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Modern Empires and Nation-States

Outline of argument

I begin with a general definition of empire in terms of core and periphery. I argue that what distinguishes the first modern empires from pre-modern ones was that they originated in competition between territorial states on the European Atlantic seaboard for control of non-European regions, giving rise to empires with a national core and physically separated peripheries. This acquired central significance with the global contest for hegemony between the commercial, national societies of France and Britain which developed new kinds of imperial control.

European overseas empire went through four broad phases.

1. Informal and contested control over broad zones.

2. From mid-19th century until 1914 formal, mutually agreed claims of sovereignty over territorially well-defined colonies.

3. This was threatened after 1918 with the collapse of "composite" dynastic empire in Europe and fascist and communist challenges.

4. The defeat of fascist imperialism presaged the end of European overseas formal empire, a protracted, half-century process. The collapse of the Soviet Union

ended the era of formal empire, replaced by a world order formally consisting of sovereign nation-states.

Empires, like all state forms, display inherent tensions. Central is that between core and periphery. I focus on the specific tension in modern empire between national core and non-national periphery.

There are four ways an imperial order can be undermined: periphery incorporation, periphery separation, periphery conquest, state collapse. These are ideal types; imperial decline combines these elements.

I focus on the tension between imperial subordination/hierarchy and imperial incorporation/separation. In particular I consider the peculiar unsuitability of a core national ideology for the exercise of imperial rule and how such an ideology tends to be displaced by other ideologies which legitimise periphery subordination. I look at how imperial institutions generate national movements and ideologies in the periphery, whether pursuing incorporation or separation.

Finally I draw some conclusions about the legacy of modern empire based on the end of national core/non-national periphery empires.

Empire: core and periphery

By empire briefly I mean a state consisting of a core and one or more peripheries. (For definitions see the opening

chapters of (Go 2011) and (Burbank and Cooper 2010).) The core is governed by one modality of power and the peripheries by different ones ultimately located in that core. Associated with the coercive institutions of empire is usually a related system of economic exploitation and ideological power which legitimises imperial hierarchy and subordination.

A key distinction between pre-modern empire and modern empire is the absence of a national core in the first and the centrality of such a core in the second. There are two counter-arguments against this distinction: that pre-modern empires had national cores and that modern empires did not. Here I briefly address the first of these. Although I emphasise the commonalities of pre-modern empire in contrast to modern empire, we should note the huge variations between pre-modern empires which might be regarded as equally, if not more, important than the contrast I draw.

Pre-modern empires originate from polities taking such forms as city-state, small kingdom or nomadic federation.[1] There were differences between the population of this core and the peripheries they conquered –of religion, language, ethnicity – but the core polity was not national. All empires start from a centre which has a specific political order and social character. Modern national historiography projects back that character as

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[1] Chapters 2-7 of Burbank and Cooper offer a good survey of a variety of pre-modern empires.

ethno-national: Athens as Greek, China as Han. Subsequent national names are taken from earlier empires: Mongol, Frankish, Persian, Zimbabwe. However, these are modern meanings. Athenians *were* self-consciously Greek but their empire subordinated other Greek city states as well as extending elsewhere. One Chinese imperial order was named Han but others adopted names from other dynasties. Identifying Han as the dominant Chinese ethnicity is a modern ideological move, reinforced by demographic mobility. (Dikötter 1997)

This claim is a variant of the general modernist argument about nationalism and national identity and I will not enter into the oft-repeated debates about this. I would just make two basic points. First, insofar as we can find "nation-sounding" terms applied to those exercising power in pre-modern imperial cores, taken alone that is best explained as projections from the national modern to the pre-national pre-modern. Second, the debate has moved beyond the rather crude juxtaposition of modernist denials against non-modernist assertions of pre-modern nationality. Research is more about the complex meanings of the words and phrases encountered in pre-modern sources. One meaning which seems to be largely absent is that the whole or majority of the core population is seen to share some common and significant identity. However, it does appear that discourse connoting ethnic identity increases in frequency and significance from the early medieval period, and not just in

Europe. (For examples: (Goetz, Jamut et al. 2012); (Scales 2012); (Webb 2016).

This core state usually expanded through military success against existing empires. Athenian imperialism followed the defeat of Persia, Roman that of Carthage; Islam pushed against mutually weakening Byzantine and Sassanian power. Sometimes the core polity conquered an existing empire, as with Mongol and Manchu takeovers of Chinese imperial power. Sometimes it conquered non-imperial polities, as with Genghis Khan and his immediate successors. These combined when conquest of an existing empire created the springboard for a imperial expansion: Alexander the Great in Central Asia and India, Athens and the Delian League in the Peloponnese, Rome in Egypt, Islam in north Africa.

Usually peripheries were land mass extensions of the core: China, Russia, the Aztec and Inca empires, Arab Islam, shortlived nomad empires. However, I include the Greek and Roman maritime empires of the eastern Mediterranean because the short distances involved, the "routine" nature of sea-borne transport and communications, and the connecting functions of islands imparted a continuous spatial quality to them.

