86.

[97] Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture: France, 1570–1715* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 7.

sented as "plausibility probes," suggesting the way in which ideas about political legitimacy shaped the political positions taken by strategic actors. These same case studies also show that strategic struggles themselves had an influence on the development of ideas about political legitimacy. The causal arrows run both ways: from culture to strategy and from strategy to culture. To demonstrate these arguments in a strictly positivist way would require several volumes of material, however, and so a less formal and more interpretive approach here has the advantage of parsimony at the cost of decisive demonstration of causal claims.

In addition to focusing on the intellectual contours of European and U.S. political culture, I also survey the more general strategic context by sketching out the interests and resources of the revolutionary states and of the great powers in the system. This entails a focus on international and diplomatic history, a field generating its own debates about historical interpretation. Because domestic political struggles also figured prominently in the transformations analyzed here, I sketch out relevant domestic factions, their strategic relationships, and the cultural resources they deployed. I focus on the revolutionary states, obviously, and also make some comments about similar divisions in other states that were penetrated by, or reacted to, revolutionary states.

For the historical data, I have taken advantage of the rich troves of secondary source material available on old regime Europe, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution. I have also delved into primary sources, particularly for the political discourses and debates emanating from each revolution, and for some of the crucial documents depicting relations between the revolutionary states and other European powers. My overall empirical aim is to shed new light on familiar case material.

My interpretations of the intellectual and international history may of course be challenged by competing interpretations; I address these as I proceed through the case studies, concentrating on those rivals most relevant to international relations theory. At times, competing interpretations by historians can be linked to more general theoretical debates regarding the nature of international relations, and when it is possible and relevant to make such linkages clear, I do so. The success and limits of my analytical framework will depend on how well the interpretations generated by this framework hold up against the historical evidence, and against competing interpretations of that evidence.

The case studies are also of substantive interest in themselves, for they represent an important phase in the development of modern international relations. I believe that we have not yet fully disentangled ourselves from the contradictions and complex logics of modernity analyzed here. More broadly, the empirical work is intended to assess the plausibility and broader applicability of the cultural approach to international relations.

As such, this study is part of a growing body of research that, in the words of Reus-Smit, "seek[s] to explain aspects of international relations through reference to the constitutive power of intersubjective ideas, beliefs, and norms."[98] By focusing on legitimacy as a central component of political authority and state identity, I aim to build on and extend the constructivist research agenda.

Conclusion

The spread of the Enlightenment in Europe and its American colonies sparked a legitimation contest that over time resulted in a reconfiguration of the dominant modes of political authority in the international system. Such a reconfiguration ultimately altered the distribution of capability in the system, but it is the change in the system's constitutive principles—the dominant terms by which collective identity and political authority were defined—that constitutes the focus of this book. In order to understand the dynamics of the legitimation contest and the mechanisms of systemic change triggered by that process, I develop and operationalize the concept of international political culture, so as to theorize about the interplay between culture and strategy. In this chapter, I have argued that international political culture should be studied as a system of rules about political authority. The relationships of either contradiction or complementarity between the rules and norms of this system constitute opportunities for conflict and cooperation among actors in the system, giving such conflict and cooperation meaning.

International political culture does not merely reflect material power distributions or class interests. It is constitutive and not just instrumental. And it is emergent in the sense that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Thus culture should be analyzed as a systemic factor in its own right. But strategic interaction and the instrumental use of culture by interested agents also matter for systemic continuity or systemic change. Strategic actors must seize upon and use the opportunities provided by the cultural system's contradictions and complementarities in order to realize the potential for either sustaining the system's continuity over time or transforming it. To fully address the problem of systemic change, then, we need to analyze the interplay between the cultural system and the strategic behavior of actors in that system.

[98] Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*, p. 9.

Chapter Three

■

Old Regime Political Culture

The term "*ancien régime*" was invented by the revolutionary French to accentuate the break between the new political order and that which it had replaced.[1] Scholars have subsequently used the term to connote both the old monarchical order in France and the eighteenth-century European order as a whole. In this chapter, I outline the main features of the old regime as an international order, linking this order to the constitutional and structural similarities of the dominant states within it. My analysis focuses on two aspects of this order: its political culture and the strategic political relationships between key actors. The cultural ferment of the Enlightenment animated political struggles over the nature of legitimate authority. These struggles took place within and between some of the dominant states in the system, but they were shaped by a discourse that transcended state boundaries.

Because of the scientific revolution and the subsequent flowering of Enlightenment thought, the "old regime" actually percolated with novel ideas. The American and French revolutions were not just the destroyers of the old regime; they were its by-products.[2] The very diversity and com-

[1] Keith Michael Baker, "Introduction," in *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, ed. Baker, vol. 1 of *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987).

[2] Ibid., p. xi.

plexity of old regime European political culture generated the conditions for the political transformations and systemic changes emerging in the turbulent late eighteenth century.

An important transformation that began in this period was a reorientation of the sovereign state from a primarily outward focus on war and diplomacy to a more inward focus on governance.[3] International rivalry consumed the bulk of government attention and state resources in the eighteenth century.[4] Eighteenth-century states were far more oriented toward international relations and foreign policy than are states in our own time. Ruling elites, a good many of whom owed their place to their ability to make war, constituted an international culture of rivalry and were preoccupied with international competition. For traditional practitioners of statecraft, foreign relations were dynastic, and thus in some senses internal, family affairs. The culture of international politics was elite and Europe-wide, and its practitioners shared ideas, wives, mistresses, spies, ambassadors, friendships, and rivalries. If eighteenth-century practitioners of statecraft were oriented more toward their external or foreign than their internal or domestic relations, then for them "inside" was "outside"; the external was internal, in important respects. Old regime ruling elites had more in common with one another than with their subjects, and were a more homogeneous caste than the diverse groups found within their own borders.

Internal governance, in contrast, though in theory directed from the center, was in fact dependent on the cooperation of semiautonomous local and regional groups and institutions, including noble and clerical estates, *parlements*, town law courts, and guilds.[5] As the monarchical apparatus began to penetrate and develop new mechanisms of internal governance in the eighteenth century, largely inspired by the need to mobilize more resources for international competition, its legitimacy became increasingly contested. The pressures of international competition put such a strain on resources that by the mid-eighteenth century most great powers were struggling to achieve fiscal reform internally, which is where the state began to meet resistance from domestic groups. In response to the pressures of international competition, Britain increased its taxes on the colonies and Louis XVI attempted fiscal reform that threatened ancient

[3] This transformation only began—it was by no means completed—in this period.

[4] Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 1700–1798 (New York: St. Martin's 1990), pp. 340–53; William Doyle, *Old European Order*, 1600–1800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 265 ff.; Isser Woloch, *Eighteenth-Century Europe: Tradition and Progress, 1714–1789* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), chap. 2.

[5] For overviews, see Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*; Doyle, *Old European Order*; and Woloch, *Tradition and Progress*.

privilege.[6] Passive and active resistance to reform, in the name of tradition, was commonplace. The tensions and rifts caused by the state's reorientation inward became the cultural schisms of the American and French revolutions.

Although Theda Skocpol and many other analysts of the French Revolution appropriately focus on the role of international competition in laying the groundwork for the revolution, the cultural dimensions of that competition are often neglected.[7] But cultural ferment was the engine behind the eighteenth-century revolutions and transformations. Ruling elites interwove Enlightenment thought with traditional ideas about monarchical authority and used these ideas to apply new techniques of governance. This enhanced the potential and actual power of the state, but it also inspired a polarizing reaction by parties within the state—a reaction also partially based on Enlightenment principles.

In this chapter I show that the political culture of old regime Europe had an irreducible influence on the strategic relationships between the dominant states. The political culture of the old regime also helped to constitute a particular set of strategic relations within each of the great powers, particularly the relations between monarchy and nobility. In discussing political culture I draw out key features of its structure—that is, of the relationships between the various ideas that constituted it. To speak of a single culture in old regime Europe is problematic, because of the wealth, diversity, and complexity of ideas brewing there. But focusing on the issue of legitimate authority narrows the field of inquiry. The key to delineating the "structure of the culture" is to draw out the complementarities and contradictions between core ideas about the nature and exercise of political authority. We should also identify which social actors were articulating and using these ideas, and for what purposes.

The chapter begins with an overview of European international relations at the end of the Seven Years' War. I then discuss the basic contours of the culture of international rivalry. This culture of rivalry was rooted in the social configurations constituting the great powers of Europe, and particularly in the attitudes of the elite ruling classes. A description of the European "society of orders" prevailing in the eighteenth century fleshes out the context. After this survey, I turn to the analysis of the culture's structure, that is, to its complementarities and contradictions. In that analysis, I identify social actors who made use of ideological configura-

[6] See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1979), chap. 2.

[7] See the insightful critique of Skocpol by William H. Sewell, Jr., "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case," in *The Rise and Fall of the French Revolution*. ed. T.C.W. Blanning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 285–313.

tions in their causes and struggles. These legitimacy contests laid the cultural and political groundwork for the revolutions analyzed in subsequent chapters.

Focusing on the complementarities and contradictions of old regime political culture accords with my aspiration to treat ideas as part of a cultural system rather than in isolation. It further allows us to see more clearly how the revolutions themselves were a part of this "old regime,"[8] insofar as they emerged from and exacerbated certain key contours of its political culture and strategic relationships. This analysis also suggests how ideas mobilized and were used by social actors in pursuit of their own strategies. The cultural system is not fully determinant of historical outcomes.[9] It creates what Archer calls a situational logic, which generates tendencies, habits, and problems for social actors. Social action may exacerbate contradictions between possibly reconcilable principles, on the one hand, or it may paper over, hide, or resolve potential contradictions, on the other.

Although it is common in scholarship to focus on societal (if not always cultural) contradictions as the moving force behind the dialectics of historical development, my account of the old regime also draws attention to complementarities between ideas, and how those complementarities facilitated cooperation or shared interests between social actors. Focusing on contradictions leads to characterizing social action in terms of opposition, balancing, and conflict. In this vein, an intuitively plausible narrative may hold that Enlightenment thoughts on equality and the rights of man contradicted old regime notions of social order based on estates and their privileges, and that social groups mobilizing along these ideological fault lines generated a dialectical struggle leading to structural change. Marxist historians, among others, have developed this interpretation; it may also appeal to liberals in that the bourgeoisie can be seen as the social class responsible for ushering in democracy and the rule of law.

Focusing on complementarities, in contrast, means attending to cooperation and bandwagoning. To put a different interpretive spin on the same example, it is plausible to argue that absolutist monarchs found in Enlightenment thought ample justification for expanding their power over various estates and rationalizing their rule so as to enhance the centralization and extractive capacity of the state.[10] A realist perspective

[8] This idea is most clearly articulated in Baker, *Political Culture of the Old Regime*; see Baker's "Introduction," and passim.

[9] See Margaret S. Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chaps. 6–8.

[10] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, chap. 7; T.C.W. Blanning, *Joseph II* (London: Longman, 1994); H. M. Scott, ed., *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Late Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).

might focus on the enhancement of the extractive capacity of the state as a key change leading to widespread emulation, and on the instrumentality of certain strands of Enlightenment thought to the consolidation of central authority. But realist perspectives would most likely neglect to emphasize the cultural sources of the coalitions that facilitated such consolidation of state power. Further, such consolidation led to reactions that in some cases (notably the French) ended up undermining the authority of the monarch, an ambiguity that can best be explained in cultural rather than in materialist or geostrategic terms.

International Relations: Strategic Overview

This section sketches out the strategic context of European international relations following the Seven Years' War (1756–1763).[11] This provides a useful baseline, because the balance of power in Europe was somewhat clarified by the war.[12] An understanding of the culture of rivalry helps to identify the continuities underlying the fluctuating strategic situation.

Five great powers dominated international relations in the mid- to late eighteenth century: Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia. The alliances between these powers fluctuated, though there were some relatively constant features: both Austria and Prussia courted Russia, and Anglo-French rivalry was a constant. Once formidable powers such as the Dutch, Sweden, the Ottomans, and Spain continued to factor into alliance politics, though increasingly as pawns or, in the case of the Ottomans, as victims rather than as major players. Smaller and medium powers found their existence increasingly precarious as the century wore on.

The Seven Years' War was actually two wars, one fought on the Continent and the other in North America. This duality reflects a dominant division in European affairs, with the western powers, including Britain, France, and Spain, primarily engaged in colonial and maritime struggles, while the competition—and occasional cooperation, as in the partition of Poland—in the East between Russia, Austria, and Prussia proceeded virtually autonomously of those colonial and maritime struggles.[13] France remained engaged in both colonial and continental struggles and thus overextended itself. The "diplomatic revolution" of 1756, whereby Aus-

[11] This section draws most heavily on Derek McKay and H. M. Scott, The *Rise of the Great Powers, 1648–1815* (London: Longman. 1983); Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Doyle, *Old European Order*, chap. 12; and Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, chaps. 10–11.

[12] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 3.

[13] McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, p. 215; on the first partition of Poland as an instance of cooperation, see Schroeder, *Transformation*, pp. 18–19.

tria and France set aside a traditional rivalry, survived the Seven Years' War without bringing major gains for either power.[14] Britain remained engaged in continental affairs, worrying Austria and France by courting Prussia and seeking a balance favorable to its interests in northern Europe. But Britain's foreign policy energies focused increasingly on maritime and colonial affairs, where its supremacy was becoming evident.[15]

The major power developments among the great powers were the significant weakening of France and the continuing vulnerability of Austria, while Russia and Britain exploited a degree of geostrategic invulnerability.[16] Schroeder identifies Austria's security problems as a key example of the inherent instability in the European states system of the eighteenth century.[17] Internally more of a multinational empire than a state (with concomitant control problems),[18] contested in Germany by a rising and aggressive Prussia, flanked by the declining Ottomans and Poland—both objects of Russian expansion—and without suitable access to the sea, Austria was vulnerable internally and externally on several fronts. The alliances and international law upon which its security rested were to provide fleeting benefits in this period, primarily because of the cutthroat and narrowly self-interested way in which the eighteenth-century balance of power system worked, Schroeder has argued.[19]

France found itself overextended in attempting to compete in both colonial and continental affairs. Although its "family compact" with Spain may have given pause to British interests in North America, France's continental power had faded despite the alliance with Austria, and its maritime and colonial strength could not match Britain's. French losses in the Seven Years' War were made more humiliating by the harshness of the peace terms, and the opportunity to gain revenge on Britain by supporting the rebelling American colonists in 1776 stretched French finances to the breaking point, a fact that at least diminished if not overshadowed the apparent gains in prestige that came from seeing Britain beaten. The willingness of the Americans to sign a separate peace with Britain, and the continued expansion of Anglo-American trade after the war, limited the gains France might have hoped for from the alliance with the colonists.[20]

[14] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 294; McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, pp. 192–97; Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 42.

[15] McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, pp. 197–200.

[16] Schroeder, *Transformation*, chap. 1.

[17] Ibid., pp. 33–35.

[18] Blanning, *Joseph II*, chap. 1.

[19] Schroeder, *Transformation*, pp. 46–52; see also Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, 8 vols. (Paris: Plon Nourrit, 1919), 1:89–91.

[20] Schroeder, *Transformation*, pp. 35–40.

Russia, with its vast manpower, territory, and advantageous geographical position limiting its vulnerability to attack, continued its ascendancy as a major player in European affairs, particularly in the affairs of the East: Poland, the Balkans, and struggles to slice off pieces of the weakening Ottoman Empire. Russia had opted out of the Seven Years' War earlier than other continental powers, in Schroeder's words retreating into "profitable neutrality."[21] Its alliance options and opportunities for expansion exceeded those of its rivals. Prussia competed with Austria for a Russian alliance, and the mistrust and rivalry between the two German powers enhanced Russia's diplomatic position.[22]

The rise of Prussia as a great power was sealed by Frederick the Great's seizure of Silesia in December 1740, and by his subsequent ability to hold on to that territory—especially during the Seven Years' War in the face of what appeared on paper to be a very strong coalition against him (Russia, Austria, France, and Sweden). Prussia then became a major rival to Austria's influence in Germany. But Prussia's position was far from secure, because of the potentially strong forces that could align against it, and by the end of the Seven Years' War Frederick thought his great power position precarious.[23]

The smaller and middle European powers had been important in the alliance dynamics in the earlier decades of the eighteenth century when the aggressions of the major powers were turned against each other; many smaller powers such as Bavaria, Savoy, and Saxony had managed to profit from such competition. But after the Seven Years' War their position shifted in an uncomfortable way. Great power struggles over Italy were in hiatus after an agreement between Spain and Austria (Treaty of Aranjuez, 1752) that ratified their respective spheres of control and influence, and as long as France remained uninterested in and incapable of expanding there.[24] But the struggle over central and eastern Europe heated up. As Jeremy Black concludes "The aggressive energies and schemes of the major powers which had been directed into conflict with each other during the mid-century wars were in subsequent decades to concentrate on a competitive struggle for influence in the minor states and territorial gains from them."[25]

The fate of Poland was one example, but other partition schemes were contemplated and planned, if not fully executed.[26] This was not an

[21] Ibid., p. 3.

[22] Ibid., pp. 24–35.

[23] Ibid., chap. 1; McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, p. 217.

[24] McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, p. 174.

[25] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 294.

[26] See Schroeder, *Transformation*, pp. 17–18; McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, chap. 8.

era when territorial contiguity or the wishes of subjects exercised authority as guiding principles, and the exchange of territory among monarchs—arguably just an earlier point on a continuum ending in partition—was commonplace, sometimes not even requiring war (the first partition of Poland was peaceful, as were other territorial exchanges in the century). Schroeder summarizes the contours of the late eighteenth-century European international system in his usual succinct manner: "dominant flanks, a vulnerable centre, threatened intermediaries, and a general crisis in status and security."[27]

Despite all the struggles and alliance shifts during the eighteenth century, many commentators note the continuities of European statecraft over a period of time that begins in the seventeenth century (with the consolidation of absolutism) and ends with the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon. Strategic balances—conceptualized in terms of polarity and alliance dynamics—were not in themselves the source of these continuities, given their fluidity and variability. Although the continuities of international relations often go by the name of *realpolitik* or power politics, the real continuities of eighteenth-century European international relations should be seen as the product of an international political culture. That culture was centered on the monarchical, dynastic state; state and monarch were inseparable concepts thanks to the developments in absolutism achieved under Cardinal Richelieu and then Louis XIV, and their many imitators.

The Political Culture of Old Regime Europe

The international dimensions of old regime political culture were linked directly to the exercise of monarchical authority and the conditions for royal legitimacy. I establish these linkages as a foundation for a more detailed analysis of the complementarities and contradictions found in old regime political culture. The main point to be made here is that the crux of both the international and the domestic dimensions of old regime political culture was a set of ideas concerning monarchical rule. This is true despite Albert Sorel's assertion (widely replicated among today's neorealist international relations theorists) that the form of government did not matter in the international relations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[28] Sorel emphasizes that reason of state ruled the day, and that regime type was not a calculation in the making of alliances and rivalries.

[27] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 46.
[28] Sorel, *L'Europe*, 1: 14–15.

It is true that republics and monarchies coexisted in this period, and that differences in regime type did not factor into alliance calculations as such. But this argument does not invalidate the observation that the strongest states in the system were monarchies, and that their rivalries, which set the tone for international relations, were shaped by the terms of monarchical legitimacy. Contemporary commentators and elites recognized that monarchical rule facilitated superior resource mobilization for international competition. For example, Gustavus III of Sweden (who had previously executed a royalist coup there) wrote in a 1781 letter: "The *philosophes* who enthuse over the name of a republic should look at the actual state of the United Provinces. They will see that our customs and the art of war of this century no longer allow these sorts of governments to enjoy the resources that the ancient republics possessed; that since large permanent armies and fleets have been established, a republic which will not dare to compete, for fear of losing its domestic liberty, runs the risk of losing her independence, respect, and glory."[29]

Republics were notoriously the weak members of the system. Thus Gustavus saw himself as enhancing Swedish power by eliminating republican government and re-establishing dynastic rule. The dominance of this way of thinking renders any argument that treats the French Revolution as a strategic response to geopolitical pressure nonsensical. The fact that the revolution would ultimately strengthen France as an international player could not have been anticipated by its early perpetrators. Republics, along with other weaker states, did exercise some influence in the eighteenth-century system; they represented the continued if tenuous existence of a rule of law at the international level, which gave them some meager legal protection. Further, smaller powers could factor into alliance calculations. But dynastic monarchies were the strong powers in the system. Their strength sprang from superior resource mobilization, particularly in the form of standing armies. Such mobilization capability was not based on brute force, however. It was based on legitimacy.

Despite what the term "absolutism" suggests, central rule in monarchical states was dependent on a number of nonstate corporate agents who had their own interests and privileges to defend, and whose cooperation was essential to the exercise of royal authority.[30] Such cooperation required common understandings about the nature and limits of legitimate authority. One clear indicator of the importance of legitimacy concerns the control of armies: large standing armies relying on non-noble

[29] Quoted in Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 386. Note that by "our customs" Gustavus was referring to Europe as a whole.

[30] See ibid., p. 414. See also Woloch, *Tradition and Progress*, chaps. 1–2; Doyle, *Old European Order*, chaps. 4 and 11; and Sewell, "Ideology and Social Revolutions."

manpower, often composed of the most marginal elements of society, might be thought of as dangerous to the smaller elite strata. But most often they were not. Black notes: "The willingness of governments to arm the poor and the marginal members of the community is an interesting indication of their confidence in the essential stability of the social order, as mirrored in the armed forces, and in the ability of discipline to direct action and attitudes. This was a view that was to be vindicated by the infrequency of army and naval mutinies."[31] The perceived legitimacy of the social order was central to the exercise of government as such, including the conduct of military operations. Further, the privileges constituting old regime social orders could also limit resource mobilization. A social bargain between rulers and ruled existed, and legitimacy was a central issue, even for absolutist states.

Legitimacy, as I use it here and following Max Weber, refers not to some abstract universal standard of law or righteousness (which is what Sorel was eager to debunk in stressing the Machiavellian nature of international relations), but rather to the basic requirement that rule must be justified in principle because it rests not just on force but on acquiescence. Whether or not one believes that it is mere window dressing for the interests of rulers, legitimacy is a necessary component of authority and thus of power. Standards and signifiers of legitimacy vary across time and place. Success in conquest, dynastic ties, papal sanction, or election by corporate orders or by a public may confer legitimacy; which of these factors or combination of factors actually does so at any given time is an empirical question. International relations scholarship that ignores the concept of authority in favor of the apparently (but not really) simpler notion of power thus bypasses an important set of issues. Insofar as the concept of political power is meaningless without some notion of authority, focusing on the constitution of authority is crucial to the study of power politics in general, and of the power politics of old regime Europe in particular.

The legitimacy of the eighteenth-century European monarch was couched in traditional religious symbolism and sanction (the monarch's authority came from God), but also increasingly in legal and constitutional thought. In this latter sense we can see the indirect influence of the political discourses on natural law and republicanism. In general, two idealized cultural images are crucial to conceptualizing monarchical legitimacy in old regime Europe: the king as a military figure whose glory lies in extending his holdings and defending his people in war; and the king as a benevolent paternalistic ruler who stands at the apex of a rigidly

[31] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 316; see also Jeremy Black, *European Warfare, 1660–1815* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 218.

hierarchical social order and rules by religious sanction in accordance with the law.

In the mid-eighteenth century the importance of religious sanction had faded significantly because of the religious divisions and strife of the previous century, and the precipitous decline of the pope's influence in temporal matters. But the importance of custom, law, and constitutions to monarchical legitimacy in the domestic sphere had, in many states and in various ways, grown. Religious legitimation remained stronger in Catholic states. These states retained the more mystical aspects of divine right, which gave the king sacred attributes and powers, such as the power to heal by his touch.[32] In Protestant states, legitimation of royal authority was increasingly rationalized according to utilitarian and legalistic principles.[33] In both cases, however, "[n]otions of paternalism and patriarchalism were widespread at all levels of society and they influenced the response to royal authority."[34] The practical counterparts to cultural images of monarchical authority were, first, that warfare and diplomatic maneuvering were accepted as the primary and proper activities of monarchs, since they served to increase authority, power, and glory; and second, that monarchs were constrained in their domestic rule by laws and customs, and particularly by the political culture that constituted the monarch as absolute ruler.[35]

International Rivalry

International relations was a primary preoccupation of monarchs because, as Black puts it, "[d]ynastic and national prestige, essential both for a sense of purpose and as a lubricant of domestic obedience, were gained principally through international success."[36] Several core, interrelated concepts animated the culture of international rivalry: reason of state as the identification of the state with the monarch and his dynasty; balance of power as a calculus that included intangible (prestige and glory) as well as tangible dimensions of power; and the notion of traditional rivalries. Each of these concepts helped to constitute the European

[32] Joseph Klaits, *Printed Propaganda under Louis XIV: Absolute Monarchy and Public Opinion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 11–12; Michel Vovelle, "La représentation populaire de la monarchie," in *Political Culture of the Old Regime*, ed. Baker, pp. 77–86.

[33] Klaits, *Printed Propaganda*, pp. 24–25.

[34] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 387.

[35] That culture undergoes sociological analysis in Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

[36] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 276.

culture of international rivalry in the eighteenth century. Culturally constituted rivalry shaped the balancing and alliance dynamics of the old regime international system.

It is by now a truism that the rise of the state and war among states are intimately related processes.[37] The role of the monarch as the primary agent in this process—his or her identity as the state personified—links monarchy to international rivalry in a dynamic of mutual constitution. Once the European states system had solidified, monarchs developed complex and nuanced forms of rivalry, going beyond warfare in and of itself. War certainly continued to be one of the primary means of legitimating royal authority and displaying royal power. Elite culture fetishized heroism, achievable through military exploits, and many rulers personally led their armies, at least in some campaigns.[38] But for medium and smaller powers especially, diplomacy, alliances, and the laws of the Holy Roman Empire were also crucial resources in international competition; these factors could be important even for great powers. Eighteenth-century international relations were constituted by a complex culture of rivalry in which the process of maneuvering for position embodied practices and rules beyond warfare itself, including dynastic marriages, competing legal claims, alliance politics, and spying.

What was the purpose of this rivalry? What did monarchs and their ministers aim to achieve? An array of objectives has been identified by key historians of the period. William Doyle characterizes the objectives of old regime diplomacy and war as dynasticism (that is, furthering the strength and holdings of a particular dynastic family), glory and prestige, balance of power (nebulously defined by its contemporary proponents), expansion of trade, and *raison d'état*.[39] These objectives were couched in a broader system of shared understandings that Schroeder calls the rules of the European states system of the eighteenth century. He summarizes these rules as "compensations; indemnities; alliances as instruments for accruing power and capability; *raison d'état*; honour and prestige; Europe as a family of states; and finally, the principle or goal of balance of power itself."[40]

[37] See especially Charles Tilly, "War-Making and State-Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); and William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[38] Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 278; Black, *European Warfare*, pp. 213–15.

[39] Doyle, *Old European Order*, pp. 265–66.

[40] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 6. See also McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, chap. 7.

The objectives of international rivalry extended beyond "survival" or "security" narrowly conceived. Rivalry was inspired by culturally constituted purposes (dynasticism, prestige, aggrandizement, glory) and played out according to certain rules of engagement; both purposes and rules gave shape and meaning to the concept of *raison d'état*. It is tempting to see this concept as the crux of the system, since it appears to correspond to the contemporary notion of "national interest." This would be accurate as far as it goes, but the substance and meaning of *raison d'état* in the eighteenth century differed essentially from its articulation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Schroeder notes:

> The motive and rule of all action was to advance the interests of the state—meaning first of all its power, security, and wealth, but also, almost equally, its monarch's honour and prestige (*consideration*) and rank among other princes. Reason of state thus closely linked the state with its monarch and dynasty, but not with its people or nationality; that link was only beginning to emerge in some countries. Louis XIV's idea of the state as dynastic patrimony (*L'état, c'est moi*) still prevailed in much of Europe, and if the Enlightenment notion of the monarch as the first servant rather than the owner of the state was beginning to make headway, the distinction made little difference in practice, especially in foreign policy.[41]

The link between *raison d'état* and the people or nation, much as it may have occupied political discourse, only begins to emerge in modern European practice with the French Revolution. Prior to that, the relationship between state and nation was more distinct than fused; the state meant the monarchical apparatus, the nation meant those who were governed by that apparatus.[42] The nation itself was a "society of orders" composed of numerous corporate bodies, rather than individuals. At times these corporate bodies claimed a share in sovereignty. The monarch symbolized the unifying element of these corporate bodies, but his reason of state could be personal or dynastic, and distinct from the interests of other corporate bodies.[43] To maintain unity in such a system, the link between monarch and nation had to be articulated somehow, either in constitutional or patrimonial terms, or in an assertion of metaphysical union. We can locate the substance of claims to legitimacy in such articulations.

[41] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 8.

[42] Alfred Cobban, *In Search of Humanity: The Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), p. 203; Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 386; Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions."

[43] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 276; McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, chap. 7.

Louis XV's speech to the *parlement* of Paris in 1766 asserts the identity between his sovereign person and the nation; this address was delivered in the context of constitutional struggle with privileged orders: "public order in its entirety emanates from me, and that the rights and interests of the nation, which some dare to regard as a separate body from the monarch, are necessarily united with my rights and interests, and repose only in my hands."[44] This assertion of identity subsumes the nation's interests in the person of the monarch, not the state in the nation as the term "nation-state" suggests. This was the traditional position on royal authority, though the need to articulate it so explicitly was a result of a legitimation crisis. This view "solved" the problem of national unity by positing a metaphysical, mystical union between the monarch and the corporate bodies that made up the nation. As will be seen, in an "age of enlightenment" such assertions were increasingly open to rationalist challenges.

Reason of state viewed in terms of a monarch's interests could well be constituted differently than reason of state viewed as "national" interest. Dynastic considerations provide an obvious example of this (why should a peasant in Lombardy care whose cousin sits on the Spanish throne?), but it could also be reasonably argued (as many *philosophes* did at the time) that many of the century's wars had less to do with "national" interest than with monarchical interest in and of itself. Thus reason of state appears in the eighteenth century as a somewhat unstable concept, periodically evoking the question of the locus of sovereignty and the sources of national unity, and hence potentially inspiring a legitimacy contest. These questions became more pressing whenever social agents such as the nobility or clergy asserted claims to political rights.

Although reason of state was understood in a particular, culturally conditioned, and somewhat unstable way, balance of power calculations still tended to center on the monarch's holdings and personal prestige. Any gains in territory, wealth, or prestige raised a monarch's stature in the international arena, and rivals might seek compensation (balance) in any of these domains. Not only territorial extent but also prestige and wealth were part of the "balancing" equation, and the balancing agents were monarchs, not nation-states. The notion that wealth acquisition was a zero-sum game, for example, underpinned the dominant mercantilist conceptions of political economy. The desire to acquire bullion by having a "favorable" balance of trade indicates that wealth was at least partly

[44] Excerpts from the Official Transcript of the "Session of the Scourging," reprinted from John Rothney, ed., *The Brittany Affair and the Crisis of the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 49

considered to consist in the contents of the royal coffers. Of course this was not the only consideration; theorists of paternalistic royal authority might argue that a monarch's wealth lay in the happiness and economic well-being of his people. This was another way of stressing the unity between monarch and nation. But in practice, what counted was a monarch's ability to finance foreign "adventures."

Dynastic considerations figured prominently in many of the major wars of the eighteenth century, including the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714), the War of Polish Succession (1733–1735), the War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748), and the War of Bavarian Succession (1778–1779). Numerous smaller conflicts and persistent tensions were also caused by dynastic issues. For example the dynastic aspirations of Elizabeth Farnese, the Italian-born queen whose ambitions propelled attempts by the Spanish Bourbons to recover for her sons Italian territories lost in the War of Spanish Succession, caused havoc in Italy,[45] and the British crown's dynastic ties to Hanover were a persistent source of tension in Germany. Although Frederick the Great's motives in the War of Austrian Succession were not dynastic, the motives of several other powers involved were. Maria Theresa's succession to the Austrian throne was at stake, and Louis XV's involvement aimed to manipulate the balance of power in Imperial Germany by attempting to restore the Bavarian Charles VII as Holy Roman Emperor.[46] Dynastic holdings "were often geographically messy and difficult to defend."[47] When combined with balance of power calculations, they "created boundless possibilities for conflict."[48]

Struggles over dynastic succession also promoted tortuous and complex diplomacy, because any gain by one house raised the demand for compensations by others. As Schroeder points out, the notion of compensation was an important rule of international politics in this period, and it extended beyond dynastic considerations to permeate diplomatic discussions following any armed conflict. Compensation could take a number of forms, but "[o]ne's own state must have compensations for gains made by any other state important to oneself; failure to get this signified defeat."[49] The concept of indemnities was linked to that of compensations, and it was central to alliance politics. Any gain by one party in an alliance had to be compensated by gains by other affected parties. Conflicts often centered on projected rather than actual gains; often alliances

[45] Doyle, *Old European Order*, p. 265.
[46] McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, p. 167.
[47] Doyle, *Old European Order*, p. 265.
[48] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 28.
[49] Ibid., pp. 6–7.

yielded little action. Indemnities meant that one's services as an ally, or the losses one accrued in assisting an ally, had to be paid for, preferably in advance. In such a system, defection was expected, and statesmen "regularly tried to calculate at what point their ally was likely to defect."[50] An ally was really just a different sort of adversary; or rather, rivalry was endemic between allies and adversaries alike.

Some rivalries were more deeply rooted than others, especially Anglo-French and Franco-Austrian rivalry. The strength of the idea of traditional rivalry may be demonstrated by the difficulty France and Austria had in sustaining the so-called Diplomatic Revolution of 1756. Although it can be argued that balance of power logic justified this alliance,[51] it was nevertheless very difficult to maintain, and many articulate parties in both countries were openly hostile to it. Tradition, rather than rational calculation based on a clear-eyed assessment of circumstances, often propelled international politics. In the words of Derek McKay and H. M. Scott: "The alliance of traditionally hostile states was certainly rare enough to be unusual. This was why contemporaries were so surprised by the alliance of such hereditary foes as France and Austria in 1756 that they styled it a 'Diplomatic Revolution.' In a similar way the long period of Anglo-French co-operation between 1716 and 1731 . . . was widely seen as an unnatural and probably temporary variation from the established pattern."[52] The authors go on to suggest that it was these traditional notions of rivalry that undermined the anti-French coalitions during the Napoleonic Wars, a point to which I return in Chapter Five.

The concept of traditional rivalry thus further challenges the notion that balance of power calculations were based on the sort of rational calculus of material interest that is assumed to govern people's actions in our enlightened twenty-first century. Monarchs and ministers engaged in cost-benefit calculations, but based on a different scale of values and system of rationality than we are familiar with today. Traditional rivalries, dynasticism, and prestige considerations bounded reason of state and balance of power rationality in specific ways. As Schroeder stresses, the systemic rules requiring compensations and indemnities imbued international relations with an unstable and rapacious character, necessitating a struggle for aggrandizement even where individual statesmen might have preferred stability and peace.[53] Prestige and glory were necessary to monarchical legitimacy, and the rules governing how such "goods" were acquired heightened the security dilemmas in Europe.

[50] Ibid., p. 7.
[51] But see Schroeder's assertion that it was really a restraining alliance, ibid., p. 42.
[52] McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, p. 213.
[53] Schroeder, *Transformation*, chap. 1.

Thus far I have shown how culture constituted and gave specific meanings to concepts which might seem familiar to a twenty-first-century reader, but which had distinct meanings in the eighteenth century: reason of state, balance of power, and traditional rivalry. I have also suggested that prestige and glory were crucial factors in the calculus of state interests. To further demonstrate the importance of such factors, we should analyze the internal constitutions of monarchical states, because the cultural manifestations of the importance of prestige and glory are highly visible there. The next section also explores the point that monarchical legitimacy rested not only on international success but also on the internal constitutions of monarchical states. Monarchical glory could be acquired through war, but the resources required for such achievement could potentially strain the social bargain underpinning the position of the monarch at the apex of the society of orders.

The Internal Constitution of Monarchy

Old regime European states all adhered to the idea of society as an organic unity composed of estates or corporate orders, rather than as an aggregation of individuals.[54] Unequal and distinct corporate bodies, arranged in a hierarchical structure, made up the "nation" governed by the eighteenth-century state. Broadly speaking, societies were divided into three estates: nobility, clergy, and commoners. But the actual picture was far more complicated. Numerous corporate bodies, including provincial estates, law courts or *parlements*, craft and trade guilds, universities, and towns, claimed ancient, traditional rights and privileges. In certain provinces, estates had some form of representation, in others not. In most countries each corporate order displayed an internally refined hierarchy; this was particularly true of the nobility. The law courts, guilds, universities, and towns also constituted corporate bodies, whose membership sometimes derived from more than one estate. Traditionally, church and nobility were the most powerful orders in terms of their capacity to shape or balance monarchical rule, although such capacity varied enormously from state to state. By the mid-eighteenth century some states (such as Prussia) had succeeded in curbing the autonomous power of their feudal nobility, but in others (such as France) the struggle continued, while in still others

[54] See Doyle, *Old European Order*, chaps. 4–6; Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, chap. 4; Woloch, *Tradition and Progress*, chap. 3; and Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions."

(Russia) cooperation between monarch and nobles was more common than competition.[55]

Everywhere, European monarchy was couched in a social order whose constituent units viewed themselves as having legitimate claims and rights. In absolute monarchies, the monarch occupied the symbolic center of this order; his role was to make it a unity and to be the ultimate arbiter of competing claims, the apex of the hierarchy. Keith Baker aptly describes the symbolic and discursive dimensions of monarchical power: "As a political system, absolutism depended upon the assumption that the king, as the sole public person, alone deliberates and wills for the whole body of the state, which is to say that he upholds the political order by controlling and defining the language of political claims and by giving authoritative definitions of the meaning of terms."[56] The monarch's role as ultimate arbiter should not be interpreted as despotism; this was precisely what the European system was supposed to avoid. As Black points out, "Monarchy was expected to operate against a background of legality and tradition."[57] European thinkers and statesmen throughout the eighteenth century were generally committed to avoiding "Oriental despotism."[58] References to law and "ancient constitutions," the latter largely unwritten, embroidered royal edicts, remonstrances of the *parlements*, and political tracts alike. Perhaps the most popular and influential political tract of the eighteenth century, Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, exemplifies this devotion to law and constitutions.[59] Montesquieu's discussion of monarchical (in contrast to despotic) authority highlights the role of estates and orders as constraints on royal authority: "The most natural, intermediate, and subordinate power is that of the nobility. This in some measure seems to be essential to a monarchy, whose fundamental maxim is, no monarch, no nobility; no nobility, no monarch; but there may be a despotic prince. . . . Abolish the privileges of the lords, the clergy and cities in a monarchy, and you will soon have a popular state, or else a despotic government."[60]

Montesquieu was actually expressing a political position. The relationship between monarch and nobility could vary greatly. In the feudal

[55] See A. Goodwin, ed., *The European Nobility in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953).

[56] Baker, "Introduction," p. xvi.

[57] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 330.

[58] George Rudé, *Revolutionary Europe, 1783–1815* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), chap. 2.

[59] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner, 1949); Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 2, *The Science of Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 325, stresses his influence.

[60] Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 4, p. 16.

system, the distinction between king and nobles was far narrower than under absolutism; a king was the "first noble" but landed nobility were, in various degrees, able to maintain their autonomy. The king's reliance on nobles in warfare had engendered a relationship of mutual dependence. But with the rise of standing armies and mercenary forces, nobility retained their importance primarily as leaders of armed forces; the bulk of military manpower was then provided by the common people or by mercenaries. Thus the primary noble function, war, became more circumscribed, and the interdependence between king and nobles became more asymmetrical.[61]

The ascension of Louis XIV to the throne of France in 1661 marked the beginning of the ascent to the apex of absolutist monarchy; Louis XIV's methods and tactics were emulated in his own time and his achievements mark him as the epitome of absolutist rule.[62] The Sun King succeeded in transforming the bulk of the formerly independent, warlike landed nobility in France into a court nobility—an estate whose livelihood, previously gleaned from landed wealth and military exploits, increasingly depended on the king's favor. He expanded the machinery of the state, rationalizing and bureaucratizing many of its functions through the sale of administrative offices to persons, often of the Third Estate, who became that much more beholden to him because of their lack of independent social standing.

With the nobility firmly held in the orbit of his dazzling and enormous court, with administration increasingly rationalized, and with a newly ennobled caste of administrators dependent on him, Louis XIV put France at the center of European power politics. In international relations, Louis's bid for hegemony in the War of Spanish Succession was checked by a European coalition, but despite this France retained its place in the highest ranks of great powers, and culturally it was the unconditional leader. All courts imitated the French court; fashion began there and was emulated elsewhere. The development of modern European diplomacy can also be traced to this period.[63] Although smaller-scale origins are traceable to fifteenth-century Italian city-states and prior to that, to the Greek city-states,[64] resident embassies became the norm under Louis XIV, and the French language replaced Latin to become the language of international relations.

[61] Black, *European Warfare*.

[62] Much of what follows draws on the analysis in Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (1969; London: Blackwell, 1983).

[63] Harold Nicholson, *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method* (London: Constable & Co., 1954), chap. 3 and esp. pp. 53–54.

[64] Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Cape, 1955); Nicholson, *Evolution of Diplomatic Method*; and McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, chap. 7.

As Norbert Elias shows in his sociological study of court society under Louis XIV, the culture of absolutism enmeshed the monarch in a system of relations constitutive of his elite position. He kept the nobles in a state of dependency but depended on them to constitute the glory of his court and to highlight the pinnacle of his place in the hierarchy. The central animating motives for the court culture, Elias argues, were prestige, honor, and glory. These, rather than wealth or merit, were the sinews of social and political power.[65] Elias finds that court culture had its own rationality, based on the pursuit of prestige, because prestige brought political power. Even though the pursuit of prestige required massive expenditures on the material trappings of court culture and often led to financial ruin, financial calculations were invariably trumped by prestige calculations.[66]

Similarly, prestige was often a primary stake in war. This was true because of the dynastic stakes involved and because of the culture within which dynastic thinking was nested: court culture. Underpinning the exquisite refinements of the material culture of the court, the torturously detailed ceremonies, the rigid hierarchy, the brutal but highly mannered (and thus in an important sense, restrained) competition for status, the emphasis on wit, and the refined etiquette, the cult of heroism and the glorification of war continued to beat a strong pulse. The king "conducts wars because the rank of conqueror is the most 'noble and sublime of all titles,' because a king must wage wars by virtue of his function and his destiny."[67]

By focusing on court culture Elias analyzes the milieu in which the great ruling decisions were made, and uncovers the animating rationales for people within it. Again, though this culture was at its most refined in the France of Louis XIV, it was emulated throughout the rest of Europe by any ruler with great power pretensions. Despite the growth of a bourgeoisie whose primary interests lay in the accumulation of wealth, court society with the monarch at its apex remained the seat of political power not only in the French old regime but throughout Europe, well into the eighteenth century.

A culture and society that was prestige conscious, stratified, and privilege dependent exercised specific sorts of constraints on monarchical rule, especially in absolutist states. Groups and individuals struggled to gain privileges and exemptions from the king. A social actor's claim to special status or economic monopoly curbed the monarch's resource mobilization capability. The claim by a group, town, or province to a degree of self-government or exemption from certain taxes also generated real

[65] Elias, *Court Society.*
[66] Ibid., pp. 92–114.
[67] Ibid., p. 135; see also Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 278.

constraints on absolutist rule. Why would an absolutist monarch grant these privileges and exemptions? Because to do so was one of his main functions; that was what kings did (in addition to going to war, enacting ceremonies, healing with their touch, and so on). The king was, to echo the title of Hilton Root's book, the "fountain of privilege." Being a king meant having the power to grant status and privilege. Thus the constraints on monarchical resource mobilization were at the same time the enabling conditions for the monarch's claim to be at the summit of the society of orders.[68]

Very often the constraints placed on absolutist rule by corporate privileges and exemptions were articulated in legal terms. The actual expression and success of legal claims varied enormously, not only from state to state but within states as well. But despite such variation, all major European monarchies recognized and negotiated the complex social system of estates and orders, articulating their privileges and exemptions, supported by ancient laws and traditions. The laws were themselves a reflection of the system of orders; in many areas laws had not changed much since feudal times.

