

World Order

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INTRODUCTION

The Question of World Order

IN 1961, as a young academic, I called on President Harry S. Truman when I found myself in Kansas City delivering a speech. To the question of what in his presidency had made him most proud, Truman replied, “That we totally defeated our enemies and then brought them back to the community of nations. I would like to think that only America would have done this.” Conscious of America’s vast power, Truman took pride above all in its humane and democratic values. He wanted to be remembered not so much for America’s victories as for its conciliations.

All of Truman’s successors have followed some version of this narrative and have taken pride in similar attributes of the American experience. And for most of this period, the community of nations that they aimed to uphold reflected an American consensus—an inexorably expanding cooperative order of states observing common rules and norms, embracing liberal economic systems, forswearing territorial conquest, respecting national sovereignty, and adopting participatory and democratic systems of governance. American presidents of both parties have continued to urge other governments, often with great vehemence and eloquence, to embrace the preservation and

enhancement of human rights. In many instances, the defense of these values by the United States and its allies has ushered in important changes in the human condition.

Yet today this “rules-based” system faces challenges. The frequent exhortations for countries to “do their fair share,” play by “twenty-first-century rules,” or be “responsible stakeholders” in a common system reflect the fact that there is no shared definition of the system or understanding of what a “fair” contribution would be. Outside the Western world, regions that have played a minimal role in these rules’ original formulation question their validity in their present form and have made clear that they would work to modify them. Thus while “the international community” is invoked perhaps more insistently now than in any other era, it presents no clear or agreed set of goals, methods, or limits.

Our age is insistently, at times almost desperately, in pursuit of a concept of world order. Chaos threatens side by side with unprecedented interdependence: in the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the disintegration of states, the impact of environmental depredations, the persistence of genocidal practices, and the spread of new technologies threatening to drive conflict beyond human control or comprehension. New methods of accessing and communicating information unite regions as never before and project events globally—but in a manner that inhibits reflection, demanding of leaders that they register instantaneous reactions in a form expressible in slogans. Are we facing a period in which forces beyond the restraints of any order determine the future?

Varieties of World Order

No truly global “world order” has ever existed. What passes for order in our time was devised in Western Europe nearly four centuries

ago, at a peace conference in the German region of Westphalia, conducted without the involvement or even the awareness of most other continents or civilizations. A century of sectarian conflict and political upheaval across Central Europe had culminated in the Thirty Years' War of 1618–48—a conflagration in which political and religious disputes commingled, combatants resorted to “total war” against population centers, and nearly a quarter of the population of Central Europe died from combat, disease, or starvation. The exhausted participants met to define a set of arrangements that would stanch the bloodletting. Religious unity had fractured with the survival and spread of Protestantism; political diversity was inherent in the number of autonomous political units that had fought to a draw. So it was that in Europe the conditions of the contemporary world were approximated: a multiplicity of political units, none powerful enough to defeat all others, many adhering to contradictory philosophies and internal practices, in search of neutral rules to regulate their conduct and mitigate conflict.

The Westphalian peace reflected a practical accommodation to reality, not a unique moral insight. It relied on a system of independent states refraining from interference in each other's domestic affairs and checking each other's ambitions through a general equilibrium of power. No single claim to truth or universal rule had prevailed in Europe's contests. Instead, each state was assigned the attribute of sovereign power over its territory. Each would acknowledge the domestic structures and religious vocations of its fellow states as realities and refrain from challenging their existence. With a balance of power now perceived as natural and desirable, the ambitions of rulers would be set in counterpoise against each other, at least in theory curtailing the scope of conflicts. Division and multiplicity, an accident of Europe's history, became the hallmarks of a new system of international order with its own distinct philosophical outlook. In this sense the European effort to end its conflagration shaped and prefigured

the modern sensibility: it reserved judgment on the absolute in favor of the practical and ecumenical; it sought to distill order from multiplicity and restraint.

The seventeenth-century negotiators who crafted the Peace of Westphalia did not think they were laying the foundation for a globally applicable system. They made no attempt to include neighboring Russia, which was then reconsolidating its own order after the nightmarish “Time of Troubles” by enshrining principles distinctly at odds with Westphalian balance: a single absolute ruler, a unified religious orthodoxy, and a program of territorial expansion in all directions. Nor did the other major power centers regard the Westphalian settlement (to the extent they learned of it at all) as relevant to their own regions.