This continuity confronted empires with the challenge of maintaining a core/periphery distinction. As populations moved between core and periphery (for a good example, see Moon

1999), as new power constellations in the periphery threatened the core (Heather 2006), as periphery conquerors adopted core ways; as expanded territory led to expanded ideology: so core identities and institutions were undermined. Alexander adopted Persian, Egyptian and the customs of other conquered societies[2]; Qing emperors learnt mandarin Chinese and calligraphy and inherited Chinese bureaucracy[3]; Julius Caesar and Augustus deployed military power gained in periphery conquest to subdue the Roman civic elite, elaborating an imperial ideology (e.g., Virgil's *Aeneid*) which transcended Rome. All these examples embodied a contradiction between exercising and legitimating imperial power from the core and doing so in the peripheries. Imperial cores were always in danger of losing the periphery through separation, assimilation, reverse conquest or disintegration. What sustained empire was that new empires succeeded old ones. Specific empires had built-in weaknesses but empire as a political form had long-lasting endurance.

The rise of the modern empire: national core and non-national periphery

The early stages of modern European overseas empire displayed features unlike that of earlier imperialism.

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[2] On Alexander as Pharoah see Goddio & Masson-Berghoff, a catalogue based on a 2016 British Museum Exhibition..

[3] This is conveyed in superb visual detail in Rawski, E. and J. Rawson, Eds. (2005). China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795. London, Royal Academy of Arts.

First, the imperial core and the peripheries were separated by large oceans, unlike continuous land and maritime empires. The significance of this would diminish with population movement from the core, especially in zones of large-scale settlement such as the Americas, south Africa and Australasia. Advances in transportation and communication technology had similar effects. However, in an era of limited emigration and sail, confronting utterly different societies and ecologies in the peripheries, there was a clear demarcation between core and periphery.

These varied greatly. In the Americas European imperialists encountered low-density populations highly vulnerable to "guns, germs and steel" (Diamond 1997) and where large-scale settlement was feasible. By late 18th century the core/periphery distinction had been significantly eroded. By contrast, Asian high-density populations, sophisticated political arrangements and climates hostile to European settlement sustained the distinction, delaying and limiting the imposition of European rule.

These ecological, political and social differences were linked to differences in imperial ideology. Ideas of race inequality, for example, put whites at the top but ordered other alleged races in a hierarchy. The same was true of civilisational hierarchies. The populations most easily subjugated (killed, enslaved, ghettoised) were placed lowest on such hierarchies.

Second, the drive for empire came from competing territorial states situated on the European Atlantic seaboard. These states were familiar with the concept of empire but one based on "composite dynasties" (Bourbons, Habsburgs, Romanovs).[4] Such a concept enabled Henry VIII of England and Wilhelm I of Prussia to claim imperial titles without territorial extension.[5]

These states took on sharply demarcated territorial forms. (Maier 2005); see also his book length chapter 'Leviathan 2.0: inventing modern statehood' in (Rosenberg 2012).

The less powerful combined to prevent the more powerful from achieving hegemony. Meanwhile, Ottoman and Romanov imperial power blocked land routes to lucrative trade in Asia. This shifted attention westwards, in search of a seaborne route to Asia.

Third: these territorial states were undergoing significant changes which promoted the idea of nationality. The Reformation broke the European wide power of the Catholic church, leading to state churches in the lands where Protestantism succeeded and increased state control over

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[4] For a series of essays on the complex ways early modern European states expanded, merged and split see Greengrass, M., Ed. (1991). Conquest and Coalescence: The Shaping of the State in Early Modern Europe. London, Edward Arnold.

[5] Bismarck denied that Prussia had conquered other German states; it had "unified" them. The dynastic imperial title served a national purpose.

churches where Catholicism prevailed. Church territorialisation was associated with national ideas: Luther's call for German independence from the Italian Papacy; Henry VIII's formation of the Church of England. These ideas were reinforced by the analogies Protestant reformers drew between their struggles and those of Old Testament Hebrews, alluding to the idea of an "elect nation". The deliberate promotion of literacy in a standardised vernacular ("national") language – justified by the Protestant insistence that the Word of God be directly available to the laity and not monopolised by an intermediate class of priests using Latin – strengthened the idea of a unique nation with its own religion, language and history. (Hastings 1997)

Finally, oceanic empire was accompanied by the rise of a new kind of commercial society which extended well beyond long-distance, high-value trade. The slave trade, plantations for the mass production of sugar, cotton and tobacco: these had profound implications for the competing imperial cores with the emergence of new groups (merchants, manufacturers, bankers, agrarian capitalists) pressing governments to be more responsive to their concerns. (For an overview (Benjamin 2009).

As a consequence these territorial states –in different ways and at different paces - "nationalised". The proliferation and extension of political society to new interest groups and religious concerns generated institutions and practices (parliaments, parties, political media, elections) extending

beyond the privileged hierarchies of *ancien regime* society. It encouraged the rise of political discourse deploying terms like "the people" and "national interest".

This culminated in the Anglo-French struggle for global hegemony, ended with the defeat of Napoleon. By the time of the Seven Years War (1756-63) this struggle was conducted in north America, south Asia, the Mediterranean, central Europe as well as directly between the two countries. The Napoleonic wars extended these theatres of war to Russia, Egypt and south-east Europe. France and Britain allied with other states (sometimes deploying coercion or subsidy) and recruited soldiers and sailors from Native American tribes, Indian princedoms, and central European rulers.(Anderson 2000)

The discourse and organisation of conflict nationalised in both countries, directed against the other and used in domestic politics.