Law was not a rational, uniform, and transparent system. As the French *philosophes* complained over and over throughout the eighteenth century, old regime law was labyrinthine, traditional, complex, often irrational, and very often cruel; it certainly did not dispense uniform justice according to enlightened standards.[69] Despite its backwardness, law was considered an important check on despotism. But as such, it could also block efforts at administrative reform. Legality and tradition bound the monarch and constrained his policy options and initiatives.[70]

Revenue collection operated under similar constraints. Although we can find much variation, in general the collection of taxes was poorly centralized, relying heavily on officials who could often achieve relative autonomy and on "tax farmers" whose offices were purchased, and thus owned, and whose financial contributions to the crown were determined by contract and thus heavily mediated. In France, for example, "a conspicuous part of the funds utilized by the state did not come directly from tax collection, and not even from contracts with the tax farmers, but from loans that the tax farmers and a myriad of significant officials granted

[68] Hilton L. Root, *The Fountain of Privilege: Political Foundations of Markets in Old Regime France and England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Elias, *Court Society.*

[69] See Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 423–47.

[70] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 330.

to the treasury at high interest."[71] Since offices were property, and with property came certain rights, the legal claims of officeholders against efforts by central administrations to streamline revenue collection could significantly hinder aspirations to reform.

Despite these obstacles, by the eighteenth century most states were making efforts at legal and financial reform. Such reform often involved uprooting traditional rights, powers, and privileges of social orders. Success in bringing such orders to heel varied widely; larger states such as France and Austria were less successful than smaller states like Prussia because they needed these orders to help them govern their territories.[72] The reform process itself was largely inspired and fueled by the wave of enlightened thought that spread through Europe in the eighteenth century; the tensions and dynamics involved in this process are analyzed in the later sections of this chapter. Up to this point, I have highlighted the shape of the social, financial, and legal order underpinning European monarchies, since this order is what helped determine both the purpose or reason of state and the means available to the monarch to pursue his or her purposes. Reason of state was constituted largely by the desire for aggrandizement and prestige, while constraints on monarchs came from the very social order that sustained the monarchy as its apex. I now summarize and clarify the links between the internal and the external dimensions of the European old regime, before turning to a closer analysis of its cultural complementarities and contradictions.

International Rivalry and State Constitutions

The notion of legitimate authority is the conceptual hinge between "domestic" society (court society and the society of orders) and the conduct of international relations. The monarch was the center of authority, and members of the corporate orders struggled for the prestige and privilege that could only come from, or be sustained and guaranteed by, him (or her).[73] This was a social structure in which prestige and honor were constitutive of power.

International affairs were conducted by monarchs and their ministers. These elites did not lose their concerns with prestige and honor once their gaze turned away from the royal court to the international arena;

[71] Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776–1789*, vol. 1, *The Great States of the West*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 341; here Venturi is citing the work of John Francis Bosher (1965).

[72] See Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, chaps. 12 and 13.

[73] Root, *Fountain of Privilege*; Elias, *Court Society.*

they retained them, and in fact the latter was an extension of the same society as the former. Diplomats were invariably nobles.[74] Honor and prestige remained central to them, particularly since their job was to represent their sovereign in all his glory and to gain access to the corridors of power abroad. The same style of maneuvering was required on both fronts: in the court of one's home country and in foreign courts. Elias notes: "The art of what, with a characteristic narrowing of meaning, we call 'diplomacy' is thus cultivated in the everyday life of court society."[75]

The game of rivalry in the international arena was in many ways a macrocosmic representation of court politics. Jean de La Bruyère, a seventeenth-century courtier in France, made the following observations: "Life at Court is a serious, melancholy game, which requires us to draw up our pieces and batteries, form a plan, pursue it, parry that of our adversary, sometimes take risks and play capriciously; and after all our dreams and measures we are in check, sometimes checkmate."[76] And further: "A man who knows the court is master of his gestures, of his eyes and of his face; he is profound, impenetrable; he dissimulates bad offices, smiles at his enemies, controls his irritation, disguises his passions, belies his heart, speaks and acts against his feelings."[77] This description fits courtier and diplomat alike. Elias's analysis of court life refers repeatedly to multipolar, unstable equilibria, just as do discussions of the international relations of this period.[78] Of course, in the domestic sphere the king mediated between the "poles." But the culture of rivalry was the same. International relations was conducted by a class of people for whom prestige constituted the primary mode of self-identification and value; retaining their elite status was their primary concern; and similar rules of rivalry governed both court politics and international politics.[79]

Viewed in this light, many of the rules outlined by Schroeder and other international historians can be seen to be nested in the structure of court society and, more broadly, the society of orders. Certainly the international system was anarchic, and there was no "fountain of privilege" at the center of that system; self-help was required in order to secure

[74] Doyle, *Old European Order*, p. 267; McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, p. 205; Paul P. Bernard, *From the Enlightenment to the Police State: The Public Life of Johann Anton Pergen* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

[75] Elias, *Court Society*, p. 108. Elias makes almost no reference to international relations; the inferences I draw about this are my own.

[76] Quoted in Elias, *Court Society*, pp. 103–104.

[77] Elias, *Court Society*, p. 105.

[78] In Elias, *Court Society*, see pp. 154–57; 168–71; 176–77.

[79] See Jonathan Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture: France, 1570–1715* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

prestige, territory, position. But these objectives were conditioned and constituted by the culture that practiced both court politics and international relations. European sovereigns struggled with one another for rank and prestige; they did not in any substantive way believe in "sovereign equality" except in the important sense that they were all of the same social stratum (just as in courtly society). In the international arena, privilege and prestige had to be acquired by constant struggle, if not to aggrandize, then simply to maintain position against others who sought to improve their status. Though this sounds like the classic security dilemma, and in some senses it is, it is important to understand it in terms of the rationality that operated at the time. That rationality was culturally constituted; the strategic maneuvering in courts and in diplomacy was shaped by the culture of courtly rivalry.

Analysts have characterized the European balance of power system of the eighteenth century in highly dynamic terms, based on struggle: statesmen were striving not for equilibrium but for primacy.[80] Although the seventeenth century had demonstrated that hegemony by one power (France) was unattainable, this did not mean that all were content to "cultivate their gardens," far from it. To aspire to the rank of a great power meant to rise in a hierarchy of sovereigns; status is nonexistent without recognition by others. To hold and sustain the rank of a great power required aggrandizement—be it territorial, colonial, or dynastic. Given the multipolar distribution of power, alliance politics were usually necessary to achieve these sorts of aims. But since rivalry permeated alliance politics as well, these politics were also plagued by the struggle for advantage, prestige, and position.

It is precisely because the European old regime was an elite courtly culture that its international politics were the way they were: a brutal but highly stylized and mannered, status-conscious struggle for prestige and precedence, honor and glory. This is why compensations and indemnities in international politics were so important: they affected status and position. This is also why the balance of power hinged on considerations that went beyond the material holding of territory and population. And finally, this is why reason of state, a somewhat mysterious concept to begin with, was becoming more problematic as the century wore on.

The traditional way to calculate reason of state was to identify state with monarch; his glory was the country's glory. But because the social hierarchy of which he was the apex—and upon which he depended for his own position—was rife with struggles for privilege and exemption, such identification could be threatened: social orders claiming privilege

[80] Schroeder, *Transformation*, chap. 1.

could make constitutional claims about how to articulate reason of state. If constitutional claims could be made on the monarch, then where was the locus of sovereignty? For what purposes ought a state go to war; whose prerogative was it to decide these purposes? What Britain had already experienced in the seventeenth century, in the discourses and political struggles leading to its constitutional monarchy, had not yet become a central issue for most other states in the late eighteenth. But the seeds of the discourse pertaining to the nature of sovereign authority were planted, and the politics of absolutism and the privileged orders' resistance to, and struggle to re-formulate, absolutism made use of this discourse to put the sovereignty question to test.

This latter point indicates the tensions already evident in the picture painted thus far. Those tensions cannot be explained simply by referring to geopolitics or the struggle for material gain, because culturally conditioned purposes underpinned and animated those dynamics. Any deeper analysis of the old regime must penetrate the complex relationships between some of the key ideas constituting its culture, because it is in the relationships of those ideas, ideas which were taken up by social actors in their political struggles, that we begin to see the possibilities and conceptual terms of social action and social change.

Cultural Complementarities: Enlightenment and Monarchy

There is much in Enlightenment thought that supports and accepts the social and cultural traditions of the *ancien régime*. The vast project of the French *philosophes' Encyclopédie* focuses in no small part on the lives and conditions of the elite strata of society.[81] Enlightenment itself was believed by many of its practitioners to be the privilege of an elite: few imagined that their ideas could be digested by the "masses"; few supported anything more than a very basic universal education.[82] Although Enlightenment thinkers may have espoused equality as a general principle, they did not expect it to apply to real life. What enlightened thinkers generally meant by equality was that human nature could be understood according to scientific principles; in their capacity of being understood, men were equal. But in practice eighteenth-century society remained highly stratified, and though upward mobility from bourgeois to noble was not unheard of, the dividing lines between social orders remained

[81] Elias, *Court Society*, chap. 3; Gay, *Science of Freedom*.
[82] Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 517–28.

clear and well maintained. Peter Gay even argues that in the eighteenth century, social barriers "were growing more rigid rather than less so. Oligarchies . . . became more oligarchical; patricians jealously guarded their privileges with carefully manipulated constitutions, adroitly arranged (though no longer forced) marriages, and sumptuary laws that delimited the prerogatives of each social stratum. As beneficiaries of recently acquired or inherited status, patricians attempted to close off the very avenues of ascent that they, or their grandfathers, had walked, and in their defensiveness they were often more reactionary than the old feudal families."[83] Enlightened thought, though concerned with reform, by no means constituted an unambiguous assault on the society of orders.[84]

Enlightenment thought was reforming but not necessarily revolutionary—at least, not in and of itself revolutionary. In some senses, enlightened thought complemented traditional monarchical authority. M. S. Anderson writes that "demand for uniformity, simplicity, and rationality, to be imposed by a powerful central government" was the "essence of the Enlightenment as an active political phenomenon."[85] The secular thrust of enlightened thought facilitated the continuing erosion of clerical privilege, influencing both church and state, often to the benefit of central monarchical authority. Enshrining Reason (rather than religion or tradition) as the chief ordering principle upon which administration ought to be based could justify freeing monarchs of traditional clerical constraints. This rationalism affected religious discourse as well. Gay writes that "more than ever before, Christian statesmen justified their policies as obedience to reason of state, while Christian philosophers elaborated rational and rationalistic philosophies of life."[86]

In other distinct ways, enlightened thought animated certain strata of the nobility and also the ministerial and bourgeois classes. In major cities such as Paris, nobles who had long been held captive in court society began to patronize the budding intellectual life engendered by the rise of the *philosophes* to high positions within the Academie Française, and the growing dissemination of their works. Ministers throughout Europe—especially in Denmark, Austria, parts of Italy, France, and Prussia—drew on enlightened thought for their reform schemes. And certain segments of the bourgeoisie found much to agree with in enlightened thought, especially its support of commerce as a socially beneficial activity. Specific, identifiable complementarities between Enlightenment thought and the

[83] Ibid., pp. 46–47.

[84] In addition to Gay, *Science of Freedom*, see Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 209.

[85] M. S. Anderson, "The Italian Reformers," in *Enlightened Absolutism*, ed. Scott, pp. 56–57.

[86] Gay, *Science of Freedom*, p. 27.

traditional ideals and interests of various social groups facilitated more vigorous or freshly legitimated pursuits of those ideals and interests, and this in turn led to new coalitions and new conflicts.

Religious Toleration

The Enlightenment message of religious toleration has a direct connection to international relations, complementing the manner in which such relations were conducted in the eighteenth century. Toleration was an international phenomenon long before it could be said to have been a widespread policy internal to most European states—the latter did not begin to occur until the mid- to late eighteenth century.[87] Toleration was buttressed by the international treaties of the seventeenth century that had sought to remove religious objectives from international politics. As Derek Beales has observed: "Toleration is unusual among Enlightened policies in that war, diplomacy and international contacts played a large part in its history. The degree of toleration found in the model states of England, Holland and the United States was to a large extent the outcome of armed struggle. Many German states were only as tolerant as the Peace of Westphalia required."[88] Religious toleration emerged in large part as a response to international conflict. The Peace of Westphalia (1648) marked the beginning of the secularization of European politics.[89] Although religious animosity between Protestants and Catholics after the Thirty Years' War was still strong enough that Protestant princes negotiated at Osnabrück and Catholics at Münster, and tensions between Protestant and Catholic princes and subjects remained vital throughout the eighteenth century, the Westphalian principle that each ruler had the right to determine the religion in his state made religious rights a less likely cause of war between princes. In the eighteenth century, Enlightenment critiques of religious enthusiasm, mysticism and superstition, the drive to promote the rule of reason and natural law, and to end persecution based on religious difference complemented this secularizing trend.

As a foundation for a secular, *realpolitik* form of international relations, the concept of religious toleration represents a certain set of common cultural attitudes among statesmen. Removing religious passions from the calculus of state interests presumably promotes a more circum-

[87] Beales, "Social Forces," esp. pp. 44–50; see also Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 179.

[88] Derek Beales, "Social Forces and Enlightened Policies," in *Enlightened Absolutism*, ed. Scott, pp. 48–49.

[89] McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, pp. 6, 210.

scribed form of *realpolitik*, facilitating the shift to a more materialist calculus of power and influence. This suggests that political realism itself is a cultural construct dependent on shared cultural attitudes; the process of eliminating religious passion from international politics was a lengthy and difficult one. Machiavelli advocated just such a development but would have had to live another hundred years or so to see it begin to come to fruition. What began in the international arena was subsequently reinforced by the secular thrust of Enlightenment thought. Enlightenment secularism complemented the system of ideas negotiated at Westphalia regarding religious toleration, and this complementarity helped promote and sustain a more secular and materialist strategic calculus in international politics. The sorts of strategic considerations we would call "realist" required a secularized and tolerant international culture in order to flourish.

Enlightened Absolutism

Enlightenment thought was reforming thought; it sought to improve the lives of people by reorganizing government according to the dictates of reason as opposed to tradition, mysticism, or religion. It would be a mistake to equate enlightened thought with liberalism, however. There was no agreement on the part of enlightened thinkers as to the best form of government, nor even regarding the nature of economic policy (not all *philosophes* were physiocrats).[90] The nature of reform and the manner in which reform was to be conducted were also sources of contention. The notion of enlightened absolutism was thus not an oxymoron; enlightened thinkers were by no means unequivocally allied with bourgeois interests, as a marxist history might suggest.[91]

One strong strand of Enlightenment thought argues that rational reform is best carried out from the center. The monarch, as "first servant of the people" (a phrase used by Frederick the Great), is well positioned to implement enlightened reforms, simplify and rationalize legal codes, and centralize administration. This meshes well with the tradition of absolutism.

The political theory of absolutism has a long lineage, articulated most clearly in the work of Jean Bodin, Hugo Grotius, and Thomas Hobbes.[92]

[90] Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 344–68.

[91] See T.C.W. Blanning, "Frederick the Great and Enlightened Absolutism," in *Enlightened Absolutism*, ed. Scott, p. 273.

[92] A helpful summary that focuses on the implications of this theory for international relations is in William John Antholis, "Liberal Democratic Theory and the Transformation of Sovereignty" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1993), chap. 1.

John Pocock argues that Hobbes should be situated in the Enlightenment tradition even though he preceded it by half a century, thus linking a key conceptual aspect of Enlightenment directly to absolutism. Pocock's analysis of what he calls the "conservative Enlightenment" suggests that this strain of thought was directed, first, against religious sects and the pope and, second, against arms-bearing aristocrats; both parties could be seized with fanatic zeal or ancient "virtue" and become agents of civil war.[93] In Hobbesian rationality, excessive zeal brought on by religious fervor mobilized in political struggle could tear apart the state, as could aristocrats bearing arms for religious or other causes. The aim of Hobbes's science of politics was to provide security against civil war at all costs, and he constructed a rational, scientific argument for why the absolute authority of the Leviathan was the crucial means to the desired end, peace.[94]

Hobbes was concerned primarily with justifying absolute and indivisible sovereignty in the interests of domestic peace, and the form of government was not for him the primary issue. Even so, Hobbes prefers the monarch, over the oligarchy or the republic, as the most effective Leviathan. Further, Hobbes's mistrust of religious enthusiasm carries over into the eighteenth century, when the *philosophes*' attack on the established church carried on the critique with vigor, and far beyond what Hobbes would have deemed acceptable.[95] Superstition, irrationality, and mysticism were the *philosophes*' targets. This attack dovetailed nicely with the continuing efforts by monarchs to curb clerical privilege and extend control over church lands.

The eighteenth century produced a number of reforming monarchs or "enlightened absolutists," including Frederick the Great of Prussia, Joseph II of Austria, Leopold of Tuscany and then of Austria, and even Catherine the Great of Russia, not to mention the reformers in the Italian states, the smaller German principalities, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands.[96] Enlightened monarchs read and had exchanges with enlightened thinkers and *philosophes*. Certain *philosophes*, in turn, fawned on the monarchs, seeking privilege and prestige in addition to hoping that their ideas might have influence. For example, Voltaire was for a time attached to the court of Louis XV; he supported the Maupeau Revolution of 1771 (which

[93] J.G.A. Pocock, "Conservative Enlightenment and Democratic Revolutions: The American and French Cases in British Perspective," *Government and Opposition* 24, 1 (Winter 1989): 81–105.

[94] See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*; also Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Oxford: Berg, 1988), chap. 2.

[95] Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 1, *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).

[96] See the various essays in Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism*; and also Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime*, vol. 1.

curbed the power of the *parlements*), and wrote to d'Alembert in 1765 that "the cause of the king is the cause of the *philosophes*."[97]

Enlightened absolutists undertook real reforms, and many of these were inspired by Enlightenment thought. Frederick the Great perhaps best epitomizes the idea of an enlightened absolutist (though Leopold of Tuscany was far more liberal and thus perhaps truer to a certain aspect of the enlightened ethos), and it is worth looking at his rule a bit more closely.[98] This focus will allow us to explore the relationship between ideas and strategic calculations, since Frederick is considered by many to be a prototypical realist. His case shows how crucial Enlightenment thought was to the development of *realpolitik* as a mode of statecraft in Europe. Certainly, statesmen throughout history have conducted themselves in a "realist" manner, and the realist approach to strategy is not confined to any one historical period if we consider the careers of specific, talented leaders. Pericles of Athens and Cesare Borgia might both be considered realists in this sense. But if instead of individual strategic and leadership skills we think in terms of systemic rules of the game or basic principles—be they structural or cultural—which shape interactions in a system at any given time, then "realism" comes to refer to a sociopolitical, historically contingent set of practices. The development of political realism in this latter sense, I argue, was shaped by Enlightenment thought.

Frederick was steeped in the major thinkers of the Enlightenment; he read them, corresponded with them, and generated writings of his own. His thinking was "rational, universal, and secular" as opposed to the devotion to dynasticism, Imperial law, and Christianity displayed by his father. He even postulated a social contract to legitimate his authority.[99] In the realm of practical statecraft, Frederick enacted a number of enlightened policies. Internally, he practiced religious toleration and engaged in extensive legal reform, abolishing torture and reducing the number of capital crimes, and laying the foundations of a rationalized civil code.[100] Further, he allowed significant freedom of speech—significant enough to impress the foremost German philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, who argued that while his contemporaries had not yet attained enlightenment, his time was nevertheless "the age of enlightenment, the century of Frederick."[101]

[97] Quoted in Gay, *Science of Freedom*, p. 471; see also pp. 474–84.

[98] The following draws on Blanning, "Frederick the Great and Enlightened Absolutism."

[99] Blanning, "Frederick," pp. 277–78.

[100] Ibid., pp. 283–84.

[101] Immanuel Kant (1784), "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" in Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), p. 45, but see context.

There are a number of challenges to the view that Frederick represented the spirit of Enlightenment, mostly rooted in the correct observation that Frederick was no humanist and no liberal. But the complexity and diversity of Enlightenment thought made it possible to take up some aspects of it and not others. The fact that Frederick selectively and strategically focused on those aspects of enlightened thought that reinforced his absolutist rule and complemented rather than contradicted monarchical legitimacy does not invalidate the notion that Enlightenment ideas shaped his rule. Some enlightened ideas complemented the manner in which Prussia had been governed in earlier generations, and some did not. Critics may doubt Frederick's enlightened status by pointing out the policy continuities between Frederick the Great's rule and that of his father, Frederick William I.[102] However, since Frederick's Enlightenment education, thoughts, contacts, and even reforms were very real, what this reference to continuity shows is how certain aspects of Enlightenment thought were complementary with more traditional notions of rule, in Prussia as elsewhere.

In particular, religious toleration and legal reform were part of the Hohenzollern tradition. "Frederick's great-grandfather had welcomed Huguenots from France, his grandfather had welcomed Pietists from Saxony and his father had welcomed Protestants from Salzburg."[103] The administrative reforms that made Prussia a model of efficiency compared with its neighbors were all made by the decidedly unenlightened Frederick William I.[104] The transition from traditional to enlightened rule in Prussia was not a matter of contradictions so much as a matter of complementarities and elaboration of the rational basis and means of absolutism. These complementarities facilitated Frederick's strategic manipulation of Enlightenment thought.

There were also senses in which Frederick the Great was more conservative than his father, most notably in his support of the nobility and in his mercantilist policies.[105] Thus one cannot reasonably argue that Frederick was enlightened through and through; rather, Enlightenment thought penetrated his rule and reinforced some traditional aspects of it. But he also introduced new dimensions of rule: a disdain for Christianity (manifest as toleration; Frederick William's toleration, in contrast, was firmly grounded in piety), and disregard for dynasticism and Imperial law. The militaristic nature and ethos of the Prussian state could in some senses be seen as a rational, calculating response to its international position, but

[102] Blanning, "Frederick," p. 266.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid., p. 267.
[105] Ibid., pp. 267–69.

in order to engage in such a rational calculus Frederick had to shed many of the constraining ideas and prejudices that had shaped his father's rule and adopt a more modern, "enlightened" rationality. At the same time, enlightened rationalism fit with traditional notions of the monarch as military leader and protector of his people. Many contemporaries saw it that way.[106]

Was Frederick's foreign policy enlightened? Was the "rape of Silesia" enlightened or simply reckless? Certainly it was not traditional. The audacity of Frederick's seizure of Silesia lay in its disregard for dynastic legitimacy, and this as well as the fact that Prussia had not been a traditional enemy of Austria may explain why all the other powers were so surprised by the attack.[107] Thus Silesia shows that Frederick was shedding the ideological constraints that might have held back a less "modern" ruler. But the seizure made Frederick many enemies. According to some historians, Frederick's cynical, power-political maneuver set the tone for subsequent decades; dynastic legitimacy considerations receded, as did the dual notions of traditional rivalries and traditional partnerships and the notion that international treaties ought to be respected. Others disagree and contend that dynastic and legitimacy issues, as well as traditional rivalries, retained their importance.

Both arguments are right insofar as dynastic legitimacy issues receded but were not completely eclipsed. The seizure of Silesia did in some sense set the tone for the period in marking a political strategy more overtly power-hungry, and perhaps more nakedly rational and calculating, and less couched in the trappings of those aspects of law and legitimacy that drew on more ancient traditions.[108] Rather than demonstrating that strategic interests "won the day" over ideas, however, this rationalization is itself a product of the penetration of Enlightenment thought into what were previously more religiously rooted, dynastic, and traditional theories and practices of kingship and statecraft. If we think of realism as a structural or cultural force in the system rather than as an aptitude of specific individuals, then this argument should come into focus more clearly. Schroeder, though not particularly impressed by Frederick's seizure of Silesia, notes that enlightened absolutism "directly increased the war-making potential of states . . . and indirectly weakened traditional norms and restraints."[109] Surely Frederick exploited and furthered these trends. His seizure of Silesia made sense in terms of a materialist calculus of state

[106] Ibid., passim.

[107] McKay and Scott, *Great Powers*, p. 163.

[108] See H. M. Scott, "Introduction: The Problem of Enlightened Absolutism," in *Enlightened Absolutism*, ed. Scott, pp. 29–30.

[109] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 50.

interest based on the notion that power was constituted by fertile, productive territory and populace; Silesia fit these criteria and had easily navigable rivers to boot. The "political algebra" approach to diplomacy is closely associated with the Austrian state chancellor Count Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz, who controlled Habsburg foreign policy from 1753 until the early 1790s,[110] but he was at least partly reacting to Frederick's form of *realpolitik*, which also fits the bill. Such thinking was seeping into European statecraft and displacing more traditional legal, religious, and dynastic concerns.

The seizure of Silesia would not have made sense in terms of dynastic calculations, religious contestation, or traditional rivalries, three traditional principles of the conduct of international relations in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Frederick did ask his ministers to drum up a dynastic rationale, but it was a very weak pretense (whereas Maria Theresa was Charles VI's daughter and had the Pragmatic Sanction, signed by all major powers, to back her claim); there was no religious context (such as the need to protect religious rights) to the seizure; and Prussia and Austria were not traditional rivals. But this deviation from traditional principles and practices does not mean that "necessity" came to rule the day and "legitimacy" now meant nothing. Rather, the terms of necessity (in other words, the terms of and reasons for conquest) were themselves being redefined by Frederick's actions. Dynastic ties and claims came to mean less; religion continued to fade as a source of international contestation, and a calculus of power as territorial extent in and of itself, regardless of religious, legal, or dynastic claims, came to mean more. And this created a more insecure international environment.[111]

Frederick was not alone in the pantheon of enlightened absolutists, of course, and not all rulers followed his particular blending of traditional and enlightened monarchy. Leopold II (who succeeded Joseph II to the Imperial throne) was far more liberal; as archduke of Tuscany he engaged in extensive reform of the Tuscan legal code under the direct influence of the Italian enlightened legal thinker Cesare Beccaria; among other moves he abolished both torture and the death penalty.[112] Gustavus III of Sweden also reformed legal codes under the influence of Beccaria. Catherine the Great undertook moves toward religious toleration, as did Joseph II of Austria despite his mother Maria Theresa's "renowned Catholic bigotry and notorious anti-Semitism."[113] Joseph's reforms caused turbulence and resistance in Austria's holdings, including revolt and secession in the Aus-

[110] Scott, "Introduction," pp. 29–30.
[111] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 50.
[112] Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 446–47.
[113] Scott, "Introduction," pp. 20–21.

trian Netherlands. He too exploited the military—and thus potentially destabilizing—dimensions of enlightened absolutism. Despite the fact that Joseph's reforms were more transient, they have earned him a central place in the pantheon of enlightened absolutism.[114]

Historians disagree about the depth and efficacy of reform under enlightened absolutism. But the issues of implementation and efficacy go beyond the point being made here, which is simply that certain aspects of Enlightenment thought dovetailed perfectly with the interests of monarchs in rationalizing their administrations and extending centralized control over their territories, and engaging in more materialist calculations of interest. No doubt some of these interests were fueled by more traditional strains of thought about paternalistic monarchy, but it is also true that the writings of enlightened thinkers complemented some of the more ancient notions and helped shape the substance of reform. Enlightenment culture and more traditional notions of paternalistic monarchy complemented each other in fueling monarchical aspirations to extend the reach of absolutism.

Historians also have divergent ways of assessing how the pressures of international competition influenced reform efforts. On the one hand, the argument is made that the pressures of war and competition so overwhelmed the resources of the state that there was little or nothing left for the domestic social reforms so desired by enlightened *philosophes*. On the other hand, it is also true that those same pressures exposed internal weaknesses and thus made reform all the more important.[115] The success of Frederick the Great in challenging Austria's hegemony in Germany, in particular, may be interpreted in terms of a complementary interaction between Enlightenment ideas and strategic interaction: Enlightenment ideas helped inspire Frederick's reforms and calculations, which in turn made him internationally stronger, which inspired competition on the part of Austria, which led to reform in Austria as well. Although Frederick's French *philosophe* correspondents were dismayed at his lack of humanitarianism and ultimately came to consider him a dilettante in intellectual matters, his style of statecraft owed a great deal to the Enlightenment.[116] Certainly, Frederick achieved internationally what his father had been unable to achieve—he made Prussia a great power (though his policies also made this position precarious). Ironically (if one has a liberal view of the Enlightenment), Enlightenment thought helped

[114] Blanning, *Joseph II*.

[115] See H. M. Scott, "Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1740–90," in *Enlightened Absolutism*, ed. Scott, p. 148; Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 483–501.

[116] See Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 483–501; Bernard, *From Enlightenment to Police State*, pp. 10–13.

him to do so; it helped produce a "purer" *realpolitik* than had previously been possible.

It can further be argued, in the same vein, that enlightened absolutism had the capacity to make international relations more dangerous for smaller powers: disregard for dynasticism and international law (Imperial law) made their existence more precarious. This is borne out by the facts of international relations in the mid- to late eighteenth century, when competition among great powers became subject to fewer legal and dynastic constraints.[117] Paradoxically, then, in some senses Enlightenment thought had the unintended consequences of making international relations more brutal than it had previously been. If we adopt a narrow view of the Enlightenment as a liberal phenomenon, this conclusion is disturbing. The Enlightenment was far more complex and multifaceted than a humanist or liberal interpretation will reveal, however, and this helps account for how well integrated it became in European society, especially in the elite corridors of power.

Enlightened Nobles, Salon Culture

Significant ideological complementarities can also be found in the attitudes of the European nobility toward Enlightenment thought. Although the nobility can be schematically seen as a force of tradition, ancient privilege, and general backwardness, that is far from the whole story.[118] In France and also in Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, and Denmark, many nobles rode the Enlightenment bandwagon. In terms of their long-standing interests in autonomy, prestige, and preserving privilege, Enlightenment thought may be seen as complementing and reinforcing the nobles' ideas of themselves as crucial checks against despotism, as sources of learning and wisdom, and as progressive agents within the social order.

Enlightenment notions of liberty complemented traditional noble claims to independent status, and one often finds the term being used in this sense. The "liberties" of the privileged class were rooted in feudal times, in their military role and their independent landholdings. The term "liberty" in this context meant something other than what it came to mean in the American and French revolutions: it referred back to older, feudal liberties (real or romantically imagined), where nobles were more independent of monarchs than under absolutism. It is easy to see how such an association might develop. When enlightened thinkers themselves

[117] Schroeder, *Transformation*, chap. 1.
[118] See Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience and the Origins of Modern Culture*.

spoke of liberty in the mid-eighteenth century, they were generally not thinking of the common people. Their social links were with the elite strata or with the educated, wealthy bourgeoisie who were themselves working to gain entry into noble orders.

The American Revolution certainly transformed enlightened thinking about liberty. But even after that, liberty as used by enlightened nobles did not necessarily mean social leveling, or freedom to participate in government by all social orders. The *cahiers des doléances* (a traditional procedure in old regime France whereby lists of grievances were drawn up by local assemblies of the three orders) of 1788 show that the provincial nobility "were for individual liberty, toleration, a constitution, and in many cases, were willing to relinguish [*sic*] their financial exemptions." But they were not willing to give up privilege and distinction, or political power.[119] As John McManners concludes in his essay, the nobility in France "had one trait in common: proud, self-confident independence."[120] Whatever side of the political spectrum nobles were on, the notion of liberty resonated with their ideas of their own independence and with the notion that the nobility provided legal checks on despotism. Noble liberties thus had some role in shaping sovereignty.

Enlightenment concepts of natural law and constitutionalism also complemented ancient notions of noble privilege, and were in some cases used to mobilize nobles in defense of such privilege. This is particularly true of France, though the same pattern can be found in some of the smaller states. In Britain, such mobilization was unnecessary because the noble orders already possessed significant political power.[121] Montesquieu's clear preference for the *thèse nobiliare*, or the thesis, contra the *thèse royale* supporting absolutism, that nobility and clergy provided important constitutional checks on monarchical power, provided an enlightened rationale for the maintenance of noble status and privilege in France.[122] The foundations of these two opposed theses lay in two distinct interpretations of French history regarding the question of whether or not, at the beginning of the French kingdom when the Franks invaded Gaul, a constitutional monarchy had been established. To answer in the affirmative indicated support for the *thèse nobiliare*, and thus opposition to the king's monopoly on executive, legislative, and judicial functions. In this vein, Montesquieu argues for separation of powers even in a monarchy; that is what keeps it

[119] J. McManners, "France," in *The European Nobility in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. A. Goodwin (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953), p. 41.

[120] Ibid., p. 42.

[121] H. J. Habakkuk, "England," in *European Nobility*, ed. Goodwin.

[122] Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, vol. 1, book 2, chap. 4. Also see Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 466–67.

from becoming a despotism. Montesquieu's admiration of Britain on this score resonated among many Enlightenment thinkers.[123]

Regarding the *thèse nobiliare*, Gay comments: "It was a fanciful theory. It was bad history and bad law, a transparent *defense of privilege in the guise of constitutional principles*; it had wider application only because it came to be expressed in universal terms as the eighteenth century went on."[124] Gay disagrees with Montesquieu on the validity of the noble thesis, but the conflict of interpretations is not the issue here. Rather, Gay's observation perfectly expresses the notion of complementarity: Enlightenment thought and language dovetailed with more traditional thinking about noble privilege and constitutional status. Thus it was little wonder that many nobles were comfortable with Enlightenment thought. It would be a mistake, however, to view this adoption of ideas as simply a strategic calculus based on some fundamental, pre-ideological interest, thus showing that the ideas themselves were of residual importance. The ideas were indeed used strategically, but in using them in this way the nobility put itself into a position that in the long run threatened its very existence as a social order. Actors deploy ideas strategically, but in doing so they get caught up in the logic and possibly unforeseen implications of those ideas; culture thus comes to have causal impact on strategic interaction.

The situation of the enlightened nobility in France provides an example of the sociopolitical consequences of the complementarity between traditional notions of noble liberties and Enlightenment conceptions of liberty. Not only were nobles' constitutional struggles with the monarch supported by theses such as that of Montesquieu, but the intellectual movements afoot breathed new life into the cultural milieu of the nobility, at least in Paris. The birth of the Paris salon can be interpreted as the development of a cultural milieu distinct from the court; it marks a decentralization of cultural life.[125] These salons, where Enlightenment writings and ideas were freely and vigorously discussed (and social mingling between nobles and commoners was constrained by wit and intelligence more than by birth into an order),[126] also represented an early step in the evolution of the notion of public opinion as a critical force reflecting on society and government (this factor is examined further below, in its contradictory implications).[127]

The international implications of the particular complementarities just discussed lie largely in the constitution of a cosmopolitan, literate

[123] Gay, *Science of Freedom*.

[124] Gay, *Science of Freedom*, p. 466; emphasis added.

[125] Elias, *Court Society*, p. 79.

[126] McManners, "France."

[127] Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*; and Mona Ozouf, "L'opinion publique," in *The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, ed. Baker.

cultural elite who communicated and exchanged ideas throughout Europe and, eventually, across the Atlantic. When books or pamphlets were banned in one country they could be printed in another and smuggled across borders. The libraries of enlightened nobles contained many books banned in their own country. International political culture was bound together not only by the ties of caste but also by discourse. Reform efforts in one country were reported on and discussed, and sometimes emulated, elsewhere.[128] European enlightened discourse thus sustained, in important ways, the cosmopolitan orientation already ingrained in the ruling orders. They continued to struggle with each other diplomatically and militarily, but they also watched and reported and wrote about each other, and this further integrated their milieu. But the spread and dissemination of enlightened discourse additionally served to expose more clearly some of the contradictions contained in or highlighted by the spread of Enlightenment thought.

The breadth and diversity of enlightened thought provided a wealth of opportunity for integrating that thought into more traditional notions of political authority, and several key affinities have been discussed here. The theoretical point is that complementarities between previously distinct systems of ideas may provide opportunities for cooperation between proponents of the old and the new ideas. It should also be clear that cooperation can worsen war; it does not equal peace. Thus an enlightened absolutist monarch could cooperate, to some degree, with bourgeois enlightenment intellectuals. Similarly, enlightened nobility could find common ground with those same intellectuals, or *philosophes*. These affinities had real political consequences: enlightened absolutism generated reform and centralization, while the enlightened nobility helped to sustain the evolution of autonomous sociocultural centers of thought and discussion, which fueled constitutional debates in France and in general became a nascent force of public opinion. It now becomes clear that two of the complementarities just discussed—enlightened absolutism and enlightened nobility—were also in contradiction with each other.

Cultural Contradictions in the Old European Order

Marxists follow Hegel in seeing contradiction as the engine of history. There is something to this view, especially if we focus on culture. I have argued that key political actors identified complementarities between Enlightenment ideas and more traditional views of authority, and that

[128] A thorough analysis of these developments can be found in Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776–1789*, 2 vols.

this helped them further articulate, rationalize, and pursue their interests. But these dynamics had unintended consequences. Complementarities between traditional and enlightened thought gave political actors a new language in which to articulate their views, and this new language propelled them into political positions that they might not otherwise have taken. Certainly, the nobility in France who sided with the Third Estate had been prepared for this alliance by their own "enlightenment," but they had not meant to bring down the entire *ancien régime*. Thus complementarity as well as contradiction may be an engine of social change. But contradictions remain powerful in their potential to facilitate social transformation.

Where ideas come into contradiction with each other, they have the potential to polarize and mobilize political actors. To hold contradictory ideas creates tensions in one's belief system and conception of identity; this may spur one to action, whether in seeking some sort of adjustment, reconciliation, or synthesis or whether in seeking to eliminate, overcome, or invalidate a contradictory principle. Parties on opposite sides of contradictory principles may become engaged in a strategic struggle. Because contradictions may be hidden from view by censors, or simply suppressed or denied by powerful social actors, they do not automatically determine strategic struggle, but they do make it possible.[129]

Because the American and French revolutions set in motion major legitimacy contests within the European context, a fuller treatment of the cultural contradictions evoked in these events is presented in the next two chapters. The seeds of those legitimacy contests, however, were already evident in old regime Europe prior to the revolutions. The following section sketches out some of the relevant lines of cultural contestation with respect to political authority, as well as identifying the relevant social and political actors mobilized by the cultural rifts.

Royal Thesis versus Noble Thesis

As already noted, the extension of absolutist rule was contested by privileged orders, initially by some orders of the clergy and eventually and more importantly by the nobility. Early modern ideas of absolutism stressed the need for centralized, rational administration, which required all authority to flow from the monarch and his or her ministers. The "royal thesis" stood in contradiction to the "noble thesis," which presented the nobility as a check against despotism. The theoretical issue revolved around the locus of sovereignty and whether sovereign power

[129] Archer, *Culture and Agency*, chaps. 6 and 7.

could be parsed out or divided. The assertion that sovereign power emanated from one source, the king, was contradicted by any assertion that the people, *parlements*, estates, or other bodies had a right to share in the sovereign power. At most, such bodies might provide counsel to the king in his deliberations, but to argue that any of the corporate orders constituted a political body that itself could determine and work for the public good was to contradict the theory of absolute sovereignty.[130]

In practice, such contradictions were not unusual even under the old regime. First, Britain showed that a constitutional monarchy where noble orders exercised significant political power, and where sovereignty resided in Parliament, could sustain great power status. Second, in some absolutist states noble and other corporate orders had periodically asserted themselves: France in the 1760s experienced a decade of struggle between king and noble-representing *parlements*. The Maupeau Revolution, which suppressed the increasingly vocal and active *parlements* in 1771, was only partially successful. Exiled members of the *parlements* did not stay silent; discourse continued, and the struggle was renewed again during the final years of Louis XVI's reign. Struggles in Austria brought on by Joseph II's reforms also highlighted the divisive potential of contradictory notions as to the ultimate locus of political authority: the nobility struggled to retain privileges and position and argued in constitutional terms about their role in the structure of the sovereign state. Even later commentators on this period seem to take sides on the noble versus royal thesis. Alexis de Tocqueville supports the former in his sociological study of the old regime: "Those peoples who are so constituted as to have the utmost difficulty in getting rid of despotic government for any considerable period are the ones in which aristocracy has ceased to exist and can no longer exist."[131] Clearly, Tocqueville was more than a little influenced by Montesquieu.

The existence of a cultural contradiction such as that between the royal and the noble thesis about the locus and nature of sovereign authority does not in and of itself cause political conflict; rather, the situational logic generated by the contradiction makes conflict a possibility if political actors find ways to act on the logic.[132] This was not possible in many states. In Prussia, for example, Frederick the Great bought off the nobles with military positions and privileges, thus giving them a sense of participation in the state even as all orders came from the center. The resources

[130] Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 169–70.

[131] Alexis de Tocqueville (1856), *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Doubleday, 1955), pp. xii–xiii.

[132] Archer, *Culture and Agency*, chap. 7.

available to monarchs for suppressing any manifestation of the problems surrounding the nature of absolute authority—the central one being how the theory of absolute monarchy related to the increasingly fruitful constitutionalist discourse of the eighteenth century—varied greatly. But the contradictions were there and in many instances were exploited and actualized in political struggle, even prior to the American and French revolutions.

Public Opinion as a Source of Political Authority

Another important dimension of the conceptual problems generated by the simultaneous extension of absolutist authority and spread of Enlightenment discourse are highlighted in the emergence, facilitated by the evolution of mass printing, of a "republic of letters" throughout Europe, that is, of a literate or semiliterate reading public that produced and consumed the numerous pamphlets, newsletters, and books flooding Europe in the eighteenth century.[133] Historians have detected in these developments the origins of the notion of public opinion as a political force. As Baker puts it, discussing the French case: "Theorists of '*opinion publique*' understood the concept as the foundation for a new kind of politics that would be at once open to public discussion and controlled by reason—which is to say by the pen of men of letters."[134] What I will emphasize here is the international nature of this development, as well as its linkage to the development of the religious schism between Catholic and Protestant states.

The idea that a "public" could constitute a locus of political authority contradicts the theory of absolutism as clearly as the notion that corporate orders may share in absolute sovereignty.[135] But this "public" was not confined within state borders; it was truly a European phenomenon. In its early years (late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries) it was not uncommon for European public discourse to focus on international affairs. Joseph Klaits traces the development of this discourse to the age of Louis XIV; its primary impetus was the War of Spanish Succession. The burdens of that war on the public and the difficulties faced by the respective parties in making peace brought forth numerous commentaries by civilians as well as diplomats and ministers.

Klaits documents the international nature of public critiques and pamphlets in the age of Louis XIV. The cultural practice of printing political commentaries and circulating them throughout Europe, whether clan-

[133] See Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 57–83.
[134] Baker, "Introduction," p. xviii.
[135] Baker, *Inventing*, chap. 8.

destinely or openly, only accelerated in subsequent decades.[136] These developments are intimately related, Klaits argues, to the rise of new forms of political legitimation that had begun to take root in Protestant states. While Catholic powers legitimated monarchical authority through "inheritance, divine right, and sacred attributes," Protestant states had begun to deploy a more rationalist, utilitarian discourse to legitimate monarchical authority.[137] Since the War of Spanish Succession pitted Catholic Bourbon powers against Protestant powers, the clash of legitimating discourses was accentuated by armed conflict. But lest we hurry to give this a Huntingtonian, "clash of civilizations" interpretation, we should note that the discourses were not really polarized along the lines of the military schism. Rather, Klaits argues that what was happening was the search for and testing of some common language of legitimacy so that a peace acceptable to all relevant parties could be negotiated. The trans-European discourse about the war sought to overcome the military schism, with all the burdens it placed on society, by generating common ground in thinking about an acceptable peace. As Klaits shows, public discourse became extremely important both as a challenge to ministers and as a propaganda tool for ministers, in the course of the peace negotiations following these wars.[138]

So the relevant contradiction here is not between Catholic and Protestant discourses on royal authority. Rather, the emergence of these discourses during the reign of Louis XIV breathed life into the republic of letters that was to become the voice of a Europe-wide public opinion. The claim that public opinion constituted a source of political authority would eventually reveal itself as contradictory to the theory of absolutist rule, however the latter was legitimated.