Thus the 1688 "Glorious Revolution" was intended by its English elite leaders to limit monarchical power and combat Catholic threats, and by its foreign beneficiary, William of Orange, to strengthen the alliance against France. The first great wars against France (the Nine Years War [1689-97] and the War of Spanish Succession [1701-14]) saw organised party conflict, articulated by pamphleteers like Defoe and Swift, and the founding of the Bank of England which bound the interests of

an extensive and varied "people of the middling sort" to the state. (Brewer 1989)

Following the 1707 Union of England and Scotland and by the time of the Seven Years War, the national idea had taken on a popular Protestant, British and global form. (Colley 1992) Political opponents accused each other of betraying the national interest. Contested elections based on an expanding electorate shaped a national polity. British symbols and ceremonies, literature, music and painting became central components of a national culture.[6] By the time of the Napoleonic wars this had become popular and intense, embodied vividly in the paintings and cartoons of artists such as Hogarth and Gilray.

One finds a parallel if different trend in France. By mid-18th century political conflict extended beyond the court and, although usually expressed within a monarchical and Catholic frame, used the national idea to promote different conceptions of policy and organisation. Crown officials seeking to reform inadequate taxation systems allied with publicists to criticise "selfish" privileges such as noble or provincial fiscal exemptions and the blocking powers of *parlements*. The crown was portrayed as representing the interests of the nation, meaning the whole society of France. Conversely, opponents of

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[6] Ironically, the first great national composer, "Mr Handel" was a German, "Herr Händel". His oratoria 'Judas Maccabeus", written to celebrate the defeat of the Jacobite rising of 1745, depicted the Duke of Cumberland, the commander of the British army, as the Jewish leader of resistance to Roman oppression. The analogy might seem far-fetched but it struck a chord with its large and socially varied London audiences.

the crown depicted these reform efforts as aiming to re-establish royal absolutism by destroying the "liberties of the nation". However, unlike in Britain, this did not merely intensify by the end of the century but led to a revolution which destroyed both reforming monarchy and privileged institutions. The result was a more intense and popular nationalism embodied first in the Jacobin movement and the revolutionary armies of the early 1790s and then in Napoleon and the formation of a continuous, if short-lived land empire. (Bell 2001)

As domestic politics nationalised, so did these two countries deploy national arguments against each other. Hogarth and Gilray were amongst those, for example, who presented stereotypes of well-fed John Bull against the starveling Gallic cock. Yet such stereotypes also support the view that nationalisms resemble and imitate each other, even while insisting on uniqueness: the "narcissism of small differences". A recent exhibition at the British Museum on caricatures of Napoleon displays this in detail. The positive images of Napoleon were as likely to be drawn by British as by French artists while the hostile stereotypes of Napoleon resembled those of British figures such as Charles James Fox and the Prince-Regent. (Clayton and O'Connell 2015) This made it easy for French critics to draw on idealised models of British politics (Montesquieu, Voltaire) and for British radicals and liberals to do the same with Jacobins or Napoleon (Paine, Hazlitt). This

shared European elite culture was accentuated by Napoleon's appropriation of imperial imagery, one which was in turn imitated by "traditional" dynasties.[7]

However, the picture was different in the imperial peripheries. Even specific wars had different names in different parts of the world.[8] In part this reflected the local concerns of allies. However, it also expressed the need for France and Britain to maintain a distinction between national ideas appropriate to the politics of the core and other ideas more suitable for exercising power in the periphery. So within Europe Britain argued it was seeking to prevent the dynasties – France above all but also Austria and Russia - crushing the freedoms of others, especially Protestant Germans. The principal German powers – Austria and especially Prussia –elaborated their national arguments, though these had nothing of the popular resonance of such arguments in France and Britain. (For a brief introduction see the chapters by Whaley and Clark in (Breuilly 2001)

In India such ideological argument was less important, partly because British interests were represented by a trading company, the East India Company, widely regarded as corrupt and indeed a threat to British liberties and political culture.

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[7] Francis, Holy Roman Emperor, adopted an hereditary imperial title shortly after Napoleon declared himself emperor. Later the department in Vienna concerned with imperial ritual modelled itself on the practices of the French Second Empire, only shifting to the British model after Napoleon III's defeat and the adoption by Queen Victoria of the title Empress of India.

[8] The Seven Years War was in India the Third Carnatic War, the Third Silesian War in the German lands, the French and Indian Wars in North America.

Edmund Burke placed this concern within a broader framework as he justified the impeachment of Warren Hastings by outlining a principled justification of imperial rule based on the idea of civilisation. Furthermore, the idea that one could "conquer" India, let alone China, was understandably incredible at the time.[9]

However, for my central argument concerning the need to separate core and periphery political ideologies and practices from each other, the most interesting case is north America. By late 18th century overseas settlement had blurred the distinction. As Britain expelled France from north America, so arose the first distinctively modern imperial crisis. In the next section I will compare it to that of the Napoleonic empire.

The crises and contradictions of modern empire: ideology and politics

British empire (the term was used in the 18th century for overseas territories under British rule: see chapter 1 of Go) was based on physical separation. A major problem Britain had in exercising power in North America and South Asia was the time it took for sailing ships to reach these peripheries with soldiers, administrators or instructions, then to monitor events and adapt

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[9] (This is the central argument of Wilson, J. (2016). India Conquered: Raj and the Chaos of Empire. London, Simon and Schuster.