Another facet of the way in which religious differences helped to fuel a Europe-wide discourse is illustrated by the fate of the French Huguenots, who were absorbed into Protestant countries from whence some of them at least could continue their discussions and extend these into substantive critiques of political authority in the Catholic states.[139] Indeed, the secularization of international relations represented in the Peace of Westphalia helped to fuel the development of the republic of letters insofar as enlightened pamphleteers could find refuge in Protestant lands, a refuge from which to launch their assaults on all things clerical.[140] In the Catholic states themselves, ministers came to see the value of pamphlets

[136] In Klaits, *Propaganda*, see pp. 34, 103–104, 123, 155 for examples of the international nature and subjects of these pamphlets.

[137] Ibid., pp. 24–25.

[138] Ibid.

[139] See Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea*, rev. ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968).

[140] Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols.

as propaganda tools, and were not above joining the discourse. In fact, Klaits argues that French ministers were eventually forced to rationalize monarchical decisions in the secular terms of enlightened discourse, rather than relying on more traditional legitimations shrouded in Catholic religious iconography.[141]

A European political culture, whose printed products constituted sustained commentaries on political authority that were impossible, even by censoring Catholic absolutists, to ignore, thus influenced the evolution of the European states system into the eighteenth century. The overall impact of these developments is summed up by Denys Hay: "Divorced now by eighteenth-century illuminism from its association with Christendom, and fortified by the notion of a 'republic of letters,' itself the product of medieval education, by the diaspora of the Italian humanists and the later dispersion of the Huguenots, the sentiment of European unity was thus married to the interlocking political affairs of the continent."[142] The evolution of the republic of letters into a political force, that of public opinion, undermined the traditional foundation of absolutist authority even as it facilitated the evolution of enlightened absolutism. Censorship was inhibited not only by the anarchy of the European states system, where a pamphlet outlawed in one country could find a publisher in another and be smuggled back, but also by the recognition of the censors themselves of the need to address the critiques that they could never fully suppress.

The implications of this development are still being played out today. Followers of Jürgen Habermas are working to demonstrate the emergence of a public sphere in which a transnational civil society exercises civilizing influence on the states system.[143] I do not apply that interpretation to the cases examined here. What was evident in the eighteenth century was that Europe-wide public discourse both exacerbated some political conflicts and facilitated new forms of cooperation. Thus the international implications of the emergence of an international public sphere are indeterminate in and of themselves. But in the period studied, this sphere helped to fuel an important challenge to absolutist authority as such, even as it provided new resources—the tools of propaganda—to absolutist monarchs themselves. On balance, these developments can be said to have heightened conflict both domestically and internationally; they gave new ammunition to the defenders of tradition even as they inspired revolutionary challenges to tradition.

[141] Klaits, *Propaganda*.

[142] Hay, *Europe*, p. 123.

[143] See Thomas Risse, " 'Let's Argue!': Communicative Action in World Politics," *International Organization* 54, 1 (Winter 2000): 1–39; Marc Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordanian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Universality and Equality versus Particularism and Privilege

Enlightenment rationality tapped into presumably universal elements of nature and human society. Such universalism contradicted the idea that political societies were the products of tradition, geography, and contingent historical processes or fortune. The tension between the need to identify universal principles of social order and a recognition of the diversity of actual political orders was evident in this period but not resolved, especially not in Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. In that tract, discussion of universal principles coexists with analysis of the influence of geography and climate on the political and social structures of various societies.[144]

The tension between the search for the universal, on the one hand, and the empirical observation of the diversity of the particular, on the other, has never been, and perhaps can never be, resolved. But it is useful to point out the tension as it was experienced in eighteenth-century discourse, because the conflict between the universalism of at least some enlightened discourse and the particularism of the traditionalists provided rich ideological fodder for the proponents and opponents of the French Revolution. The epitome of such usage is Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which attacks the purveyors of "abstract right" for having undermined the natural and traditional order of their society. "The science of constructing a commonwealth, or renovating it, or reforming it, is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught *a priori*," warns Burke.[145] These conceptual schisms predated the revolution that most exploited them.

Insofar as the notion of basic universal principles upon which a science of society could be based focused on human nature, it suggested a certain notion of equality. This notion of natural equality contradicted the notion that society was a natural hierarchy. Even if most *philosophes* were themselves unwilling or unable to take these ideas to their logical conclusion, political actors in the American and French revolutions were at least willing to push them further than they had ever been pushed. How difficult it must have been for some people to grasp this contradiction is evidenced in the willingness of certain nobles to ally themselves with the bourgeoisie in the early stages of the French Revolution. Such enlightened nobles perhaps failed to fully appreciate the implication that universal equality would mean eradication of the roots of their own political posi-

[144] Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*; Gay, *Science of Freedom*, pp. 323–35.

[145] Edmund Burke (1789–90), *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 53.

tion and power, which lay in particularism and privilege.[146] But that is getting ahead of the story.

Mercantilism versus Economic Liberalism

The final juxtaposition of contradictory old regime ideas to be discussed in this chapter is the challenge posed by physiocrats and economic liberals to the traditional doctrine of mercantilism. Mercantilist thought was, according to Peter Gay, "a conglomerate of economic ideas flexible enough to satisfy the requirements of statesmen in the most varied circumstances."[147] The overall objective was to gain a "favorable" balance of trade, that is, if a country exported more than it imported it could accumulate bullion, which was considered a measure of state wealth, which directly translated into state power. Techniques to achieve this included not only import duties and export subsidies but also restrictions on emigration of skilled workmen, encouragement of population growth, and protection of domestic shipping.[148] The primacy of the objective of state power, the view that international trade was a zero-sum game, and the competitive measures taken to enhance a state's exports at the expense of the products of other countries all showed trade to be an extension of international rivalry.

The economic ideas of the physiocrats and their liberal descendants such as David Hume and Adam Smith emerged as a strong critique of the mercantile system. Laissez-faire thinking indicated that wealth was not a zero-sum game, that free trade yielded gains for all, that state intervention could hamper economic productivity, and that ultimately, if left to themselves, individuals would generate through their economic activity a harmonious social order with only minimal help from the state.

In what sense are these two systems of ideas contradictory? On the desirability of state intervention in the economy there is no obvious contradiction, because even liberal economists recognized the need for some level of intervention. Thus competing views on the role of the state could in principle be settled by finding some "mix" of intervention and laissez-faire. Of course, plenty of policy struggles over this mix were possible, but the ideological polarization need not be as deep as the one generated by, for example, the opposition between the idea of public opinion as a

[146] See Patrice Higonnet, *Class, Ideology, and the Rights of Nobles during the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

[147] Gay, *Science of Freedom*, p. 345.

[148] Ibid., pp. 345–46.

source of authority and that of absolutist monarchy; conflict over the degree of state involvement in the economy did not constitute a legitimacy contest.

Where the two theories stand in greater tension is on the issue of the proper unit of analysis when studying political economy and indeed society in general. This point ties in to the contradiction between universal equality and particular privilege. From a mercantilist perspective, the proper unit of analysis is the state; from a liberal perspective it is the individual. Thus a potential point of political contestation lies in assessing who exactly is responsible for people's economic well-being: a paternalistic monarch or the individuals themselves? In eighteenth-century politics, the very notion that a human agent, rather than providence or God, could be labeled responsible for economic crisis was itself novel. As Black notes:

> At the popular level, it could be suggested that tensions increased in periods of economic distress without implying that they were simply due to them, and that increasing population pressure and general falling living standards led to a rise in tension from the 1760s. What was possibly crucial was not the depth of a particular crisis, but the sense that crisis was imminent and that human agents were responsible. . . . The attempt by the French government, under physiocratic influence, to reorganise the grain trade in the 1760s and 1770s increased the habit of ascribing harvest difficulties to human agencies, both because of the actual consequences of the policy and because writers, both pro- and anti-government, encouraged the notion that human intervention could and did affect the situation.[149]

This is an interesting point, but the question of which human agent was responsible was not trivial. Who were the real agents in society: rulers or the people? Liberalism pointed to the people, who sustained social order through their everyday economic activity. Mercantilism pointed to the state and thus to the ruler(s) as the primary agents of social order, a concept that reinforced absolutism. That particular contradiction has not really been resolved in modern politics. Its international implications in the eighteenth century were found in the contradictory attitudes about the purpose and nature of commercial treaties between nations: did such treaties represent bonds between rulers or between peoples? The tensions between the liberal and mercantilist view, however, do not become an active issue in international politics until the American Revolution.

[149] Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe*, p. 402.

Conclusion

International relations between the great powers in eighteenth-century Europe were grounded in an elite culture of rivalry. That culture put monarchs at the apex of a political order rooted in religion, tradition, and law. Relations between monarchs were conditioned by court culture. Diplomacy and court politics were both grounded in the same culture insofar as they were practiced by people from the same stratum of society, and courts were the centers of state power. Interaction in the diplomatic and courtly domains involved brutal struggles for power, prestige, and precedence, struggles that were overlaid by highly refined manners and a luxurious material culture. The observation that one realm was anarchical and the other hierarchical obscures their shared roots in a common culture. For monarchs, their ministers, and the politically active nobility, the realm of international relations was an extension of their own society; these actors had closer ties and affinities with one another than they did with the lower orders which over which they ruled. In some important respects, for the ruling elites in Europe "outside" was "inside" and vice versa.

Political relationships in Imperial Germany in this period epitomize the blurry boundary between international and domestic politics. Myriad small and medium-sized principalities, corporations, and ecclesiastical principalities were bound together by a constitution delimiting the rights of these entities. They made claims to sovereignty that were partially buffered by international treaties, but at the same time were subject to the Holy Roman Emperor, at this point inevitably a Habsburg. In a sense Germany was the link between feudalism and the sovereign states system. Its continued existence in the midst of this system provided a picture of that system's cultural and historical roots. Politics among the German princes was just as competitive, devious, cutthroat, and often extremely petty, as between great powers and rivals in court—just the scale in each domain was different. And the competition, throughout the system, was heavily circumscribed by law, tradition, and religion.

The restraints of religion and tradition, and traditional Imperial law, were becoming frayed by the mid-eighteenth century.[150] A major factor in such erosion was the spread of Enlightenment thought. The tensions between Enlightenment principles and more traditional ideas of social order and political authority, and the resources Enlightenment rationalism provided to both absolutist monarchs and revolutionaries, all helped

[150] See Schroeder, *Transformation*; compare with T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), chap. 1.

to foster heightened levels of competition that strained the old regime to the breaking point. The stresses and strains of the intellectual movement under way, and especially of its political manifestations, were experienced differently in the domestic and international contexts; this is where the anarchy/hierarchy distinction becomes important.

It was in the domestic sphere that Enlightenment principles were most likely to cause conflict; it was here that their revolutionary potential first became realized.[151] The increasing penetration of the absolutist state into the domestic society of privileged orders caused conflicts between the state and those orders. Ideological polarization was facilitated by the spread of enlightened discourse, particularly constitutional discourse. All sides in the conflicts—princes and corporations, clergy, nobles, merchants, monarchs, and their ministers—could and did make use of those aspects of enlightened discourse that complemented their traditional views in putting forth their claims. It was only in France that this process took on revolutionary dimensions, but the intellectual ferment of the Enlightenment was Europe-wide and transatlantic, despite the efforts of censors in the most conservative Catholic states.[152]

The resource demands of international competition propelled the domestic extension of state power.[153] But how did Enlightenment discourse affect international competition? In the anarchic realm of international relations, the influence of Enlightenment discourse was, in and of itself, not revolutionary or potentially revolutionary; rather, it indirectly exacerbated and heightened the level of international competition, on the one hand, while constituting a continuous public commentary on international affairs, on the other. The way that Enlightenment exacerbated competition was through the mechanism of enlightened absolutism: more strongly absolutist states could muster greater resources and engage in a more rational, calculating *realpolitik* at the expense of religion, law, and tradition. The reforms of the more successful enlightened absolutists, such as Frederick the Great, were envied and emulated. But since this development was quite patchy, and legal, traditional, and dynastic principles continued to animate monarchs, this was not yet a revolutionary development for the international system (at least, not until the coming of the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon). It nevertheless deserves to be noted, because while some commentators may blame the revolutionary French for wiping out all traditional restraints on the conduct of interna-

[151] See Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions," pp. 292–93.

[152] See Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*; and Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe*, 2 vols. On the incompleteness of censorship, see also Bernard, *From the Enlightenment to the Police State*; and Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism*, chaps. 3–7.

[153] Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Sewell, "Ideologies and Social Revolutions."

tional relations, it is more accurate to argue that these restraints were already eroding under the old regime.[154]

The development of a Europe-wide republic of letters was also significant in the anarchic context of international relations; that anarchic context was what made such a development feasible. Books censored in one state could be printed and distributed, and smuggled out of, another. Similarly, those exiled for their beliefs could find haven elsewhere from which to continue expounding those beliefs. Thus in an imperfect but nevertheless potent fashion, anarchy facilitated the freer spread of ideas. The impact of this development on the conduct of international relations was oblique and indeterminate, but nevertheless real. Enlightenment discourse provided an ideological resource for all sorts of groups. The growth of a European "public sphere" forced those in power to address and reply to "public opinion." But at the same time, those in power found new tools of public manipulation through propaganda. Certainly, the humanitarian and pacifist strands of Enlightenment discourse had little effect on the conduct of international relations. But this does not mean that the discourse had no impact. Rather, we must identify such impact in terms of the contradictions it exacerbated, the complementarities it facilitated, and how social actors took up and acted on these contradictions and complementarities.

When we begin to analyze international political culture as a system in which ideas are linked to each other in relations of contradiction or complementarity, we can begin to analyze the impact of culture on the strategic relationships between political actors. The structure of old regime political culture, permeated by the Enlightenment, presented complex patterns of situational logics available to strategic actors. Relations of contradiction or complementarity between ideas about the nature of legitimate authority shaped political struggles, both within states and between them. This chapter has outlined the primary complementarities and contradictions shaping political struggles within and between the dominant European states. I have tried to show that the strategic struggles were embedded in a cultural context, defining political culture as a system of ideas pertaining to the nature and exercise of legitimate authority. The following chapters will examine how the tensions and developments discussed herein came to a head in the American and French revolutions, especially in terms of the international context of these revolutions.

[154] Paul Schroeder makes this argument in *Transformation*, as does Sorel in *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*.

Chapter Four

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The American Revolution

A successful colonial independence movement was an unprecedented event in modern European history, and independence raised a host of new foreign and domestic policy problems for the United States. Since the United States represented something new in European political culture, the policy trajectories of the early Republic had deep significance for the evolution of that culture. The early Republic was in many ways a test of Enlightenment ideas: could republicanism survive in a large state; could liberal notions of commerce flourish in a postcolonial society and a mercantilist world; could a republican government muster adequate strength to deal with the European powers? Early U.S. political development and foreign policies were not simple reactions to material imperatives, nor did they represent the inevitable unfolding of republican or liberal principles. Republican ideals, geostrategic position, economic interests—none of these factors presented a clear set of imperatives for domestic policy or future relations across the Atlantic. An unambiguous "national interest" did not exist; if anything, most of the work of the early period of American foreign and domestic policy involved attempts to construct such an interest out of particularistic sectional and state interests and disparate views on the nature of American national identity.[1] The interaction be-

[1] Cathy D. Matson and Peter S. Onuf, *A Union of Interests: Political and Economic Thought in Revolutionary America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990); Gordon S.

tween competing legitimacy conceptions and strategic interests shaped early U.S. policy and development, and those experiences in turn altered European political culture both by setting an important example and by altering the balance of power in the colonial world.

How should the newly independent United States relate to Europe? This issue was salient for security and for economic well-being, and for the analyst it provides evidence about the importance of legitimacy conceptions in shaping policy. The Royal Navy's domination of the seas; British and French holdings in the West Indies; Spanish holdings in America and especially the Floridas; British outposts in Canada and on American territory; the transfer of Louisiana from Spain to Napoleonic France; and the complex relationships and alliances between foreign powers and Native Americans all indicate that the United States was hardly isolated in its early years. It had to devise a strategy for dealing with Europe if only to secure and expand its own frontiers. That strategy had to fit with the legitimacy conceptions that shaped the struggle for independence in the first place.

The cultural resources to address the problem of how to relate to Europe came from across the Atlantic in the form of both classical and modern republican discourse, English opposition ideology, and both liberal and mercantilist views of political economy. These discourses hardly presented a coherent and comprehensive framework for action; Europe itself was in an enlightened ferment. Nevertheless, such were the materials with which the Americans had to work. European political culture, transposed into the colonial social and demographic context, shaped American foreign policy choices. In turn, the strategic choices made by the Americans sowed the seeds of transformation of European political culture.

The latter point seems to hold true by definition, risking tautology. Insofar as putting ideas into practice in a new context creates new and unexpected issues and thus reshapes those ideas, culture is transformed. But the transformative effect seems inevitable only if we cannot imagine alternative outcomes. Cultural resources and strategic options at the time presented a number of possible though unrealized alternatives: democratic principles could have given way to elective or even hereditary monarchy; the colonists could have traded British for French imperial tutelage; the Americans could have re-created a European-style state in the New World; they could have broken all ties with Europe. The transformative power of the American Revolution can be found in the ideas that it embodied, but

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Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969); Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II, eds., *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

neither the trajectory of the transformation nor the ideological shape of the Revolution was preordained; certain ideas were sustained in practice while others were not, and this is what bears closer examination.

The very complexity and inconsistency of ideas denies us the option of seeing the progress of a particular idea as inevitable; culture as a complex of ideas presents a set of alternatives, and we should explain how some alternatives were pursued and others fell by the wayside. A Kantian liberal view of the progressive unfolding of the rule of law cannot account for why some alternatives were dropped while others were realized—a constitutional monarchy fits the Kantian model of progress toward the rule of law just as well as a republic. Nor is strategic necessity the core explanatory factor, because culture shapes perceptions of such necessity, and early American politics were rife with competing conceptions of the proper strategic course of action.

In this chapter, I show how republican discourse shaped American strategic practice and how that practice generated reinterpretations of republicanism. Although I travel well-trod historical ground, it yields important insights for students of international relations, who have tended to neglect the foundational importance of this period for both the subsequent hegemony of the nation-state system and the specific evolutionary trajectory of liberalism.

The American Revolution and subsequent federal union drew on and transformed European political culture in at least three crucial ways. First and most obviously, democratization transformed the republican discourse. The first section of this chapter focuses on republicanism and its transformations in the early American context. The American Revolution deployed the discourse on republicanism and contributed to the erosion of the linkages between sovereignty and monarchy and between republicanism and the stratified society of orders, strengthening the identification of sovereignty with a free and equal people. In several important respects these developments were spurred on by social forces experienced and further unleashed—but not controlled—by the architects of American independence and union. The founders' inherited republican precepts were overwhelmed by a politics far more democratic and chaotic than they had envisioned.[2]

Second, the American experience gave practical (albeit ambivalent) support to the still largely theoretical notion that the pursuit of individual self-interest in a commercial society might have a beneficial and legitimate, as opposed to corrupting, effect on politics. Political and economic liberalism emerging in the early Republic outpaced developments in En-

[2] This is a central theme in Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

gland.[3] However, liberalism did not emerge so fully as to sound victory for the late modern view that economic interests are (and ought to be) the driving force behind politics. Liberalism falls short as an explanation for early American foreign policy, if only because a liberal world view was still being constructed and justified at this time. Liberalism was becoming an ideology; its proponents had to struggle to enact its precepts in a world still dominated by more traditionally organized societies. The political economy section of this chapter develops a critique of the liberal argument that American foreign policy was primarily driven by economic interests. Some resolution to the struggle over the shape of American identity was a necessary precondition for the articulation of an American commercial interest vis-à-vis Europe. Although some argued that the liberal perspective could not adequately solve the problem of national unity and state power in the context of the mercantilist and war-prone world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Jeffersonian liberal republicans attempted to do just that, with uneven success.[4]

Third, early American foreign policy revealed a struggle between enlightened cosmopolitanism and a more nationalist foreign policy, in which the former was marginalized but retained a toehold in the form of America's commitment to a progressive law of nations. The cosmopolitanism versus nationalism section of this chapter builds on both the republicanism and the political economy sections to analyze how the struggles and innovations in those areas—which were in essence struggles over the shape of American identity—translated into the formulation of American policy in relation to Europe. In this section I draw together the threads that contributed to a nationalist turn, and argue that acknowledging such a turn is not tantamount to proving realism correct as an explanation for early American foreign policy. I also discuss the continued relevance of cosmopolitan views in American attitudes toward the law of nations and toward maritime rights issues in particular.

Each section traces how political culture shaped strategic struggles and alignments and how key ideas were transformed in this process. A good deal of space is devoted to domestic politics, where the main contours of American national identity were cobbled together. The international context was crucial in that it put intense pressure on the Americans to construct coherent and unified solutions to dilemmas of foreign affairs.[5] But the United States was not simply on the receiving end when it

[3] Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

[4] Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984).

[5] Frederick W. Marks III, *Independence on Trial: Foreign Affairs and the Making of the Constitution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

came to pressures from the international system; it also generated new pressures of its own. Colonial independence began to erode key mercantilist precepts. New trade routes were opened up, old monopolies were challenged. The balance of power in the Western Hemisphere was altered.

Further, the democratizing aspects of the American Revolution had a significant impact on a world accustomed to viewing international politics as the exclusive province of monarchs and their ministers. Bringing more of "the people" into politics on the basis of republican principles, now interpreted in increasingly democratic ways, linked domestic legitimacy and foreign policy more closely together. Activities in the international realm had to be legitimated domestically according to republican principles, whereas the sources of international legitimacy in old regime *realpolitik* were other monarchs and their courts, and the prestige, rank, power, and consideration derived from that milieu. The effects of the closer linkage between "the people" and international relations were not those that eighteenth-century republican theorists had led their readers to expect: not cosmopolitan brotherhood but rather nationalism appears to have been the dominant initial outcome.[6] We need to understand the contours of political culture and its deployment in strategic interaction in order to explain what occurred.

Republicanism

The American Revolution and its aftermath reshaped republican discourse: it democratized classical republicanism, associating it ever more closely with the will of the people, reconceptualizing "the people" in the process; it facilitated resistance to the secularizing spirit of the Enlightenment, developing the complementarity between Protestantism and republicanism on a grand scale; and by reformulating ideas about the nature of the European balance of power, it challenged the idea that republics had to be small and developed the notions of republican federation and empire. Each of these developments involved the political mobilization of particular persons or groups around a specific contradiction or complementarity inhering in late eighteenth-century political, mostly republican, discourse. This section explores these developments after an initial overview of republican thought on the eve of the American revolution; this thought was centered on the notion of mixed constitutions rather than democracy.

[6] This is more clearly reinforced by the French case, discussed in Chapter Five.

Mixed Constitutions

Although Europe in the late eighteenth century may be characterized as a land of absolute monarchies, the republican tradition was very much alive and indeed a vital part of European and especially British political discourse and practice.[7] Republicanism as conceptualized by authors in the mid-eighteenth century was not necessarily antithetical to monarchy.[8] In its broadest sense, according to Pocock, the term "republic" was "the English form of the Latin *res publica*" and it "could still be used neutrally to describe political systems either with monarchs or without them."[9]

The key connotation of the term concerns its articulation of the purpose of politics: the republican discourse sought a solution to the problem of political order consistent with the exercise of political liberty and civic virtue. The roots of the discourse in antiquity and particularly in Aristotle's assertion that man's purpose was to be found in the *polis* lend it a fundamentally teleological character that may be difficult for later modern minds to accept; we now tend to think of the polity as an outcome of impersonal historical developments or struggles over conflicts of interest rather than as an embodiment of human purpose.[10] Participants in the discourse on republicanism had fewer qualms about teleology, and focused on what was for them the central problem of how to organize the polity so as to promote the public good.[11] Promotion of the public good required a particular form of organization of rule, and also proper virtues in those who exercised rule. But republican discourse was not limited to those polities without a monarch; it contributed to the work of the English opposition, to the French discourses on the nature and limits of monarchical rule, and even to discussions of reform in such resolutely old regime states as Imperial Austria.

[7] The literature is voluminous, but see especially J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); J.G.A. Pocock, "States, Republics, and Empires: The American Founding in Early Modern Perspective," in *Conceptual Change and the Constitution*, ed. Terence Ball and J.G.A. Pocock (Lawerence: University Press of Kansas, 1988); Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *The Republican Legacy in International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967); and Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*.

[8] See Pocock, "States, Republics, and Empires"; Wood, *Radicalism*, sec. II.

[9] Pocock, "States, Republics, and Empires," p. 57.

[10] On teleology and Aristotle's influence, see Peter S. Onuf and Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World: The Law of Nations in an Age of Revolutions, 1776–1814* (Madison, Wisc.: Madison House, 1993), chap. 1.

[11] Onuf uses the term "common good." See Onuf, *Republican Legacy*, pp. 6–7 and part I, chap. 2.

Pocock has argued that the central problem of the republican discourse involved fighting corruption in a dual sense: the natural corruption brought on by the passage of time, and the human abuse of power.[12] The republican polity was a fragile construct that had to be actively sustained against the vagaries of time and the fluctuations of fortune, and against the usurpation or corruption of power by self-seeking agencies such as ministerial cabals or corporate financial interests. Sustaining the polity required the active participation of citizens imbued with civic virtue. The delimitation of who was a citizen and the precise definition of civic virtue were points of debate. But both concepts connoted vigilant and discerning activity in the service of and for the sustenance of the polity through the dangers of human corruption and transformations brought on by the passage of time.

Those participating in and discussing the American Revolution and the subsequent federal Constitution took up these central issues of the republican discourse.[13] But they confronted these issues under the unique conditions prevailing in the colonies. These included distance from the mother country, weakness of royal authority relative to local assemblies, an extensive territory, widespread property ownership, relatively high degrees of social mobility, explosive population growth, growth of settlements and high levels of internal migration, and a less stratified society. This context weakened traditional social distinctions and the social bonds on which these distinctions depended.[14] Thus while republicanism did much to shape state and federal constitutions, the contours of republican discourse were transformed by the new colonial environment.

The British solution to the republican "problem" was the mixed constitution. Civic order was preserved by structuring the polity to take into account each one of the three principles of governance, categorized as such since Aristotle's time: the one (monarch); the few (aristocracy); and the many (people). The mixed constitution guarded against the usurpation of power by any one of the three "orders" of society by giving each a share in government. By balancing and combining all three forms of rule derived from the Aristotelian tradition, the English constitution guarded against the inevitable degeneration or corruption of each specific form: monarchy into despotism; aristocracy into oligarchy; democracy into mob rule.[15] This conception of republican constitution was consistent with the traditional view of stratified social order, and drew upon such stratification in order to generate a formula for mixed and balanced gov-

[12] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.
[13] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*; Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*.
[14] Wood, *Radicalism*, chaps. 7–8.
[15] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 70.

ernment that prevented any single order of society from usurping the public good for its own corporate or "private" interest.

The English constitution was much admired by Montesquieu and other Enlightenment thinkers, who evoked the efficacy of its mixed nature to support the claims of nobles and other corporate orders in their polemics and political struggles against monarchical "despotism." In the minds of the rebelling American colonists, however, the English constitution had been corrupted. Parliamentary autonomy had been usurped by corrupt ministers, who duped this representative institution into exercising arbitrary power over the colonies. The rebelling colonists took up the republican discourse in an effort to show how the English constitution ought to be perfected and sustained against such corrupting forces.[16] In so doing, however, they uprooted republican discourse from its basis in a stratified conception of society. They articulated a more egalitarian, individualist view of society, and provided a renewed cultural resource for those people—both in and outside of America—interested in a broader system of participation in governance.

Democratizing Republicanism

American colonial elites were equipped with specific cultural resources through which to articulate their strategic struggle with Britain over taxation and the question of colonial rights. The language they used was well understood across the Atlantic, deploying concepts from classical antiquity, from Enlightenment rationalism, and from the radical social and political thought of the English civil war and Commonwealth period, in addition to the indigenous New England Puritanism that put forth America as God's chosen land.[17] When the crisis in Anglo-American relations intensified to the point that a break became imaginable, the problem of constituting independent governments for the colonies was naturally articulated in terms of this inherited language. The colonists also brought a degree of experience to the problem of government insofar as most colonies had some form of representative assembly.

Colonial society did not clearly display the contours of three distinct orders. Widespread property ownership in the form of smallholdings and the nature of the American economy, as well as the geographical position of the colonies at the edge of a vast continent replete with natural resources, constituted a material and social base unlike that found in Europe. The Revolutionary War mobilized the population, both economi-

[16] Ibid., chaps. 3 and 4.
[17] Ibid., chap. 2.

cally and militarily, and the hold of elites over the political process eventually came into tension with the egalitarian strains in postcolonial society. To resonate with a free people living under the unique material and social circumstances of North America, the republican discourse had to be modified: it had to confront the problem of a society without clearly distinct orders and with fewer glaring disparities of wealth and status—a society where equality was more of a reality than in Britain.[18]

In the colonies the democratic element of the mixed constitution—the people—was certainly present in force. But in classical discourse rule by the people alone threatened to degenerate into mob rule. What of the balancing forces that would sustain the public good and preserve liberty? Even Adam Smith did not believe the "common" classes were fit to detect the public good.[19] Perhaps the monarch could be replaced by a governor in each colony; the executive need not be hereditary. But for some Americans, the lack of a noble order posed a problem because nobles were the mediators, the guarantors of liberty.[20] Despite its more egalitarian nature, colonial society was still quite stratified and hierarchical prior to the Revolution.[21] The notion that an elite, aristocratic class was an essential aspect of republican politics and the preservation of the public good was not easily shed. But in America, the presence of this aristocratic class was far less widespread than in Britain and Europe. There was a great deal more mobility, and the American aristocracy was less defined by birth than by achievement and merit. Still, the notion that public service was the province of an aristocratic class retained a strong hold on American political life well into the Federalist period.

Gordon Wood argues that the federal Constitution was the product of a struggle by those Americans who believed that government should be the activity of an aristocratic stratum of society to reassert their control over a burgeoning democratic politics emerging in the state legislatures.[22] Federalist elites were, he argues, appalled by the developments taking

[18] For an extended discussion of the relationship between political discourse and the new economic circumstances in the early United States, see Joyce Appleby's *Capitalism and a New Social Order.* Appleby's essay explicitly deploys a cultural argument very similar to that presented throughout this book, but with a narrower focus and some differences in interpretation.

[19] Adam Smith (1776), *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1981), vol. I, sect. xi, p. 267.

[20] See Chapter Three and the works referenced there; also Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, pp. 280–84; Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, especially chaps. 1–3 and 12; and Wood, *Radicalism*, pp. 57–168.

[21] Wood, *Radicalism*, pt. I.

[22] Gordon S. Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness in the Making of the Constitution," in *Beyond Confederation*, ed. Beeman, Botein, and Carter, pp. 69–109.

place in the state legislatures, especially the clamor for paper money and debt forgiveness. They believed that state legislators were cravenly pursuing economic interests, while classical republican governance entailed the existence of a class of men who rose above such interests to focus instead on the public good. Public good and private interest were antinomies; the latter would corrupt the former. Even Benjamin Franklin, whose common ancestry made him a symbol of the egalitarian principles of the Revolution, took care to secure his fortune and abandoned his printing business prior to entering public life.[23]

The relative absence of a hereditary nobility, then, did not destroy the orientation in republican political culture toward elite-driven, disinterested politics. The solution was an aristocracy of merit; talented individuals would have the opportunity to rise to the top. The idea was that individuals of merit would rise into a higher society, not, as happened, a reconstitution or leveling of that society. The analysts of the American founding who most focus on republicanism take substantial care to distinguish republicanism from democratic politics. Wood even goes so far as to present a clear opposition in the debates over the federal Constitution; he portrays the Federalists as republicans of the classical mold, and the Anti-Federalists as the modern harbingers of a democratic politics of competing interests.[24]

According to Bernard Bailyn's interpretation of James Madison's vision, the federal Constitution resolves the republican problem of balance between the three orders by replacing the "orders" with branches of government, or separation of powers. The social underpinnings of this new form of republicanism entailed competition between individuals and factions for the furtherance of specific interests. The hedge against the corruption of the public good by private interests is the institutional structure of the polity itself.[25]

> The essential units participating in the constitution were no longer . . . formal orders of society derived from the assumptions of classical antiquity; they were interests, which, organized for political action, became factions and parties. . . . 'Balance' was still involved, but with the repudiation of monarchy and nobility and the confinement of society to 'the democracy,' the notion of what the social powers were that must be balanced and controlled was changing. . . . And the concern with balance

[23] Ibid., p. 89.

[24] Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness."

[25] The classic statement is in *Federalist* no. 10. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: New American Library, 1961).

> in government was shifting from a concern with social orders to that of functioning branches of government.[26]

Both Wood's and Bailyn's analyses suggest that the founders could not fully envision the sort of society their political system would produce, but that they nevertheless anticipated problems in sustaining republicanism in a society without stratified corporate orders, and came up with a solution suited to American circumstances.

Although the Federalists succeeded in building a consensus around the Constitution, that consensus soon eroded into distinct and competing visions of the measures required to sustain republicanism over time. Essentially this was a debate about the future shape of American identity, with competing visions of such identity both claiming to be true to republican principles. The most common articulation of this division contrasts Alexander Hamilton's vision of America as a great power on the British model with that of Thomas Jefferson's more agrarian, egalitarian, individualistic, and decentralized vision.

Wood argues that by the 1780s, the principal social antagonism in the United States was between democrats and aristocrats.[27] The American "aristocrats" were the high Federalists, led by Hamilton, who still believed that public life was and ought to be the special province of a leisured, educated, meritorious aristocratic order—an order by definition untainted by labor and the pursuit of economic interest—a "disinterested" class. Hamilton's fiscal policies, discussed below, were designed to sustain such a class and bind it to the government and his vision of the public good and national greatness.[28] Income inequality was necessary to this vision, insofar as this was the only way to sustain an aristocratic order capable of governing in the public interest.

The label "democrat" could be applied to anyone who made a living through work, be it a wealthy merchant, a planter, or a poor blacksmith. "Democrats" or Democratic-Republicans attacked the idea that public life was the province of a meritorious elite uniquely capable of detecting the public good. In Hamilton's programs they detected the usurpation of public liberty by the corrupt interests of a small class of elites. Jefferson and Madison both challenged Hamilton's vision. According to Lance Banning, Jefferson and Madison deployed the classic "country" ideology of the English opposition, while Hamilton's defenses followed the

[26] Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p. 299.

[27] Wood, *Radicalism*, pp. 241–243

[28] Gerald Stourzh, *Alexander Hamilton and the Idea of Republican Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970); Lance Banning, *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978).

"court" line of argument.[29] Joyce Appleby challenges Banning's interpretation, arguing that Jeffersonians represented a progressive, liberal vision of a commercial society of independent smallholders, while the court versus country debate took place within the Federalist party itself.[30] For Appleby, the American discourse was breaking loose of its English frame of reference; Banning ties it more closely to that frame of reference. I find Appleby's interpretation more convincing precisely because she recognizes how the deployment of ideas in a new context can transform them, and is perhaps more sensitive than Banning to the interaction of material conditions and culture (whereas Banning seems to err on the side of cultural determinism). Appleby's refusal to evoke either a materialist or a cultural determinism makes it possible to analyze how human beings respond creatively to changing circumstances.

Regardless of how we interpret the debate between the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, the challenged posed by the latter was more than discursive. Beginning in the late 1790s and gaining momentum in the early nineteenth century, the so-called American aristocrats, or Federalists, were under direct and widespread assault by democratic political forces, and a democratic politics hostile to the inequalities implicit in Hamilton's programs came to the fore.[31] To the Democratic-Republicans, equality meant that no man could claim to be so much wiser or more virtuous than the next as to retain an exclusive right to engage in politics. Those who lived by labor had just as much a right to participate in public life as those who had aristocratic leisure and learning. By extension, then, the assault on aristocracy was an assault on the Federalist interpretation of classical republican ideas. Political leaders from the "lower" orders explicitly challenged the Federalist elite's claims to disinterestedness, and rather than touting the virtues of such disinterestedness, argued instead that the representation of local interests was the proper function of elected representatives.[32] Democratic republicanism was an alternative to Federalist republicanism: the former embraced the competition of local interests as healthy, and capable of producing harmony; the latter still sought to transcend local interests in favor of a higher, disinterested public good.

The decline of the Federalist party was evident in the "Revolution of 1800" that brought Thomas Jefferson to power. The attack on the Federalists revealed that republican discourse was no longer limited by classical models relying on civic virtue, nor by the English model of the

[29] Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*; see also Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, chap. 15.

[30] Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order.*

[31] Wood, *Radicalism*, chap. 15.

[32] Wood, *Radicalism*; Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness."

balanced constitution. Republicanism was essentially recast as democracy, or the politics of competing interests, where balance in politics came not from the representation of three distinct orders of society but rather from the checks and balances between branches of government, and between state and federal government. Society in turn became conceived of, not as a stratified organic unity, but as a plurality of individuals, all competing to further their particular interests. The Constitution, rather than an aristocracy of merit, became the mechanism by which the public good could be maintained, by preventing usurpation of power by any one branch of government or localized interest. This democratization of republican discourse changed republicanism as a theory, and also set an example for future practice. This democratizing influence may be related to another significant change engendered in the American Revolution and its aftermath, namely, the reassertion, contrary to Enlightenment secularism, of the complementarity between Protestantism and republicanism.

Republicanism and Christianity

As discussed in Chapter Three, one of the main thrusts of the European Enlightenment was secularization: human beings had the power to sweep away the veils of Christian superstition by shining the light of reason into the darkness of blind faith. This secularizing process, I argued, began in international politics and only imperfectly penetrated European societies and domestic politics, being confined to enlightened aristocratic elites and some scientifically minded bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the secularizing process penetrated the policy realm, especially by encouraging the detachment of foreign policy from religious concerns, thereby facilitating the flourishing of *realpolitik*. In North America, the secularizing thrust of the Enlightenment not only failed to penetrate deeply into society but also had limited impact on intellectuals and opinion leaders. Both prior to and after independence, a distinctive characteristic of American political thought was the close association with and interpenetration of republican theory by Protestant themes of jeremiad, millennialism, and the need for virtue and self-sacrifice.[33] This association may have inhibited the development of an American "realism" to match that pervading European diplomatic circles.

The North American colonies' social and political context facilitated the reconciliation of republican principles with Christian faith. This in

[33] Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756–1800* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England*

some ways echoed Britain's experience with Cromwell's Puritan republic. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, English millennialism had splintered off from the mainstream and survived only in radical, marginal sects.[34] Throughout Europe, republicanism had been embraced by those who also favored the secularizing spirit of the Enlightenment. But in North America, millennialism and religious fervor in general helped take republican thought and practice in a new direction, allowing Protestant millennial visions of progress toward a golden age to complement rather than to compete with enlightened republican ideology.[35] Further, as Nathan Hatch argues, republican thought itself reshaped American approaches to the Christian faith, as did the democratization of early American society.[36]

The democratic developments already discussed were one of the driving forces behind this melding of Christian and republican themes, but such integration did not entirely emerge "from below." It may be true that the majority of the founding fathers embraced Enlightenment secularism and took little interest in organized religion. "At best," according to Wood, "most of the revolutionary gentry only passively believed in organized Christianity and, at worst, privately scorned and ridiculed it."[37] The references to "Nature's God," equality, and unalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence reflect the penetration of Enlightenment naturalism and egalitarian conceptions into American political discourse. The federal Constitution does not mention God at all. As Hatch has argued, however, the intellectual leadership of New England ministers actively and creatively integrated republican thought and Christian belief. "The most crucial aspect of this Christian republicanism is its function as an idiom through which intense Christian beliefs and symbols came to focus on the preservation of republican principle. The cause of liberty thus became a sacred one."[38]

Republican discourse alone did not shape the collective identity of the rebelling colonies and the new nation. Protestantism, and especially Protestant interpretations of the millennium—the prophesied golden age of peace, plenty, and harmony on earth under the rule of Jesus Christ—constituted a major force in popular culture.[39] Christian beliefs interacted in complex and significant ways with enlightened and republican ideas

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(New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989).

[34] Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, p. 91. See also Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty.*

[35] Bloch, *Visionary Republic.*

[36] Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty*; Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity.*

[37] Wood, *Radicalism*, p. 330.

[38] Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty*, p. 157.

[39] Bloch, *Visionary Republic.*

and helped shape the contours of American political attitudes toward Europe, on the one hand, and toward the western frontier, on the other.

Insofar as American revolutionary ideology drew on the literature of the radical English opposition, it was like that tradition imbued with millennial themes—with the belief that the English (and now, Anglo-American) people were chosen to enact, through their history, the visionary prophecies of the Old Testament.[40] Even prior to the Revolution, America was characterized as having a special place in God's unfolding plan for mankind. In the words of John Adams: "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scheme and design of Providence for the illumination and emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."[41]

During the Revolution, the term "liberty" took on both political and religious meaning, facilitating a fusion of republican notions of political liberty and biblical prophecies of liberty through grace during the millennial age.[42] Further, the "theme of national mission . . . was applied with increasing intensity to an independent American state."[43] Millennialism also fueled visions of national expansion westward. America was to become "a great and mighty Empire; the largest the World ever saw."[44] And finally, a strand of universalism—the idea that America was struggling on behalf of all mankind—also took shape in the discourse of this period. As Ruth Bloch points out in her detailed study, millennial universalism effectively complemented the more secular universalism of Enlightenment thought on human equality and rights. "Largely because of this common universalism, the distance between biblical religion and Enlightenment ideas about natural rights was often exceedingly small."[45]

The trials and tribulations of the War of Independence brought millennial fervor to a head, with Britain and the pope both characterized as forces of Satan, the antichrist, and the Beast of biblical prophecy.[46] The hardships and sacrifices demanded by the war could be borne more readily with the knowledge that the colonists' cause was just and that they represented God's chosen people preparing for his kingdom on earth. In the revolutionary period, writers of all persuasions drew explicit link-

[40] Ibid.; in the Bible see, for example, Daniel 7 and Revelation.

[41] John Adams (1765), quoted in Bradford Perkins, *The Creation of a Republican Empire, 1776–1865*, Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, vol. 1 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 8–9.

[42] Hatch calls this discursive fusion "civil millennialism." See Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty*, pp. 22–23.

[43] Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, p. 82.

[44] Ebenezer Baldwin, 1779, quoted in Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, p. 83.

[45] Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, p. 85.