. The "equality" of European and non-European "encounters" was also strongly conveyed in a Royal Academy exhibition of 2004 for which see Jackson, A. and A. Jaffer, Eds. (2004). Encounters: the meeting of Asia and Europe, 1500-1800. London, The Royal Academy.

policy, especially in the face of a rapidly changing crisis. (Bunker 2015) It was important to devise arrangements which bound local agents to the core. The most reliable dependency rested on mutual interest. Plantation owners produced for the British market and relied on British naval protection. The settler, predominantly farming societies also produced goods for the British market. Especially when threatened by France or Native Americans, settlers happily accepted British rule.

What also sustained imperial power was that the settlers regarded themselves as British – by race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture. They were accorded a good deal of self-government – as much out of necessity as policy – but this was highly localised. There was no significant sense of "American" identity to interpose between that of the individual colonies or the British connection. [10]

However, this undermined any identity distinction between core and periphery. British settlers expected to be treated like other British subjects. When the French threat had been eliminated with the end of the Seven Years War but the imperial core insisted on reforms which ensured that settlers contributed more to the costs of government, there was

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[10] See Don Doyle & Eric Van Young, 'Independence and Nationalism in the Americas' in Breuilly, J., Ed. (2013). The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

increasing resistance from settlers. They were able to use their existing institutions and the argument of equal treatment.

As tension grew this had two consequences in terms of identity and exercise of power. Increasingly the separate colonies coordinated their resistance to the imperial core. Institutionalising conflict brought in its wake new identity claims. [11] Both the imperial core and the periphery began using language setting Britain against the thirteen colonies as equivalent opponents. The British were caricatured by drawing attention to features absent from the colonies: privileged aristocracy, established church. These were linked to an hereditary monarchy which became the major target of criticism. The increasingly positive complement was social and political equality, freedom of (Christian) religion and republicanism. Meanwhile in Britain these claims were mocked. When colonists issued statements about the equality of all men, British critics inquired about Native Americans and Afro-Americans.

Thus conflicting claims about political identity and forms of government, combined with the inability of the core to maintain control, quickly gave rise to new institutions in the

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[11] I cannot explore the important argument that political identity can be rapidly produced from a quite small stock of ideas and coordinated actions. Men from New England and Virginia were very different and many first met in Philadelphia to act in common against Britain. The same story is repeated in many other cases of political opposition, for example the German National Assembly of 1848-49 and the Indian National Congress.

periphery which subsequently projected a national identity. Finally, the basic shared values in Britain and the colonies ruled out any other imperial ideology (Christianity, race, language, culture) to justify continued British domination, except for monarchical claims which were already in dispute in the core itself.

The American revolution was not nationalist; rather the coordinated resistance itself generated increasingly national sentiments to set against British imperial ideology. This distinction between nationalism as explicit ideology and national identity as an aspect of institutional growth can be further explored by considering the short-lived Napoleonic Empire.

This was a continuous land empire, in that sense traditional. However, it was indelibly associated with the utterly non-traditional figure of Napoleon. His justifications for exercising power were multiple and contradictory.

As a child of the revolution he proclaimed the extension of its values beyond France. Peasants were emancipated, the French Civil Code introduced, hereditary nobility abolished, empire justified in the name of enlightenment and progress. Implication: the less civilised periphery must remain under the rule of the advanced core, but only for the time being.

However, his imperial coronation, with the Pope standing by (though Napoleon crowned himself) conveyed the image of a latter-day Charlemagne. This was institutionalised through Napoleon's creation of an imperial nobility financed by land grants, making kings of relatives and loyal allies, marrying the daughter of the Austrian Emperor and conferring the title of 'King of the Romans" upon the son of that marriage. Yet Napoleon was acutely aware that his origins, rise to power, and justification of inequality by merit not hereditary privilege meant he could never become part of an *ancien regime* world, let alone framed in the archaic terms of the Frankish empire.

Above all, he was a conqueror, the genius soldier of *la grande nation* bringing other parts of Europe under his sword.

We will never know if these contradictions in imperial ideology could have been resolved by survival of that empire beyond Napoleon's short-lived rule. What we do know is that the mechanics of empire did not map on to a national core/foreign periphery structure.

Michael Broers has distinguished between "inner" and "outer" Empire. It is a simple yet powerful distinction. By inner empire Broers means what I have called "core", in that these territories are ruled by one set of institutions, mainly administrative. Outer empire can be regarded as periphery, ruled in other ways, usually coercive, often directly military. What is

striking is that for Broers inner and outer empire do not map on to France and non-France. Britanny and the Vendée are part of the outer empire. Northern Italy, Belgium, Rhenish Germany and the Hanseatic cities are part of the inner empire. That we find this striking shows how much we think of modern empire in terms of national core and non-national periphery. (Broers 1996, Broers 2003, Broers 2016)

This distinction can be related to Michael Mann's contrast between infrastructural and despotic power. (Mann 1986) In the non-French inner empire are local elites fluent in French who regard Napoleon and the modes of rule and associated social arrangements he brings as preferable to their previous rulers. In turn Napoleon and his imperial elite regard these people as "civilised", men who can be entrusted with posts such prefect and mayor. Some areas are incorporated directly into France as new departments; elsewhere local rulers are confirmed in power and energetically introduce French-style reforms. In terms of Mann's distinction, the state increasingly penetrates into all spheres of life, for example with the *Code Civile* (tellingly known as the *Code Napoleon*) reshaping property transactions.

By contrast despotic power takes the form of a "capstone" state imposed on top of existing periphery institutions.[12] If imperial power gets beyond military occupation, it does so by

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[12] This distinction links closely to that between "direct" and "indirect" rule.

making deals with local elites to suppress violent resistance and provide a limited range of goods such as taxes and soldiers.

This is an ideal typical distinction. "Real" empire was more complicated. In the satellite kingdom of Westphalia, set up as a "model" state to showcase the benefits of modern French ways, reforms were undermined in two ways. First, local elites did so subtly by putting old wine into new bottles. Peasant emancipation depended on key legal definitions. An extensive definition of property rights and a narrow one of privilege prevented dependent peasants becoming independent landowners.

Second, the imperial regime did not follow through the logic of reform. Napoleon appropriated large estates in Westphalia to endow his imperial nobility. Meanwhile, continuous warfare meant continuing extraction of men, money and materials, ensuring deep unpopularity. Only for a few years (roughly 1805-1812) could the inner empire enjoy peaceful times as war was fought far away and was not too burdensome. (Breuilly 2003)

The distinction between despotic and infrastructural power expresses a key difference between non-modern and modern state. What is interesting in the Napoleonic case is that this is not a national/non-national contrast and that modernity, by extending the remit of the state into everyday life, required

legitimation beyond the original core. One is forced either to extend "national" legitimation (white settlers in North America are as British as the inhabitants of Great Britain) or replace it with another (France as bearer of progress, enlightenment, modernity).

I return to the distinction between modern forms of integration, national or non-national, and the modern ideology of nationalism. It is often claimed that nationalism began in Europe at the time of Napoleon.[13] In terms of intellectual history there is much to be said for this. The *Addresses to the German Nation* of philosopher Fichte, based on lectures given in Berlin under French occupation, express authentic nationalist doctrine. However, at elite level the main responses to Napoleon were *statist* – whether the choice was collaboration or resistance (themselves options taken according to calculations about the balance of power). At popular level one can better explain responses to Napoleon in terms of habits of obedience or direct reactions to the opportunities and burdens his conquest imposed. By 1812-13 the costs far outweighed the benefits and state elites had concluded combined resistance was the best option. "Nationalism" was a rhetoric overlaying these collective values and actions. Until and unless imperial rule had undermined pre-

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[13] Most striking is the opening sentence of Kedourie's book *Nationalism* (1960): "Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century." [1]

modern social and political arrangements, this is what a modernist interpretation of nationalism would expect.[14]

The American War of Independence and the responses to Napoleonic empire demonstrate two ways imperial rule worked. Where rule from the centre was infrastructural, it undermined core-periphery distinctions and led to short-lived incorporation in Napoleon's inner empire and legitimation based on progress instead of nationality, or to longer-run incorporation in the thirteen colonies in which progress and Britishness were fused. When imperial rule collapsed, in the Napoleonic case it was not in the face of nationalist resistance but a powerful coalition of states. In North America, by contrast, breakdown quickly stimulated a counter-national movement, though one which initially found it difficult to formulate a nationalist ideology.

For a more sustained core/periphery relationship we can turn to Britain's "second empire', the one she was acquiring in south Asia while losing her first one in North America.[15] Unlike Napoleonic empire this was rule over a far distant periphery.[16]

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[14] I developed the argument in a general way for modern Germany in Breuilly, J. (1997). The national idea in modern German history. German History since 1800. M. Fulbrook. London, Edward Arnold.

[15] This is a crude distinction as there were many other areas of British imperial activity in the Americas. For an illuminating analysis utilising the distinction see Marshall, P. (2005). The making and unmaking of empires: Britain, India, and America c.1750-1783. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
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[16] "Far distant" is not just actual distance but relative to existing forms of communication and transportation.

Unlike the thirteen colonies this was rule over a very different society, or complex collection of societies, with high population density and elaborate political orders.

At first there was no claim of "national" superiority.[17] At best any claim was couched in civilisational terms. However, even that was qualified by admiration for "ancient" civilisations and religions.[18] William Dalrymple has argued that many East India Company officials in the late 18th and early 19th centuries easily affected Indian dress and customs and married Muslim women. (Dalrymple 2004)

Yet as the EIC took more direct control of ever larger territories they came more sharply to distinguish ruler from ruled. Civilisational claims were made, for example justifying efforts to abolish "barbaric" practices such as suttee (burning a widow on her deceased husband's funeral pyre). This was related to shifts in some regions to "infra-structural" rule, for example in efforts to change land tenure systems in Bengal with the so-called Permanent Settlement. In addition, Partha Chatterjee has criticised Dalrymple for underestimating straightforward white racism.(Chatterjee 2012)

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[17] In 1800 European powers rightly considered themselves to have no clear military advantage over many Asian states, especially those that imported modern technology and exploited conflicts between the European states. Mehemet Ali in Egypt and Tippu Tipp in Mysore are cases in point.

[18] The work of William Jones in India suggesting that all Indo-European languages had a common Aryan root had such a tendency.