[46] Ibid., chap. 4; Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty*, chap. 2.

ages between republican ideals and millennial thinking. Christ's reign was interpreted as the reign of liberty and equality; the defeat of the antichrist was the defeat of monarchy. The American revolutionaries believed they were helping to usher in the millennium by instituting a republic. Further, the Enlightenment view of history as progress toward a better world, rather than a series of cycles of virtue and corruption, complemented the notion of progress implicit in the idea of a millennial age. Even the more secular-minded revolutionaries made ample use of millennial imagery, undoubtedly conscious of its metaphorical power.[47]

Millennial fervor did not disappear once the war was won—which would be evidence of its epiphenomenal and purely strategic rather than constitutive character—but it altered its form. Although universalist strains remained, they were in the minority. Rather, American millennialism became more nationalistic. Bloch puts it succinctly: "Whereas in the 1770s nationalist and universalist themes combined, in the 1780s nationalism overrode the earlier identification with universal humanity. Visions of the future contracted, focusing more exclusively on America and, specifically, on the happy prospects of internal economic and physical growth."[48] The shift from a universalist to a more nationalist vision of America's role in the world was made easier by the fact that earlier discourses had consistently located the sources of corruption and threat as external to the colonies and the newly independent nation: first the French in the French and Indian Wars, then the British, and finally, for a significant minority at least, the French again in the throes of their own revolution.[49] The shift to a more nationalist ideology is significant for understanding the development of American attitudes toward political economy, a subject treated further in the next section. Here my aim is to introduce and emphasize the tension between universalism and nationalism, because this tension played a major role in characterizing debates about and struggles over American foreign policy and westward expansion.

Despite the emerging dominance of the nationalist millennial ideology in the 1780s, universalist ideology did not disappear; it remained on the margins of the discourse, available to groups who might, under different conditions, choose to mobilize on that point. Such an opportunity arose with the French Revolution. As Bloch points out, there were two distinct ways in which millennial thinking in the United States responded to the French Revolution. On the one hand and initially, the francophilic Republicans interpreted the French Revolution as a sign that the American legacy was being passed on and bearing fruit in Europe as part of a

[47] Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, p. 84.
[48] Ibid., p. 96.
[49] Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty.*

universal plan. On the other, Federalist francophobes by the late 1790s characterized the revolutionary French as the antichrist, spreading anarchy and irreligion across Europe and threatening the United States.

The French revolutionaries' double attack on the monarchy and on the Catholic church dovetailed well with American Protestant representations of monarchs and the pope as emblems of the antichrist, whose fall would signal the coming of the millennium.[50] The emerging Democratic-Republicans in the United States were thoroughly francophilic, at least in the early years of the French Revolution. The discourse in which this solidarity was expressed was not only republican but millennial. Although Jefferson and other leaders' purely secular support of the French Revolution is more commonly noted in the historical literature, Bloch demonstrates that "[m]illennial hopes for the French Revolution were always more a part of popular culture than of explicit political party debate."[51] But with the emergence of popular societies devoted to the French cause, popular feeling put pressure on those engaged in the debates on American policy toward the French Revolution.

The Republican affinity with revolutionary France reanimated the universalist strands of both millennial and Enlightenment thought, drawing them closer together in the idea that the spread of republicanism would bring forth an earthly utopia. To Bloch, this is evidence that "[t]he sense of incompatibility of revelation and reason, like the opposition of churches to political revolution, developed much more slowly and incompletely in America than in England or on the Continent, where the established clergy had long been firmly identified with the ancien régime." Further, this sense of affinity included the hope that the two republics might unite in federation, explicitly evoking the idea of a cosmopolitan democratic peace.[52]

Federalist francophobia, in contrast, drew on millennial themes to attack the excesses of the French Revolution and to justify U.S. efforts—embodied in Washington's Neutrality Proclamation, the Jay Treaty, and the Quasi-War—to distance itself from revolutionary France.[53] Federalist dismay at the democratic upsurge inspired in the United States by the French Revolution was given intellectual and spiritual support in the sermons of New England ministers, whose skepticism about human nature led them to fear that the upheavals of the 1790s would result in a democratic tyranny replacing the previous aristocratic tyranny of the British Parliament.[54] Of paramount concern was the sustenance of "virtue"—

[50] Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, chap. 7.
[51] Ibid., p. 154.
[52] Ibid., pp. 187, 191–92.
[53] Ibid., chap. 9.
[54] Hatch, *Sacred Cause of Liberty*, chap. 3 and especially pp. 117–23.

interpreted as the display of merit and disinterestedness in elites, and deference and self-restraint in the populace. Sustaining virtue was made much more difficult by the self-assertion of common, uneducated men in both politics and religious affairs.[55]

Christian belief, and especially Protestant millennial sentiment, thus constituted a crucial cultural resource through which Americans articulated their sense of identity and place in the wider world, not only with respect to Europe but also in the push toward westward expansion. In this section I have highlighted some of the complementarities and tensions between Protestant millennialism and Enlightenment thinking as they played out in the early North American context. Several of these themes will be taken up again in subsequent sections. But as discussions of early American foreign policy and political discourse frequently neglect the religious dimensions of that discourse, it is useful to emphasize its role, not only for its own sake but also because it shapes our conception of what the American Revolution meant for European political culture more generally.

The birth of American democracy was by no means a secular process, nor did republican ideology stand in opposition to strong Christian belief; whatever the significance of the separation of church and state, it did not entail exorcising religion from political culture—quite the contrary. Today we tend to interpret religious "fundamentalism" as antithetical to liberal democratic values. But early American political culture was deeply religious as well as being democratic and republican. Republican and then democratic politics, in both the American and the French revolutions, were so shaped by popular forces as to put serious pressure on the elite, secular, rational voices of the Federalist aristocracy in America and the enlightened nobility in France. One of the consequences of such pressure was the sustained interpenetration of religious and political culture in America, as well as giving nationalism in France a sacred character.

Protestant millennial ideas enforced both cosmopolitan and nationalist strains in American political thought, thus exacerbating a fundamental contradiction in the discourse shaping foreign policy. Nationalist discourse, I aim to show, came to dominate over cosmopolitanism. The development of American nationalism in the context of republican discourse owes a great deal to its religious underpinnings and to Protestant complementarities with the republican discourse.[56] These developments penetrated deeply on the domestic front, but far more slowly into foreign af-

[55] On the latter point, see Hatch, *Democratization of American Christianity.*

[56] For an intellectual history of the relationship of Protestantism and the Enlightenment in the United States, see Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

fairs, where European court culture still exercised significant influence on the Americans, at least in the early stages of statehood.

American Republicanism and Europe

In their earliest diplomatic encounters with Europe, American decision makers adjusted their republican ideals to the diplomatic realities of the old regime. But this occurred in the context of strong enlightened opinion in the European republic of letters supporting the American enterprise.[57] Republican ideology allowed the Americans to present an intellectually compelling front in European courts as they struggled for independence.[58] Presumably the support of the republic of letters would not buy guns and soldiers; real support had to come from the ministers of old regime courts. Even so, it may not be a trivial detail that one of the earliest agents for the American cause in France—Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, playwright and occasional spy—was himself a key figure both in the republic of letters and in courtly and diplomatic circles. In much of enlightened Europe, these venues interpenetrated each other.[59] In Chapter Three I discussed the influence of printed public opinion on courtly society; it also bears mentioning here, at least insofar as the ties between the two are so obviously represented in the figure of Beaumarchais. Treaties between American and France were forged through his own personal connections and the initially secret support of the French court.

Of course the real impetus for aiding the American drive for independence came from the French ministers themselves, and their enlightened views were secondary to their interests in regaining French stature in European balance of power politics.[60] France's purely strategic interest in aiding the Americans is by now a common assumption in the historical literature, even though in hindsight such aid helped to bring about the financial crisis that set the stage for the French Revolution. But Robert

[57] Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776–1789*, vol. 1, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), chap. 1; Durand Echeverria, *Mirage in the West: A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957).

[58] Doron Ben-Atar, "Nationalism, Neo-Mercantilism, and Diplomacy: Rethinking the Franklin Mission," *Diplomatic History* 22, 1 (Winter 1998): 101–114.

[59] An entertaining account of the changing fortunes of Beaumarchais can be found in Claude Manceron, *Twilight of the Old Order, 1774–1778*, vol. 1 of *The Age of the French Revolution*, trans. Patricia Wolf (1972); (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

[60] Jonathan R. Dull, *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985); James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980).

Rhodes Crout argues that an often overlooked dimension of French policy is Louis XVI's own efforts to appear to his peers and to the literate public as the epitome of an enlightened absolutist monarch.[61] This is precisely what we should expect given the account of eighteenth-century old regime culture in the previous chapter, where I argued that this culture constituted the terms of competition.

For the French king, supporting the American cause would not only bring about a possible humiliation of Britain but also strengthen France's prestige among the enlightened nobility and monarchs in Europe. Crout notes that Louis XVI's reestablishment of the *parlements* in 1774 reflected his concern about appearing despotic, and that "Louis's objective in foreign policy was to restore the French monarchy to its traditional role as arbiter of Europe and fount of justice." The desire to strengthen French prestige by supporting *les droits des gens* in America thus signals more complex motivations than simply balancing material power.[62] Prestige was central to power in old regime courts and diplomacy in this as in earlier periods, but the idea that prestige could be found in supporting liberty, which was becoming conceptually linked to justice, demonstrates the impact of the Enlightenment, through the republic of letters, on old regime statecraft.

For the Americans, catering to European courts was a matter of expediency and so could be construed as temporary. But the common discursive threads evoked by parties on both sides of the Atlantic were not simply the by-products of strategic necessity. America's self-image as the polity of the future, the home of republican virtue and the ideals of liberty, only made sense when contrasted with the "corruption" of European courts. So it is misleading to cast the need for "realism" in opposition to American idealism. An important part of what made the American cause attractive in Europe was in fact the ideal America represented. This is not to underplay the importance of France's interest in humiliating Britain. But the attraction of the American cause ran deeper than balance of power politics; it tapped into European enlightened political culture.[63]

Because diplomatic culture in Europe was dominated by nobility and highly contingent on personal relations and contacts, the success of American diplomats in pursuing help abroad was contingent on their ability to fit into and manipulate this culture. American decision makers and diplomats had to find a way of playing *realpolitik*—pursuing the interests

[61] Robert Rhodes Crout, "In Search of a 'Just and Lasting Peace': The Treaty of 1783, Louis XVI, Vergennes, and the Regeneration of the Realm," *International History Review* 5, 3 (August 1983): 364–98.

[62] Crout, "In Search of a 'Just and Lasting Peace,' " p. 372.

[63] Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime*, vol. 1, chap. 1.

of the rebelling colonies (materially poor, weak, and underdeveloped despite their bright prospects and self-image) in the European states system—within the constraints posed by the republican ideology they were espousing. The incentives presented by the European system included a complicated mix of traditional norms and more modern enlightened opinion.

First, the Americans had to demonstrate the credibility of their commitment to fight the British as a unified nation, and to avoid coming to terms with Britain short of independence. Since eighteenth-century alliance politics were known for defections and reversals, demonstrating a credible commitment was essential in order to convince France in particular to convert covert support into an overt alliance. Second, the Americans had to present a unified and skillful (or at least not self-defeating) negotiating front, and this required tactful and convincing ambassadors. The rules of diplomacy operated in a complex courtly society shaped by considerations of rank and prestige. Mistakes of manners could lead to isolation in this society, and isolation would render diplomacy ineffective.

It was Benjamin Franklin who, as American envoy in France along with John Adams, most adroitly managed to juggle the apparently conflicting images of plain republican, enlightened sage, and courtier.[64] The somewhat stodgy Adams was too wedded to republican principles to play the courtly game, and so was marginalized at the French court. Franklin was the key diplomatic figure who articulated and shaped a vision of America for consumption by the Europeans.[65] That he was able to do so testifies not only to his skill but also to the fact that enlightened opinion was alive and well in European courts, receptive to the American image as a republican promised land. Further, the fact that Franklin's success depended on the resolution, or papering over, of contradictory norms (republican versus courtier) provides an interesting glimpse into how cultural contradictions may be dealt with by an individual. Had Franklin not been able to resolve the contradictions between republican principles and courtly manners into such a compelling personal image, the American cause might have been far less palatable to the French court.

Despite the diplomatic imperatives of forging an alliance necessary to waging a successful war, from the beginning many Americans expressed or at least avowed a deep aversion to European power politics. Such aversion took at least two forms: the well-known liberal internation-

[64] Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); Jonathan R. Dull, "Benjamin Franklin and the Nature of American Diplomacy," *International History Review 5* (August 1983): 351–55; Ben-Atar, "Nationalism, Neo-Mercantilism, and Diplomacy."

[65] Ben-Atar, "Nationalism, Neo-Mercantilism, and Diplomacy," p. 114.

alist ideal of replacing relations of war among states (war being the result of the irrational passions of princes) with relations of peaceful commerce under the law-giving function of treaties, on the one hand;[66] and on the other, a classical republican, civic virtue–inspired mistrust of all commerce and of any relations at all with the corrupting forces of European courts and their luxuries.[67] The latter strain was imbued with Calvinist and millennialist overtones, reinforced by the association of the European old regime with Catholicism.

During the War of Independence and the subsequent peace negotiations, American decision makers generally suppressed their aversions and proceeded to do their best at playing the game of *realpolitik*. But this did not simply reflect an abandonment of idealism, because the realist game also had rules. For Americans, playing *realpolitik* meant behaving like European powers. But they did not have the resources to do so. In addition to their trade (the value of which Americans tended to overstate), ideas—or more precisely the image of America as a new world where republican principles would have their first true demonstration—constituted one of their most valuable resources. Enlightened European courts were receptive to this resource (some more than others, obviously; the Spanish did not appreciate American ideology). I have already referred to some evidence from French court politics, and focus now on the French alliance proper.

The standard interpretation is that the French alliance was sealed with the British surrender at Saratoga in October of 1777; that victory indicated that the American rebels were capable of achieving some military success. Jonathan Dull contests this, arguing instead that the timing of the French alliance had far more to do with French war-preparedness, especially the progress of naval rearmament, and with deteriorating Anglo-French relations, than with American achievements in battle.[68] This interpretive dispute basically centers on the question of who had more agency in the European context, the Americans or the French. The answer seems obvious; the Americans were dependent on the Europeans for the success of their venture. Dull's argument is a corrective to more nationalistic historians who tend to paint the achievements of American independence as the product of American virtue and success in battle.

[66] Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address: Ideas of Early American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961); and Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*, pt. 2.

[67] James H. Hutson, "Early American Diplomacy: A Reappraisal," in *The American Revolution and "A Candid World,"* ed. Lawrence S. Kaplan (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), see pp. 46–49.

[68] Dull, *Diplomatic History*, pp. 89–95.

Highlighting American dependence on European politics and in particular on the French navy tempers such interpretations.[69]

Dull's insight and evidence emphasize the importance of European politics to American independence, and his interpretations fit nicely into a structural realist perspective on international relations. Americans had to accept and manipulate European balance of power politics to achieve their objectives. Dull does not evoke culture to explain European power politics, instead taking reason of state at face value. But as I have argued, reason of state cannot be taken at face value; it must be understood in terms of its cultural context. Cynicism about French objectives must be tempered by an acknowledgment that Enlightenment and even republican ideas were causing significant ferment on the Continent, and that European receptiveness to American ideals made the tasks of American diplomacy feasible. Further, the balance of power that was supposed to govern *raison d'état* could be interpreted in various ways, at least one of which complemented the liberal internationalist vision of peace through commerce. The Americans themselves developed competing interpretations of the European balance of power, one idealized and one distinctly negative.

Several commentators have shown that European culture had produced an idealized conception of balance of power, heavily based on the writings of Emmerich de Vattel, which made it possible to render American republicanism and European power politics complementary in principle.[70] Vattel had argued that the balance of power in Europe formed the foundation of a law of nations wherein each state possessed the same right to self-preservation and self-perfection.[71] A system of treaties and agreements could be measured against and grounded in these basic principles of sovereign equality. What the balance of power sustained in practice (sovereign rights), the law of nations legitimated and sustained in principle; such law facilitated the smoother operation of the balance of power.[72]

The Americans understood and idealized this system. Conveniently, Vattel had also argued against intervention by one sovereign power in the affairs of another, but had supported the right of revolution in case a sovereign power transgressed the law of nature.[73] Here the Americans found conceptual ammunition to simultaneously support their right of

[69] Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence: A Study of Arms and Diplomacy, 1774–1787* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[70] This section draws on Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*; Daniel George Lang, *Foreign Policy in the Early Republic: The Law of Nations and the Balance of Power* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985); and James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1980).

[71] Lang, *Foreign Policy*, pp. 10–26.

[72] Ibid., p. 34.

[73] Ibid., p. 31.

revolution against British tyranny while guarding against the very real possibility that the intervention of foreign powers—notably France and Spain—could conceivably lead to some sort of partition of America, as had happened in Poland.[74] The trick was to secure assistance to the Revolution while remaining free of concomitant interference that would theaten the incipient sovereignties of the rebelling colonies.

Peter and Nicholas Onuf have also pointed out that Vattelian balance of power thinking informed American conceptions of how the relations between individual states ought to be organized.[75] An idealized balance of power system, upon which a progressive law of nations could be founded, had the potential to bring peace and stability to Europe, bringing forth the idealistic visions of Europe as a republic. The Americans could realize this ideal among themselves (even though it had failed to fully materialize in Europe) by establishing laws governing the relations between the American states.[76] Thus one vision of American federation held that the sovereignty and self-perfection of the individual states would be most effectively protected under what was essentially a perfected law of nations, the Articles of Confederation.[77]

Unfortunately, the European balance often operated in a predatory rather than an ideal fashion. Strong European powers held territory adjacent to the newly independent Americans. The British had not fully evacuated military outposts in the Northwest. The Confederation presented a weak front in the predatory world of European power politics. Furthermore, the American states did not always behave as Vattel's theory would dictate. They did not cooperate on common commercial or military policy. Their interests often seemed conflicting, incompatible.

To meet both domestic and international challenges, stronger bonds of union were necessary. In establishing a federal Constitution, however, Americans had to turn away from the idealized, progressive balance of power thinking that characterized attitudes during the period of the Articles of Confederation. Instead of a progressive principle, balance of power politics in the *Federalist Papers* became the model of disunion and strife—something that would plague and tear apart the American states if they failed to form a "more perfect union." Hamilton and Madison drew on antiquity and on more contemporary examples to demonstrate how confederations would fall prey to competing interests, inequalities of wealth and power, and the inability to stay united against a common enemy if,

[74] Hutson, *John Adams*, chap. 1.

[75] Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*, chaps. 4 and 6.

[76] For an extended analysis of this mode see Daniel Deudney, "The Philadelphian System: Sovereignty, Arms Control, and Balance of Power in the American States-Union, circa 1787–1861," *International Organization* 49 (Spring 1995): 191–228.

[77] Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*.

for example, that enemy offered one state an alliance.[78] Further, even the intentions of the American states to limit their own, as well as foreign, relations to commerce alone would not ensure freedom from strife and even possibly war, for, asked Hamilton, "Has commerce hitherto done any thing more than change the objects of war?"[79]

The other side of the coin of American leaders' perceptions of the perils of democracy in the state legislatures was their perception of the weakness of the postwar Confederation in its own relations and, especially, vis-à-vis European powers. In order to strengthen their negotiating power for the purposes of expanding trade (which involved having the capacity for commercial retaliation against states who would not offer favorable terms); settling the Mississippi navigation issue; resolving border disputes; and getting the British to evacuate remaining military outposts in the Northwest, the Americans needed to present a united front. But after independence republicanism lost its cachet in the context of this sort of diplomacy; no longer romantic revolutionaries but a state struggling for concessions, the Americans had to change their strategy; they chose federal union.

The ratification of the federal Constitution also meant a shift in attitudes toward the European balance of power. As the Onufs note: "Thinking in federal constitutional terms meant that an idealized European republic could no longer be taken as a model for the American union."[80] Another foundation for union had to be articulated, and the Federalist versus Anti-Federalist debates represent competing efforts to reestablish that foundation.[81] The Federalists won the contest, and a unified national government replaced the Articles of Confederation. The tricky question of states' sovereignty was resolved by Madison's argument that popular sovereignty constituted the source of legitimacy both for the individual states and for the federal government as well as for the laws governing their relations and constituting their union.[82] "The Vattelian system was predicated on the independence and sovereignty of every state; the framers' [*sic*] predicated their federal republican system on the people's sovereignty. The rights of the republican states of the United States—and the liberties of republican citizens—could only be secure when they all ac-

[78] *Federalist* nos. 18–20.

[79] *Federalist* no. 6, p. 57.

[80] Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*, p. 128.

[81] Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*; Bernard Bailyn, ed., *The Debate on the Constitution*, 2 vols. (New York: Liberty Classics, 1993); *The Federalist Papers*; Ralph Ketcham, ed., *The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Debates* (New York: Penguin, 1986); and Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

[82] Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*, pp. 131–32.

knowledged a higher law, their own perfected law of nations."[83] Madison's argument highlighted the inextricable interdependence of the continued independent existence of the states, on the one hand, and the stronger federal union, on the other. The states could not survive as independent entities without a stronger federal constitution (because of their European balance of power–like divisiveness), and the federal Constitution derived its legitimacy from its ability to support the survival of the states and its being grounded, like the states, in the sovereign will of the people.

The Onufs argue that the federal structure constituted a "new world order" that other states could in principle join. It resolved the problem of size and extent plaguing classical republicanism. There was no reason to think that it could not continue to expand.[84] Expansion, however, would be westward, rather than generating a brotherhood across the Atlantic. European balance of power politics proved too hazardous over the course of the wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon to sustain the Atlantic connection. And at least some visions of republicanism—notably the agrarian dimensions of Jefferson's vision of independent property owners—required territorial expansion to survive.

Political Economy

This section serves a double purpose. First, we need to focus on economic interests and conditions to understand the cultural and political changes taking place in the early Republic and the impact these changes had on European political culture. The focus on republicanism does not fully capture the liberal commercial aspirations of the American Revolution, nor does it always give adequate due to the material considerations and private interests that helped shape the political debate on early American identity.[85] Second, I want to emphasize (building on historians' critiques of the revisionist school[86] of the American founding) that economic interests in and of themselves do not provide an adequate explanation of early American domestic political struggles and foreign policy objectives. The

[83] Ibid., p. 95.

[84] Ibid., chap. 3.

[85] Joyce Appleby stresses the need to attend to capitalist economic relations in order to understand political thought in the early United States as a corrective to the narrower focus by some authors on republican theory. See Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order.* See also Joyce Appleby, "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43, 1 (January 1986): 20–34.

[86] Notably Charles A. Beard, *The Republic* (New York: Viking, 1944); see the introductory essay in Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism.*

liberal commercial aspirations of the Revolution, as articulated in Paine's *Common Sense* and the Model Treaty of 1776, faced significant hurdles in the early history of U.S. relations with Europe. Thus while this section fleshes out the picture of early American political life by focusing on economic issues, it also shows the limits of economic explanations in the face of the dominant strains in the culture and politics of late eighteenth-century Europe.

The most liberal dimensions of early American political thought were perhaps best articulated by Jefferson, whose valuation of individual freedom and belief in the rationality and universality of natural human impulses made him confident that the economic activity of individuals could benefit, rather than corrupt, the body politic.[87] Liberal theory promised to address the problem of social cohesion, a problem brought to the fore when commentators such as Adam Smith focused on economic life and began to develop a model of an atomized society of self-interested individuals to replace the organic solidarity conceptions of the society of orders. Liberal theorists resolved the problem of social cohesion by positing a natural harmony of interests that would ensue if individuals were given the freedom to pursue their happiness without undue governmental interference. In the Jeffersonian vision, because of its abundant resources the United States was one of the few places on earth where this liberal ideal could be realized.[88]

But Adam Smith's influence on early American political and economic thought is limited, and John Crowley argues that few Americans actually read and fully understood his views on the power of free markets.[89] Liberal precepts did complement the American domestic context of demographic growth, abundance of land, relative lack of social stratification, and westward expansion. But the international environment presented formidable challenges to the realization of a liberal vision in the realm of foreign policy and foreign trade. European mercantilism stunted the growth of American liberalism as long as the United States was more dependent for its economic growth on overseas commerce and credit than on the internal market and domestic sources of credit and investment. This was the situation throughout the period studied here, and until the early to mid-nineteenth century.

To compound the difficulties of realizing a liberal political economy, not all American elites were fully convinced by the liberal notion of equal-

[87] J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Matson and Onuf, *A Union of Interests*; Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order.*

[88] Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order.*

[89] John E. Crowley, *The Privileges of Independence: Neomercantilism and the American Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 146–55.

ity, nor were they uniformly committed to having their foreign policy guided by a liberal perspective—especially when faced with the pervasiveness of European mercantilism. Economic questions and international challenges exposed a lack of consensus on the nature of American identity and institutions. The American party system evolved around a deep rift in thinking about the desirable shape of American economic life and the agencies that had authority over such life. Daniel Vickers argues that "we should locate the contested ground in early American economic culture, not around the issues of markets and property rights, but around the agencies of power that actually organized the economy."[90] Economic questions were a subset of a broader discourse on governmental authority and legitimacy.

Both international and domestic factors constrained the development of a liberal political economy in the new Republic. This section begins with a discussion of the state of late eighteenth-century European discourse and practice regarding colonial markets, for this was the context into which the United States was born. I then explore three areas of contention in early American political economy. How these issues were or were not resolved determined the role the United States was to play as a participant in, and alternative model for, politics of the European states system. The first issue concerns the problem of colonial and postcolonial commercial dependence on Britain. Americans revolted against the political dimension of this dependence, but the economics of such dependence were more difficult to challenge. Second, a key point of contention surrounding domestic economic issues was about the degree of authority exercised by the national government over state and local interests; this debate to some extent followed the language of English debates over "court" versus "country," but it also entailed the emergence of a distinctly American liberal vision of growth and prosperity. Key figures in this debate were Hamilton and Jefferson, and the election of 1800 brought the issues to the forefront of the national agenda.[91]

Third, the difficulties presented by European trade barriers pressured U.S. policy makers to subordinate free market polities to more mercantilist means of gaining leverage in world markets. American leaders had choices in how to confront these problems; they were not smoothly "socialized" into the mercantile system. Ideas of republican and democratic

[90] Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 47, 1 (January 1990): 3–29.

[91] Lance Banning, in *The Jeffersonian Persuasion*, argues for the "court" versus "country" signification, but faces strong disagreement from Joyce Appleby. See Lance Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited: Liberal and Classical Ideas in the New American Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43, 1 (January 1986): 3–19, and Appleby, "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts," in the same issue.

legitimacy, and of a liberal vision of economic well-being, strongly shaped and constrained policy choices. Hopes for a liberal internationalist order based on free trade and peace lingered on in early statehood. Even as more "realistic" views emerged, debates on how to confront a mercantilist, warring Europe were shaped by both republican and liberal principles, and disagreements centered on the appropriate interpretation of those principles and what they meant for American national identity. In the contention that arose regarding the shape of foreign economic policy, arguments for and against commercial discrimination took center stage.

In all these debates, political discourse constrained the ways in which economic interests could be legitimately articulated. This is clearly distinguishable from the tendency today to see economic interests as constituting their own justification. The political culture that permits this had to be created; its roots are in the eighteenth century.[92] But discourse did not fully determine outcomes; Americans innovatively interpreted, and thus altered, the constraints of republican discourse in response to changing social and economic conditions.

Liberal Economic Thought versus Colonialism: An Unrealized Contradiction

Although late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century thinkers produced the early conceptual foundations of a liberal political economy, in which free market transactions and the operation of supply and demand were seen as the optimal path toward economic prosperity, such thought had not penetrated very deeply into policy, and the independence of the United States initially had little impact on entrenched attitudes about colonial dependency. In England, liberal thought had been co-opted into mercantilist agendas of state building and expansion of trade.[93] The notion that colonies existed for the benefit of the mother country, and that trade between colonies and a mother country must be kept exclusive, was firmly embedded in practice, and very few challenged it in politics or discourse. In France, the physiocrat minister Anne Robert Jacques Turgot lost his battle for fiscal conservatism and free trade in grain. Ironically, one of the notable defeats in his struggle to rationalize economic and especially fiscal policy was French support of the Americans in their war with Britain—something Turgot had argued the regime could not afford.

[92] For an argument to this effect, see William M. Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture: The Textile Trade and French Society, 1750–1900* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[93] Appleby, *Liberalism and Rebublicanism*, chaps. 1, 2, 7.

To most ruling elites, commerce meant foreign trade, not the operation of free markets.[94] Foreign commerce alone (as opposed to internal market transactions) brought significant revenue to the state. Domestic production for foreign markets could be profitably stimulated as a national enterprise; a favorable balance of trade would generate state wealth. Rulers aimed to expand their foreign commerce while maintaining some sort of self-sufficiency in staples and rigidly controlling their internal markets, often at the behest of powerful groups such as the Farmers General (tax farmers, not agriculturalists) in France. The Farmers General sustained monopoly power over tobacco and other commodities, which turned out to be an important impediment to Jefferson's efforts to expand American trade with France. Social control went hand in hand with mercantilism, and the laboring poor were seen as slaves to passion, not sufficiently endowed with the reason of the enlightened.[95] An elite caste was needed to keep the people under control while realizing the public good (that is, a stronger, richer state) inherent in the advantages brought on by foreign commerce.

Neither British nor French thinkers—even the most enlightened—sought to construct a rationale for freeing up colonial trade. The idea that colonial trade was and ought to be explicitly for the benefit of the mother country was not even challenged in the *Encyclopédie* of the *philosophes*. Crowley, who makes this argument systematically, notes that "the entry on colonies explicitly repudiated liberal pieties about the economic advantages of free markets. Modern colonization aimed forthrightly at economic benefits for the 'metropole.' "[96]

Even the American colonial rebellion against Britain hardly challenged the idea that Britain had the right to regulate its colonial trade.[97] The fact that Americans considered the offer to open up their trade to Britain's enemies as their greatest source of bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the European powers, and that doing so would put them on the path to independence because of the radical nature of such a move, shows that they too were operating on the assumption that colonial trade was a rightful monopoly. Otherwise, challenging that monopoly would not have had such radical connotations.

Crowley further argues that the American colonists comfortably prospered in their commercial dependence on Britain. The abundance of land in the colonies made it seem natural that they should export primary products and food to Britain while taking in British manufactures.[98] The

[94] These paragraphs draw on Crowley, *Privileges of Independence*.
[95] Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism*, chap. 1.
[96] Crowley, *Privileges*, p. 2.
[97] Ibid., chap. 1.
[98] Ibid., pp. 8–9.

British Navigation Acts gave Americans preferential access to otherwise restricted markets, and permitted the development of American colonial shipping. Perhaps the strongest criticisms of the colonial dependency relationship came not from the colonies themselves but from Josiah Tucker in Britain, in the attacks on mercantilism that he eventually extended to include the suggestion that it would be better for Britain's economy to be rid of the colonies.[99] His was a minority view, but it reinforces Crowley's general argument that economic liberalism had stronger roots in Britain than in the American colonies.[100]

The experience of the colonial resistance and the War of Independence did little to liberalize American thinking on trade issues. As Crowley notes, "Appeals to free trade never acquired much ideological authority because they transparently served self-interests and often contradicted the simultaneous pursuit of privilege by their proponents. From the mid-1760s to the mid-1779s such liberal economic ideas ran afoul of the restraints on consumption and trade by the nonimportation movements and the Continental Association, as the sacrifice of individual economic benefits became a test of public virtue."[101] Rather than supporting economic liberalism, early American experience with the struggle against Britain reinforced mercantilist tendencies in the sense that commerce was viewed as an instrument of coercion, to be deployed for the political aim of independence. Moreover, the deprivation caused by cutting commercial ties with Britain to further the revolutionary struggle had the aura of classical republican virtue. The ability of the colonists to deny themselves the privileges of trade with Britain in order to extract concessions—namely, the repeal of the Stamp Act and the Townshend duties[102]—involved acts of self-denial that fit in with the classical republican idea that commerce was a corrupting force because it addicted people to luxury and thus eroded their manly virtues.

The Continental Association promulgated, prior to the Declaration of Independence, a series of regulations forbidding the importation of certain British and Irish goods, as well as "East India tea from any part of the world; molasses, syrups, paneles, coffee, and pimento from the British West Indies; wines from Madeira or the Western Islands; indigo, and slaves."[103] The British retaliated with restrictions of their own, and finally enacted a law in December of 1775 prohibiting all commercial

[99] Ibid., pp. 10–11.

[100] Ibid., passim.

[101] Ibid., p. 25.

[102] Vernon G. Setser, *The Commercial Reciprocity Policy of the United States, 1774–1829* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937), p. 5.

[103] Ibid., p. 6.

intercourse with the colonies.[104] Thus while Americans tried to manipulate Britain by closing themselves off to its goods, it was Britain who first severed the colonial trade ties completely.[105]

Any emergent contradiction between liberal doctrine and colonial dependency (or exclusive claims by imperial countries to colonial trade) remained unrealized in practice in the American Revolution and its immediate aftermath. Even as the colonies rebelled and claimed independence, thus challenging British rights to control their trade, they themselves began to manipulate their own commerce for political ends in what can readily be described as a mercantilist fashion, and the War of Independence reinforced classical republican mistrust of commerce rather than the liberal vision of free trade. Ironically, it was the British who began to adopt more liberal attitudes as they tried to make the best of the loss of their colonies.[106] In the end it turned out that abandoning exclusive privilege to trade with the Americas—in effect a move toward liberalization—stimulated rather than diminished U.S.-British commerce. But this realization on the British part infuriated influential Americans, insofar as it meant that political independence had done nothing to sever the ties of economic dependence between the two countries.

Independence versus Persistence of Colonial Dependency

For the Americans, the glow of victory over Britain waned in the face of the reality of continued commercial dependence on Britain. Vernon Setser sums it up: "The events following the peace [of 1783] soon demonstrated that the United States, in spite of the recognition of independence, remained an English colony in economic status."[107] Americans retained their taste for British goods and their appetite for British credit. French merchants and bankers could not compete, despite Jefferson's strenuous efforts to expand American trade with France. Further, Americans now found themselves outside rather than inside the embrace of the British Navigation Acts; indignantly they realized that they would now be treated like any other foreign power and maritime competitor. American shipping was decimated by these restrictions, as was the West Indian trade when the British closed off their West Indian holdings to American ships, and France and Spain revived old restrictions. France reopened the West

[104] Ibid., p. 7.

[105] Crowley, *Privileges*, pp. 56–57. Crowley takes this to be evidence of American acceptance of the colonial dependency in trade.

[106] Ibid., chap. 4.

[107] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*, p. 52.

Indies to trade in the early stages of the French revolutionary wars, and smuggling rendered restrictions incomplete and porous, but the damage was serious. The West Indies trade was the most crucial foreign commerce of the United States, and many an American aristocrat had built his fortune on it.[108]

Despite the new restraints placed on it by the British mercantile system, trade continued to flow heavily between Britain and the United States, to mutual profit. Why then were the Americans so intent on breaking down what were, at the time, legitimate British restrictions on colonial trade and navigation, when the only viable tools they could use to coerce the British into curbing those restrictions were commercial restrictions of their own, thus in effect cutting off a nose to spite the face? The answers are largely political rather than economic. Some Americans saw economic independence from Britain as a crucial counterpart to political independence, regardless of the costs that would be incurred by cutting colonial economic ties. Others saw economic independence as an instrument for acquiring prestige and negotiating leverage in European courts, a prerequisite for negotiating commercial treaties with other powers.

Confronted with the difficulties of extending their commerce, the overarching goal of early American foreign economic policy became not free trade but commercial reciprocity.[109] John Adams first proposed an American navigation act (which would require that foreign commerce be carried exclusively by American ships) in 1783, and few opposed this idea as a mode of retaliation against similar foreign—especially British—restrictions. Further, a host of commissioners were sent abroad in order to negotiate reciprocal trade agreements. To accomplish these sorts of objectives, the Continental Congress needed the proper authority. But it could not sustain such authority; individual states took commercial policy into their own hands, thereby undercutting one another's efforts. British ships closed out of New York harbors could go through Connecticut, for example.[110]

The imperative of formulating a coherent foreign commercial policy was one of the key pragmatic incentives for the formation of a national government, overshadowing even the imperative of establishing some sort of national defense.[111] Although it was fairly easy to reach consensus on the need for a national government to regulate commerce, discussion of specific initiatives generated debates based on sectional interests. What

[108] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*, chap. 3; for a unique perspective on West Indies connections, see Roger G. Kennedy, *Orders from France: The Americans and French in a Revolutionary World, 1780–1820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

[109] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*; Crowley, *Privileges*.

[110] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*, chap. 3.

[111] Marks, *Independence on Trial*, chap. 2.

was more important, gaining access to Newfoundland fisheries or convincing Spain to acquiesce on the Mississippi navigation issue? Shipping agricultural products by any means possible or supporting an American merchant marine? The southern states had an interest, for example, in trading directly with the West Indies and preserving the slave trade, and they feared dependence on northern ships for overseas carriage of their goods should a navigation act be passed. The northern and middle states, in contrast, favored export taxes and navigation acts in order to strengthen America's carrying trade (favoring northern ship builders) and gain leverage against foreign countries, especially Britain.[112] Economic issues divided the country, but at the same time, unity was essential if the overseas commercial advantages nearly everyone sought were to be realized. The question of national unity hinged on an acceptable construction of national identity that transcended particular sectional interests.

Hamiltonian versus Jeffersonian Political Economy

Although republican thought dominated the discourse on American national identity, economic relationships were increasingly becoming accepted as important and legitimate dimensions of the polity. But economic interests were still not sufficient to legitimate policy in and of themselves. Policy debates were animated by disagreement about the relationship between political authority and economic interests; Hamilton and Jefferson represent divergent views on this score. Wood characterizes the main division in U.S. thinking about political economy as a conflict between "aristocrats" and "democrats."[113] This characterization makes sense if we ground it in republican discourse—where the argument was tied to the question of whether a "disinterested" aristocratic caste was necessary for the proper functioning of a republic.[114] Hamilton represented the more "aristocratic" Federalists; Jefferson stood in for the more "democratic" Republicans.

One important contour of the conflict from the 1780s onward was polarization around the issue of paper money. Federalists distrusted paper money and worked for a specie-based economy, or at least a strong central bank that would control paper issues and establish solid national credit. The more "democratic" leaders, however, spoke for the interests of a pop-

[112] Ibid., p. 147 and passim; Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*, p. 66 and chap. 4.

[113] Wood, *Radicalism*, p. 241 and passim.

[114] Although republicanism makes for a powerful interpretive scheme, not all the evidence fits neatly into it. For a critique of republicanism as a paradigm that has overreached, see Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79, 1 (June 1992): 11–38.

ulace becoming accustomed to new levels of consumption and market exchange, as well as new levels of debt, and wanting easier access to liquidity. The growing domestic market and the need for an internal circulating medium in a country short on specie fueled the arguments of the paper money advocates.[115]

Americans had a long history of using various paper forms of credit, because of the shortage of specie in the colonies. The War of Independence relied heavily on this medium. In E. James Ferguson's words, "Congress stuffed the maw of the Revolution with paper money."[116] But the disastrous economic consequences of wartime finance, inflation, and graft led to a conservative backlash oriented toward the protection of public credit.[117] Fiscal reform constituted a powerful rationale for a stronger national government, capable of restoring that precious public credit.

Federalist elites generally represented the interests of creditors, which had been threatened by state policies under the Articles of Confederation that favored debt relief and paper currency issues. Those Americans for whom the classical republican ideal of an aristocracy of merit devoted to safeguarding the public good still resonated required a source of wealth that would free them from commercial interests. Large-scale rent-producing land ownership did not provide the sorts of aristocracy-defining income that it brought in England; the incentives for Americans to stay tied to land owned by large landholders were low, since they could move west and claim their own holdings. Instead, the means by which aspiring gentlemen drew a steady income now involved lending money at interest.[118] Creditors—a new aristocratic caste—required currency stability, not the frightening cycles of postwar depreciation.

American creditors identified their interests in currency stability and sound national credit with maintenance of the public good and even moral virtues. In a society still based on highly personalized relations, the establishment of good credit meant securing one's status as a moral and trustworthy person. From this perspective, events that threatened to shake up the debtor/creditor relationship, such as Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts (1786), threatened the very fabric of society. Among the framers of the Constitution, agreement on the need to avoid the inflationary effects of state issues of paper currency was fairly widespread,

[115] Wood, *Radicalism*, p. 249.

[116] E. James Ferguson, *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776–1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 29.

[117] Ibid., pp. 112–15.

[118] Wood, "Interests and Disinterestedness," pp. 104–105.

and the "prohibition of states' authority in Article I, Section 10 of the Constitution was scarcely debated."[119]

Prohibitions on states' printing of paper money did not solve the country's economic problems, however, which included massive indebtedness from the war and rapid depreciation of those debt issues. Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton's efforts to restore public credit focused on federal assumption of state debts, and the creation of a National Bank, to be launched by shares of government debt. The bank would lend to large commercial investors, thus encouraging industry and especially manufacturing.[120] These policies would tie the interests of an emergent wealthy commercial class to that of the central government. The overall importance of Hamilton's program, and his power as Treasury secretary, is evident in considering the relative size of his department: in 1789 Treasury had five top positions, over thirty clerks, and nearly a thousand customs officers and revenue agents. The Department of State, by contrast, had "four clerks, a messenger, and an office keeper; and the War Department could muster only three clerks."[121]

Hamilton focused on enhancing the power of the national government by generating confidence at home and abroad in its ability to settle its debts and provide a return on securities. The model that inspired Hamilton was Britain, the most commercially competitive state in Europe. He wanted to emulate British strengths while remaining within the constraints of the federal Constitution. He hoped that the United States would develop in such a way as to compete with European states essentially on their terms. National unity could be promoted by means of a stronger central government and a National Bank. Encouragement of domestic manufactures through protective legislation emulating larger European, state-protected industries was designed to be temporary; it would facilitate the development of an internal market, drawing northern merchants closer to southern planters. Here Hamilton was departing from mercantilist thought in pointing out the integrative capacities of domestic markets, which was a distinctly liberal view. Crowley even argues (controversially) that Hamilton was the most liberal of the framers; that his "Report on Manufactures" paraphrased lengthy sections of the *Wealth of*

[119] Ibid., p. 107. See also Janet A. Riesman, "Money, Credit, and Federalist Political Economy," in *Beyond Confederation*, ed. Beeman, Botein, and Carter, p. 152.

[120] Ferguson, *Power of the Purse*, chap. 14; Riesman, "Federalist Political Economy," pp. 154–56.

[121] John C. Miller, *The Federalist Era, 1789–1801* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 33.

Nations; and that the mercantilist aspects of the report constituted "a self-conscious exception to an otherwise liberal political economy."[122]

Jefferson challenged Hamilton's vision of U.S. identity by presenting an alternative. Some scholars characterize Jefferson's vision as agrarian, but grafted onto the agrarian vision were innovative, modern, and distinctly liberal elements.[123] Jefferson's agrarianism was neither anticommercial nor isolationist. The real question for him was what agencies should have authority in enacting commercial regulations and fiscal policies. For the Jeffersonians, Hamilton's moves to concentrate economic power in the hands of the federal government and the National Bank were anathema, and undermined republicanism. Banning traces this argument to the English "court" versus "country" debate. In Hamilton's efforts, Jeffersonians detected echoes of the machinations of commercially self-interested ministers corrupting Parliament. Instead, Jefferson favored sustaining the economy of small, independent landowners by promoting territorial expansion, on the one hand, and keeping the federal government from creating a strong moneyed interest (by means of Hamilton's central bank and promotion of large-scale commercial and manufacturing interests), on the other. Weakening the federal government in favor of state and local financing initiatives (which would be more beneficial to agriculture) would be necessary to combat the emergence, as a result of Hamilton's fiscal plans, of a European-style income inequality.[124]

Jefferson's vision was grounded in a distinctly liberal view of human nature and social life. According to Joyce Appleby,

> For the Jeffersonians the economy offered an escape from the predicaments implicit in traditional ways of looking at social order. Here was a system operating independently of politics and, like the physical universe, taking its cues from nature. Where politics achieved stability by imposing its structure of power, the economy appeared to elicit voluntary participation as it wove ever more extensive networks of free exchange. It also discovered a rationality in the humblest person whose capacity to take care of himself could be used as an argument for freedom.[125]

Although the contradictions between the Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian visions led to vociferous political battles, they did not tear apart the country; material and social conditions muted the effects of the division. The

[122] Crowley, *Privileges*, p. 153 and more generally pp. 146–55.