The 1857 rising brought EIC rule to an end but had ambiguous consequences. It led to a rejection of the "civilisational" approach of Thomas Macaulay who envisaged forming an Anglo-Indian elite to introduce modernity to India. The Legal Member of the Viceroy's Council (the institution designed to exercise formal imperial rule from 1858), Henry Maine, concluded that it was precisely the interference with traditional ways which had sparked the 1857 uprising. He elaborated a modern doctrine of "indirect rule" based on codifying and respecting traditional law.(Mantena 2009) This coincided with a renewed emphasis on the gulf between whites and natives – based on ideologies of race, civilisation and militant Christianity. This was reinforced by the arrival of increased numbers of women from Britain who had no wish to see British men marrying local women. (Dalrymple 2006)

Yet this was an unstable situation because indirect rule and clear separation was undermined by the imperative of imperial exploitation (or "development", to adopt the later euphemism). That produced modern indigenous elites (there simply were not enough whites to do all the jobs modern empire required) and infrastructural rule. The two different worlds could live for a while side by side: modern and direct in the major towns; pre-modern and indirect in large areas of traditional peasant agriculture, but tensions grew.

The result, as in Napoleon's inner empire and Britain's settler colonies, was to produce indigenous elites which sought modern incorporation. The preferred route was based on modernity and progress detached from nationality; this was the choice of the early Indian National Congress. A second route, not very well explored because firmly rejected by the British, was what John Darwin has called "imperial ethnicity".(Darwin 2010) For obvious reasons this was more significant in British settlement colonies such as Canada, Australia and South Africa.

The third route was resistance and that, especially with modern indigenous elites, increasingly expressed itself as nationalism. Such nationalism could draw on a rich legacy of civilisational and religious difference, though integrating that into a coherent national idea was a formidable challenge.

These problems were compounded by the breakdown of British hegemony in the later nineteenth century. The *direct* competition for empire (i.e., leaving aside the violence inflicted in the peripheries) between the major European powers as well as the USA and Japan was relatively non-violent, marked by agreement and cooperation rather than conflict. In some cases, where formal rule seemed too difficult, notably China, the major powers combined to crush large-scale resistance whilst "preserving" the Qing dynasty.[19] In other cases, where formal

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[19] Though it did not last long after the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion with a republic declared in 1911.

rule appeared feasible, it was often achieved by treaty, as at the Berlin Conference of 1884-85. This accounts for the rapid conversion of informal into formal empire: in the last quarter of the century half of Africa was "switched" from one to the other.

Yet this was superficial. Modes of imperial rule varied hugely, between and within imperial powers, having little to do with the formal status of that rule. However, all were increasingly defined against each other as "British", "French", "Belgian", "Dutch", "Russian", "Japanese", "American". We have arrived at a world of empires formally structured around national cores and non-national peripheries. It was extremely short-lived.

The end of modern empire

The first world war marked a watershed for dynastic, continuous empires in east-central Europe and the Middle East and modern overseas empires. These took two different forms.

Defeat in inter-imperial war led to the collapse of the Romanov, Habsburg, Ottoman and Hohenzollern empires. However, there were instructive differences which I link to distinctions between national and non-national, despotic and infrastructural power.[20]

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[20] For an introduction to the events covered in the following paragraphs see the chapters on the Habsburg and Ottoman, Romanov and Soviet empires, and the Middle East by Hroch, Weeks and Roshwald respectively in Breuilly, J., Ed. (2013). The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

The Romanov and Ottoman empires most closely fit the non-national and despotic type. Legitimations of rule were dynastic and religious (Russian Orthodoxy, Islam). In the decades before 1914 there were efforts to modernise and nationalise empire which stimulated counter-nationalist responses, both from modern elites where reforms had taken hold and broader populations reacting against Russification and Turkification. However, these were limited unless able to build on more enduring divisions such as that between Polish Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy, Greek Orthodoxy and Islam.

Instead pressure to separate into "national" units came primarily from outside, especially the USA and the Bolsheviks. In December 1917 Lenin challenged the western allies to abandon secret war aims (revealed in agreements with Tsarist Russia published by the Bolsheviks). Within two days of reading the English text of a speech by Trotsky calling for "national liberation" across the world, Woodrow Wilson delivered his "Fourteen Points" speech. That speech did not use the term "national self-determination" but Wilson did so publicly within a month. The combined, if conflicting pressures from the Soviet Union and the USA compelled France and Britain to pay lip service to such ideas which shaped the post-war settlement.

In the Ottoman empire there was no significant nationalist movement or sentiment in the Arab peripheries where France and Britian harboured imperial ambitions, while the Anatolian core was multi-ethnic, albeit with a Muslim Turkish majority. In the Arab provinces this led to an alliance between France, Britain and traditional Arab leaders prepared to use nationalist language. A compromise between national independence and colonial subordination was found in the language of "mandates", territories ruled "in trust" by France and Britain with the prospect of independence when sufficiently "advanced". Empire was no longer justified as a permanent mode of rule.

In Anatolia the western allies sought advantages in alliance with non-Turkish forces, in particular Greek nationalists. This failed in the face of fierce Turkish nationalism, a case of an imperial, non-national core rapidly converting into a powerful nationalist movement, building on its organised coercive resources. This produced the only "real" nation-state out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey, aware of the need to modernise rapidly, rejected its Ottoman heritage for modernising secular nationalism. Nationalism in the Arab territories by contrast developed as a consequence of the post-war settlement and belongs to the later story of general decolonisation.

As for the Soviet Union, the Bolsheviks adopted the view that there *were* nations as well as classes and organised the new state along national lines.(Martin 2001) They continued to agitate for national liberation as part of the struggle against capitalist empires.

The Habsburg Empire was more modern, based on infrastructual power, especially in the western half.(Deàk 2015) This had promoted movements with well-developed nationalist ideology, elite leadership and popular support, although before 1914 these did not demand nation-states but various kinds of national autonomy within a multi-national state.[21]

The defeat of the empire and Wilson's call for national self-determination rapidly converted these demands into full-blown nationalism. They could be uneasily combined with irredentist claims by formerly independent states of "co-ethnics" carved out of Ottoman Europe (Serbia and the South Slav idea which extended to Habsburg Croats and Slovenes; Romania and the Romanian national idea which took in Habsburg Transylvania).

The Hohenzollern empire is very different; this was a modern nation-state: Germany. Its imperial name derived from a dynasty, not a core/periphery structure, and it had overseas possessions of modest proportions compared to its European

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[21] Such demands took various forms: limited territorial autonomy, federalism and, in the pioneering ideas of the Austro-Marxists, "national cultural autonomy".

opponents.[22] Despite its dynastic form rapid modernisation had promoted strong and popular national identity, mainly critical of the dynastic regime as non-national. The experiences of war, defeat and the loss of "non-German" territories (Alsace-Lorraine, Schleswig, "Polish" lands) intensified such identity.

The story of how these various forms of imperial collapse led to the "nation-state" map of central Europe has often been told. (For the diplomacy see (Macmillan 2003).) What is less analysed is the nationalism involved. I have suggested that we relate nationalism to imperial modernity, rather than the usual focus on ethnic composition and diplomacy. The degree of modernity relates to how far empires exhibited a national core ruling non-national peripheries or some other imperial structure.

This provides a key for analysing post-war nationalism in central Europe. The ex-Habsburg parts of Yugoslavia had developed strong Slovene and Croatian cultural nationalism but not political movements seeking state power. By contrast the Serb core – a state formed from the early breakdown of pre-modern Ottoman power in the Balkans – displayed primarily statist ideology and limited popular national sentiment. However, it had produced a political elite which organised a state and a powerful army, especially during the Balkan wars.

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[22] Prescient nationalists like Max Weber opposed direct imperial expansion in central Europe precisely on the grounds that this would destroy the national identity of the core. Informal hegemony in Europe and overseas empire were the preferred ways to preserve an empire with national core and non-national peripheries.

The major tensions in Yugoslavia, an idea advocated by French and British intellectuals at Versailles and implemented by the Allies, ensued from this difficult combination of national movements. (Drapac 2010) One can analyse Czech/Slovak or Transylania/"old" Romania combinations in a similar way, as well as the problems of a Poland composed of ex-Hohenzollern, ex-Habsburg and ex-Romanov societies.

The overall outcome was a central Europe of different polities with national names (likewise the non-Russian Soviet republics), formally vested with sovereignty and accorded official recognition through membership of the League of Nations. This entailed disavowal of empire, its replacement by the normative target of a world of nation-states and a formula for forming new nation-states. The imperial powers subscribed to this new rhetoric while retaining ways of legitimating continued imperial power.

European overseas empire expanded after 1918 but had lost almost all legitimation other than holding "in trust" territories not yet "ready" for independence. That legitimation was framed as hierarchical, civilisational or racial ideology. The populations of central Europe were differentiated by ethnicity, not race, with the implication that these white nations were ready for independence.[23] Asians were seen as higher up the

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[23] Wilson had doubts as to whether Albania was yet fit for a state of its own. Allied delegates at the Versailles Conference expressed derogatory opinions about

race ladder than black Africans and they in turn above "aboriginal" populations in the Pacific islands and Australasia. Nevertheless, as Secretary of State Henry Lansing had observed when objecting to Wilson's term "national self-determination", a Pandora's Box had been opened. There was a global flurry of demands for national independence ranging from Ireland (soon successful) to Egypt to Indochina, China and the Dutch East Indies.(Manela 2007) Even if these were repressed one could not destroy the language of national liberation increasingly used by colonial elites against empire.

However, it was not clear what nationalists meant by national liberation. We can distinguish between territorial and pan nationalist ideas. In central Europe the solution had been to identify specific ethnic groups and to give those deemed dominant in certain territories a state of their own, albeit also creating the problem of newly designated and resentful "national minorities". [24]

However, elsewhere pan-movements appeared more credible because territorial claims were difficult to formulate and could prove divisive, while imperial power appeared invincible. Pan movements have often been deemed "failures" but this is a retrospective projection from our knowledge that

different nationalities, even if these were generally occasioned by irritation at the behaviour of nationalists claiming to speak for those nations.

[24] Indeed, the Versailles settlement bound successor states (but only them) to respect the "rights" of specified "national minorities".

European decolonisation was based on precisely delineated colonial territories. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries pan-nationalism appeared a more appropriate response to the global dominance of "white" empire.(Lake and Reynolds 2008) Such movements had been inspired by the rise of Japan, especially following its military defeat of Russia in 1904-5. Pan-movements, framing broad racial or religious rather than narrowly ethnic identity claims, accepted the categories used to legitimise white or Christian domination but rejected their hierarchical ordering. Black, brown and yellow was equal to white; Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism to Christianity; Asian, African, Arab to European. Pan-nationalists recognised that for the foreseeable future imperial power could not be contested politically or militarily. It was necessary first to challenge imperial culture and ideology.