[123] Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*; Banning, "Jeffersonian Ideology Revisited"; Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*; Appleby, "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts."

[124] Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*.

[125] Appleby, "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts," p. 32.

crux of this resolution lay in the acceptance by both sides of commerce as a positive rather than destructive influence on social and political life.

The relative abundance of land, widespread property ownership, and lack of traditional or feudal social relationships created a situation in which it was difficult to view private property, commercial exchange, and the price mechanism as destructive of tradition, as they might be in many parts of Europe. Vickers paints a Jeffersonian picture of early American economic culture revolving around household economies, where marketing surplus was routine and acceptable (though marketing labor was far less desirable). He characterizes the values underpinning the system of household economies as "competency," which meant "a degree of comfortable independence." The basic aim of American property owners engaged in small-scale agriculture was "to improve the property that defined their status as independent farmers."[126] For those reflecting on these conditions more broadly, Appleby argues that "[i]t was the economy's ordering of society with minimal compulsion that stirred the Jeffersonian imagination, not its capacity to produce wealth."[127]

Part of the process of "improvement" articulated by Vickers included selling to foreign markets. Thus the commonplace notion that agrarian values were backward and isolationist has no basis as far as early American economic life is concerned.[128] Population growth in Europe during the latter part of the eighteenth century increased the demand for American grains.[129] Both large planters and small family farmers responded to price rises and new market opportunities. Appleby argues that selling to Europe provided incentives and opportunities to small farmers to increase their surpluses while still maintaining the structure of the family farm. Much of the population was animated by the "spirit for Trade," noted George Washington in 1784.[130]

In addition to trading in agricultural surpluses, American farm households engaged in small-scale household manufactures. Stimulated as never before by the War of Independence, these manufactures tended to be for domestic markets, and it was the development of such internal markets that Wood argues is one of the great economic transformations of a society previously focused on commerce as an almost entirely over-

[126] Vickers, "Competency and Competition," quotes on pp. 3, 11.

[127] Appleby, "Republicanism in Old and New Contexts," p. 33.

[128] Joyce Appleby, "The 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic," in Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism*, pp. 253–76.

[129] Ibid., pp. 257, 261. William Doyle notes that population growth and price rises were the most important material developments of the eighteenth century. William Doyle, *The Old European Order, 1660–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 7–8.

[130] Appleby, "Agrarian Myth," pp. 264, 268.

seas activity.[131] Although after the war the economy suffered a depression as government procurement dropped, eventually household manufactures took off again, along with agricultural production. Such activity certainly reinforced the competency ethic and the ideal of household independence.[132]

Hamilton and Jefferson each articulated a competing vision of American national identity as a republican state (or empire). The "fiscalist" or nationalist vision supported a strong state with an aristocracy of wealth and merit attached to it, to sustain national honor and credit; the liberal "agrarian" notion touted the virtues of independence, equality, and competence. Domestically, as long as westward expansion was possible and Atlantic trade relatively open, the American economy and society were able to absorb both these visions. Small farmers could continue to proliferate, southern planters could sell the produce of slave labor overseas, and Atlantic traders could make and lose fortunes according to international markets. It was the relationship between the American economy and Europe that constituted the more pressing problem, because the resolution of these divisions in domestic politics depended on sustaining Atlantic commerce.

Commercial Discrimination versus Free Trade

The United States needed foreign trade to sustain its economy, but in a mercantilist world it had trouble leveraging open foreign markets.[133] In arguing for the Constitution, Federalists as a whole were initially united in advertising the advantages a strong national government would provide for securing commercial leverage abroad; supporting American navigation and fisheries ("nurseries of seamen" for a navy); and expanding interstate commerce.[134] But after ratification, the framers split on the proper means to secure access to foreign markets. Hamilton and his cohort favored relatively open markets, even if that meant an inability to leverage reductions in British restrictions. Jefferson and Madison, in contrast, were committed to deploying the weapon of commercial discrimination as a means of gaining access to foreign markets. The disagreements over policy reflected deeper ideological tensions about the role of the state in managing the economy, and particularly foreign trade.

[131] Wood, *Radicalism*, pp. 137ff.
[132] Vickers, "Competency and Competition."
[133] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity.*
[134] *Federalist* nos. 11 and 12.

Although the power conferred on the national government to control commerce exceeded the almost nonexistent power of Congress under the Articles of Confederation, its authority was still weak. The federal government lacked the power to levy duties on exports. The two-thirds Senate majority requirement for the ratification of treaties meant that ratifying necessary commercial treaties would be difficult.[135] Despite these weaknesses in authority, expectations at the time of ratification were that the Constitution would essentially implement the commercial policies to which the Continental Congress had aspired, but which it had been unable to enact: harsh commercial retaliation against countries not willing to reciprocally open their trade to the United States, and more liberal treatment of those countries who were more open.[136] But Hamilton, as Treasury secretary, initially set the country on a different course.

As already discussed, Hamilton's overall aims centered on the need to secure financial credit for the United States. Import duties were the primary available source of income. To maintain this income, trade with European nations had to be sustained, trade wars avoided. Since Britain was America's biggest trading partner, duties on British imports brought the most revenue to the government. Hamilton viewed the United States as a young and weak country, unable as yet to muster sufficient leverage to dictate terms to Europe. In time, American power would develop and commercial relations might be redirected. In particular, Hamilton sought to stimulate American manufactures to these ends. In the short run, however, trade should be sustained despite the odious restrictions placed on it by mercantilist powers.

Hamilton's attitude toward overseas trade thus limited the government's discriminatory capacity against foreign powers. British restrictions would have to be borne. When they became so egregious as to bring the two countries to the brink of war in 1793–94, the U.S. response was negotiation and, some have argued, capitulation.[137] The Jay Treaty with Britain represented the culmination of this policy, for it limited U.S. retaliatory capacity and accepted Britain's rights to make restrictions as it saw fit in the course of the European conflicts, in exchange for evacuation of the Northwest posts and the very limited admission of American trade to the British West Indies (the latter article was defeated in Congress).[138]

[135] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*, pp. 100–101.

[136] Ibid., p. 102.

[137] Miller, *Federalist Era*, chap. 10; Jerald A. Combs, *The Jay Treaty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970).

[138] On the Jay Treaty, see Combs, *Jay Treaty*; see also Merrill D. Peterson, "Thomas Jefferson and Commercial Policy, 1783–1793," *William and Mary Quarterly* 21 (October 1965): 584–610; Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*, pp. 126–31.

Commercial retaliation for Jefferson and Madison, in contrast, constituted a crucial weapon (the only weapon) that the United States could and should use to force others to lower restrictions. They sought to redirect trade away from Britain and toward France and other less politically offensive countries. Unlike Hamilton's vision of American weakness, Jefferson and Madison's view was optimistic about the importance of the American commerce for Britain, and of its power to lure other European countries into reciprocal agreements.

Jefferson strenuously sought to cultivate American trade with France, in order to wean American markets from Britain. Even before the establishment of a federal Constitution, he pushed the French to open their markets to American tobacco, whale oil, and rice. But what he failed to do was find a way to make Americans want French goods in return. Thus although Americans found markets for their goods in France, they ended up using the revenues from sales to the French to buy British goods and pay off British creditors.[139] This hurt the already troubled French economy. Merrill Peterson points out that one key reason Jefferson's efforts to strengthen commercial ties with France failed was that Jefferson himself knew little about French producers. This was because of the nature of his contacts in France: "Even as liberal commercial policy gained favor [in France], the country's merchants, manufacturers, *fabricants*, and shopkeepers who were losing by it moved toward reaction and revolution. The American Minister [Jefferson] had little contact with the bourgeoisie. He moved in a restricted circle, the enlightened nobility for the most part—friends of agriculture and free trade, of America and republicanism—and so it is not surprising that some of the most disturbing realities of the French economy eluded him."[140] Once the French Revolution broke out, French commercial policy became more restrictive rather than less so, as "merchants, manufacturers, *fabricants*, and shopkeepers" gained leverage over the enlightened nobility. Jefferson was dismayed by the fact that a "liberal revolution could turn reactionary in commercial policy," but he kept trying to redirect American trade away from Britain and toward France.[141]

Increasingly, Jefferson and Madison saw retaliatory discrimination as the only means by which such redirection—and other policy objectives such as securing liberal neutral shipping rights—could be achieved. These views were defeated in the Federalist commercial policies under Hamilton's aegis, but emerged anew with the "Revolution of 1800" which put Jefferson in the presidency. Jefferson's embargo, nonimportation, and

[139] Peterson, "Thomas Jefferson and Commercial Policy," p. 600.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid., pp. 604–605.

nonintercourse acts—all more or less designed to coerce, by withholding American trade, the Europeans to respect American neutral shipping rights in wartime, and all economically disastrous[142]—showed how much he relied on commercial discrimination as a political weapon.

Madison's efforts prior to the War of 1812 echoed Jefferson's preferences. Madison finally conceded the weakness of the commercial weapon and went to war, but the fact that an invasion of Canada was seen as a means to achieve neutral shipping rights showed his continuing concern for strengthening the United States' ability to wield commercial discrimination to its advantage. Madison felt that it was the Canadian ability to supply the British West Indies with staples and naval stores that rendered American retaliatory discrimination ineffective; hence invading Canada might serve to cut off that supply route.[143]

The struggle for markets, and especially commercial access to European colonies in America and the Caribbean, had to be fought politically, since European states exercised far stricter control over their markets than the Americans. Both Federalists and Republicans had to develop policies to confront the realities of European mercantilism. But the different attitudes about how to deal with the problems in Atlantic trade reflect distinct views of how America as a nation ought to evolve. Thus the apparent neglect of the liberal principles of the Model Treaty of 1776 and growing "realism" in American foreign commercial policy were not simply signs of "socialization" and capitulation to the hard-edged realities of international politics, if only because distinct alternatives were developed to confront those realities, and each alternative had strong legitimating principles rooted in republican and, increasingly, liberal discourse.

Crowley argues that it was the failure to reestablish colonial trade patterns with Britain, rather than progressive thinking, that pushed the Americans to seek out more liberal trade agreements with the rest of the world. This argument contains a direct critique of the strength of American liberalism in political economy, because liberalism is shown to be a last resort position rather than a guiding principle.[144] Without using the same argument, Setser also suggests that liberal political economy was a last-resort attitude adopted by the Americans because of their position of weakness. Setser's implication is that stronger mercantilist measures

[142] For an aggressive indictment, see Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chaps. 17 and 22 and pt. V.

[143] Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), chap. 9; J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War: Politics, Diplomacy, and Warfare in the Early American Republic, 1783–1830* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

[144] Crowley, *Privileges*.

would have been preferable, but the United States was too weak to enact them. His comment on liberal principles is telling: "If the economists had not already developed the principles of economic liberalism, American statesmen would have been under the necessity of inventing them. There was no practicable alternative policy for an independent America in the eighteenth century. A weak, divided, poor country was in no position to maintain a navy, to undertake the exploitation of dependencies, or to engage in cutthroat trade rivalry."[145] But there was a policy alternative. Closer ties with France—reconstructing some sort of new commercial dependency relationship but with a different metropole—might have constituted an alternative policy. Such a policy failed to take hold because of American unwillingness to buy French manufactured goods, the inability of the French to compete with Britain in supplying credit, and also because of the strong American desire for independence from all foreign entanglements.

The Treaty of Alliance and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with France in 1778 provide early evidence that the United States could not pattern its foreign relations on the Model Treaty of 1776 (which aspired to commercial ties only) because in a mercantilist world, economic ties entailed political ties. So the United States had to develop political as well as commercial ties with France. Later aspirations to commercial ties free of political entanglements would also meet with formidable obstacles. Yet the United States persisted in advocating free trade. But all this does not give unequivocal support to the "liberalism as a last resort" argument, for two very different reasons. First, the liberal approach had ideological legitimacy insofar as those who supported it—the Jeffersonian Republicans—linked it to some of the most central principles of American independence. These included freedom, natural equality, and social cohesion based on free exchange between individual households rather than hierarchical social stratification among different orders of society.

Second, U.S. commercial policy did not turn out to be particularly liberal, and so liberalism could hardly be a last-resort "outcome" if it was not an outcome at all. Rather, liberalism was a rationale. Liberal principles constitute an important part of American revolutionary thought;[146] they complemented and over time began to replace the classical strains of republican thought that so powerfully shaped the early American identity. The weight of their legitimacy should not be underestimated, because there were alternative paths that could have been chosen on the basis of the material position of weakness alone: neocolonial dependency on

[145] Setser, *Commercial Reciprocity*, p. 257.

[146] See especially Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address*, chap. 3; and Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism*.

France, for example, or complete isolation and abandonment of Atlantic commerce.[147]

These alternatives were not selected, at least partly because such alternatives were not seen as legitimate in terms of the prevailing discourses of the day. Both Hamilton's and Jefferson's visions, though competing, were rooted in republican legitimacy, but in very different interpretations of what republicanism meant. Hamilton's emulation of Britain sought to select the successful, commercial aspects of British development while retaining the American constitutional innovations that served as a "corrective" to the corrupt English constitution. This was not antirepublican, but rather a continuation of the republican model still somewhat rooted in a society of orders. The Jeffersonians' vision was also republican (obviously, since their party claimed that title), but their republicanism was overlaid with strong liberal elements, with greater faith in the power of commerce to bind the American people together and to bind the United States to the rest of the world in peaceful commercial relations. According to one Republican commentator, for example: "In a free government, commerce expands her sails; Prompted by a spirit of enterprize [*sic*] and a desire of gain, men venture the dangers of a boisterous ocean in pursuit of new commodities. With a wider acquaintance of man the elements of the monk and the barbarian dissolve into the sympathizing heart of a citizen of civilized life."[148]

Although the Jefferson administration's ideas on commercial discrimination appear mercantilist, they were structured by an ideal vision of a world where nations peacefully exchange the surpluses produced by their different natural endowments. Commercial discrimination was a necessarily mercantilist means to a liberal end. This discussion of foreign economic policy returns us to the broader question of how to characterize early American attitudes toward Europe.

Cosmopolitanism versus Nationalism in American Foreign Policy

The preceding section confronted the limits of liberalism as an explanation for U.S. foreign economic policy, while nevertheless acknowledging its power as an emergent ideology; this section addresses realist explana-

[147] Jefferson toyed with the latter idea but dismissed it as unrealistic given American propensities; see Peterson, "Jefferson and Commercial Policy," pp. 589–90.

[148] Phineas Hedges, *An Oration Delivered before the Republican Society of Ulster County* (Goshen, N.Y., 1795), quoted in Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*, p. 87.

tions by working through a central tension in early American foreign policy, that between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. In the process, I show how a realist explanation in and of itself is unsatisfactory, while an understanding of political culture as constitutive of legitimacy must play a central role in explaining early American foreign policy. Further, this section draws together the threads developed in the earlier sections to address the puzzle of how the United States solved the problems of confronting the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European world of prestige and power politics.

The core substantive argument here is that cosmopolitan strands in early American thought and action mutated into a much more nationalistic mood, and republicanism came to be associated with exceptionalism or exclusion rather than cosmopolitan brotherhood. But crucially, the cosmopolitan thread was sustained in American attitudes toward international law; this can be interpreted as both a cause and a by-product of American military weakness in this period. The elite founders aspired to enlightened, secular, republican, and liberal internationalist ideas, as Felix Gilbert has shown.[149] They envisioned a world where peaceful commerce between free peoples would replace the rapacious and war-prone competition between monarchs. The world did not cooperate with this vision, and so in several respects actual policy turned out quite differently. But this is not a case of "idealism" giving way to "realism," nor is it a case of U.S. socialization to European power politics. Rather, it is the realization of one innovative set of ideas about American identity at the expense of another. Further, the "losing" view was marginalized rather than eliminated, and continued to exercise influence on discourse and policy.

Certainly, the balance of power had something to do with how policy choices were made. But such choices had to be legitimated in terms of the republican vision that inspired the move to independence and union. American exceptionalism and nationalism are themselves ideological constructs, not simple reflections of material interests. Material interests and strategic contexts facilitate choices between existing clusters of ideas, especially where political culture is as diverse and rife with contradictions as that of the eighteenth century. Neither condition in and of itself is sufficient to explain policy choices and outcomes.

Conceptualizing political culture as a complex of ideas also alerts us to the possibility that even marginal ideas may have significance, because they may shed their marginal role in new contexts. This is what the Americans did with the political ideology of the English opposition (largely marginalized in Britain), and this is what future generations did (and are still attempting to do) with cosmopolitanism. Even a cursory perusal of

[149] Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address*.

the history of American involvement in international law and organizations will detect the marginal but tenacious persistence of a distinctly cosmopolitan strain of thought.[150] Further, American interpretations of international law remained distinctly cosmopolitan even in the period studied here.

The French Revolution and the Problem of American Identity

The "realism" of Federalist foreign policy was ultimately contingent on a clear and supportable conception of American identity, as a union. Such articulation was grounded in the ideological arguments presented in the *Federalist Papers* and other such venues. As Peter Onuf points out, "Partisan and sectional conflict in the early republic revealed the fragility of a union always seemingly poised on the brink of disintegration." This meant that ideas were crucial in forging a unified national identity from which a national interest could be said to follow; "American national identity was constantly being renegotiated as successive administrations responded to real and imagined threats at home and abroad."[151] Such identity had to entail independence and distinctiveness from Europe as well as republican values. But a more cosmopolitan identification with Europe was also feasible, given the European sources of so much of American political thought.

The French Revolution, in its early stages, profoundly challenged the nationalist and exceptionalist turn in American foreign policy. For it now appeared that republicanism was indeed spreading through Europe, that the American example had proved potent and influential. Fraternal societies sprang up everywhere; Americans sang the *Marseillaise*, wore the cockade, toasted their French brothers, and demonstrated identification with and support for the French Revolution.[152] The religious dimension of Republican francophilia, already discussed, saw millennial implications in the spread of republican liberty throughout the world, and in the French assaults on the Catholic church. This perspective complemented the more secular, cosmopolitan attitudes toward the French Revolution, wherein the United States and France each represented outposts of an emerging world of republicanism, liberty, and the rights of man. The common values thought to underpin both the American and the French revo-

[150] For example, see Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

[151] Peter S. Onuf, "A Declaration of Independence for Diplomatic Historians," *Diplomatic History* 22, 1 (Winter 1998), quotations from pp. 80, 82.

[152] Banning, *Jeffersonian Persuasion*, chap. 8; Miller, *Federalist Era*, chaps. 7–8.

lutions bound their respective peoples into a single republican fraternity; this was republican cosmopolitanism at work.

Even as the Revolution became a regicide and the Terror gained momentum, public enthusiasm in the United States remained strong.[153] Federalist elites, however, were far more cautious than the public, for both ideological and practical reasons. As the European wars over the French Revolution began, the key policy issue for the Washington administration became the status of the U.S. alliance with France. The cultural question framing the policy discussion concerned the shape of American identity.

Although both Hamilton and Jefferson counseled neutrality, they split on the reasons and rationales. Hamilton argued that the treaty with France should be suspended because the situation there was too unstable, and it was not clear that the government was legitimate and likely to stay in power. In other words, he adopted the view that treaties bind governments, not nations. Hamilton's main fear was that France would invoke Article XII of the 1778 alliance treaty, which committed the United States to protecting the territorial integrity of the French West Indies.[154] If that article were invoked, it would involve America in a war with Britain, insofar as Britain would (and did) attack the French West Indies from its own position in the British West Indies. To avoid the obligation, Hamilton argued that the treaty promised American aid only in the case of a defensive war, and that in this case France was the aggressor.[155] Hamilton also urged Washington not to receive Edmond-Charles-Edouard Genêt, the French minister to the United States, in such a way that would imply recognition of American obligations to France under the revolutionary government (which would invalidate most of his tortured legal arguments for suspending the treaty).

Underpinning this cautious attitude was Hamilton's pragmatic conviction that America was as yet too weak to get involved in a European war, and that economic ties with Britain had to be preserved. Thus conflict had to be avoided until the day came when the United States could muster sufficient resources to play a great power role, for that was the future he envisioned. Hamilton's nationalism was grounded, not in American exceptionalism, but in an aspiration for great power status, modeled on Britain. This ran counter to most popular attitudes, and Hamilton rarely expressed the full scope of the vision in public. Rather, he concentrated on the need for aligning aspiration with capabilities, and defended his

[153] Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*, pp. 54–55.

[154] Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, p. 141; Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958), p. 192; Miller, *Federalist Era*, p. 129.

[155] Miller, *Federalist Era*, p. 129.

position, in republican terms, as the only way to preserve the fragile federal union.

Jefferson, in opposition to Hamilton but still publicly supporting a neutral stance in the European war (in private he was more pro-French),[156] argued that the treaty should not be suspended, because all treaties bind nations, not governments. This was a key element of a republican understanding of the rule of law as a progressive force in international relations. To casually abandon a treaty not only meant abandoning a country that had aided America in its time of need, it also meant reneging on a broader ideological commitment to the progressive development of international society. On a more pragmatic note, Jefferson did not believe that war with Britain over the U.S. guarantee of the French West Indies was likely, thus invalidating one justification for suspending the treaty. He also argued that France might not invoke the military aspects of the alliance (he proved correct on this), that it was not for the United States to decide whether the war was offensive or defensive, and that renouncing the treaty might give France a just cause for a Franco-American war.[157]

George Washington steered a middle course between his advisors. He did not suspend the treaties with France, and he did receive and accept Genêt as fully accredited. However, he also issued a proclamation of neutrality in April of 1793, more probably on the advice of Hamilton. Jefferson favored a neutral course, but wanted to extract commercial concessions from Britain in exchange for a neutrality proclamation. Further, Jefferson argued that only Congress, and not the president, could commit the nation to neutrality.[158] The contours of existing and future divisive debates on the power of the executive branch, and indeed of the federal government itself, were evident in this disagreement. As Appleby has written, the debates over neutrality "precipitated a much more divisive controversy about the legality of popular participation in politics."[159] Given the pro-French sentiments permeating public discussion at this time and the proliferation of popular societies devoted to the French cause, it is not at all clear whether a neutral course would have been taken had Congress been the relevant agency. Hamilton argued that the president had the power to make the neutrality proclamation, and that it needed to be made immediately. Washington followed Hamilton's advice on this score.

The attitudes and debates in Washington's Cabinet showed that the cosmopolitan threads in American foreign policy were fraying among

[156] Tucker and Hendrikson, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 51–52.

[157] DeConde, *Entangling Alliance*, p. 194; Miller, *Federalist Era*, p. 129; Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, p. 143.

[158] Miller, *Federalist Era*, p. 129.

[159] Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order*, p. 55.

elites; wholehearted support of France as a "sister republic" committed to and spreading the same universal principles as the United States gave way to a far more cautious policy. As Citizen Genêt overstepped his bounds in whipping up public support for the French cause (threatening to go over the president's head and straight to the "people"; outfitting privateers in American ports, and so on), as the French Revolution became more violent, and as, over time, it consolidated itself into a military dictatorship, the thread of Franco-American identification wore very thin among elite decision makers. At the same time, however, popular sentiment continued to sustain that identification, and the question of how to deal with revolutionary France continued to inspire sustained debate on the fundamental contours of American identity.

The Jay Treaty with Britain and Pinckney's Treaty with Spain are often cited as evidence for a growing realism in U.S. foreign policy. The Jay Treaty (1794) made significant concessions to Britain on neutral rights and commercial and credit issues in exchange for British evacuation of the Northwest posts and avoidance of hostilities between the United States and Britain.[160] Pinckney's Treaty (1795) secured navigation rights on the Mississippi, the right to deposit goods in the port of New Orleans, and recognition of the 31st parallel as the boundary between the United States and Spanish Florida.[161] The Jay Treaty was hugely unpopular among the American public, and it deeply rankled Jefferson and his emerging Republican party cohort. It appeared to undermine American ideals and natural rights, betraying a "sister republic" while bowing to British dominance of the seas and of American markets. Pinckney's treaty was more popular, but it clearly revealed a willingness by U.S. negotiators to exploit the European war in order to gain commercial and territorial concessions from a relatively weak and insecure Spain.

Neither in these nor in other notable cases of early American *realpolitik* is it possible to neatly argue that the importance of ideas receded in the face of clear material interests, however. First, if the United States had truly been socialized into European power politics, it would have constructed a strong navy and army to defend its maritime and continental interests. Because of the constraints placed on it by republican thought, with its fear of standing armies and its faith in commerce, America did not do so. Advocates of a large army and navy (notably Hamilton) could not muster sufficient support to realize their plans. Second, if commercial interests had been the driving force behind policy it would be impossible to explain the persistent use of nonintercourse and nonimportation acts

[160] Combs, *Jay Treaty*.

[161] Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Pinckney's Treaty* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1926); Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 64–65.

to try to achieve American political objectives vis-à-vis Europe, since these acts hurt commercial interests.[162]

Rather than representing a victory of material interests over ideals, then, any emerging American "realism" was grounded in the articulation of an idea-infused vision of American identity. This vision was not exactly the cosmopolitan, natural rights, liberal internationalist notion that the United States and Europe would someday constitute a federation under international law grounded in shared principles of liberty, respect for natural rights, and republicanism (though again, this persisted at the margins). The strategic struggles faced by the early Republic, in combination with the growth of an unexpected, less elite-guided form of democracy internally, favored the articulation of nationalist principles over cosmopolitan, universalist ones.

In short, it was the convergence of the strategic struggles in the international arena and the democratic, exceptionalist, and millennialist strains in American political thought and popular culture that facilitated the selection of a more nationalist stance over the cosmopolitan one. Americans melded continued faith in democracy with millennial religious elements into a nationalism that emphasized America's distinctiveness from, rather than principled connection to, European political culture. Such an ideological stance set fewer principled limits on American foreign policy behavior; if the United States was indeed God's chosen land, then pursuit of its own interests at the expense of corrupt European powers (not to mention at the expense of Native Americans) could be legitimized as a pursuit of American ideals. The American nation was itself idealized and romanticized. This can hardly be construed as ad hoc justification for prefigured material interests.

Securing Neutral Rights versus Nonentanglement[163]

The turn taken by the French Revolution, and the ensuing European wars, reaffirmed for some American decision makers their desire to be free of the corrupting entanglements of European power politics.[164] The United States should steer clear of the affairs of Europe or it could risk the fate of Poland. But the wars were not just a threat but an opportunity—the

[162] For a more systematic articulation of these competing explanations see Mlada Bukovansky, "American Identity and Neutral Rights, from Independence to the War of 1812," *International Organization* 51, 2 (Spring 1997): 209–243.

[163] Much of the material in this section draws on ibid., and the discussion is more fully developed there.

[164] The best exposition of the nonentanglement idea is Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address*; also see Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*, pt. III.

opportunity to vastly increase the U.S. carrying trade, particularly with the West Indies. The threat and the opportunity provided contradictory policy imperatives; the United States chose engagement, but of a particularly idealistic sort—idealistic in the sense that aspirations far outran capabilities.

In a mercantilist world, the colonial trade of an enemy could be legitimately attacked in wartime. With the combatants hobbled by the need to commit resources to their navies, and shut out of colonial trade by the high risks involved, neutrals would step in to take on the carrying trade. In that context, protecting neutral shipping rights from the depredations of the warring parties became a central concern of U.S. foreign policy until the peace negotiated at the Vienna Congress. In attempting to secure these rights, the United States relied not on material power but on international law. In advocating what was for the time a very liberal interpretation of the rights of neutrals, the United States acted on a convergence between liberal, cosmopolitan principles, the economic interests of those Americans engaged in carrying trade, and the broader stratum of the public outraged at the blows to American honor that came with every seizure of American ships by warring parties, and with the British impressment of American seamen (who often could not be distinguished from their British counterparts) into the Royal Navy.

The existing body of maritime law supported two different interpretations of the rights of neutrals to trade with belligerents during wartime. The narrow interpretation favored by the British held that colonial trade previously closed to neutrals remained so during wartime (unless explicitly allowed by treaty or declaration), and that the list of goods exempt from seizure, even on neutral ships trading with the enemy, was very narrow. In other words, the Royal Navy had the right to choke off colonial trade and also to search neutral ships, not only looking for deserting British seamen but also seizing goods that might aid the enemy's war effort (contraband). The liberal interpretation, traditionally advocated by the Dutch and later by a host of small-navy powers, and by France when circumstances favored such a course, was embodied in the slogan "free ships, free goods." Neutral ships had the right to carry goods to warring countries, and goods being transported under a neutral flag were exempt from seizure. Contraband was recognized, but a narrow definition prevailed.

The liberal interpretation of neutral rights became a major U.S. cause during the European wars. Understandably so, insofar as U.S. carrying trade in the West Indies increased significantly during the war. But with the increase in returns came an increase in the risk of seizure and of being caught up in the European wars. Supporting neutral rights appeared liberal internationalist and even pacific in principle and in spirit, but in practice it drew the United States to the brink of war and into real war with

Britain (1794 and 1812, respectively), and into a Quasi-War with France (1798–1800). Thus supporting liberal neutral rights threatened the principle of nonentanglement.[165]

Because of the risks involved in defending neutral rights, divisions emerged among American leaders regarding support of the "free ships, free goods" principle.[166] Hamilton was more cautious insofar as he did not want to antagonize Britain; the Jay Treaty agreed to Britain's narrower views on neutral rights for the duration of the war. Jefferson, in contrast, linked liberal neutrality to the liberal internationalist ideas of peaceful commerce, and advocated its support on moral and pragmatic grounds.[167] He engaged in some of the most damaging acts of commercial discrimination by enacting an embargo against all foreign trade during his administration, in the name of supporting neutral rights. These acts hurt the United States economically and did nothing for neutral rights, and in this as in other policies, Jefferson gets chided by some historians for employing means that contradicted his ends.[168]

Underpinning these problems and divisions, however, was a broad consensus that the law of nations was an authoritative and important source of order in international relations, to which the United States was deeply committed.[169] Such law should be upheld even and especially in war. Further, law that facilitated free commerce could have a doubly beneficial effect on international politics: since commerce tended to move people toward peaceful relations, promoting commerce had pacific connotations, and supporting laws that protected commerce during wartime could soften the hard edges of war. There is evidence, in *Federalist* no. 6, for example, that Hamilton did not completely accept the commerce/peace equation. He supported the law of nations and neutral rights but did not want to risk war over it. In justifying the Jay Treaty, he argued that "it is folly in a young and weak country" to try to instigate progress and change in the law of nations.[170] Jefferson, on the other side, saw the United States as the spearhead of progress in the world, and wanted to instigate progress in international norms as well.[171]

These differences again highlight competing views of the American identity and role in the world, this time with respect to the broad commitment to international law. Parallels can be drawn with the discussion of

[165] Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address*.

[166] See Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, chap. 6.

[167] Ibid.

[168] Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*.

[169] Onuf and Onuf, *Federal Union*.

[170] Stephen Peter Rosen, "Alexander Hamilton and the Domestic Uses of International Law," *Diplomatic History* 5, 3 (Summer 1981): 195.

[171] Tucker and Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, p. 59.

views on Vattel's idealized balance of power.[172] Jefferson still appeared to believe that broader, cosmopolitan, and law-based relationships between peoples were possible and desirable; republicanism was spreading and a new international order loomed on the horizon. Hamilton was more inclined to emulate great power politics and to seek out greatness and glory for the United States on those terms. Each of these approaches offered something to economic interests: Jefferson to those trading with the West Indies (at least until the embargo), and Hamilton to large merchants and financiers. But economic interests were not driving policy in and of themselves; they were subsumed under broader visions of, and arguments about, U.S. identity and republican legitimacy. And neither of these approaches neglected the importance of the law of nations to the early Republic: whether because of weakness or ideology, the United States saw the law of nations as deeply linked to its identity in the European international system.

Conclusion

The emergence of new political forces in the American Revolution did not entail the sudden invention of entirely new political languages. Rather, revolutionary actors deployed existing, mostly European, cultural resources in new contexts, and in the process began to alter the meanings of those resources. In their struggle for independence and union, Americans took positions along dividing lines within existing European and British constitutional discourse, or else they competed in their claims to be implementing the true interpretation of a shared, inherited set of principles. Alignments and coalitions were formed through the articulation of complementarities and discursive identification of common purposes and interests. In other words, ideas shaped and cemented people's conflicts with, and allegiances to, each other. Those ideas were not invented to suit the needs of the moment, but rather constituted a shared cultural legacy. Their transformation was the result of the deployment of inherited ideas in new contexts. Those new contexts then propelled cultural elaboration or revision.

Both republicanism and liberalism constituted complex cultural legacies that shaped American aspirations about how to relate to Europe (and also the American West, which I have neglected here). Not only English opposition thought, but also European balance of power politics and the court culture in which such politics were grounded helped in a very practical way to shape and further the struggle for independence. In their politi-

[172] See "Republicanism" section, above.

cal struggles, Americans drew on and transformed republican discourse and opened up the way for a more democratic and market-oriented culture. None of these developments was simple or inevitable. The cultural resources available to the Americans were not a coherent and logical whole, but rather complex and rife with contradictions and tensions; this facilitated innovation and selection among alternatives. Disparities also existed between ideals and the context in which people attempted to implement them. Such conditions facilitated cultural revisions and adaptations, and new alignments among political actors articulating complementary ideas and realizing common interests.

Constellations of ideas about political legitimacy play a crucial role in shaping strategic struggles in both the domestic and the international arenas. In the period studied here, the linkages between international and domestic politics became much tighter, precisely because of the emergence of democratic legitimacy. It became possible to imagine international relations as something other than the sport of kings, and the Americans provided a concrete, and corrective, lesson for generations whose thinking on these issues had remained largely theoretical. In economic life, the struggle to attain commercial independence proved more difficult than the military struggle. The early Republic did not break free of mercantilism, but it did contribute to its erosion by chipping away at the British imperial monopoly in the Western Hemisphere and by developing Jeffersonian liberal aspirations. If the United States had to behave in a mercantilist fashion in order to achieve its aims, then it should also be remembered that a liberal purpose frequently underpinned these efforts.

If one takes into account the French Revolution, it would seem that some of the developments described here were overdetermined—it is tempting to adhere to R. R. Palmer's "Age of Revolutions" thesis and see democracy and liberalism bursting out all over the Atlantic world. I make no such claims about underlying historical dynamics here. My sense is that contingency had much greater play than any Whig theory of progress would expect. This chapter has shown how, under particular circumstances, particular strains of thought became dominant while others receded to the margins. But ideas at the margins do not always disappear completely, serving to remind us that under slightly different conditions, things might well have been otherwise.

On balance, the first grand experiment with Enlightenment ideas and democratic government in the modern world generated a strongly nationalist legacy. Reinforced by the militarized nationalism of the French Revolution, populist or democratic nationalism is perhaps (and paradoxically) the strongest legacy of the Enlightenment in international political culture. Nationalism began to replace the more integrated and cosmopolitan attitudes articulated in European aristocratic and *haut bourgeois* circles in

the earlier part of the century. On reflection it should not seem particularly surprising, though perhaps it is ironic, that the greatest advocates of cosmopolitanism were of an elite class whose social position was fundamentally challenged by democratic revolutions drawing on some of the same liberal strains of thought.

Observing the nationalist turn in American foreign policy may tempt the analyst to argue that Americans became realists, and with some justification. But this would entail a very limited definition of realism: namely, that aspirations came somewhat more closely into line with capabilities. How closely is arguable, because the United States in its early years never mustered adequate resources or a sufficiently centralized government to compete militarily or economically with European powers. Further, realism defined as an alignment of aspiration and capability entails precisely the sort of recognition of the importance of ideas (that is, aspirations) for which I am arguing; alignment implies that there are two things to align, not that one thing (aspiration) is reducible to the other (capability). Realists neglect analysis of aspirations at their peril. Aspirations reflect inherited cultural legacies articulated in particular contexts. As such, aspirations must be studied alongside capabilities, with at least equal weight given to each.

Chapter Five

■

The French Revolution

The French Revolution accelerated the shift in the European states system from the dynastic territorial state to the nation-state as the dominant model of political legitimacy.[1] The Revolution also demonstrated how the principle of popular sovereignty could vastly enhance state power and mobilization capacity, and this development enhanced the potential destructiveness warfare, especially warfare conducted in pursuit of messianic and imperialistic objectives. The revolutionary and Napoleonic wars provided a compelling example of both the dangers and the potentialities of nationalism harnessed to democratic populism. Underpinning the changes in the conduct of war and international politics that followed in the wake of the Revolution was a new template of political legitimacy. Widespread emulation of the revolutionary French did not immediately ensue—for reasons touched on in the concluding chapter—but the template generated in the Revolution proved durable and compelling.[2]

[1] Recent works in international relations that discuss this shift include J. Samuel Barkin and Bruce Cronin, "Changing Norms and the Rules of Sovereignty," *International Organization* 48 (Winter 1994): 107–130; and Rodney Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

[2] This argument dovetails with the realist one that successful practices will be emulated by other actors in the system. Barry Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security* 18 (Fall 1993): 80–124.

The historian Alfred Cobban wrote that "[t]he example of the French Revolution suggests that the principle of popular sovereignty, pushed to the extreme limit, is by itself capable of producing an unbridgeable gap between a State and the rest of the world." If popular sovereignty is taken to the extreme, "tyranny at home and conquest abroad will be unrestrained."[3] According to Cobban, the revolution created a Leviathan that threatened individual liberties and made international relations more like a "state of nature." Whether or not one agrees with him, the implications of Cobban's suggestion that the shift in France from monarchical to popular sovereignty precipitated an international "state of nature" are worth exploring. If the international system only became a state of nature after the Revolution, then what was it prior to that, and what was it about the Revolution that changed the European system? How could a domestic reconstitution of the conditions for political legitimacy create such havoc in the international system if, as Sorel once argued, the type of regime mattered little to the conduct of international politics?[4]

This chapter addresses these questions by analyzing the contradictions and complementarities present in old regime political culture and the strategic alignments that flowed from them. The loss of legitimacy faced by the French monarchy was a dramatic example of the increasing tensions in European political culture at the end of the eighteenth century. Loss of legitimacy was also a loss of power, and the revolutionary coalitions that emerged to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the *ancien régime* in France articulated new principles in order to justify their rule. France emerged as a deeply revisionist state in relation to other European powers. Under the old regime, legitimacy at home and legitimacy abroad were closely linked. After the Revolution, legitimacy at home became decoupled from legitimacy abroad. When domestic and international legitimacy are decoupled, conflict ceases to be governed by mutually understood rules and norms, heightening its intensity and making negotiated settlements more difficult.

In Chapter Three I discussed old regime political culture and its roots in dynastic monarchies embedded in court societies. Prestige, dynastic ties, status, and privilege were the currencies of power in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Monarchical legitimacy was dominant in the great powers, constituting both domestic and international authority. Even though other modes of legitimacy coexisted with monarchy, the

[3] Alfred Cobban, *In Search of Humanity: The Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), pp. 192, 193.

[4] Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, 8 vols. (Paris: Plon Nourrit, 1919), 1:14–15.

presumption remained that *great* powers were monarchies. Society was still stratified into "orders," even if mobility between the bourgeoisie and the nobility was increasing. Many leading *philosophes* accepted the realities of absolutism and a stratified society; the monarch appeared to be a viable agent for the rationalization of state power needed to implement enlightened policy.[5] Such policy had to work from the top down because the masses were generally deemed incapable of enlightening themselves. In addition, leading *philosophes* appreciated the patronage that rained down on them from the royal coffers as their initially radical movement became institutionalized and established.[6] Several old regime European states, including France, Prussia, Austria, and Russia, had to various degrees managed to co-opt the Enlightenment to their own ends, which generally involved the expansion of state power at the expense of traditional privileges of corporate orders such as the nobility and clergy. But this co-optation of the Enlightenment was only partial, as is evident in the manner and rapidity of the collapse of the French *ancien régime* in 1787–1789.

This chapter analyzes two related mechanisms and processes in explaining how the French Revolution marked a decisive transformation in international political culture: the interaction between political culture and strategic behavior, both domestic and international; and the interaction between revolutionary and status quo agents in both the domestic and the international contexts. The French Revolution gave birth to a virulently nationalist popular sovereignty because of the interaction of Enlightenment ideas with the competitive international context of the late eighteenth century, and the domestic strategic struggles accompanying the weakening of the French monarchy. This interaction supported the radical strains of Enlightenment ideas and marginalized the moderate. The particular strand of discourse that won out in the French Revolution was not liberal and pluralistic, but rather holistic, founded on a Rousseauian conception of general will as a unity rather than a representation of a plurality of interests.[7] This goes a long way toward accounting for successive revolutionary regimes' inattention to individual liberties (such as the right to property) and their inability to compromise with domestic opposition and foreign powers. The interaction between discourse and strategic struggles was the crucial mechanism by which the holistic rather than liberal ver-

[5] This was especially true of the physiocrats in France.

[6] On this see Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France," *Past and Present* 51 (May 1971): 81–115.

[7] Jean Jacques Rousseau (1754), "On the Social Contract," in Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

sion of popular sovereignty emerged victorious; the choice of ideology cannot be reduced to strategic choice, nor vice versa.[8]

The French Revolution constituted a material and ideological assault on old regime legitimacy both internally and internationally. The primary mechanisms for this shake-up, and also for the radicalization of the Revolution, were war and counterrevolution. These two phenomena were inextricably intertwined at their birth because elite political culture was Europe-wide. The French queen was Austrian; the emigrating nobles scheming for counterrevolution were well connected in European capitals; enlightened republicans from all over Europe flocked to Paris during the Revolution. Literate and semiliterate Europe polarized around the issue of the Revolution, as did observers in the Americas and the West Indies. The revolutionary French characterized enemies at home and abroad in the same way: as aristocratic, privileged enemies of the French nation and of the universal principles of human nature and liberty which that nation now represented. Such rigorous and holistic universalism was at odds, both with important social forces within France itself and with the fragmented and particularistic structure of old regime Europe.[9]

The French articulation of popular sovereignty ended up making the French state powerful enough to pursue imperial aspirations, breaking the will of a series of coalitions lined up against it. The French began to fight war in a new way, with the nation-state as their primary unit of allegiance, defended by citizen-soldiers, and espousing popular sovereignty as the exclusive source of political legitimacy. The power of their model could not be ignored. Henceforth even monarchs would be forced to seek popular legitimacy in order to guide the ship of state; populist nationalism became a powerful—albeit dangerous—tool in the arsenal of statecraft.[10] The lesson that popular sovereignty could enhance state power and military performance was not lost on contemporaries. Thus there were two dynamics set off by the enactment of popular sovereignty in France: a direct engagement with and undermining of the legitimating foundations of the old regime, and a strengthening of the state, generating a new model to be emulated by others.

These propositions attribute deep, structural significance to the role of ideas. First, Enlightenment ideas created ferment in European political culture; potentially a phenomenon that could serve the absolutist state,

[8] See Chapter Two for a theoretical defense of this position. See also Margaret S. Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

[9] Edmund Burke (1790), *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

[10] Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power."

more revolutionary forms of Enlightenment ideas emerged through the struggles characterizing more strategically polarized societies, most significantly but not exclusively France in the mid- to late eighteenth century.[11] Second, revolutionary ideas altered the purposes of the French state and made its interests incommensurable, not just with the interests of other states (which would hardly have been novel) but with the basic structure and norms of the European international system itself. Thus the game changed from "France against Austria" (for example), to "France against Europe."[12] For a time, the international arena appeared more like a state of nature, something that had not occurred since the wars of religion of the seventeenth century.[13]

My framework builds on but also challenges key neorealist assessments of the French Revolution. I argue that Enlightenment and revolutionary discourse played a central role in generating a climate of threat in Europe, moving beyond the application of balance of threat theory and the hypotheses on revolution and war presented by Stephen Walt. I also argue that revolutionary nationalist ideology cannot be seen simply as the instrument of a rational competitive state, and in this I challenge the interpretations of Barry Posen.[14] Further, I critically extend constructivist theory in focusing on domestic as well as international politics, and by showing how cross-cutting cultural trends throughout Europe were crucial to the transformation of its political culture. This means that any purely state-centric framework, which might represent France as a deeply revisionist state lined up against status quo European powers, is inadequate for understanding and explaining the revolutionary wars and the transformations following on the Revolution. By "deeply revisionist" I mean a state that challenges not only the balance of power in the system but also the legitimacy of the ruling structure in other states. The threatening nature of revolutionary conceptions of political legitimacy became evident in this period precisely because these conceptions were not confined to France, although they found their clearest expression there. A

[11] For an overview of the Enlightenment in a broad European context, see Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1768–1776*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989); and Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776–1789*, 2 vols., trans. R. Burr Litchfield (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[12] Steven T. Ross, *European Diplomatic History, 1789–1815: France against Europe* (New York: Anchor, 1969).