This inverted ideological claims. The imperial powers, retreating from hierarchical orderings between core and periphery and unable to insulate the political language of core from periphery in this "global world", fell back on the paternalist language of "trusts" and "mandates", while it was the peripheries that explicitly invoked national categories.

There were alternatives. One was fascism. Fascist imperialism was directed against the current imperial powers and revived the language of hierarchy, most explicit in the race ideology of the Third Reich but also encountered in Italian

expansion into North Africa and Japan into Korea, China and Indochina. Yet these empires, like all empires, needed periphery collaborators as in China, the Dutch East Indies and occupied western Europe. Where race ideology was practised (North Africa, Eastern Europe), self-sustaining imperial rule was undermined. These empires were fortunately short-lived (in part because of this self-destructive feature) and we will never know whether they could have established durable imperial rule under conditions of modernity.

The other challenge was communism. However, as we have seen, the Bolsheviks did not regard nationality as a form of false consciousness but as an objective social category which could not be ordered hierarchically and they preached world-wide national liberation.[25] This was put into practical form through support not only of communist parties but also nationalist ones, most notably in China in the 1920s and early 1930s. The ideal ally, however, was a communist party leading the struggle for national liberation against capitalist empire.

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[25] The "escape clause" was that the degree and type of national independence was made dependent on the function it served in the route to a communist world. For the difference between Lenin and Wilson on national independence see Knudsen, R. A. (2013). Moments of Self-determination: The Concept of 'Self- determination' and the Idea of Freedom in 20th- and 21st- Century International Discourse. International History, London School of Economics. **PhD.**

The end and legacy of modern empire

It was territorial nationalism, not pan-nationalism, which eventually "succeeded", if by success we mean the etablishment of a sovereign nation-state accepted as a member of the United Nations..

Again much has been written on this protracted process (Lebanon was granted independence in 1943, Zimbabwe in 1979.) Again, I focus on how modernity and the core-periphery relationship help us understand this.

A standard way of analysing European decolonisation[26] is to distinguish betwen international relations, the politics of the core and the politics of the colony, and to combine them to understand particular cases. (Darwin 1999) Here I take one element from each of these levels.

The crucial feature of international relations was the balance of power between the USA and the USSR and the policies they pursued towards European empire. No generalisation is possible about how that worked out politically. What can be generalised is why demands for independence focused on specific colonial territories. These are often called "colonial states" and that phrase provides part of the explanation. "Colonial state" is a contradiction in terms if "state" signifies sovereignty and "colonial" dependency. Instead

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[26] The term itself is revealing, implying that the key agent was the imperial power, not the colonial nationalist movement.

the phrase identifies the colonial territory as a "state in waiting". By 1945 the US State Department judged the Versailles settlement as fundamentally flawed. Justifying statehood on the basis of ethno-national identity set in motion a never ending chain of conflicts, sparking secessionist claims by "national minorities" and irredentist claims by "incomplete states". Conferring statehood on the "colonial state" apparently detached objective and universalist claims to equality and freedom from subjective, particularist claims based on ethnicity. The objection was that the new state was "artificial", the implication being that "national identity" made a state "natural".[27]

The irony is that the "natural" states of post-1918 Europe were short-lived compared to the "artificial" states created after 1945, most of which exist to this day. One could argue that this was a function of international, not domestic politics: after 1918 numerous states engaged in conflict; after 1945 the Cold War froze the nation-state map. However, that still implies that other things matter more than "identity".

Such arguments are framed too generally. "Colonial state" might be an incoherent concept but some colonial territories acquired political identity through the ways in which imperial power and colonial society interacted. The British Raj had acquired aspects of quasi-statehood by the mid-1930s as Britain

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[27] To which one might reply that all states are "artificial" at the time of their creation; "natural" is how they come to be regarded if they endure.

conceded powers to the mass-mobilising Congress Party. Indeed, the reason why this was the major exception to the rule that the colonial state became the new nation-state was because the British lost control of colonial politics and conceded partition to two competing nationalist movements.

The colonial political unit can become the framework within which "the new nation" is formed, as we have seen in north America. However, the extent to which this happens varies widely. At one extreme strong movements develop over several generations, as in India. At the other, an imperial power anxious to concede "independence" (because it has already lost power or concluded that the costs of rule far outweigh the benefits) chooses the colonial elites which take over.

A similar analysis applies to the last major imperial collapse, the Soviet Union and east European communism. One did not need "state in waiting" legitimations with respect to Warsaw Pact states which were already recognised as sovereign nation-states. However, the constituent republics of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia could be treated like European colonial states. The major difference was that in the USSR ethno-nationality had been deliberately cultivated as the "national identity" of these republics, although with varying degrees of success.(Roeder 2007)

We now officially live in a world of nation-states. Empire has been proclaimed dead. If by empire we mean a formal structure of core and periphery, especially one with the national core which characterised modern empire, this seems valid. However, there is a great difference between nation-states which arose from an ex-imperial cores and ex-imperial peripheries. Apart from obvious inequalities of power between nation-states, nationalist ideology, nationalist politics and national sentiment vary widely. In certain ways we have returned to a world of pre-modern empire where core and periphery are not formally defined with distinct modes of rule and a separation between core and periphery ideology. In other ways the predominance of modern infra-structural power means that domination and subordination can be exercised in ways which do not take the form of specialised institutions of coercion typical of modern overseas empire. Domination and subordination continue but the analytic tools developed both for pre-modern empire and the modern empire with a national core no longer suffice to understand this.

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