[13] Hedley Bull makes the comparison between the French revolutionary wars and the Wars of Religion in *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 41.

[14] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), and Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power."

deeply revisionist state is more threatening to others in the system if they fear the "contagion of liberty" on their own soil, whether or not those fears are well founded.

The Collapse of the *Ancien Régime*

The French Revolution is as much a story of the collapse of the *ancien régime* as of the rise of revolution. Although there are elements of truth to the marxist interpretation that the French bourgeoisie revolted against and overthrew a monarchy rooted in feudalism, this view has been seriously challenged by the current generation of historians.[15] The rifts that contributed to the collapse of the *ancien régime* resulted from the tensions permeating old regime political culture in the mid- to late eighteenth century. The key dividing lines did not lie between economically based classes, nor did the strategic postures of relevant parties correspond to clear economic interests or positions in the relations of production. Because economic position and interests were too variable to account for views regarding the legitimacy of the *ancien régime*, a more useful way to understand the rifts therein is to begin with an analysis of the discourses on political legitimacy permeating this period.[16] The key discursive contests center on assertions of liberty versus despotism; public opinion as a source of authority challenging monarchy; and equality versus privilege. These cultural divisions can be linked to key strategic struggles in the *ancien régime*. I also discuss how these factors influenced and were influenced by the financial crisis that is widely perceived to be the immediate material cause of the Revolution.

The monarchy's financial crisis was indeed central, and was exacerbated by poor harvests (especially in the wine industry) and general economic depression. But France had been plagued by financial crises throughout the history of the monarchy. Bread riots by the "lower" orders were expected reactions to extraordinarily difficult times, and did not in

[15] A useful literature review is T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?* 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1998); see also Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), introduction; and François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[16] See George V. Taylor, "Noncapitalist Wealth and the Origins of the French Revolution," *American Historical Review* 72, 2 (January 1967): 469–96; Daniel L. Wick, "The Court Nobility and the French Revolution: The Example of the Society of Thirty," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 13, 3 (Spring 1980): 263–84; Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

themselves constitute a revolutionary threat.[17] The new element in the late 1780s was the monarchy's loss of power and legitimacy; the challenge to royal authority initially came from the noble and newly ennobled orders, who were no longer contained by the traditional techniques of court politics. The traditional center of that politics, the king, was no longer in full control.[18] Alternative centers of culture—the salons—and alternative sources of authority—*parlements*, estates, and public opinion—were emerging or reemerging to exacerbate the crisis of legitimacy. The final attempt to salvage the situation, the calling of the Estates General for the first time since 1614, ended up ushering in the Revolution.

Ministers working under Louis XV at the end of his reign, and a few working under Louis XVI, made serious attempts at financial and administrative reform. Such efforts could conceivably have led to a more accountable, constitutionally constrained, and representative political order, while retaining monarchical authority and without unleashing the revolutionary process. Controller General Turgot's reform ideas in 1774–1776 seemed to suggest this direction; he advocated representative provincial assemblies and a more broadly equitable and accountable system of taxation and finance.[19] He aspired to bring broader popular support to monarchical authority, bypassing the troublesome privileged elites represented in the *parlements*. But Turgot failed to stay in power precisely because he alienated some very powerful interests.

Alternatively, if the *parlements* had had their way it is conceivable that republicanism could have remained a tamer theory of rule of law ensured by constitutional checks and balances rather than becoming associated with popular sovereignty. Efforts at reform from either direction failed for several reasons, including divisions among ruling elites as to the proper scope and nature of political authority; factionalization in the royal administration and among key ministers and court figures; and the rising power of the queen and her pro-Austrian faction. All of these factors caused fatal instability in the reign of Louis XVI and stymied the implementation of any sustained reform program.[20]

[17] Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe, 1700–1789* (New York: St. Martin's, 1990), pp. 400–403.

[18] On the traditional functioning of court politics, see Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1983); and Wick, "The Court Nobility and the French Revolution." On the strife within Louis XVI's monarchy, see especially Munro Price, *Preserving the Monarchy: The comte de Vergennes, 1774–1787* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), and also Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: From Feudalism to Enlightenment*, trans. William Doyle (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[19] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, pp. 46–47.

[20] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy.*

Financial Crisis

The French monarchy suffered from the threat of financial collapse on the eve of the Revolution. Skocpol and others have pointed out that the exigencies of international competition put severe pressures on the resources of the French state.[21] In particular, having to compete in the colonial as well as the Continental arena proved dangerously draining.[22] But in an age of mercantilism, colonies were essential accoutrements of great power wealth and status. More immediately, the American colonial rebellion provided an opportunity to take revenge on Britain for the humiliation France suffered in the Seven Years' War. Support of the colonial rebellion brought the regime to the brink of bankruptcy. But a longer-term look at the history of French finances shows that such crises were routine, financial stability the exception; thus the financial crisis in itself cannot account for the Revolution.[23] The crisis does illuminate structural problems in the French old regime, however.

To say that the royal finances were "administered" would probably suggest too much order and rationality. J. F. Bosher's definitive study shows that the French monarchy was almost completely dependent on autonomous or semiautonomous intermediaries to both collect and expend revenue, and to provide loans. These agents routinely failed to delineate between public finance and their own private dealings. "Large though the royal administration was, it was never equipped to collect taxes, to borrow, to hold royal funds or to spend them. . . . All financial operations were in the hands of municipal governments, the clergy, provincial estates, tax farms, and most of all, a great many financiers, private or semi-private."[24] Though theoretically under absolutist rule, these corporate and individual agents were not subject to routine administrative scrutiny, and the most powerful constituted "an independent financial syndicate, subject to the King's orders but not to his continuous supervision."[25] In short, royal finances were at the mercy of a host of powerful intermediary bodies. Venal office holding, wherein an office with a func-

[21] Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Theda Skocpol and Meyer Kestenbaum, "Mars Unshackled: The French Revolution in World Historical Perspective," in *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, ed. Ferenc Fehér (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[22] Derek McKay and H. M. Scott, The *Rise of the Great Powers, 1648–1815* (London: Longman, 1983), chap. 9; William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), chap. 3.

[23] J. F. Bosher, *French Finances, 1770–1795: From Business to Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 3–4.

[24] Ibid., p. 6.

[25] Ibid., p. 7.

tion such as tax collection was considered personal and, eventually, hereditary property constituted the norm.

Although it is common knowledge that the French monarchy was in deep financial trouble after the American War of Independence, it may come as a surprise that no one at the time knew how much the debt amounted to, and "the very idea that they ought to know was itself something of a novelty."[26] When Jacques Necker, controller general of the royal finances, published a *Compte rendu* in 1781, this was the first time such a thing had happened.[27] His reasons for going public were political; his hold on his position was threatened by enemies within the ministry. Necker's accounting showed that revenues exceeded expenditures even after three years of war and no increases in taxes, but failed to mention "extraordinary accounts," which recorded the real costs of the war.[28] A wave of public interest and admiration for Necker that followed on his publication of the *Compte rendu* emboldened him to push for a seat on the king's highest council, something traditionally issuing from his position but forbidden to a Protestant, and when he was rebuffed he resigned.[29]

Necker was perhaps the most famous and certainly the most popular of controllers general in this period, rivaling his predecessor Turgot, a physiocrat whose ideas on reform were popular among some intellectuals but had little chance of seeing the light of day because he did not last long in power. But Turgot and Necker each sought to reform the inefficient, opaque, unaccountable, and complex state of the royal finances, on both the revenue and the expenditure sides. Necker and others also sought to reform the administration of finances, which Bosher argues was the most important aspect, neglected and overshadowed by the focus on revenue extraction. The very concept of a royal budget was unheard of in the French royal administration; the monarchy had never had a budget. Bosher points out that "even the word 'budget' was foreign to the *ancien régime*. The *Encyclopédie methodique. Finance* (1784) describes it as 'an English word which means, properly speaking, a bag,' and goes on to define it entirely as an English parliamentary term."[30] Royal and administrative control focused on the legality of financial instruments and distributions, but with so many independent sources and receivers of royal funds, a complete and coherent accounting was beyond the capacity of the royal administration.[31]

[26] Ibid., p. 23.

[27] Because he was a Protestant (and a foreigner), Necker could not hold the official title, but he did perform the functions of controller general.

[28] Doyle, *French Revolution*, p. 67.

[29] Ibid.; see also Bosher, *French Finances*, chap. 8.

[30] Bosher, *French Finances*, p. 42, cite omitted.

[31] Ibid., pp. 42–45 and passim.

Turgot, Necker, and their successors faced an uphill battle. After Necker's resignation his successors, Jean François Joly de Fleury and Charles Alexandre de Calonne, retrenched and rolled back many of the reforms begun under their predecessors.[32] Their policies did not alleviate the financial difficulties faced by the crown. Joly de Fleury was forced to raise taxes in order to restore confidence enough to gain new loans after Necker's resignation.[33] Calonne, who became controller general in 1783, tried to bring some order and hierarchy to the administration of finances, to rationalize the tax structure, and to provide economic stimulation,[34] but he failed to engage in the sort of administrative reform that would have made actual implementation of any reform program viable.[35] The key stumbling block was the strong and independent class of financiers, whose venal offices yielded immense privileges while shielding them from scrutiny; Calonne could not convince the financiers or, as it turned out, the Notables and magistrates, to go along with his plans.

When Calonne decided that the only way to face the monarchy's financial crisis was to call an Assembly of Notables, chosen by the king and thus presumably amenable to his authority, the final crisis of the old regime began to unfold. The purpose of the Assembly had been to gain the cooperation of powerful social and financial persons and corporate bodies in revising the tax structure and to a lesser degree the administration of finance. But since Louis XVI's authority had waned so drastically, and he and his ministers failed to manipulate the divisions within the Assembly to their own advantage (Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes, who might have been able to pull this off, had just died)[36], this move had the effect of precipitating the slide into revolution. How had monarchical authority come to be so weak? A look at the stresses and strains of an old regime political culture penetrated by Enlightenment thought provides a fertile interpretive scheme for assessing old regime weakness.

Liberty versus Despotism

Enlightenment thought was to a large extent co-opted by the ruling orders, but as its leading lights struggled to gain access to higher status and noble privileges, the rise in literacy and the widespread printing and distribution of all sorts of literature disseminated enlightened (and not

[32] Ibid., chap. 9.
[33] Doyle, *Oxford History*, pp. 67–68.
[34] Ibid., p. 69.
[35] Bosher, *French Finances*, chap. 9.
[36] See Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, chap. 9.

so enlightened) ideas to a broad swath of the literate and semiliterate population. Enlightenment thought also injected new life into the claims of the nobility to share in the ruling of the kingdom.[37] Constitutional struggles between noble and clerical orders and the monarch were articulated in a language that contrasted liberty with despotism. Such language was readily available in the political theories of the day. The language of "liberty versus despotism" was not invented to serve the political struggles permeating France in the 1750s, but it shaped these struggles, which culminated in the suppression, in 1771, of the *parlements* by Louis XV's leading minister, René Maupeou. The *parlements* were thirteen sovereign law courts situated in Paris and the provincial centers, each composed of a body of noble magistrates. They heard a variety of legal cases and served administrative functions. Before royal financial edicts could become enforceable, they had to be "registered" by the *parlements*. This process could involve the articulation of remonstrances, or commentaries on the edicts. In the political thought of the period, and especially for Montesquieu, the *parlements* represented essential noble checks on royal despotism.[38]

The mid-eighteenth-century struggle between the king and the *parlements* began in the 1750s with the Jansenist controversy; Simon Schama notes that this was the first time that the royal government was characterized as "despotic."[39] Jansenist-sympathizing magistrates in the Paris *parlement* engaged in a struggle to check papal authority in church councils; this struggle extended into a critique of royal authority as such.[40] The Jansenists aligned themselves with and used the language of the *philosophes* to attack royal despotism. It is important to emphasize that Jansenists and magistrates in the *parlements* did not invent this language. This fact reflects the relative autonomy of political culture from strategic struggle (in the sense that the culture preexisted the struggle), suggesting a constitutive role for culture. In the Jansenist case, the crown had attempted to implement a papal bull designed to root out the "heresies" of the Jansenists, who were critical of Rome and "took a more austere view of salvation than the acceptable norm."[41] The Paris *parlement* instigated resistance to the crown's cooperation with the papacy, speaking in the name of the "people" and the "nation." They succeeded in forcing the

[37] See Chapter Three.

[38] For a detailed account, see Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, chap. 5.

[39] Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 108.

[40] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, p. 12; Dale Van Kley, *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 1757–1765* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975).

[41] Schama, *Citizens*, p. 108.

government into a complete reversal, which resulted in the expulsion of the Jesuit order from France in 1762.[42]

This was an early stage in the eighteenth-century struggle of "liberty versus despotism" as it played out in Paris and the provinces. Battles over taxes followed. In 1768–1770 the *parlement* of Brittany declared certain new taxes unconstitutional, and other *parlements* rallied to its defense, leading to Maupeou's 1771 coup d'état: the curbing of the authority of the *parlements*, exile of resisting magistrates, and creation of new legal tribunals more directly subservient to the crown.[43] Louis XVI's first minister, Jean, Comte de Maurepas, reversed Maupeou's coup and recalled the *parlements* in 1774. But he took measures to restrain their autonomy and ensure their cooperation with the royal administration. The royal administration in effect attempted to recast the struggle between king and *parlements* so that it no longer conformed to the dichotomy of liberty versus despotism; this move was in line with Louis's attempts to appear as an enlightened friend of liberty.[44] Maurepas tried to bring the two sides together in some sort of synthesis, where king and *parlements* would cooperate. The same could be said of Calonne's efforts with the Assembly of Notables in 1787. These measures were undermined, however, by divisions within the administration itself.[45]

Although the juxtaposition of liberty and despotism is the most general mode in which the conflict between the royal administration and the *parlements*, with their noble and clerical allies, was articulated, Baker's research lays out more precise schematic corollaries of this central contradiction. These include, first, a "tension between the traditional foundations of royal absolutism in a particularistic social order, and the universalistic implications of the growth of more centralized government," a tension that was expressed in conflicts over taxation and local privilege and in divisions between ministers. A second corollary points to a "tension between justice, as a mode of government action in preserving each his due, and administration, as mobilizing social resources to maximize the public welfare." This too played out in terms of both jurisdictional struggles between the royal administration and privileged noble and clerical elites, and ministerial divisions within the monarchical apparatus itself. Third, Baker emphasizes a "tension between the need for monocratic authority in an institutional order ultimately grounded in the person of the king, and the lack of such authority in a system of government now

[42] Ibid.

[43] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy* p. 11; Schama, *Citizens*, pp. 108–109.

[44] See the discussion of Louis XVI's support of the American Revolution in Chapter Four.

[45] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, pp. 16–18 and passim.

too complex and chaotic to allow for it." Fourth, increased public demand for social benefit was in tension with growing public criticism of the "irresponsible power by which these benefits were achieved."[46] This fourth tension is a product of the emergence of public opinion as a source of public authority, a crucial development discussed further below.

The more specific forms in which the conflict between liberty and despotism was articulated shed clearer light on the interests of those who engaged in the strategic political struggles using that inflammatory language. For example, the evocation of ancient, particularistic privileges was the manner in which nobles and clerics legitimized their "liberties," while the administrative needs of the crown suggested that such privileges stood in the way of more efficient conduct of the king's business, based on universalistic, "scientific" principles. Similarly, different conceptions of justice played out in struggles over jurisdiction (of the *parlements*, for one thing) and the limitations of royal authority.[47] Was justice rooted in historical and particular privileges that gave every order its due, or did it entail the even application of universal principles? This question also extended into the question of tax collection; the royal administration's efforts to implement more universal tax schemes came up against the particularism of the noble and clerical orders.

Both sides deployed Enlightenment language to support their claims: the privileged orders seeking to protect "liberties" and rights, and the royal administration seeking to rationalize government according to more "scientific" principles. This is not evidence for the irrelevance of ideas, but rather for the broad and complex nature of the Enlightenment and the ability of a wide array of actors to find affinities within it. Turgot, for example, was inspired by his physiocratic ideas to attempt wide-ranging tax reform in the service of the monarchy. The fact that he failed to stay in power and engage in any systematic implementation (he was strongly opposed by elements of the nobility and clergy) also reveals that the balance of authority in this struggle seemed to lie with the privileged orders. Or more accurately, the royal administration was itself divided, and so failed to counterbalance the defenders of privilege by providing strong support to advocates of reform.

The inapplicability of a simple marxist schema whereby the monarchy represented feudalism and the rising bourgeoisie the new ideology of liberal capitalism should be fairly obvious at this point, because the monarchy was clearly trying to modernize on its own volition, and there were plenty of modernizing nobles as well as newly ennobled bourgeoisie to assist in this task. But that is not to say that the ascendance of bourgeois

[46] Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 115.
[47] Ibid.; Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, chaps. 5 and 7.

power was a trivial factor in the breakdown of old regime authority; the rise of bourgeois individuals and families into noble ranks exacerbated the problems between crown and nobility. As social mobility accelerated with the rise of commercial society, the monarchy brought more non-noble or newly ennobled administrators into its service. Significantly, most of the newly ennobled let go of their bourgeois heritage and embraced the values of their new caste, as is evident in the choice, made by the majority of such people, to deposit their wealth in landed property and offices rather than in capitalist wealth per se.[48] This too poses problems for marxist interpretations of the French Revolution. Nevertheless, the penetration of noble orders by bourgeois pretenders created important rifts in the regime of Louis XVI.

Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette each had their own, distinct circle of courtiers exercising significant political influence. Both the king and the queen excluded a number of old noble families from key privileges and positions of court life.[49] Louis XVI excluded old noble families, especially the nobility of the sword (that is, nobles whose main vocation was in the military), from his administrative apparatus, favoring instead the provincial nobility of the robe (church officials and magistrates), many of whom were of recent vintage. The king sought to professionalize his administrative ranks in accordance with enlightened theories of administration. To do so, he followed the example of his predecessors all the way back to Louis XIV, and elevated the status of many members of the Third Estate to the exclusion of older noble families. Further, the military reforms of 1781 loosened the court nobility's grip on higher military command, favoring instead provincial nobles and career soldiers. Marie Antoinette also excluded old nobility from her circle, because many of those families remained deeply hostile to the Austrian alliance of 1756 and therefore hostile to her personally.

Thus under Louis XVI the overall influence of the old noble families was reduced in the royal bureaucracy, the army, the court, and the king's councils. But by excluding key noble families from traditional positions and court life, the regime alienated them and helped to produce the Society of the Thirty. This was a group of nobles who supported the movement for constitutional reform that led to the 1789 Revolution, many of whom became leaders of the Revolution as it unfolded.[50]

Not all nobles articulated their interests in terms of preserving ancient liberties against royal despotism, especially not those who were beholden to the king for their rank. But enough of them did to make this a central

[48] Taylor, "Noncapitalist Wealth."
[49] Wick, "The Court Nobility and the French Revolution."
[50] This paragraph draws on Wick, "The Court Nobility and the French Revolution."

theme in French political life in the mid-eighteenth century. The attempt to rationalize, reorganize, and extend royal authority to meet the administrative needs of the absolutist state—arguably one form of modernization—came up against a defense of traditional rights and privileges articulated as an enlightened defense of liberty against despotism. The strategic struggles of the actors involved seem to have divided the Enlightenment against itself. The cultural contradictions were there to exploit; royal authority could stymie and in some cases co-opt, but not suppress, such exploitation.

Ministerial Divisions and the Austrian Alliance

Baker suggests that the very idea of royal authority residing entirely in one person was contradicted by the increasingly complex tasks of royal administration; such complexity undermined confidence and weakened royal legitimacy.[51] Royal administration was of course a complex matter even before Louis XVI came to power, so how is it that the tensions and conflicts over legitimate authority became so fatal only in his reign? One part of the answer has already been suggested: the language of the Enlightenment facilitated the articulation of these conflicts in compelling terms that seemed easy to understand, enhancing polarization by providing those engaged in the struggle of "liberty versus despotism" a language by which to articulate a common purpose and identify a hostile "other."[52] The strength of the attack on despotism is evident in that it even penetrated the thinking of the monarch and his ministers. They did not wish to appear despotic, much as they wanted to enhance royal authority. I suggested in the preceding chapter that Louis XVI sought to get some credit for being a friend of liberty in supporting the American War of Independence, as a positive by-product of France's obvious strategic interests in the war. Further, Louis XVI and Maurepas had recalled the old *parlements* in 1774. In so doing, however, they renewed opportunities for the struggle of liberty versus despotism. Strategic polarization extended into the royal government itself, into conflicts between ministers and various parties at court. In this arena, divisions were enhanced not only by authority struggles at home but by international developments.

The so-called Diplomatic Revolution of 1756 whereby France allied with its traditional enemy, Austria, proved highly divisive for the Bourbon

[51] Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 115.

[52] The work of Keith Baker provides a much richer articulation of these tensions; the notion that the language of "liberty versus despotism" broadly characterized the political struggles of Louis XVI's reign is also supported in Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, passim but see pp. 14–15, 91.

court. Traditional policy under Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Jules Mazarin was anti-Habsburg, with France supporting the smaller European states against Austrian power.[53] According to Munro Price, this policy "was associated with the military and diplomatic glories of the *grand siècle*, and was regarded as virtually part of the 'monarchical constitution' itself."[54] Marrying the monarch-to-be to an Austrian archduchess, the daughter of Maria Theresa, helped seal the alliance, but could not stifle enduring French suspicions of Austria. "On arrival at Versailles, Marie-Antoinette was immediately confronted by the hostility of those court families most committed to the pre-1756 foreign policy."[55] These old school court families shared, following the preferences of Louis XVI's own father (son of Louis XV), certain core beliefs and policies: they favored the extension of royal authority against the *parlements*, supported the pro-Jesuit (and anti-*philosophe*) faction against the Jansenists, and opposed the Austrian alliance.[56]

These court families managed to secure for their own members a number of key ministerial positions.[57] The fact that Louis XVI never took a mistress (as was normal) created an imbalance at court, which resulted in the queen's becoming the focus of a faction or party. In the absence of a mistress, who could become a focal point for those attempting to influence the king, the development of a queen's party created a bipolar rather than tripolar configuration of power at court. The queen's party supported the Austrian alliance, the authority of *parlements*, and in general made trouble for the ministers aligned with Louis XVI's objectives of controlling the *parlements*, enhancing royal authority, and doing as little as possible to sustain the Austrian alliance while still avoiding an outright break.[58] Thus within the royal court and among the members of the king's council there were divisions that reflected the authority struggles of the mid-eighteenth century. These divisions inhibited cooperation between royal ministers and *parlements* and among royal ministers themselves. Further, the division took on a fairly rigid bipolar form, which in court politics (as opposed to nuclear deterrence, say) is arguably less stable than a more fluid, tripolar or multipolar balance of power.[59]

[53] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, pp. 12–13; McKay and Scott, *Rise of the Great Powers*, pp. 181–192.

[54] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, pp. 12–13.

[55] Ibid., p. 13.

[56] Ibid.

[57] The tale is intricately told by Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*. See also Wick, "The Court Nobility and the French Revolution."

[58] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, pp. 24–25.

[59] The use of polarity to analyze court politics is suggested in Elias, *The Court Society*, passim. See also Wick, "The Court Nobility and the French Revolution," p. 268.

The struggle by individuals to stay in power and enhance their court status and privileges was of course a normal feature of court life. But under Louis XIV this struggle had been managed by a strong monarch who maintained equilibrium by never letting any one faction get too strong, and by serving as arbiter.[60] Under Louis XV, the equilibrium was less stable but still somewhat fluid because of the presence of powerful mistresses; the configuration at court remained somewhat multipolar and fluid (though this changed toward the end of the reign). Under Louis XVI the struggle for prestige and power at court had no strong arbiter (the monarch was notoriously indecisive) and developed both a bipolar structure of rigid factions and a strong ideological language—that of liberty versus despotism. The need to keep the royal court under control while at the same time ensuring that it was the center of political and administrative life was a central imperative of monarchical legitimacy, and it was breaking down under Louis XVI. The old duc de Richelieu told Louis XVI: "Under Louis XIV one kept silent, under Louis XV one dared to whisper, under you one talks quite loudly."[61] Ministerial divisions and rivalries among court factions became uncontrollable.[62] Royal initiatives might not be implemented, since such implementation depended on intermediary bodies, which were also polarized and centripetal as the center was no longer holding. These dynamics will sound familiar to students of coalition politics, but it bears emphasis that the language and discourse of contestation gave these dynamics their corrosive quality. They not only destabilized royal administration but eroded the very legitimacy of monarchy as a source of central authority.

Public Opinion as a Source of Authority

The rise and increasing influence of public opinion as a source of political authority and of critical commentary on political affairs was in many ways a Europe-wide phenomenon, as discussed in Chapter Three.[63] Public commentary on affairs of state can be traced to the age of Louis XIV, in whose time international public opinion constituted a source of authoritative commentary on war and peace negotiations, to which the monarch

[60] See Elias, *Court Society.*

[61] Quoted in ibid., p. 87.

[62] Price, *Preserving the Monarchy.*

[63] See Mona Ozouf, " 'Public Opinion' at the End of the Old Regime," in *The Rise and Fall of the French Revolution*, ed. T.C.W. Blanning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, chap. 8.

had to respond and justify his actions.[64] But the idea that domestic public opinion constituted an internal source of authority by which monarchical policy toward subjects (rather than foreigners) could be judged was slower to emerge, and much more dangerous.[65] The flowering of the domestic dimensions of this concept in France coincided with the political struggles of the 1750s and afterward, as just discussed.[66]

The "public" in this case was not a precisely conceptualized entity; it was certainly not the mass of people's opinions represented in polls. But writers at the time did acknowledge that the spread of literacy and profusion of pamphlets of all kinds contributed to the creation of an entity they called public opinion.[67] Mona Ozouf locates two dominant sources of public opinion: the academies, populated by successful *philosophes*; and the *parlements*, especially in their activity of publishing their remonstrances, even in defiance of royal bans on such publication. Commentaries that claimed to be voicing the public view, in the public interest, flowed from both these sources.[68] But the multiplicity of pamphlets and foreign journals could be attributed to an even wider array of sources, including writers outside the academies, foreign commentators, and royal publicists.[69] A clear acknowledgment of the power of the appeal to public opinion is the fact that the monarchy also tried to develop an "equivalent weapon," or "counterpublicity," in its struggles with the *parlements*.[70]

It was not simply the publication of views that claimed to articulate public opinion, and or the location of this "public," that were the most radical and relevant features of this emergent phenomenon. Rather, it was the fact that public opinion was thought to constitute a source of political authority in its own right. In international affairs one might expect the interests of a particular monarch to be contested by the counterclaims of other monarchs, who were his juridical equals. But to grant authoritative status to domestic public opinion meant that the authority—not just the interest—of the king in his own realm was being challenged. Public opinion was seen as a "tribunal" before which policies and persons would be judged.[71] Since under absolutism the monarch was the sole source of political authority and legitimacy in his realm, the idea that public opinion was a source of judgment and authority constituted a direct challenge to

[64] Joseph Klaits, *Printed Propaganda under Louis XIV: Absolute Monarchy and Public Opinion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[65] Baker, *Inventing the Fench Revolution*, p. 172.

[66] Ibid., p. 168.

[67] Ibid., chap. 8.

[68] Ozouf, "Public Opinion," p. 96.

[69] Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*.

[70] Ozouf, "Public Opinion," p. 96.

[71] Ibid., pp. 99–100.

monarchical legitimacy; the two canceled each other out. Public opinion was thus a new "counterforce" opposing royal authority. Ozouf argues that it took on the characteristics of the set of absolutes that it replaced: the authority of the Christian God. Traditionally, only God's authority could surpass and judge that of the monarch. In the secularizing spirit of the Enlightenment, divine authority was replaced by public opinion as the independent, abstract tribunal, the only tribunal higher and more powerful than the monarch.[72]

Just as the monarch claimed divine authority to be on his side, so also he attempted to bring public opinion to his side in the political struggles from the 1750s on. Baker argues that the monarchy was forced into such a strategy by the unfolding logic of the concept itself:

> By the end of Louis XV's reign, the monarchy no longer seemed to have a choice in the matter. The logic of the new political situation required that the government address its claims to a domestic "public," deploying pamphlets and other devices of political contestation in internal affairs with as much energy as it had previously done in the international arena. . . . But by accepting the logic of a politics of contestation in this way, the royal government unwittingly conspired with its opposition to foster the transfer of ultimate authority from the public person of the sovereign to the sovereign person of the public.[73]

Many French commentators of the time were profoundly uneasy about the controversy that had emerged in this period, and they feared the instability that the struggle between king and *parlements* appeared to represent. Accompanying such anxiety was an ambivalent attitude toward politics in England, where turbulence and instability seemed to accompany the heightened liberties of the people.[74] Baker further argues that the concept of public opinion as it emerged in mid-eighteenth-century France, shaped by Enlightenment thought, was seen by some as a source of mediation between the dangers of arbitrary despotism, on the one hand, and unrestrained, anarchical liberty, on the other. Public opinion was thought to be a rational, peaceful social phenomenon with universal and objective characteristics emanating from the fact that it was constituted by human reason.[75] For enlightened supporters of the monarchy, public opinion "offered an abstract court of appeal to a monarchy anxious to put an end to several decades of political contestation. And it held out the ideal of a tranquil expression of public reason to a people who, in wishing for re-

[72] Ibid.
[73] Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p. 172.
[74] Ibid., pp. 178–86.
[75] Ibid., pp. 193–97.

sponsible government, remained nonetheless horrified by the spectacle . . . of the play of divisive political passions."[76]

Thus public opinion as a political force posed a threat to absolute monarchical authority, and yet it also seemed to hold out the possibility of transcending the constitutional struggles that were weakening the French monarchy. That possibility was realizable only if the rational, peaceful, enlightened, unified public was actually the entity that Necker and his ilk (who were ever appealing to and drawing power from it) imagined it to be. This turned out to be a chimera, but it does, as Baker argues, provide an important clue to understanding the transition from old regime to revolution. And as Albert Hirschman has taught us, the anticipated but unrealized consequences of important ideas can be just as—if not more—important in explaining the course of events as unintended but realized consequences of ideas.[77] The "public" was initially thought to be peaceful and rational, hence its voice began to be respected; it did not turn out to be so, and this perhaps garnered it even more respect, or at least the respect that comes from fear.

Equality versus Privilege

The final crisis of the old regime unfolded after the refusal of the Assembly of Notables to accept the reforms proposed by Calonne. In the ensuing political struggle between king and *parlements*, the monarchy agreed to call a meeting of the Estates General; it was the last resort in a desperate attempt to resolve the financial crisis. The calling of the Estates General led to the overshadowing of the rhetoric of liberty versus despotism by that of equality versus privilege, and a concurrent reorientation of the main political contests surrounding the monarchy and the French constitution (abstractly conceived—there was no written constitution as yet, but people did speak of a constitution). The privileged orders lost their central position in the constitutional discourse, as the representatives of the Third Estate made a bid for political power by arguing that their numbers should be doubled in order to gain equal representation vis-à-vis the other two orders (nobility and clergy), and that instead of vote by order the estates should vote by head (that is, one man, one vote). Although an avalanche of pamphlets accompanied the public debate over the form of the Estates General, the most famous of these, and the one that provided the rhetorical force of the arguments put forth by the

[76] Ibid., p. 197.

[77] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), pt. 3.

Third Estate, was that of Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate?"[78]

This pamphlet constitutes an assault on all privilege in the name of fundamental equality, and presents the Third Estate as the true body of the French nation. Sieyès' pamphlet succeeded in articulating the strategy that the Third Estate was to follow as it mutated into a National Assembly, and it outlined the basic principles that became the core of subsequent revolutionary ideology. At its center was a fundamental claim of human equality against privilege, and the assertion that sovereignty resided in the nation, which itself was constituted by the "productive" sector of society—that is, the nonprivileged sector. The familiar story of how the Third Estate, with sympathetic help from members of the other two orders, managed to constitute itself as the National Assembly marks the decisive shift from reform to revolution. This political shift was preceded by a discursive shift: the language of liberty versus despotism was overtaken by, and subsumed within, the language of equality versus privilege.

When the Revolution came it first appeared that the aspirations of the more radical nobles would complement those of the Third Estate, at least in opposition to the reassertion of absolutist authority; a coalition was forged on this basis. But when the call of liberty and equality was more widely disseminated, and opportunities to respond to it opened up in revolutionary politics, then the revolutionary process slipped out of the control of these literate, upper strata of noble and bourgeois society and passed into the turbulence and violence that came to define revolutionary domestic politics until the rule of the Directory. The mobilization of previously excluded people—not just bourgeois but women, blacks, and *sans culottes*—generated a new resource (and strong potential ally) for revolutionary factions struggling for power. That "resource" proved uncontrollable until new forms of despotic rule emerged, under Napoleon.

Revolution and War

The French Revolution was not in and of itself a mechanism of international cultural change, but it was one particularly significant result and example of the intensified dynamics of those mechanisms. Throughout

[78] Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *What Is the Third Estate?*, trans. M. Blondel (London: Phaidon Press, 1964). For an abridged version of this and numerous other useful documents pertaining to the French Revolution, see Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization, vol. 7 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). See also William H. Sewell, Jr., *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyes and "What is the Third Estate?"* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994).

the European international system, the mechanisms determining whether there would be continuity or transformation of international political culture were political contestation based on cultural contradictions, and the formation of coalitions based on real or manufactured complementarities. On the face of it, war was the mechanism by which the revolutionary French challenged the legitimacy of the European old regime, but war represented a facet of the cultural struggle over legitimacy.

As we have seen, the germs of transformation were already present in prerevolutionary political culture. The French Revolution accelerated the development and dissemination of these seeds of change; it became the wind that carried them across Europe. In a profound and violent way, the French Revolution reconstituted shared understandings of what was possible in politics. Military expansion spread these new conceptions widely even where it failed to enact them; even where the proliferating revolutionary tracts went unread, soldiers spread ideas among occupied populations.[79] Although the French army did little to directly promote German nationalism, for example, it sowed the conceptual seeds.[80] The Revolution also generated new understandings about the destabilizing potential of certain strands of Enlightenment thought, in particular the legitimating principle of popular sovereignty, which now appeared to have taken over the more complex republican legacy. These new understandings informed the attempts to reconstitute a stable international order in the Vienna Congress and resulting Concert of Europe.

Blanning argues that the French Revolution produced a "massive surge" in the power of the French state.[81] How did it produce this? According to François Furet, "in democratic culture—the real innovation of the French Revolution—and in the transfer of legitimacy—its very essence—the traditional image of absolute power was somehow reconstituted."[82] Both these writers assert that the Revolution betrayed the ideals that inspired it—liberty and equality. But without such ideals the surge in state power would have been impossible. To refer again to Hirschman's insight, simply because the aspirations contained in a set of ideas fail to come to fruition does not mean that those aspirations played no role in motivating behavior.

[79] For a historical account of the spread of democratic ideas, see R. R. Palmer *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959, 1964), vol. 2.

[80] See T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Stuart Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe* (London: Routledge, 1991).

[81] Blanning, *French Revolution in Germany*, p. 2.

[82] Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p. 77.

Constitutional Monarchy versus Democratic Republic

The Revolution was not born radical. Initially, it seemed that the revolutionary movement would result in a constitutional monarchy, emulating Britain. The struggle that began in 1789 to craft the Constitution of 1791 involved a polarization between those favoring a constitutional monarchy and those leaning toward a popular republic (with very weak executive power). It was not clear at the outset who would win this struggle. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) was based on the marquis de Lafayette's drafts, which in turn were based on the Virginia Declaration of Rights and on the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson himself annotated Lafayette's second draft.[83] Lafayette was of the nobility of the sword and a prominent member of the noble Society of Thirty. He formed the core of an enthusiastic cohort who had served in the American Revolution and were thoroughly enamored of the ideas of liberty and equality that this war represented; these men were the "largest single contingent" in the society.[84] The French Declaration lays out the doctrine of inherent equality, disavows aristocratic privilege, and restricts the powers of the king, declaring that sovereignty lies in the nation. But it describes a constitutional monarchy, not a republic, because the initial and more moderate reformers themselves subscribed to the shared understanding that republicanism was only suitable for small states; France, as a great power, ought to remain a monarchy.[85]

There was a precedent for the anglophilia of the constitutional monarchists. Montesquieu had brought the English system of government to the attention of the French, praising it as conducive to liberty, but also, as Baker has pointed out, expressing reservations about its stability.[86] Britain was a European great power that also seemed to have a constitution conducive to liberty—even, it was possible to argue, a republican constitution in monarchical garb. It thus seemed natural that supporters of liberty in France would look to Britain as a model. The American states produced compelling constitutional ideas, especially in their written constitutions,

[83] A copy of the Declaration can be found in John Hall Stewart, ed., *A Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), pp. 113–15. See also Donald Sutherland, *France, 1789–1815: Revolution and Counterrevolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 81; Doyle, *Oxford History*, p. 118.

[84] Wick, "The Court Nobility and the French Revolution," p. 279.

[85] Doyle, *French Revolution*, p. 119; Schama, *Citizens*, chap. 8; see also Patrice Higonnet, *Class, Ideology, and the Rights of Nobles during the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 6.

[86] Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, trans.Thomas Nugent (New York: Hafner, 1949), book 11, chap. 6, pp. 151–62, and book 19, chap. 27, pp. 307–315; Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, chap. 9.

but they were no great power. They were not an apt model for a major state situated in the center of the European continent.

The anglophilic moderates were not long in power. Schama captures the essence of the domestic rift between moderate and radical republicans:

> Mounier and the "English" party were heirs to Montesquieu and, behind that, an Aristotelian tradition of seeing in diversity, divisions and balances a satisfying equilibrium. Their opponents, whether arguing from neoclassical rigor or from Rousseau-like consistency, were holists. For them, the *patrie* was indivisible, and they responded to charges that they were creating a new despotism of the many by retorting that the new, single sovereignty was a morally reborn animal that could have nothing in common with the impurities of the old.[87]

The rift was exacerbated by the failure of the coalition between reform-minded nobility and prominent leaders of the Third Estate. Patrice Higonnet suggests that the bourgeoisie could have remained allied with reform-minded nobility and taken the Revolution on a moderate course. This is how things started. But the alliance broke down, not because of class differences but because of tensions within the ideology (or political culture) of the bourgeoisie, and because new political actors appeared on the scene whose demands contributed to an ideological drift toward communitarian and egalitarian principles, rather than respect for property rights.[88] In Higonnet's words: "When the entènte broke down in the autumn of 1791, the Revolutionary bourgeoisie, true to its communitarian principles, altered its course and gradually sacrificed the rights of nobles in an opportunistic effort to please the crowd."[89]

Egalitarian principles could be interpreted procedurally or substantively: they could mean equal protection of rights (including property rights), on the one hand, or communitarian notions of distribution, on the other. The Constitution of 1791 protected property rights, but the process of eradicating aristocratic privilege and expropriating church lands yielded new resources to the state (whose legislative body was now the National Assembly), and newly active political voices clamored for equitable redistribution. At the same time, the wealthier strata of society who had welcomed the Revolution aspired to protect property rights from arbitrary confiscation; this claim could also be supported by republican political theory. But mobilized local populations often failed to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate noble property holdings, and could take matters into their own hands. Whether actually harassed or

[87] Schama, *Citizens*, p. 444.
[88] Higonnet, *Class, Ideology*, intro.
[89] Ibid., p. 258.

fearing harassment, a steady stream of nobles began to leave the country. When the Assembly began the process of nationalizing the church and expropriating church lands, the conflict intensified.[90]

The more moderate supporters of constitutional monarchy sought to provide the king with veto power, again looking to the British model. But public mistrust—especially of the queen and Austrian counterrevolutionary conspiracy—provided support for advocates of greater legislative and popular authority, at the expense of the executive. The royal family's behavior, especially and climactically its attempt to flee to Varennes,[91] did not help the position of the moderates. In addition, the composition of the Assembly began to change. The Legislative Assembly established by the Constitution of 1791 brought all new faces to power; they were younger and more radical than their predecessors, but also fraught with divisions.[92] More radical revolutionaries (led by Jacques-Pierre Brissot) who sought to abolish the monarchy altogether succeeded in discursively linking the fear of international conspiracy and the machinations of the royal family to counterrevolutionary plots broadly conceived. The solution, they argued, was war, and their reasoning will be outlined presently.[93]

Since a number of articulate, enlightened nobles had put their weight on the scales of moderate constitutional reform, the progressive vilification of the aristocracy made moderate reforms increasingly difficult to legislate and legitimate.[94] Furthermore, the mobilization of people once completely excluded from political life created new constraints on the Assembly. Once the people, or the revolutionary "crowd," was mobilized it was difficult to put the genie back into the bottle, though successive Assemblies tried their best. No matter how much political capital a particular cadre was able to derive from the lower-class masses, or *sans culottes*, it was always an uneasy and volatile relationship that threatened to slip out of the ruling group's control and into mob violence. Furet notes that "[l]egitimacy (and victory) . . . belonged to those who symbolically embodied the people's will and were able to monopolize the appeal to it."[95] Institution building—critical to the sustained enactment and maintenance of revolutionary legislation—came later, with the Directory and Napoleon. This marked the end of revolutionary politics; the state reasserted

[90] For an overview, see Doyle, *Oxford History*, chaps. 5, 6, and 13.

[91] A failed plot to get the royal family out of the country.

[92] T.C.W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (London: Longman, 1986), p. 96; Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*.

[93] Blanning, *Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, pp. 98–100.

[94] Schama, *Citizens*, p. 293; Higonnet, *Class, Idology*, chap. 2.

[95] Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p. 48.

itself over the nation. But by the time this had happened, the state was entirely reconstituted, and its political culture transformed.[96]

By confiscating church lands and routing the nobility and its property, the pre-Thermidorian Revolution cleared away significant restraints on state power. But these were also the old sinews of state power; they had to be replaced with something new: and this was the nation, the people, the *patrie*. The process of reconstituting the state was far more difficult and complex than the foregoing phraseology suggests; the early struggles to put an effective army in the field fully demonstrate this.[97] Popular sovereignty and nationalism could take many possible forms. The ultimate victory of the holist, virtue-based perspective on popular sovereignty (Wood's discussion of popular sovereignty in the American context provides a useful counterpoint)[98] had a significant impact on how France conducted its foreign affairs, not only because it perpetuated a contentious and unstable pattern in domestic politics—what Donald Sutherland has called the "politics of insurrection"[99]—but also because it shaped how the French viewed themselves in relation to other European states. The undivided will of the people became the basis and legitimation for all policy, including foreign policy. This made French foreign policy difficult to square with the demands of a system based on complex tangles of legal and dynastic relations, prestige considerations, and archaeologically accumulated particularistic historical claims. The one language the revolutionaries did learn to speak in common with old regime European diplomats and statesmen was that of force.

Revolution and Counterrevolution

As Rousseau had demonstrated and key revolutionary leaders came to believe, the general will had to be one will, not the balance of many individual wills or interests.[100] Leaders had to speak for the whole people, and if they did not, they had to be removed from power. Public good and public virtue must dominate over private interest. Such a system had no mechanisms for integrating opposing interests; those in opposition were

[96] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*.

[97] See the early chapters in Jean-Paul Bertaud, *The Army of the French Revolution: From Citizen-Soldier to Instrument of Power*, trans. R. R. Palmer (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); and John Lynn, *Bayonets of the Republic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

[98] Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), chap. 9 and passim.

[99] Sutherland, *France 1789–1815*, pp. 192ff.

[100] Rousseau, "On the Social Contract."

against the public good. Even after the fall of Maximilien Robespierre marked the end of the radical period, the French revolutionaries displayed a persistent aversion to "factionalism" of any sort; this inhibited the formation of parties and made the idea of a loyal opposition impossible.[101] Higonnet writes: "In the minds of its framers, the new revolutionary and universalistic state was ultimately to guarantee the natural rights of all men (as against the American system of 1787 whose purpose was to defend the positive rights of enfranchised men). At the same time, the *French obsession on the unity of the state's political purpose* gradually but inexorably eroded a concern for the civic rights of individual citizens."[102]

The holistic turn made one political issue paramount: Who spoke for the people? Who articulated the general will? The dynamics set off thereby involved a struggle to be the voice of the people—a struggle carried out by means of oratory and, increasingly, insurgency and terror. Revolutionary instability became endemic. Furet notes: "Even during the apparently 'institutional' phase of the Revolution, when France had a rather widely accepted Constitution, every leader—from Lafayette to Robespierre—and every group took the risk of extending the Revolution in order to eliminate all competitors instead of uniting them to build new national institutions."[103] But opposition could not be eliminated. Economic difficulties inherited from the old regime and intensified by revolutionary upheaval raised discontent, whether it was popular concern about the price of bread, sympathy with the plight of the clergy, or liberal concern with property rights and the inflationary spirals brought on by the printing of *assignats* (paper money).

Helping the poor and protecting property demanded different political programs and strategies. How could a plurality of constituencies and interests be melded into one will? Counterrevolution became endemic, especially as moderate reforms were discredited along with moderate reformers, and the Revolution became radicalized. Although the counterrevolution began with the noble émigrés who began to flee France from the fall of the Bastille in July of 1789 onward, it soon sprang to life within France itself.[104] Internal noble plots, spying and scheming by supporters of the royal family, passive and active resistance by members of the clergy, and intrigues by newly disenchanted members of the National Assembly

[101] Lynn Hunt, D. Lansky, and P. Hanson, "The Failure of the Liberal Republic in France, 1795–1799," *Journal of Modern History* 51 (1979): 734–59.

[102] Patrice Higonnet, "Cultural Upheaval and Class Formation during the French Revolution," in *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, ed. Ferenc Fehér (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 82. Emphasis added.

[103] Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p. 47.

[104] For a treatment of the Revolution that gives ample attention to counterrevolution, see Sutherland, *France, 1789–1815*; see also Doyle, *Oxford History*, chap. 13.

all began to generate a counterrevolutionary mood, although this movement was by no means unified. The abolition of the nobility's monopoly on promotion to the officer corps, followed by the formal abolition of the nobility in June 1790, led to a massive outflow from the officer corps as well as continued noble emigration.[105] Further, traditional antagonism between Protestants and Catholics was exacerbated by the Revolution, as demonstrated most clearly in the *bagarre* (riot) at Nîmes, where pro-revolutionary Protestants massacred Catholic National Guardsmen who were attempting to take over the city. Although the Catholics were defeated, they became martyrs for the Catholic counterrevolutionary cause.[106]

The noble émigrés reconstituted their society abroad, and began to form an army that at its height was perhaps 20,000 strong.[107] They aspired to form an auxiliary force with the Prussians and Austrians, whom they hoped to enlist in their cause. Thus the links between counterrevolution and foreign war, though fodder for the paranoid rhetoric of committed revolutionaries, were nevertheless real. Endemic counterrevolution combined with external pressures, heightened by the agitation of the émigrés, made the identification of counterrevolution with treason and foreign war an effective rhetorical tool for revolutionary leaders. Enemies at home and abroad all had the same character—they were a threat to the *patrie* and the Revolution.

France versus Europe

France's slide into war with the first European coalition, and its subsequent wars of conquest, appear to lend credibility to realist assessments of the unimportance of revolutionary ideology relative to the pressures of "traditional" security issues and predictable balance of power politics (although historians also stress the importance of domestic politics in fomenting the slide toward war).[108] Neorealist students of international relations also discount the importance of ideology in the French revolutionary wars, and view nationalism as a tool of power-hungry states rather than as an autonomous ideological force.[109] It is true that revolutionary ideology cannot fully explain French foreign policy behavior. However, there is a

[105] See Higonnet, *Class, Ideology*; Doyle, *Oxford History*, pp. 299–300.

[106] Doyle, *Oxford History*, p. 300.

[107] Ibid., p. 302.

[108] This skepticism regarding the role of ideology can be found in the works of many historians, including Albert Sorel, T.C.W. Blanning, Georges Lefebvre, and Paul Schroeder, even when they are not explicit realists.

[109] Walt, *Revolution and War*; Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army and Military Power."

problem with the manner in which the "ideology" question has been framed. Blanning's statement of the "clash of ideologies" thesis is worth quoting: "An ideological war . . . can be defined as a conflict in which the two parties adhere to political and social principles so diametrically opposed that each finds the existence of the other to be intolerable and seeks its elimination by force of arms. Put more succinctly: war is made inevitable by the existence of two irreconcilable ideologies."[110] Although leading French revolutionaries often used rhetoric that suggested ideological war was at hand, Blanning and others provide ample evidence that actual events do not neatly fit this interpretation; some of that evidence is summarized and reviewed in this section.

The broader theoretical point I wish to make, however, is this: simply because the wars did not correspond to the clash of ideologies thesis does not mean that the role of ideas was negligible. Ideas or ideologies are not merely characteristics of states. In the period studied here, ideas were influential in a broader Euro-Atlantic context and had a significant impact of a different order than that suggested by the "clash of ideologies" thesis. The latter thesis, like some versions of realism, implies that ideologies are characteristic of states, or in the marxist version, of specific classes within states. This leads to a conceptualization of ideological contestation as corresponding to clashes between states (or clashes between classes), and from that perspective other variables such as security interests, material or class interests, or misperception can quickly be found to have greater weight than ideology. But do state or class boundaries mark the limits of ideology?

Throughout this book I have argued that political culture, defined as a system of ideas about the nature and exercise of legitimate authority, shapes strategic practice, and that strategic practice in turn reshapes culture. The stresses and strains in political culture provide fodder for conflict; the complementarities between certain ideas and different cultural complexes facilitate cooperation and coalition building. This may sound like another version of the clash of ideologies thesis. But my model does not at all imply "one state (or one class), one ideology," or that states sharing the same ideology will be allies. This is because I assume neither that ideology is coherent nor that it is confined within state or class boundaries.

The ferment brought on by the Enlightenment was Europe-wide; it generated contradictions that gave birth to the French Revolution. This is particularly evident in light of the fact that much of the "revolutionary" dynamic breaking down the French old regime occurred prior to the Revo-

[110] Blanning, *Origins*, p. 120.

lution itself.[111] The French Revolution did not immediately disengage France from European political culture. Seen from this perspective, it is hardly surprising that the revolutionary wars did not represent a pure international clash of ideologies. Rather, we see the emergence of an alternative form of legitimacy (not only in France, but most fully and radically there) gradually destabilizing the existing international system, and France along with it. Instead of a clash of ideologies, each represented by a distinct sovereign state, competing principles of legitimacy were dividing France internally (and not simply according to class lines), as they were dividing other parts of Europe. If we must use the term "ideological conflict" it would be best to remember that such conflict cut across rather than corresponded to state and class boundaries. The French Revolution propelled France into the wars discussed in this section, which ultimately did divide France from Europe. That the wars between states did not correspond perfectly to the ideological fault lines does not render the role of ideas unimportant, but it does make it more complex and difficult to isolate.

The transformative and threatening role of ideas in the period of the French Revolution can be characterized in at least four ways, each of which demands a view more nuanced than that offered by the clash of ideologies thesis: (1) revolutionary ideas directly challenged the legitimacy of dynastic, monarchical regimes (in some cases from within as well as from without) and of the treaties and agreements between those regimes and old regime France; (2) revolutionary ideas ultimately strengthened the French state by facilitating a new level of social mobilization for warfare; (3) the demonstration effects of the mobilizing power of popular sovereignty and nationalism invited emulation, but emulation of a technique rooted in popular sovereignty and nationalism would also challenge the legitimacy of dynastic regimes (again, both from within and from without); and (4) the example of revolutionary France inspired imitators seeking not just military mobilization but republican revolution elsewhere. In all these dimensions, the rules of the game of European international politics were deeply disrupted and, despite the efforts of the Vienna Congress to generate a new status quo equilibrium that would check the disruptive spread of "liberal" ideas, ultimately transformed.

Initially, however, the democratic pressures unleashed in 1789 seemed decidedly unthreatening to the rest of Europe. France's revolution would surely weaken it and leave it ripe for predatory eighteenth-century struggles over compensations. [112] The duke of Leeds, foreign secretary under

[111] The classic source here is Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, trans. by Stuart Gilbert (New York: Doubleday, 1955).

[112] Sorel, *L'Europe*, vol. 1; Blanning, *Origins*, chap. 2; J. H. Clapham, *The Causes of the War of 1792* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1899).

Pitt, wrote after the fall of the Bastille: "I defy the ablest heads in England to have planned, or its whole Wealth to have purchased, a Situation so fatal to its Rival, as that to which France is now reduced by her own intestine Commotions."[113] The Revolution initially appeared to offer a new opportunity for the competitive, aggrandizing scrambles of eighteenth-century diplomacy.[114] This was consistent with the traditional notion that revolutions weakened states; the idea that a revolution could engender deep, regenerating social transformation was as yet unheard of.

Despite the apparent opportunity, it was by no means clear that the European powers would take advantage of France's weakness by engaging in a war of conquest. Britain was trying to stay out of Continental entanglements, Austria was reluctant to go to war, Russia was preoccupied with digesting its recent gains in Turkey and preparing to do the same in Poland, and Prussia, though acquisitive, could not act alone.[115] Early revolutionary principles did not in themselves appear particularly threatening. European coexistence with a constitutional monarchy in France was not unimaginable, especially if it ended up looking something like the British system. Leopold II of Austria was himself attempting to implement enlightened reforms, and sympathized with many of the Revolution's principles.[116] Opinion in Britain was divided, and the Revolution had many admirers there, as elsewhere on the Continent and indeed throughout much of the world. Even Prussia initially appeared to be following contradictory policies, and could be seen as either indifferent or hostile, depending on which member of Frederick William II's court one consulted. Prussia even considered the possibility of an alliance with revolutionary France.[117] In France, some were receptive to the idea of an alliance with Prussia, showing lingering admiration for the philosopher king (Frederick the Great) who had embraced Voltaire and Diderot.

In short, the ideological polarization in old regime Europe, exacerbated by the Revolution, did not in itself mean that war was inevitable. That polarization was present within various states, not just between them. Neither the clash of ideologies thesis nor a simple *realpolitik* calculus can capture this complexity. In the following paragraphs I bring evidence to bear on my thesis that the interaction of ideological (or cultural) contradictions and complementarities with the domestic and international strategic context yielded the revolutionary wars, and that the

[113] Quoted in Blanning, *Origins*, p. 132.

[114] In addition to Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), see Robert Howard Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1915), pp. 268–81.

[115] Blanning, *Origins*, pp. 70–73.

[116] Ibid., p. 72.

[117] Ibid., p. 72–73, 82.

disjunction between domestic and international legitimacy in France (popular sovereignty became the domestic principle, but monarchical legitimacy was still the international principle) was what set these wars apart from the more limited contests of eighteenth-century balance of power politics.[118]

Blanning's core argument about the causes of the revolutionary wars highlights the role of misperception, or the "Coppelia effect."[119] This assessment is built on a solid foundation. My own contribution is theoretical rather than historical; I suggest that culture plays a role in shaping perception, and in this case misperception. The tendency to think that the Revolution would produce a weak state was grounded in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century views of revolution; the notion that the Revolution would regenerate France was a product of revolutionary ideology and produced optimistic assessments of France's military viability; and the tendency of the French revolutionaries to see old regime conspiracy everywhere was grounded in the evolving holist, Rousseauian revolutionary ideology. Perceptions of the situation were thus shaped by shared—and competing—ideas about the meaning of the Revolution.

The noble émigrés fleeing to various European capitals interpreted the Revolution as a destruction of France's legitimate constitution and social order. They reinforced the idea that the Revolution had weakened France, for how could France survive without its constitutive orders? The monarchy was but a shade of its former self; how could it possibly organize a war effort? And with the best noble generals gone, army discipline and mobilization were sure to be a sham. The émigrés, promising that the new regime would easily tumble, agitated for immediate war. Although the émigrés were not welcome everywhere and Joseph II even had them ejected from Belgium, their arguments did contribute to the creation of a climate of predatory hostility, especially in Prussia and also, though more slowly, in Austria.

On the French side misperception also prevailed, for as Blanning notes, the emerging leaders of the Revolution assumed that the old regime powers were "teetering on the brink of collapse and that one tap on the door would demolish the whole edifice." The revolutionary French, in a classic case of paper tiger syndrome, were simultaneously overoptimistic about old regime weakness and overpessimistic about old regime hostil-

[118] See Kyung-Won Kim, *Revolution and International System* (New York: New York University Press, 1970).

[119] Blanning, *Origins*, chaps. 3 and 4; on the Coppelia effect, see p. 73. For a theoretical account of the role of misperception in international politics, see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

ity.[120] They believed that France was now enacting universal, progressive principles and that old regime powers rested on shaky, particularistic foundations at odds with the spirit of enlightenment. Peoples oppressed by despotism would rise up and greet the French armies as liberators. Furthermore, the divisions in France between supporters and attackers of the monarchy propelled the process whereby war came to be seen as an attractive political option. A highly unlikely pro-war alliance was forged between antimonarchist radicals and royalists who thought that war would bring defeat to France, which would then result in restoration of the full authority of the monarchy by foreign powers. Thus the ideological divisions within France and between revolutionary France and old regime Europe produced, not ideological war, but profound misperception that facilitated a slide into war. The war then "revolutionized the revolution," in Georges Lefebvre's terms, and supported the nationalist and populist aspects of the Revolution against moderating influences.[121]

Although they did not topple as easily as some revolutionaries hoped they would, the European powers did show themselves incapable of forming a stable and cohesive coalition against France, precisely because of the way eighteenth-century international politics operated. Initially, Britain was resolutely neutral and Austria had no intention of making more than symbolic gestures of disapproval of the Revolution and support for the émigrés. Blanning sums it up: "As an international plan for the forcible repression of the French Revolution, such a concert did not exist, for most old-regime powers were not prepared to go beyond verbal reproofs or symbolic gestures. What confronted the revolutionaries in the spring of 1792 was not a European-wide concert but something much simpler: an alliance between Austria and Prussia."[122] That alliance was shaky. It was in the nature of eighteenth-century international politics for allies to be suspicious of each other. Each jealously guarded against one party's gaining more than the other, even before the imagined spoils were conquered. Nor were the powers that eventually aligned themselves against France able to settle on common war aims.[123] The environment was ripe for defections, and over time the French were able to exploit this.

Under the absolutist monarchy, the French had not been able to take advantage of the weaknesses in the international system; France's performance as a great power in the eighteenth-century had been disappoint-

[120] Blanning, *Origins*, quotation on p. 74 and see chap. 3; Walt, *Revolution and War*, chap. 3.

[121] Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution from Its Origins to 1793*, trans. Elizabeth Moss Evanson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul), chap. 13.

[122] Blanning, *Origins*, p. 81.

[123] Schroeder, *Transformation*, chaps. 3–4; Blanning, *Origins*; Lord, *Second Partition*, chap. 11.

ing.[124] Higonnet writes: "The failure of the crown's bureaucracy to enact institutional modernization at home dovetailed in the public mind with its failure to impose its will on foreigners, as was seen in Holland especially in 1787."[125] The Revolution brought hope of regeneration, not only domestically but in international military viability. France's lack of success could also be attributed to the Austrian alliance, a perception that interacted with the growing paranoia about Marie Antoinette's counterrevolutionary plots.

One reason scholars tend to deride the importance of revolutionary ideology in foreign policy is that they view it only selectively and partially, emphasizing liberty, equality, and pacifism but not nationalism and the notion of regeneration. But these latter notions had major implications for France's international military standing. Liberty and universal equality were certainly central, and the image of Marianne as a female symbol of the Revolution carried great weight. However, another symbol also emerged in revolutionary political culture: that of Hercules, the warrior.[126] A more masculine and active image than that of Marianne, Hercules symbolized the crushing of domestic counterrevolutionary forces and those of the nation's enemies. The Hercules symbol was officially embraced after the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic. The radical deputy Joseph Fouché articulated the meaning of the metaphor in a speech made at the end of June 1793, describing the "victory of the people of Paris over the Girondins" (that is, the fall of the Girondins from power, and the rise of the Montagnards): "A terrible cry made itself heard in the midst of the great city. The tocsin and the cannon of alarm awakened their patriotism, announcing that liberty was in danger, that there wasn't a moment to spare. Suddenly the forty-eight sections armed themselves and were transformed into an army. This formidable colossus is standing, he marches, he advances, he moves like Hercules, traversing the Republic to exterminate this ferocious crusade that swore death to the people."[127] Herculean imagery goes back to Renaissance France and underwent significant transformations, wherein popular power came to replace that of the French king as the key referent.[128] This ties in directly to Furet's insight that the French Revolution actually reconstituted absolute

[124] Skocpol and Kestenbaum, "Mars Unshackled."

[125] Higonnet, "Cultural Upheaval and Class Formation," p. 82.

[126] On revolutionary iconography, see Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, chap. 3; also Mona Ozouf, *Festivals of the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[127] Quoted in Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, p. 101.

[128] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, p. 103.

power on a grander scale than absolutist monarchs had imagined.[129] Replacing the king with the power of the people made the state stronger.

Hunt argues that although the Revolution did not bring about revolutionary social and economic changes, it produced its greatest changes in the realm of politics.[130] In the long run, the nobles came back and the economy remained mired in tradition, but politics could never be the same. What Hunt's study suggests but does not emphasize (because it focuses on domestic politics) was that revolutionary regeneration permeated the military; in fact, I will argue that it was in the army that revolutionary ideals found their most thorough realization. Here I note that the Revolution enhanced the perception, at least by important leaders, that France was now capable of great military feats, because it represented universal principles and the will of the people, united into a single national will. Hercules would protect Marianne.

Revolutionary leaders made ample use of rhetoric in attempting to unite the people for war, and counterrevolutionary forces gave them ample material with which to work. In 1791 Brissot's faction in the Assembly succeeded in explicitly linking the fear of counterrevolutionary activity sparked by Louis XVI's flight to Varennes with émigré agitation, and posed war as the solution to both problems.[131] By early 1792 the Brissotins had succeeded in convincing the Legislative Assembly of the need for war. The Legislative Assembly was full of new, young members; it was divided and the ability to bring unity rested on effective rhetoric. Whipping up fear of counterrevolution, aristocratic plots, and invasion from abroad proved effective in gleaning support for war. As mentioned, even some of the royalists went along with this, though for different reasons, since they imagined that such a war could not be won. In 1792 the Assembly's pronouncements became increasingly belligerent toward the émigrés and the foreign powers harboring them. The responses of the European powers, initially represented by ambiguous declarations and not much movement, came to be interpreted as unambiguously hostile. Despite Austria's hesitation, many French citizens interpreted its declarations in support of the émigrés, and its threats to create a European Concert designed to protect them, as a move toward war. Ambiguous Austrian diplomacy gave the war party in the French Legislative Assembly the material it needed to break the alliance of 1756, in a manner that was tantamount to a declaration of war.[132]

[129] Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*.
[130] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, p. 221.
[131] Blanning, *Origins*, p. 99.
[132] Ibid., pp. 102–105.

The pro-war faction in the French Legislative Assembly (replaced by the National Convention in September of 1792) made use of both revolutionary ideas and more traditional thinking about France's international position to construct arguments that Blanning notes combined to form a "war cocktail." A successful war, they argued, would strengthen the *assignats* and thus enhance the regime's credibility; it would put an end to civil strife by unifying the nation against a foreign enemy. The Brissotins also made rhetorical use of the traditional strain of Austrophobia permeating French political culture, arguing that France's diminished stature in international politics since the Seven Years' War was largely to be blamed on the Austrian alliance. War would be a means of reasserting French greatness in the world. Further, they argued that national sovereignty was at stake, and that France needed to protect itself from external interference in its affairs. Finally, they argued that France's enemies were paper tigers, and that winning the war would be easy.[133] A notable dissenting voice was that of Robespierre, whose impassioned and tightly reasoned plea to avoid war in order to concentrate on enemies at home and to build greater strength left him in the minority.[134] He feared that war would only help the royalists and aristocrats. But his voice was overwhelmed on this issue, and he changed his tune in the wake of key military victories.

In their assessment of the international scene, the Brissotins estimated that Britain would stay neutral, that Russia was too preoccupied with Poland to be a threat, that Spain was bankrupt, and that Prussia might even fight on the French side. They admired the late Frederick the Great as an enlightened philosopher king. They also recalled his attitudes toward Austria. Frederick was "held up to the Assembly as the model on which the Revolution should base its foreign policy, for when he had been confronted by an Austrian-led concert, he had known just what to do: strike first."[135] The Austro-Prussian alliance of February 1792 put an end to the hopes of a Franco-Prussian alliance, and heightened French suspicions and fears; France declared war on Austria in April. The British did in fact maintain a neutral stance until November of 1792; Charles Maurice Talleyrand, France's envoy to Britain, was even angling for a British alliance. What began to turn the British was the success of French armies at Valmy, in Savoy and Nice, and along the Left Bank of the Rhine. Finally, the French conquest of Belgium and subsequent threat to the Low Coun-

[133] Ibid., pp. 105–109.

[134] Société des Amis de la Constitution, Séante aux Jacobins, à Paris, *Discourse de Maximilien Robespierre, sur le parti que l'Assemblée National doit prendre relativement à la proposition de guerre, annoncée par le pouvoir executif*, Prononcé à la Société, le 18 décembre 1791 (De l'Imprimierie du *Patriote François*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris).

[135] Blanning, *Origins*, p. 110.

tries—seen as pillars of British security—proved the last straw, especially the opening of the Scheldt River, which had long been closed by treaty.[136]

Revolutionary France's early "no-conquest" decrees and universalist ideology quickly mutated into a war of expansion. This is partly because the French revolutionaries were trapped by their own rhetoric. In promising to liberate all peoples from despotic rule, the Brissotins put themselves into a position from which they could not back down, especially while French armies in the field were winning significant victories. On November 29, after the French victory at Jemappes, Brissot wrote: "We cannot be calm until Europe, all Europe, is in flames."[137]

The revolutionary French melded universalist ideology with *raison d'état*.[138] It may thus appear that revolutionary ideology was merely a cover for national interest, but this is too simplistic, and hardly obvious. Would not the Revolution have been better consolidated without antagonizing all of Europe? It is possible to argue, as the Brissotins did, that war would bring national regeneration. But there were competing, and arguably more rational, interpretations of France's national interest that dictated a more cautious policy. One need only look to Talleyrand's correspondence and efforts to secure a British alliance, or Georges Jacques Danton's moderating diplomatic efforts, for example, to find evidence that key skillful practitioners of *realpolitik* preferred a moderate course and were overridden by more radical forces.[139] Certainly, the revolutionary wars ended up facilitating French imperial expansion on an impressive scale; in a sense the Brissotins were proved right. But this does not mean that ideology was merely a cover for national interest, for who knew at the outset what the outcome would be?

A better argument is that key elements of revolutionary ideology logically complemented certain traditional strands of French foreign policy, including Austrophobia and the desire for national greatness. It was thus possible to construct a coalition of support based on these complementary principles. Such complementarities inevitably incite a temptation toward reductionism: if the French were practicing *realpolitik*, then why do we need to include radical revolutionary ideology in our analysis? The answer is that there were other versions of *realpolitik* available: an alliance with Britain, consolidation at home, perhaps colonial expansion. A war

[136] Ibid., pp. 133–41.

[137] Quoted in Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution, from Its Origins to 1793*, trans. Elizabeth Moss Evanson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 274; also see Blanning, *Origins*, pp. 136–137.

[138] Blanning, *Origins*, p. 137.

[139] For example, see *Correspondance Diplomatique de Talleyrand: le Ministère de Talleyrand sous le Directoire* (Paris: Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1891), especially the letters of January–April 1792.

with the German powers was not the only strategic choice, but one of many. Understanding the ideological or cultural climate helps us understand why some strategic choices were made rather than others.

Rather than attempting to eliminate power politics in favor of liberty and equality, the French were reinventing power politics, shedding old constraints, and by instituting popular sovereignty and espousing a universalistic cause, remaking the image of Europe from a society of dynastic states to something more like a state of nature.[140] The terror, the war, the abolition of the monarchy in September of 1792, and the subsequent trial and execution of the king are all inextricably intertwined. Insurrectionary domestic politics and foreign war came to form a mutually enforcing dynamic.[141]

The Republic of Virtue in a State of Nature

Mobilization for war shaped, and was shaped, by revolutionary politics. Linked to the exigencies of warfare and mass mobilization, republican ideals took a classical form that might have deeply interested, but not surprised, Machiavelli. The French nation came to be visualized as a republic of virtuous citizen-soldiers charged with fighting enemies at home and abroad. But such a republic could not fight limited wars for limited aims, as was the practice of eighteenth-century monarchs. Just as revolutionary leaders either embodied the general will or failed to do so, in which case they were traitors, the Republic of Virtue could only fight for total victory or total defeat. There was no way to accommodate or recognize the legitimacy of opposing interests, or interests of outside powers; opposition was by definition illegitimate. As Furet puts it: "The term 'democratic politics' does not refer here to a set of rules or procedures designed to organise, on the basis of election results, the functioning of authority. Rather, it designates a system of beliefs that constitutes the new legitimacy born of the Revolution, and according to which the 'people', in order to establish the liberty and equality that are the objectives of collective action, *must break its enemies' resistance*."[142] Consequently, the values of the Revolution "were at stake in every conflict,"[143] including

[140] See Mlada Bukovansky, "The Altered State and the State of Nature: The French Revolution in International Politics," *Review of International Studies* 25, 2 (April 1999): 197–216.

[141] Mona Ozouf, "War and Terror in French Revolutionary Discourse, 1792–1794," *Journal of Modern History* 56 (1984): 579–97.

[142] Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p. 27, emphasis added.

[143] Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p. 29.

foreign wars. And so France found itself in a "state of nature" in relation to all other European states.

The disjunction between domestic and international legitimacy reached its apex in the wars of the Republic. The French annexations of the principality of Alsace and the papal enclave of Avignon were legitimated by the popular sovereignty principle. Populist modes of legitimation left the status of all treaties adhered to by monarchical France uncertain. Georges Lefebvre writes: "Monarchs thought that this new international law was obviously calculated to benefit France by permitting it to annex, peacefully and at no cost, any territory whose inhabitants wished to start their own revolution, challenging their rulers. All treaties were torn up, all legal bonds between France and Europe broken."[144]

Although Schroeder argues that the international law protecting German principalities and other small and intermediate holdings was already under assault by great powers animated by destructive eighteenth-century rules and practices,[145] the revolutionary French accelerated this erosion. The power of nobility, clergy, and other "feudal" institutions was already waning under enlightened absolutism,[146] but as argued in Chapter Three, the Enlightenment also gave new rhetorical force to privileged claims in a way that weakened monarchical authority. In Blanning's view the feudal order, epitomized by the German principalities, was decimated by the French: "Far from being the gale which blew away the desiccated feudal leaves . . . the French Revolution is better likened to a chain-saw, which felled an ancient, gnarled, but still flourishing oak."[147]

Whether or not France can be blamed for the destruction of international law in the eighteenth century (contemporary critics of the Revolution were quick to place such blame), the old regime in all its manifestations was subject to unprecedented pressure due to the vast mobilization by the revolutionary French. Mobilization was made possible by the unleashing of the idea of popular sovereignty and the revolutionary political dynamics that ensued. Without that principle, it would have been impossible to legitimate the mass eradication of nobility and clergy as constitutive orders of the state, orders that, in the rhetoric of the Abbé Sieyès, were "nothing" where the laboring classes (bourgeoisie) were "everything."[148]

Positing popular sovereignty as the fundamental principle of political legitimacy empowered France to challenge the old order because it enabled mass mobilization. It also encouraged other "peoples" to put into

[144] Lefebvre, *The French Revolution, from Its Origins to 1793*, pp. 196–97.

[145] Schroeder, *Transformation*, chap. 2.

[146] See George Rudé, *Revolutionary Europe, 1783–1815* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), chap. 2; Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, p. 57.

[147] Blanning, *French Revolution in Germany*, p. 20.

[148] Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate?"

question every international treaty entered into by "princes." In French hands this became an effective rhetorical tool legitimating expansion. But such a principle also made it impossible to find common ground for negotiating with rivals, since rivals were by definition illegitimate and could not therefore have legitimate and negotiable interests. This problem became more acute as the war abroad was accompanied by insurrection at home, and both internal and external rivals were labeled as enemies of the *patrie*. Thus international relations became, for the French at least, more like a state of nature. This attitude took on the dynamic of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

As the wars progressed, liberation of peoples and "sister republics" quickly gave way to direct administration with the co-optation of local elites and, increasingly, annexation. The inability of the Convention to resolve economic crises at home made conquered ("liberated") territories ripe targets for economic exploitation. After the final overthrow of the monarchy and the declaration of a Republic in September 1792, a period of terror and revolutionary dictatorship ensued, which "helped galvanize the war effort and save France, at the cost of raising the ideological stakes of the struggle and making it more difficult for France to end the conflict and easier and more tempting to expand it."[149] Although initial French victories were more attributable to allied incompetence and foot-dragging than French skill, the internal mobilization of 1793, accompanied by the height of the Terror, sent the French on the road to real victories. According to Schroeder, "late 1793 marked a point where France surpassed its rivals in its ability to recruit and train large masses of men and organize its economy for war."[150] As Schama observes: "Militarized nationalism was not, in some accidental way, the unintended consequence of the French Revolution: it was its heart and soul."[151]

Revolutionary Ideas and the Army

The French revitalized the classical concept of citizen warfare but gave it a new basis in the idea that citizens were fighting for the universal values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Hercules was protecting Liberty. The *levée en masse* of August 1793, though unevenly implemented and widely resisted, vastly increased the manpower available to the army (a reasonable estimate is that, combined with a conscription in February, the *levée*

[149] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 103.
[150] Ibid., p. 137.
[151] Schama, *Citizens*, p. 858.

made about 500,000 men available,[152]) and the decree that initiated it reveals the extent to which the entire French nation was conceptualized as a war machine.[153]

> Henceforth, until the enemies have been driven from the territory of the Republic, the French people are in permanent requisition for army service. The young men shall go to battle; the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions; the women shall make tents and clothes, and shall serve in the hospitals; the children shall turn old linen into lint; the old men shall repair to the public places, to stimulate the courage of the warriors and preach the unity of the Republic and hatred of kings. National buildings shall be converted into barracks; public places into armament workshops; the soil of cellars shall be washed in lye to extract saltpeter therefrom.[154]

As John Hall Stewart notes, this is "the first complete wartime mobilization of a nation in modern history."[155] The French put about 750,000 active men in the field in the campaigns of 1794, ultimately distributed among eleven armies in various theaters, one of them fighting the mass counterrevolutionary uprising in the Vendée.[156]

Although it is a common observation that the French revolutionary armies, and Napoleon's "perfection" of them,[157] revolutionized warfare, the Revolution itself generated no real technological innovations, and military techniques drew on prerevolutionary strategists such as Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, comte de Guibert (although Guibert himself was expressing relatively new ideas in setting forth the advantages of popular involvement in war).[158] So the nature of the military innovations must be directly linked to the political innovations of the Revolution—the un-

[152] T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787–1802* (London: Arnold, 1996), p. 109.

[153] Bertaud, *Army of the French Revolution*; Lynn, *Bayonets*; see also Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power."

[154] Decree Establishing the *Levée en masse*, August 23, 1793, in Stewart, *Documentary Survey*, pp. 472–474.

[155] Ibid. See also Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770–1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 83.

[156] Best, *War and Society*, p. 87. For an account of the wars, see Blanning, *French Revolutionary Wars*.

[157] This is Clausewitz's view; see Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 591–92; see also Best, *War and Society*, pp. 63–65.

[158] R. R. Palmer, "Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 91–119; Best, *War and Society*, pp. 56–57.

leashing of popular sovereignty and nationalism in the context of counter-revolution and foreign war. There is disagreement, however, on whether French military successes, especially in the western theaters, were due to revolutionary élan or to superior numbers. Blanning argues for numbers; John Lynn cites élan.[159]

Blanning supports his argument by pointing out the following:

> Whenever the Austrians or Prussians managed to get even roughly the same number of men on to the battlefield, they won. This they managed on more occasions than are compatible with the popular image of the revolutionary wars as an unbroken triumph for France. The Prussians lost at Valmy in September 1792 but won at Pirmasens in September 1793; the Austrians lost at Jemappes in November 1792 but won at Neerwinden in March 1793. The topsy-turvy pattern also gives the lie to the conventional explanation which stresses the irresistible *élan* of citizen-soldiers, for constant forces should have constant consequences.[160]

Blanning also argues that the enthusiasm of the soldiers was largely grounded in a fear of the commissars sent by the National Convention to monitor their activities and that, furthermore, the divided nature of the anti-French coalitions was a crucial permissive condition for French military successes. Napoleon, in his view, was truly a military genius for whom the Revolution provided an opportunity he would not otherwise have had.[161]

Lynn's competing conclusions are based on a close study of the Army of the North. Lynn systematically argues that the combat effectiveness of French troops was the critical factor in French victories, and that this effectiveness rested on the motivation of the soldiers. The motivation was based on a new sense of role and purpose. "A transformation of the nature of the government had widely redefined the relationship of the soldier to the people."[162] Although the training and mobilization of the army involved complicated administrative schemes, and resistance and desertion remained endemic, revolutionary principles nevertheless got through to the army, and the taste of victory solidified those principles.

While these two explanations may rival each other in accounting for French military victories, in assessing the general impact of the Revolution on military affairs they are not mutually exclusive. The crucial problem

[159] Blanning, *French Revolutionary Wars*, p. 270; Lynn, *Bayonets*; see also Bertaud's classic *Army of the French Revolution*.

[160] Blanning, *French Revolutionary Wars*, p. 270.

[161] Ibid., pp. 270–71.

[162] Lynn, *Bayonets*, p. 64.

for the anti-French coalitions, as Blanning and others have pointed out, was putting enough men in the field. This they could not do because they had neither common war aims nor the political tools now available to the French. However one might judge its effectiveness in the field of battle, revolutionary élan was central to France's ability to muster manpower. An attentive realist who has read Posen's article on mass armies might now reiterate the claim that nationalism and mass mobilization were simply tools of *realpolitik*.[163] But although they may have become so in the subsequent course of history, their initial introduction onto the scene was much more complicated and cannot simply be construed as instrumental. This is especially true because the actual identity and nature of political authority in France was being contested. The question of who actually constituted and ruled the state was at stake in the political struggles preceding and permeating the early Revolution; thereafter, when the popular will had gained its ultimate status, it was still a contest as to who represented the popular will. Since the identity of the authority that constituted and spoke for the state was constantly contested until Napoleon's coup, it is analytically misleading to posit an instrumental state guiding the upsurge of nationalism, at least until the Napoleonic turn (for how could something whose very identity and nature was not settled act instrumentally?). But revolutionary French nationalism clearly predates Napoleon, and so the force of nationalist ideas has to be recognized as autonomous of the French state up until (and arguably beyond) Napoleon's coup.

The upsurge of nationalism was not simply generated from the top down, but resulted from the collapse of the old regime, the entry of new political actors onto the scene, and the development of new political techniques. Hunt's observation is relevant here:

> The power of the revolutionary state did not expand because its leaders manipulated the ideology of democracy and the practices of bureaucracy to their benefit; power expanded at every level as people of various stations invented and learned new political 'microtechniques'. Taking minutes, sitting in a club meeting, reading a republican poem, wearing a cockade, sewing a banner, singing a song, filling out a form, making a patriotic donation, electing an official—all these actions converged to produce a republican citizenry and legitimate government. . . . Power, consequently, was not a finite quantity possessed by one faction or another; it was rather a complex set of activities and relationships that created previously unsuspected resources. The surprising victories of the revolutionary armies were only the most dazzling consequence of this discovery of new social and political energy.[164]

[163] Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power."
[164] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, p. 72.

Realist arguments about the instrumentality of nationalism and mass armies forget that the process of inventing and the process of harnessing and using an invention are not the same.

War and revolutionary ideology were joined in a mutually reinforcing dynamic that was both destructive and creative. The French army's success, argues Schroeder, "made some revolutionary ideals (fraternity, nationalism, social equality, careers open to talents, and sacrifice for the general will) take root more deeply and durably in the new army than anywhere else in French political and social life."[165] According to Schama, that key repository of revolutionary values became "a professionally organized and highly disciplined arm of the state."[166] Such developments, according to Schroeder, "promoted a strong vested interest in continued war." This interest became a national one, because the revolutionary governments had failed to reorganize the national economy enough to sustain a prolonged war drive. "Yet one regime after another relied on [the army] not only for security against foreign and domestic enemies, but even more for the contributions and loot from abroad to sustain it financially at home."[167]

After Robespierre fell from power in July of 1794, the purposes of the government and those of the army became increasingly divergent. The inability of the Directory to control its generals, in particular the spectacularly successful Napoleon in Italy, set the pattern for the immediate future. The *esprit de corps* of the army became stronger with the victories, but more insular, and increasingly disconnected from the aims of civilian government. As Napoleon's eventual coup demonstrated, the French nation-state was now constituted more by the army than by any other institution. These developments made the construction of a stable peace ultimately dependent on complete defeat of France, combined with a disavowal of the revolutionary populist principles that themselves came to be seen as warlike and destabilizing. From this perspective, Napoleon was an extension rather than a perversion of the Revolution.[168] Although he perverted its democratic ideals and restored the concept of noble orders and some noble families, he effectively tapped the Revolution's martial spirit and France's newly mobilized resources.

Despite the understandable temptation to lump the revolutionary French in with other practitioners of power politics, the French Revolution introduced a new dimension into power politics—popular sovereignty.

[165] Schroeder, *Transformation*, pp. 137–38.

[166] Schama, *Citizens*, p. 760.

[167] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 138.

[168] This is Georges Lefebvre's basic thesis in *Napoleon from 18 Brumaire to Tilsit, 1799–1807*, trans. Henry F. Stockhold (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), intro.

That dimension extended the scope and intensity of power politics at home and power politics between states. Once Napoleon took the reins, the forces unleashed in the French articulation of popular sovereignty were harnessed to imperialist ends. But the idea of popular sovereignty, with its corollaries of natural equality and the rights of man, was critical to the processes of wartime mobilization. Under Napoleon the state regained control over the people, and became instrumental about mobilizing nationalist sentiment for the purposes of *realpolitik*, as Posen convincingly argues.[169] But Napoleon only rode the wave, he did not invent it.[170]

Conclusion

Raymond Aron once remarked that "the French Revolution compromised the homogeneity of the European system."[171] The international structure of old regime Europe was constituted by the culture of dynastic legitimacy and court politics; when the alternative legitimating principle of popular sovereignty emerged in the French Revolution and the revolutionary wars ensued, this further undermined the European old regime and arguably ushered in the modern nation-state system.[172] Since the triumph of popular sovereignty was far from complete (or even assured) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, heterogeneity became the order of the day, and in this sense Aron's remark is on the money. It would be a mistake, however, to read this argument as a claim that change in regime type constituted the primary destabilizing factor in the international system. Sorel long ago challenged this view by pointing out that old regime Europe was already the locus of various regime types, and that in particular the revolution in Britain that brought Oliver Cromwell to power did little to change politics as usual; monarchical powers soon came courting for alliances.

It was the revolution in legitimacy rather than revolution in regime type that constituted the significant break. What is the difference? Cromwell's republic did not challenge the legitimacy of the entire European order; the French Revolution did. The spread of Enlightenment ideas throughout Europe prepared the ground for a more thoroughgoing, popular challenge to monarchical legitimacy. The Enlightenment was Europe-wide, not just confined to one state; the tensions set off by the spread of

[169] Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power."

[170] See Peter Paret, "Napoleon and the Revolution in War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, ed. Paret, pp. 123–42.

[171] Raymond Aron, *Peace and War*, trans, Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox (Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday, 1966), p. 396.

[172] Hall, *National Collective Identity.*

Enlightenment ideas created a ferment that cut across Europe. But this ferment was only the tinder, it had to be sparked by the Revolution and the revolutionary wars to take the specific form that it took: populist nationalism. Enlightenment ideas could have been put into practice differently, and in different times and different places, they were. But since revolutionary, militarized nationalism emerged in one of Europe's great powers and facilitated its rise to previously unattained imperial heights, this particular version of modernity proved a potent template for future imitators. This is all the more true since Europe went on to colonize much of the world, and so succeeded in widely disseminating these conceptions.

My research further suggests that in order for a state to be deeply, constitutively revisionist, it is not enough for that state to set itself up against all others in the international system. Rather, there have to be revisionist sympathizers in other states to make deep revisionism truly destabilizing. When the domestic politics of status quo states are destabilized by a revisionist movement, as was the case with the French Revolution (and also, incidentally, with the Russian), then the potential for a "constitutive war," where the principles of political authority are ultimately challenged, becomes all the more acute. If there had been more active Nazi parties throughout Europe and in the United States, the German challenge in World War II would have been even more deeply threatening than it turned out to be.[173]

Finally, for the purposes of international relations theory I would reemphasize the point that the surge in power brought on by the French Revolution was not simply the result of intentional *realpolitik*; it was a consequence of the deployment of Enlightenment ideas in the sociopolitical context of late eighteenth-century France and within the context of eighteenth-century dynastic competition. There was no rational state to guide this process through much of its early stages, let alone engineer the results. The predatory international context and mutual misperception honed revolutionary ideas into their holistic, messianic, universalist form, exponentially heightening the level of threat in Europe. But new possibilities also nested within the French threat. European reaction against the military expansion of the Revolution and Napoleon, though slow in mobilizing, nevertheless managed to turn back the tide of French imperialism. But at the level of discourse and future example, the dual legacy of nationalism and universalism proved more durable than French hegemony itself.

[173] Mark Mazower's book, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), suggests that national socialist and fascist ideas were much more of a Europe-wide phenomenon than most people are willing to recognize.

Chapter Six

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Conclusion: Fractured Hegemony and the Seeds of Change

> "There are few greater errors in the study of international politics than to suppose that revolutionary doctrines have been discarded or are maintained only hypocritically for reasons of state. This is to show ignorance of human beliefs and motives."
> —Martin Wight[1]

Culture shapes the international system because beliefs about legitimacy are forged through cultural discourse, and without legitimacy power cannot endure. Legitimacy does not simply emanate from, nor is it reducible to, a state's material power; rather, legitimacy constitutes a significant dimension of power, and it is the product of both cultural discourses and strategic struggles that transcend the boundaries of the state itself, while simultaneously shaping its identity and internal cohesion. Legitimacy has both international and domestic dimensions. Without at least some basic, internationally recognized notions of legitimacy there would be no order at all in the international system; this holds true for organized war as well as for diplomacy and international law. Any entity that deserves the name "states system," even when it displays a certain degree of heterogeneity, enshrines certain modes of authority and order, privileging some forms of rule over others.[2]

Insofar as one of the requirements of domestic legitimacy is maintenance of the security and identity of the state in a world of other states, domestic and international legitimacy are intertwined. Loss of the latter

[1] Martin Wight, *Power Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad (1978; London: Leicester University Press, 1999), p. 94.

[2] For a more extended discussion of this idea, see Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

can mean big trouble for the former, although one can always find individual cases—today we call them "pariahs" or "rogue states"—wherein holding out against the norms of the system may be seen as a badge of honor in the domestic sphere. But these are exceptions that prove the rule. The tacit support and acceptance of a state's legitimate sovereign rights by other states facilitates the exercise of sovereignty at home. One result of this condition is typically characterized as "socialization" pressure exerted by the international system on its member states.[3]

While international legitimacy is one condition for sustaining domestic legitimacy, the reverse is also true; without domestic legitimacy a government will have difficulty mustering the resources to act as a state on the international scene. A deep, mutually constitutive relationship thus exists between international and domestic legitimacy conceptions. In the modern era this relationship does not appear as tight as it did in old regime Europe, where dynastic ties and common membership in the same social caste bound ruling elites together while at the same time setting them above their subjects as the class born to rule by the grace of God. But although blood and class ties are no longer as relevant in this regard, the link between international and domestic legitimacy remains important despite its variability. The specific contours of this link may be identified through a study of political and legal debates and discourses of a specific period.

International legitimacy conceptions tend to be so enduring as to take the form of structural characteristics of the system, but they are not static; legitimacy is a variable because conceptions of what is required to make power legitimate change. On the surface, one of the forces of change appears to be revolution, because revolutions embody fundamental contests over the character of legitimate authority. The French revolutionaries' denial of and challenge to the authority of "princes" and assertion of the authority of "peoples" constituted a major challenge to the legitimating foundations of the old regime European international system. English School thinkers such as Hedley Bull and Martin Wight, as well as writers like Raymond Aron and Kyung-Won Kim, characterize the French and also the Russian revolution as forces that undercut the existing international order.[4]

[3] The structural realist account of socialization is found in Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979). For a discussion of socialization that takes legitimacy into account, see David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), and Mlada Bukovansky, "Revolutionary Regimes and the International System: Socialization and Structural Change" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1994).

[4] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Wight, *Power Politics*, chap. 7; Kyung-Won Kim, *Revolution and International System* (New York: New York University Press, 1970); Raymond Aron, *Peace and War*, trans. Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966).

The French Revolution has had a strong gravitational pull, for scholars and for those living in its immediate aftermath. But our attraction to the "world historical event" may also obscure our ability to see that it was not just the Revolution and the ensuing wars that began to transform the system, but rather the ideas about political legitimacy germinating first in the European Enlightenment, and then in the complex, Euro-Atlantic struggle of revolution and counterrevolution. If this is granted, then the American Revolution also takes on "world historical" significance, not simply because of the change of regime in the colonies, but because of the legitimacy conceptions taking shape in the revolutionary process. If we see the crucial change as one in which popular sovereignty began to challenge dynastic monarchical rule as the most legitimate form of political authority, and if in addition we recognize that along with popular sovereignty the notion of legitimacy as rule of law began to take deeper root in European political culture during this time, then the American Revolution deserves as much attention as the French.

The focus on revolutions should not deflect our attention from the more subtle but still central issue of legitimacy as a discursive, cultural phenomenon. Not revolution in and of itself, but rather the ideas about legitimate authority percolating in the revolutionary process destabilized the international society of the eighteenth century. Moreover, revolutionary doctrines cannot simply be characterized as "domestic" phenomena; the discourses that generated them were transnational. Finally, it was not revolution in and of itself but also the reactions of, and lessons learned by, nonrevolutionary statesmen that yielded systemic changes in legitimacy conceptions.[5] Legitimacy contests penetrated both the domestic and the international sphere simultaneously; a legitimacy struggle should not simply be characterized as "revolutionary or revisionist state versus status quo international system."

In the cases studied here, innovation in the political culture of the international system proceeded by means of dialectical struggles taking place both domestically and internationally between groups adhering to contradictory notions of legitimacy, and by the adoption and use of revolutionary conceptions of legitimacy by more conservative actors who found or manufactured complementarities between their own ideas and interests and those of revolutionary factions. Without revolutionary challenges, old regime statesmen would not have changed their ways and worked to create the sort of stable peace and European equilibrium that was, Schroeder argues, the essence of the system born of the Vienna Congress. Schroeder gives a good deal of credit to the European statesmen

[5] On this point, see Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), especially chap. 12.

involved in the Congress for constructing a stable peace and a workable, legitimate international system. In so doing, he portrays the impact of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars in a negative light, calling Napoleon a "scourge of God" while noting that if the French Revolution "remains in the long term the source of liberal and democratic ideals, it may in the short term have set them back."[6]

But revolutionary conceptions of legitimacy articulated by both the French and the Americans contributed to the lessons learned by late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century statesmen in more than just negative ways, and such conceptions had broader impact and greater durability than the revolutions with which they are associated. If this were not the case, it would be difficult to account for Schroeder's interpretation of the decline in 1848 of the Vienna system: "The Vienna system in 1848 continued to meet the demand for order; its rules for managing and containing conflict were still widely accepted and worked well. But it was ceasing to meet the requirements of legitimacy and welfare in the face of nationalism, liberalism, and accelerating economic change."[7] Long after the French Revolution had spent its fire and the architects of a new European order had done their work, the ideas that underpinned and evolved through both the American and the French revolutions continued to have such strong effects that they undermined the durability of one of the most successful international security regimes in modern history. But as I will argue, revolutionary conceptions of legitimacy not only undermined the Concert but may also have contributed to its successful construction.

In previous chapters I explored the notion that nationalism and liberalism—two of the forces that according to Schroeder undercut the Concert of Europe—were enduring legacies of the eighteenth-century revolutions, and that these legacies were the outcome of the interplay between Enlightenment ideas and the strategic political relationships between factions within the revolutionary states, and between these states and the other members of the international system. Neither the ideas themselves, nor the strategic struggles among political and social actors with specific material and prestige interests, were fully determinant of the outcomes; rather, the interplay of these factors produced the dual revolutionary legacy of nationalism and liberalism. In significant respects these consequences were unintended, at least by some of the major players. The U.S. Federalists hardly anticipated the full extent of popular, democratic, and nationalist participation in politics that would follow in the wake of their constitutional innovations. The enlightened, cosmopolitan French nobility, enthusiastically supporting and in some cases fighting for the cause of

[6] Ibid., pp. 395, 580.
[7] Ibid., p. 803.

liberty, first in the American War of Independence and then in France's own campaigns, tragically failed to anticipate the ascendancy of a Robespierre or a Marat, and the onset of the Terror. And few revolutionary idealists expected to see the potent symbol of Hercules, the slayer of the enemies of liberty, personified in a Corsican general with insatiable imperial ambitions.

In this concluding chapter I first review the systemic consequences of the development and deployment of Enlightenment ideas in the American and French revolutions, and briefly discuss how these legacies may have in turn contributed to both the learning that took place within, and the stresses and strains that ended up undermining, the Concert of Europe. I then review the implications of this study for international relations theory, and in particular for understanding systemic change.

Legacies

The cultural legacies of the American and French revolutionaries' articulation and defense of democratic as opposed to dynastic legitimacy are complex, but they include popular sovereignty, self-determination, nationalism, liberalism, class struggle, state centralization, new interpretations of the balance of power and international law, and a less restrained approach to warfare. These legacies—several of which are directly contradictory or at least in tension with each other—formed the building blocks of a new international system, although such a system did not fall into place until the twentieth century. An interim order was cobbled together in the Concert that embodied both traditional and innovative conceptions of legitimacy and statecraft; for a time this order checked—without destroying—some of the most radical legacies of the revolutionary period.

It is possible to make an economically deterministic argument and assert that the rise of capitalist market economies made notions such as popular sovereignty, self-determination, liberalism, and so on inevitable. This would make the eighteenth century less important for what came later, because one would argue that democratic legitimacy will inevitably arise along with the spread of capitalist markets. But such arguments can be challenged by reference not only to the historical record but also to the international system today, where the "inevitability" of the link between market society and democratization is being challenged in much of the developing world. A more careful argument should take into account the historical contingencies of culture, political struggles, and human choices and actions. Our world is built on the sedimentary residues of historical struggles; these residues both constrain and facilitate innovation. Because cultural legacies are complex and riddled with contradictions, innovation

is almost always possible. Scholars do a disservice to our understanding of international relations when they attempt to "naturalize" the historically contingent and make it appear inevitable or rooted in some unassailable law of history or human nature. We innovate with the cultural tools we inherit, and are simultaneously constrained by them.

Concepts that are so familiar to us today—popular sovereignty, self-determination, nationalism, liberalism, and the administratively centralized territorial state—must therefore be understood as legacies of cultural and political struggles. The American and French revolutions helped to situate these conceptual legacies firmly on the map of Western history and discourse. When I refer to the legacies of these revolutions, I am not claiming that only the revolutionary states, and no other political actors or thinkers, originated or had a hand in developing these legacies. Rather, because of their prominence in contemporary eighteenth-century events and discourse and in subsequent historical discussion, these revolutions cemented, accentuated, and innovated with these legacies in highly visible and influential ways. The French Revolution tends to overshadow the American in assessments of systemic impact, except where both are seen as part of a Europe-wide process of democratization.[8] But though the legacies of the American Revolution appear more subtle when compared with those of the French, they are nevertheless important. I summarize these before turning to the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Concert of Europe.

The rebelling American colonists put the concept of self-determination on the map of European culture by engaging in a successful War of Independence and then forming and sustaining a large and potentially powerful republic. They showed that written constitutions could serve as the rational legitimating foundations of government. This was a crucial legacy, because it supported the idea that legitimacy meant rule of law, that law should be written and available for all to see and understand, and that it should be grounded in universal human rationality rather than in tradition and particularistic local interests. This had implications for international as well as domestic conceptions of legitimacy; the early U.S. support for the rule of law in international relations was grounded in such modern conceptions of legitimacy, challenging the legitimacy of dynastic right, of the right inherent in conquest and superior force, and of the traditional privileges of particular, high-ranking social orders. The Anglo-Americans also demonstrated that republicanism could be an appropriate

[8] As in R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959, 1964). See also see Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (New York: Vintage Classics, 1990).

form of government even for a large state, by innovatively solving the problem of deploying republican principles over an extended territory.

The United States in its early years also made the first attempt of several to transcend the European balance of power system by developing an alternative vision of a liberal, universal cosmopolitan order based on equality, self-determination, and above all free trade. The last commitment had very broad implications because it embodied a desire to eschew the traditional power politics of territorial aggrandizement and status struggle, while supporting and furthering the development of international law. In these efforts the United States echoed and reinforced the aspirations articulated earlier by physiocratic and other enlightened reformers, and positions occasionally adopted by predominantly naval powers such as the Dutch, by weaker players in the European states system, and at various times by stronger powers (such as Russia and France) when they sought to gain advantage and prestige by upholding the "law of nations."

U.S. support for international law and a liberal commercial order was underpinned by a strong moralistic attitude, an attitude fueled and complemented by universalist interpretations of Christian doctrine. But faced with the realities of a mercantilist world where power and prestige politics still held sway, liberal aspirations often gave way to mercantilist measures, if only as unfortunate means to a good end. Frustrated liberal aspirations could also mutate into a sense of isolation, complementing earlier strains of exceptionalism and the desire to remain free of the corrupting influence of European power politics. Christian doctrine also fueled the sense of exceptionalism, and as a chosen people Americans could see themselves as separate from the rest of a doomed Western civilization rather than as participants in its overall redemption. Thus at least two conflicting strands of U.S. attitude and policy toward the European world competed for dominance: the liberal cosmopolitan, underpinned by a reforming, crusading spirit; and the nationalist, underpinned by a sense of exceptionalism. Advocates of the former approach sought to participate in the transformation of the European international system by identifying with the universal humanity of the members of that system; supporters of the latter sought either to divorce themselves from it or to squeeze what they could out of it while denying any bonds of identification. Much of American foreign policy can be interpreted in terms of these dueling approaches,[9] though like all broad interpretive schemas it leaves out important realities.

[9] See Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

Because of the United States' geopolitical isolation from Europe, its impact on European international politics was largely indirect, in the sense that its greatest influence was in the realm of ideas and example. Other than noting the obvious fact that the American Revolution "broke up a great overseas empire," Schroeder cautions against making too much of its impact on eighteenth-century international politics.[10] But he has a more circumscribed view than mine of what should be included in an analysis of the eighteenth-century international system. By concentrating on legitimacy conceptions as constitutive dimensions of the system, and by making legitimacy central to my analysis, I focus on the nexus of international and domestic politics—on their mutual dependency.[11] The idea of an international system presupposes domestic politics and vice versa. This challenges the neat division between the international and domestic spheres, but some semblance of parsimony can be salvaged by staying focused on fundamental legitimacy questions rather than taking into account all aspects of domestic, or for that matter international, politics.

In the realm of discourses about political legitimacy, the impact of ideas and example should not be underestimated. Whatever one thinks of his overall "Atlantic revolutions" thesis, R. R. Palmer's two-volume work provides ample evidence of the impact of the American War of Independence on European culture, and this theme is further reinforced in the work of Franco Venturi.[12] Although discourse alone cannot change the world, the discourses of democratic legitimacy, rational rule of law, and constitutionalism provided opportunities for all sorts of groups to try and assert their claims against traditional rulers. And a successful example of democratic republicanism in practice was probably far more potent in this regard than any abstract theory, no matter how elegantly wrought. Moreover, the notion that legitimacy meant the rule of law and that the rule of law constrained the sovereign was accepted and supported even by the conservative statesmen constructing the Concert of Europe.[13] In a number of ways, then, the American Revolution significantly altered the cultural resources available to those involved in European politics, even to the point of making it possible to think of a hitherto generally politically inactive group, "the people," as a legitimate political actor. Again, though this had been discussed in theory, a real-world, working example, espe-

[10] Schroeder, *Transformation*, p. 11.

[11] For Schroeder, legitimacy tends to have a constant meaning, which is rule of law. See, for example, his discussion of the Concert in *Transformation*, p. 539.

[12] Palmer, *Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 1:9–12; Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1776–1789*, 2 vols., trans. R. Burr Litchfield (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), especially chap. 1.

[13] Schroeder, *Transformation*, pp. 578–82.

cially in a period of growing literacy, was probably far more potent than any political tract in and of itself.

On the heels of the American example, the French Revolution generated a host of legacies of its own, and their impact was accentuated by France's position at the center of European international politics and culture. For Edmund Burke, good European governments existed in organic symbiosis with a broader European culture: "Nothing is more certain than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners and with civilization have, in this European world of ours, depended upon two principles and were, indeed, the result of both combined: I mean the spirit of a gentleman and the spirit of religion. The nobility and the clergy . . . kept learning in existence, even in the midst of arms and confusions, and whilst governments were rather in their causes than formed."[14] By annihilating the nobility and undermining the clergy, the French Revolution removed—in one very large and important state—the constraints on state power that Burke found so civilizing.

The argument that the French Revolution swept away intermediary bodies and thereby enhanced state power has a lineage not only in Burke but in marxist interpretations of the French Revolution, and has been taken up by historical sociologists such as Theda Skocpol and Charles Tilly.[15] The significance of this development for international relations deserves emphasis. Sweeping away intermediary bodies and thereby enhancing state power altered the patterns and limitations of international as well as domestic politics. A reconstitution of the legitimating foundations and structure of the French state, from a monarchy rooted in an estates system to popular sovereignty, also entailed a reconstitution of the purposes of the state. A reconstitution of state purpose in turn altered the overall balance of threat. While Stephen Walt's focus on balance of threat is important and insightful, it is also important to assess the cultural roots of threat perception; a reconceptualization of legitimacy was central to the reconfiguration of the newly threatening French state.[16]

The idea that the state and the nation should become welded into one general collective will (and "national interest"), and that it alone had the

[14] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 69.

[15] For a good historiographical summary, see François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chap. 1. On state power, see Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Skocpol and Meyer Kestenbaum, "Mars Unshackled," and Charles Tilly, "State and Counterrevolution in France," both in *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, ed. Ferenc Fehér (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). See also Kim, *Revolution and International System*.

[16] Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

power to command absolute allegiance, was invented and enacted in late eighteenth-century Europe. Culture was central rather than epiphenomenal to this development, but practice—especially the wars—brought certain cultural aspects to the fore in France (nationalism, popular sovereignty) while temporarily suppressing others (moderate constitutionalism). This process of interaction between strategic struggle and cultural context generated a reconfiguration of what was considered possible and legitimate in both domestic and international politics. As William Doyle points out, even those who wanted to bring back the old regime after the Revolution "no longer thought in ways that it would have recognized. New ideologies had emerged; old orthodoxies had been thrown off. Politics had been transformed."[17] The French Revolution altered theories of—and the very meaning of—the term "revolution," just as it altered theories of the nature of the state.[18] Its most important effects were in the realm of politics, not in economics or even so much in reconfiguring fundamental social structures. Although a stratified society continued to endure, even in France, politics would never be the same.[19] The effects of this transformation were felt internationally as well as domestically.

By altering traditional notions of what the state was, and was capable of, the French Revolution lent significant weight to the idea that international politics was a state of nature. The theory of balance of power put forth by Vattel and embraced by some U.S. Federalists,[20] which linked it to a system of international law moderating and governing Europe's international relations, was deeply challenged by the experience of the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Designs for perpetual peace based on a confederation of republics were shelved for at least a century. The state of nature idea gained credibility. Nasty as eighteenth-century wars had been, they were dominated by dynastic monarchies whose legitimacy was rooted in a conception of social order that constrained their mobilization capacity. Nor were such wars generally plagued with a deeply revisionist player who denied the legitimate existence of the others.

In a sense, the French revolutionary wars may be seen as what John Ruggie has called "constitutive wars," though he himself does not recog-

[17] William Doyle, *The Old European Order, 1660–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 378.

[18] See Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. 9.

[19] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[20] See Peter S. Onuf and Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *Federal Union, Modern World: The Law of Nations in an Age of Revolutions, 1776–1814* (Madison, Wisc.: Madison House, 1993).

nize them as such.[21] Europe remained a system of territorial nation-states, and so perhaps "the very ontology of the units" was not at issue.[22] What was at issue, however, was the "ontology" of political authority: who represented and constituted it? In this sense the French challenge of popular sovereignty did engender a constitutive crisis. But the constitutive war idea should not be simply cast as implying the polarization of a deeply revisionist state against an array of status quo powers, where the victory of one side or other determines the constitutive principles of the system. For one thing, dynastic monarchy seemed to have been victorious at the close of the Napoleonic Wars, but as we know in hindsight and as even some contemporaries recognized, dynasticism would never again enjoy the legitimacy it had enjoyed prior to the wars. Further, the real constitutive work in this period was not being done by or in just one state; the forces leading to the revolutionary crisis were cross-cutting and extended through Europe and beyond, into its colonies. They infected France most virulently, and thus it appeared as though France was the primary revisionist power among status quo states.

The reality was more complicated, because at least some pressures similar to those experienced in France (demands for more popular representation, nationalism, constitutionalism, ideas about equality) were percolating even within status quo states; they were just more effectively channeled and repressed in those states. In the realm of interstate interaction, the deep revisionism of France was shaped and mediated by the ongoing imperatives of international competition. The competitive context and France's perception of threats from Europe (and vice versa) channeled France's revisionist energies into militarized nationalism. The outcome was a more intense power-political struggle than had been the case in the previous decades, at least in terms of the scale of resources that were mobilized, thanks to nationalism and the popular sovereignty principle.

Georges Lefebvre's comment on the Austrian archduke's conduct of the War of 1809 captures the distinction between traditional eighteenth-century warfare and that which emerged from the French revolutionary wars: "Archduke Charles had great qualities, such as diligence, prudence, and coolness; but he was more effective in defence than attack, and too much wedded to traditional strategy which treated war as, in Niebuhr's phrase, 'a game of chess', and aimed not at destroying the enemy but merely at conquering a geographical objective."[23]

[21] John Gerard Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations," *International Organization* 47, 1 (Winter 1993): 139–74.

[22] Ibid., p. 162.

[23] Georges Lefebvre, *Napoleon, from Tilsit to Waterloo*, trans. J. E. Anderson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 54.

The only prerevolutionary set of wars within the European system that compare in scope and destructiveness to the French revolutionary wars were the post-Reformation wars of religion.[24] Indeed, the universalistic discourse of the religious wars and that of the French revolutionaries bear comparison.[25]

European leaders' responses to the Revolution went from sanguine and opportunistic in the early stages to deeply threatened as time wore on. Initial attempts to intimidate France and prey on perceived French weakness gave way to efforts to beat back French armies and, at various times, to cut diplomatic deals on the side, on the one hand, and to reinvigorate failing coalitions against Napoleon, on the other. All this highlighted the weaknesses of the eighteenth-century European system in the face of a determined imperialist state capable of mobilizing vast manpower and, when manpower ran short, of ruthlessly exploiting conquered territories.[26]

The mutation of the popular sovereignty principle into militarized nationalism and imperialism taught an important lesson to European statesmen about how societies could be mobilized for war. David Scharnhorst, who by 1806 had emerged as a leading proponent of military reform in a humiliated and defeated Prussia, had argued as early as 1796 that "we shall be victorious when one learns to appeal, like the Jacobins, to the spirit of the people."[27] None of these efforts proved immediately viable. Attempts to emulate French military innovations in Austria and Prussia were limited by the constraints of political legitimacy in those states; they could not afford to unleash the popular, nationalist will and hope to still survive in their existing forms, especially the multinational Austrian empire. Nevertheless, revolutionary ideas penetrated the system, though neither in accordance with France's initial revolutionary intent nor in accordance with Napoleonic pretensions to graft dynasticism and empire onto revolutionary populism (though this latter development showed the way for populist authoritarian regimes of the future).

The solidification of the structure of the European states system into a few great powers was spurred along, Gunther Rothenberg argues, by

[24] See Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions, 1783–1793* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 527; James Mayall, "1789 and the Liberal Theory of International Society," *Review of International Studies* 15 (1989): 297–307.

[25] Black, *British Foreign Policy*, p. 527; Mayall, "1789"; Ferenc Fehér, "The Cult of the Supreme Being and the Limits of the Secularization of the Political," in *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, ed. Fehér.

[26] Schoerder, *Transformation*.

[27] Quoted in Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 190; see also Barry Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," *International Security* 18 (Fall 1993): 8–124.

the revolutionary innovations in mobilization and by the Europe-wide effort to defeat Napoleon: "The increased reliance on mass armies, supplied by the production of mass industry, led to a progressive concentration of military power in a few major states."[28] This consolidation was accompanied by a change in the rules of international politics, which Schroeder's work lays out. The great powers became more interested in the preservation of intermediary states, in attempting to settle disputes peacefully through the Concert system, and in a more consciously equilibrated balance of power, rather than the old aggrandizing, purely competitive notion. Because of their negative experience with attempting to hold together an anti-French coalition, European statesmen came, for a time, to consciously adopt a systemic view, and to lay the foundations for a stable European peace.[29]

The notion of *international* legitimacy was revitalized in the Concert and interpreted as implying international legal constraints on sovereignty, though the Holy Alliance pushed further for the restoration of strictly dynastic notions of legitimacy.[30] The idea that intermediary bodies were important checks on despotic authority was reconfigured and projected onto the international realm in the commitments made by the architects of the Concert to protect the existence of weaker powers in the international system, because of their useful function as buffers between great powers. The strongest and most secure powers in the postwar system, Britain and Russia, practiced a relatively restrained form of hegemony on the European continent, punctuated by cooperation rather than the pure rivalry that materialist realist theories would predict.[31] A pragmatic and restrained realism based on Concert diplomacy came to supplement the failed cohesiveness of dynastic legitimacy and shared European civilization so important to Burke.

But one of the most enduring and problematic legacies of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars was the acceleration of nationalism. In particular, the Revolution strongly reinforced the idea that nation should be wedded to state, and that this was, as Max Weber has argued, the highest repository of collective value. National self-assertion could thus be seen as an end in itself, and this justified viewing international

[28] Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 165.

[29] Schroeder, *Transformation*.

[30] Ibid., chap. 12; see also Andreas Osiander, *The States System of Europe, 1640–1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), chap. 4. Osiander argues that dynasticism was something of a red herring, and Schroeder does not give much credit to the principle either.

[31] See Schroeder, *Transformation*, chap. 12, and Paul W. Schroeder, "Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?" *American Historical Review* 97 (June 1992): 683–735.

relations as a "state of nature." This emerging trend undermined, though perhaps did not overshadow, the achievements of the Concert of Europe; it certainly outlived them. Georges Lefebvre writes of the Concert: "It was natural that the diplomats of the *Ancien Régime* should be proud of their work, since they had divided the various lands and 'souls', according to their cherished principle of equilibrium. For that very reason, the work of the congress ran counter to the new European tendencies, for it completely ignored the feelings of nationality which the revolutionary wars had aroused."[32] Although Schroeder argues persuasively that interpretations of the Concert as a conservative force which suppressed emergent liberal and nationalist feelings have been discredited,[33] and it is clear that the Concert system was sufficiently innovative and attuned to the new forces in Europe to avoid the moniker of "reactionary," it is also true that its architecture could not fully contain and de-fang the forces unleashed by the revolutions. That much of European nationalist feeling emerged as a reaction to French occupation may beg the question of French influence, but it is no contradiction to argue that France provided both the negative impetus (occupation) and the basic outlines of a model—nationalism wedded to the state—through which reaction to that impetus could be articulated.

The French Revolution also demonstrated the virtues and vices of state centralization by achieving an entirely new level of centralization, a level that far surpassed that achieved by French absolutism. Other European leaders sought to emulate this. Tocqueville writes: "The local privileges which the French did not abolish in the countries they conquered have finally succumbed to the policy of the princes who conquered the French. Those princes rejected all the innovations of the French Revolution except centralization; that is the only principle they consented to receive from such a source."[34] Although the rationalization of administrative structures was already well under way in many enlightened monarchies, the Revolution and Napoleonic rule greatly accelerated the process. Centralization was spurred on by the attack on intermediary aristocratic and clerical estates, traditionally the holders of privileged claims against monarchical authority. Tilly argues that the acceleration of state centralization set off by the Revolution occurred throughout Europe.[35] Others came to see that eradication of intermediary bodies could enhance the wealth and power of the state; the French were a model to be emulated in this respect. We thus return to Furet's insight that democratic politics,

[32] Lefebvre, *Napoleon, from Tilsit to Waterloo*, p. 357.
[33] Schroeder, *Transformation*, pp. 575–76.
[34] Tocqueville (1840), *Democracy in America*, 2:304.
[35] Tilly, "State and Counterrevolution in France."

articulated in the French version of popular sovereignty, brought about a new form of absolute power. This in turn made international relations more like a state of nature, at least during the ensuing wars.

The restructuring of international politics in the Concert involved conscious resistance both to the new form of political legitimacy that had so disrupted the old order and to the problematic aspects of the eighteenth-century international system that had failed to respond adequately to French expansion. Yet while they worked to curb revolutionary ideas and establish a stable equilibrium, leaders were at the same time grasping their significance in at least two contradictory ways: nationalism and appeals to the people had important ramifications for the conduct of war, on the one hand; commitment to the rule of law and the notion that sovereign power should be constrained by law helped shape Concert diplomacy, on the other. Just as the contradictions within the international system of the old regime contributed to its ultimate transformation, the contradictions within the Concert system constituted important cultural rifts along which the struggles and legitimacy contests of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took shape. In a word, the struggle between unrestrained and self-assertive nationalism and the international rule of law had only just begun.

Political Culture and Systemic Change

Students of international relations have begun to seriously explore the role of ideas in shaping both foreign policy and the international system as a whole. Anyone who has studied a theoretical discourse—be it in philosophy, politics, economics, or physics—knows that such discourse evolves at least partly through a process of relating hypotheses or propositions to each other and demonstrating whether they challenge or complement each other. When we engage in discourse we sift through various propositions, relating them to empirical evidence to determine the viability of a challenged hypothesis or the durability of a complementary proposition. Although it may be far less rigorous and systematic, should we not expect something like this process to take place in the less academic but no less discourse-laden realm of politics itself? In both domestic and international politics, actors are faced with complexes of ideas about state identity and legitimacy; they may experience some of these ideas as being in contradiction with each other while others are complementary, and they may learn from experience that certain ideas are more powerful and compelling than others. This is not just a process of progressive learning, for truth often gets lost in the struggle over ideologies (in both academic

discourse and in politics), but it is a process that is both discursive and political at the same time.

In focusing on the role of ideas in international relations, some scholars have emphasized the constitutive nature of conceptions of sovereignty, state identity, and state purpose.[36] Such research has enhanced our understanding of the structure of international systems and has made inroads into explaining how state identities shape state interests and policies. Less progress has been made in showing how ideas contribute to systemic transformation, although the work of Rodney Hall and Christian Reus-Smit has richly described the differences between international systems with different constitutive principles.[37] This book has focused on the role of ideas in systemic change by highlighting the complex nature of political culture, or discourses pertaining to legitimacy and the exercise of authority.

In the analytical perspective adopted here, the identities of collective actors such as states are shaped by the cultural systems in which they are embedded, but at the same time the complexity of the cultural system facilitates the strategic manipulation of its propositions and symbols, as well innovation that generates new interpretations and syntheses. The incoherence of culture is what makes hegemony vulnerable and some degree of free agency possible. I have treated hegemony as a characteristic of the international system as a whole rather than as the property of a particularly strong state within the system. That is, what is hegemonic about a particular system is its constitutive complex of ideas about legitimate authority. This cultural complex may or may not be materially supported by one great power; in the system studied here, the hegemonic cultural complex was supported by several great powers rather than just one, and as Schroeder argues the Concert that came after rested on the dual hegemony of the system's flank powers, Britain and Russia.

A hegemonic political culture can be seen as a system of propositions and norms about legitimacy that relate to one another in specific ways. By mapping out the relationships between key propositions and norms within a political culture, I have delved into a hitherto underexplored aspect of the systemic transformation process. Relationships of contradiction and complementarity between core propositions and norms of a po-

[36] Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Chris Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Alexander E. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, U.K. Cambridge University Press, 1999); Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[37] Hall, *National Collective Identity*; Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*.

litical culture fuel conflict and facilitate coalition building in both international and domestic politics. The seeds of systemic change are sown when the legitimacy of the hegemonic order is undermined by either its extension (fueled by the discovery or manufacture of complementarities) into new areas or by its inability to meet new internal challenges, and when subsequent to this erosion political actors face off wielding contradictory notions of legitimacy in a hegemonic versus counterhegemonic struggle or legitimacy contest. Such legitimacy contests are most destabilizing—and thus potentially system transforming—when they occur in several domestic arenas and the international arena simultaneously.

I believe that it is impossible to develop a predictive theory or fully deterministic model of systemic change based on the ideas presented here (or any ideas, for that matter). But my approach does suggest some general things to look for. Hegelians and marxists have offered valuable insights about the role of contradiction as an engine of historical transformation. When political alignments form along the fissures created by contradictory notions of legitimacy, the probability of systemic change increases. But even prior to this, the legitimacy of the existing hegemonic order can be eroded by the extension of the existing order into domains it had previously failed to penetrate, and/or by the failure of the existing order to address new problems raised by changing material conditions. Both these corrosive factors may inspire legitimacy contests as political groups mobilize against the existing order. Extension of a hegemonic order into new domains is facilitated by the discovery and/or manufacture of significant complementarities between key principles of that order and propositions emanating from realms outside of that order. The rationalization of absolutist administration was facilitated by Enlightenment theories, which complemented some strains of traditional absolutist thought. This in turn extended the penetration of state control into areas previously governed with greater autonomy by constituent social orders, in some cases generating significant reaction and resistance from those orders. At the same time, the absolutist state found itself struggling to cope with changing economic conditions. The legitimacy of absolutism was thus undermined both by its very success in mobilizing Enlightenment thought to its own purposes and, in some cases (notably in France), by its failure to adapt to changing economic conditions. The latter point is emphasized often enough, but the former is just as important. The legitimacy contests that ensued, fueled by the complex cultural resources of Enlightenment thought, brought the contradictions between old regime dynastic legitimacy and the claims that sovereignty derives from "the people" to the fore.

As I have argued, the systemic outcomes of legitimacy contests cannot simply be construed as the victory of one form of legitimacy over another;

it is rarely that simple. One of the central themes of this book is that culture need not be coherent; the culture studied here was a complex of new and old propositions, rules, and norms whose very incoherence made innovation and transformation (and the strategic struggles that accompany this) possible. Thus a coherent and neat outcome of a legitimacy contest is hardly to be expected. The Concert of Europe did not simply represent the victory of tradition and dynastic conservatism over the counterhegemonic challenge of popular sovereignty and Napoleonic imperialism. Rather, it embodied elements of tradition along with new ideas gleaned from the revolutionary period. The tensions between these cultural elements constituted the fuel for future political struggles and legitimacy contests. Similarly, though it is tempting to view the end of the cold war as a coherent victory of democracy and capitalism over totalitarian rule and central planning, such an interpretation would miss the points being made here. The challenges to the legitimacy of free markets posed by socialist concerns, for example, have not been decisively wiped out; rather, they have taken on new forms, for example in the surprising alliance between trade union activists and environmentalists in protesting globalization.

To glean possible sources of systemic transformation in other international systems, including the current one, analysts should concentrate both on the development of legitimacy conceptions that contradict and challenge dominant modes of legitimating authority and on the extension, by the articulation or manufacture of complementarity, of existing modes of legitimacy into domains where such modes had not previously penetrated. The current, post–cold war international system appears on the surface to be a relatively coherent case of U.S. or U.S.-European hegemony furthering the complementary notions of democratic governance, the international rule of law, and the spread of capitalist markets. Perhaps, as Alexander Wendt has suggested, we are passing from a coherent "Lockean" international system to a coherent "Kantian" system.[38] But my view of international political culture differs significantly from Wendt's, not only in my more empirical approach to that culture and its variations but also in my active assertion of its incoherence. This approach to culture sheds light on some potential seeds of change in the current system, and I make a few brief suggestions here by way of conclusion. My observations in this regard are not original, but they are consistent with the analytical approach developed here, and that approach may shed some new light on these familiar issues.

One obvious point is that the tension between unrestrained nationalist self-assertion and commitment to the international rule of law has not

[38] Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, chap. 6.

been resolved, especially and somewhat ironically in the most powerful state in the current international system, the United States. The period studied in this book is one in which the tension between nationalism and the rule of law first truly came to the fore in its modern form. The issue today remains one of how to conceptualize the international dimensions of legitimacy: does it mean conforming to the rule of law or pursuing a purely self-regarding conception of security? The ideals the United States purports to uphold are very often in contradiction with the manner in which it conceptualizes its military security. To the rest of the world and even to the politically involved U.S. public, this Janus-faced hegemony invites some skepticism and confusion at best, and active resistance—even armed or "terrorist" resistance—at worst. Culturally, the United States has opened itself up to being portrayed as either a benign rule of law hegemon or a purely self-regarding, and perhaps even bullying, superpower. Those parties who choose to portray it as the latter have the cultural resources to do so, even if at this time they lack the material resources to do anything substantial about it. But the cases in this book strongly suggest that innovatively deployed cultural resources may in time alter the material distribution of power by facilitating the building of previously unthinkable coalitions. And by this I mean not just coalitions of states in some sort of balance of power formula, but coalitions that cut across state boundaries and may divide states, including the United States itself.

Further, the linkage between international and domestic legitimacy suggests that legitimacy conceptions projected by a dominant state in the system are especially important indicators of systemic stability or instability. Obviously, a divisive legitimacy struggle in a dominant state can have systemic effects, especially when the discursive terms of that struggle resonate within other states, as was the case in the struggle of popular sovereignty versus dynasticism. But even a less divisive fault line within a dominant state may prevent the hegemonic order from "gelling" as completely as it otherwise might. For example, the virulence of the tension between national self-assertion and voluntary self-submission to the rule of law within the United States influences its support of international regimes and organizations. The United States sends inconsistent messages with respect to its support of the international rule of law, and as a result the legitimacy and stability of the rule of law aspects of the international system are not what they could be were U.S. support less ambiguous. This point is hardly novel, but my focus on cultural contradictions and the linkages between international and domestic legitimacy does allow us to see it from a new angle.

A second "point of concern" has to do with the challenges faced in the current international system by the concept and legitimacy of sovereignty

itself.[39] Two sources of challenge are commonly identified: transnational social movements and the spread of capitalist markets. Transnational social movements, especially the human rights and environmental movements, have developed and crystallized around claims that qualify the legitimacy of sovereign authority by asserting the priority of individual human rights and ecological sustainability, respectively.[40] However these latter terms are defined (and that is the subject of a voluminous literature and active debate), those who align themselves with these movements are asserting the priority of their concerns over and above the right of the state to claim freedom from intervention in its domestic affairs. In essence, the very dividing line between what is a legitimate international concern versus what is a domestic concern is being challenged. Whereas earlier interpretations of the United Nations Charter, for example, gave priority to the principle of nonintervention in a state's domestic affairs over the question of support of human rights, this seems to be changing at least in some instances.

In and of itself such a challenge to sovereignty is nothing new. Intervention in the domestic affairs of another state has hardly been rare in practice over the past couple of centuries.[41] The sovereignty concept is sufficiently elastic to accommodate a variety of constraining interpretations. But what bears close watching with respect to these transnational social movements is how they align themselves with political actors to facilitate the extension of certain forms of authority and legitimacy into new areas. Such extension has the capacity to undermine the legitimacy of the existing order, as represented in the UN system, by exacerbating one of its central contradictions (between support of human rights, on the one hand, and noninterference in the domestic affairs of a state, on the other). For example, the selective support of human rights concerns by governments that perceive a complementarity between human rights principles and their security interests in a specific instance leads to the phenomenon of armed "humanitarian intervention." This involves an extension of the authority of some members of the international community into areas where such authority had previously failed to penetrate.

[39] "Point of concern": I take this terminology from David Laitin's book, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change among the Yoruba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), which makes several theoretical arguments that fit well with those made here.

[40] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); Paul Wapner, *Environmental Activism and Civic World Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

[41] For a lively discussion to this effect, see Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Aside from the important question of whether the selective enforcement of human rights principles undermines the legitimacy of the human rights regime in general, the related question of whether acting on a specific complementarity between human rights concerns and security interests might not breed active resistance by those who find the extension of such authority illegitimate, or contradictory to the still vital principle of self-determination, should not be ignored. Extension of a specific form of authority into areas where it had previously failed to penetrate might engender a legitimacy contest. The erosion of the legitimacy of the existing order is not likely to lead to a neat replacement by a coherent, alternative order, as the analyses developed in this book have shown. Rather, it provides an opportunity for a hegemonic versus counterhegemonic struggle involving actors committed to contradictory principles, the outcome of which is hardly predetermined unless we believe in a theory of progress in which "right" must eventually win out.

The analytical perspective in the example just discussed may also be applied to the complementarities that are being developed between the environmental movement and organized labor, generating coalitions opposed to the extension of global market relations and corporate power. If indeed we may still characterize international political economy as embodying a compromise of "embedded liberalism," itself a concept containing a potent contradiction,[42] then the alignment of trade unions and environmental groups to try and give the "embedded" side of the equation more force than the "liberal" side might also engender (and may in fact now be engendering) a legitimacy crisis in the existing economic order. The capacity of these movements to form transnational linkages enhances their political clout and their ability to make the legitimacy contest a global one.

The impact of the spread of capitalist markets on territorial sovereignty is of course one of the central questions of our own time. The development of market economies has always influenced politics, and entire research industries have developed to analyze the material dimensions of such influence. For the most part, analysis of the impact of globalization on sovereignty falls outside the scope of the analytical framework offered here. But there is a way in which my theoretical perspective might offer some insights, and that again has to do with the focus on how the terms of legitimate authority are constructed and contested. There is no doubt that in the cases studied in this book, the development of market economies influenced the strategic and legitimacy struggles of the eigh-

[42] John Gerard Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order," in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983).

teenth century. I justified my focus on the cultural, discursive terms of these legitimacy struggles rather than on their material underpinnings by arguing that the material underpinnings in and of themselves did not decisively determine the specific forms of the political and legitimacy struggles. This does not mean that material conditions should be ignored, but simply that they are indeterminate with respect to their political outcomes. In the eighteenth century, emergent capitalist markets coexisted as comfortably with absolutism as with republican forms of government, and republican governments could just as easily ruin their economies as absolutist monarchs.

Today we can argue about whether globalization is eroding sovereignty or whether it might actually enhance it, for example, in those countries whose governments successfully ally themselves with corporate interests in order to gain more domestic authority at home and more leverage in the international political arena. No doubt globalization has material effects whose implications for international politics are very much worth studying. In particular, the inability of sovereign states to adequately confront the perceived problems caused by globalization may inspire political actors to mobilize and further destabilize the legitimacy of the existing order. For these reasons among others, it worth studying the types of discourses that arise from the globalization debate on their own terms, for there are fundamental legitimacy issues nested within those debates. The articulation and resolution of those legitimacy issues are what will shape the contours of any new regime governing international political economy. The globalization debate involves legitimacy issues of the deepest sort, because it is fundamentally about identity, that is, about who should (and who is competent to) have the authority to act and make decisions in global and local economic affairs.

Some of the legitimacy issues at the core of this question are hardly new, tracing back to the period studied in this book and even earlier. For example, in my analysis of old regime political culture in Chapter Three, I noted the emergent contradiction between liberalism and mercantilism, arguing that the central issue then was not so much about whether states should have a hand in controlling markets (everyone believed that they should have some, differing on how much), but rather about who was responsible for the economic well-being of society—governments or individuals. At issue, in other words, was the question of who were the most relevant agents in economic life; with agency comes the authority to make decisions. As the hierarchical paternalism of the society of orders began to give way to the individualist egalitarianism of a liberal, capitalist society, this development was characterized by a transfer of some degree of authority from state to individual in the economic realm.

Today this latter issue still resonates to some degree, especially in the rhetoric of domestic politics. But perhaps more important, the globalization of production and finance have created a new set of corporate agents who are claiming and exercising forms of authority that challenge both the territorially bound authority of the sovereign state and the decision-making authority and perhaps even autonomy of the individual citizens in those territorial states. This situation lends itself to characterization as a legitimacy contest having to do with conflicting claims regarding the exercise of authority. The creation of "private" authority structures alongside the "public" structures of states and international organizations is shaping up to be a legitimacy contest of global proportions.[43]

The analytical framework developed in this book thus provides some suggestions about where to look for potential sources of systemic change. Not only contradictory conceptions of legitimacy, but complementarities that bring together previously separate groups into active coalitions all have the potential to generate legitimacy contests which, if they manage to erode the legitimacy of the existing order by exacerbating its central contradictions, could lead to the sort of hegemonic versus counterhegemonic struggle that brings major systemic change. The legitimacy of the existing order may also be eroded by its inability to confront new material conditions, if such failure in turn inspires political actors to mobilize against the existing order. Again, the terms of such mobilization will involve a legitimacy contest. Yet the example of the Concert of Europe shows that legitimacy contests may in the end be managed by political leaders, if those leaders are able to learn the relevant lessons of the day and cobble together an order that takes into account both traditional claims and those of newly empowered (and/or newly dissatisfied) sociopolitical actors. If one immerses oneself in the details of how the Concert came together, the contingencies and accidents that made it work almost seem overwhelming, not to mention the fact that all involved were substantially sobered by the experience of decades of brutal warfare. On the other hand, miracles do sometimes happen.

[43] See Claire A. Cutler, "Locating 'Authority' in the Global Political Economy," *International Studies Quarterly* 43 (March 1999): 59–81.

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