The idea of world order was applied to the geographic extent known to the statesmen of the time—a pattern repeated in other regions. This was largely because the then-prevailing technology did not encourage or even permit the operation of a single global system. With no means of interacting with each other on a sustained basis and no framework for measuring the power of one region against another, each region viewed its own order as unique and defined the others as “barbarians”—governed in a manner incomprehensible to the established system and irrelevant to its designs except as a threat. Each defined itself as a template for the legitimate organization of all humanity, imagining that in governing what lay before it, it was ordering the world.

At the opposite end of the Eurasian landmass from Europe, China was the center of its own hierarchical and theoretically universal concept of order. This system had operated for millennia—it had been in place when the Roman Empire governed Europe as a unity—basing itself not on the sovereign equality of states but on the presumed boundlessness of the Emperor’s reach. In this concept, sovereignty in the European sense did not exist, because the Emperor held sway over

“All Under Heaven.” He was the pinnacle of a political and cultural hierarchy, distinct and universal, radiating from the center of the world in the Chinese capital outward to all the rest of humankind. The latter were classified as various degrees of barbarians depending in part on their mastery of Chinese writing and cultural institutions (a cosmography that endured well into the modern era). China, in this view, would order the world primarily by awing other societies with its cultural magnificence and economic bounty, drawing them into relationships that could be managed to produce the aim of “harmony under heaven.”

In much of the region between Europe and China, Islam’s different universal concept of world order held sway, with its own vision of a single divinely sanctioned governance uniting and pacifying the world. In the seventh century, Islam had launched itself across three continents in an unprecedented wave of religious exaltation and imperial expansion. After unifying the Arab world, taking over remnants of the Roman Empire, and subsuming the Persian Empire, Islam came to govern the Middle East, North Africa, large swaths of Asia, and portions of Europe. Its version of universal order considered Islam destined to expand over the “realm of war,” as it called all regions populated by unbelievers, until the whole world was a unitary system brought into harmony by the message of the Prophet Muhammad. As Europe built its multistate order, the Turkish-based Ottoman Empire revived this claim to a single legitimate governance and spread its supremacy through the Arab heartland, the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe. It was aware of Europe’s nascent interstate order; it considered it not a model but a source of division to be exploited for westward Ottoman expansion. As Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror admonished the Italian city-states practicing an early version of multipolarity in the fifteenth century, “You are 20 states . . . you are in disagreement among yourselves . . . There must be only one empire, one faith, and one sovereignty in the world.”

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic the foundations of a distinct vision of world order were being laid in the “New World.” As Europe’s seventeenth-century political and sectarian conflicts raged, Puritan settlers had set out to redeem God’s plan with an “errand in the wilderness” that would free them from adherence to established (and in their view corrupted) structures of authority. There they would build, as Governor John Winthrop preached in 1630 aboard a ship bound for the Massachusetts settlement, a “city upon a hill,” inspiring the world through the justness of its principles and the power of its example. In the American view of world order, peace and balance would occur naturally, and ancient enmities would be set aside—once other nations were given the same principled say in their own governance that Americans had in theirs. The task of foreign policy was thus not so much the pursuit of a specifically American interest as the cultivation of shared principles. In time, the United States would become the indispensable defender of the order Europe designed. Yet even as the United States lent its weight to the effort, an ambivalence endured—for the American vision rested not on an embrace of the European balance-of-power system but on the achievement of peace through the spread of democratic principles.

Of all these concepts of order, Westphalian principles are, at this writing, the sole generally recognized basis of what exists of a world order. The Westphalian system spread around the world as the framework for a state-based international order spanning multiple civilizations and regions because, as the European nations expanded, they carried the blueprint of their international order with them. While they often neglected to apply concepts of sovereignty to the colonies and colonized peoples, when these peoples began to demand their independence, they did so in the name of Westphalian concepts. The principles of national independence, sovereign statehood, national interest, and noninterference proved effective arguments against the

colonizers themselves during the struggles for independence and protection for their newly formed states afterward.

The contemporary, now global Westphalian system—what colloquially is called the world community—has striven to curtail the anarchical nature of the world with an extensive network of international legal and organizational structures designed to foster open trade and a stable international financial system, establish accepted principles of resolving international disputes, and set limits on the conduct of wars when they do occur. This system of states now encompasses every culture and region. Its institutions have provided the neutral framework for the interactions of diverse societies—to a large extent independent of their respective values.

Yet Westphalian principles are being challenged on all sides, sometimes in the name of world order itself. Europe has set out to depart from the state system it designed and to transcend it through a concept of pooled sovereignty. And ironically, though Europe invented the balance-of-power concept, it has consciously and severely limited the element of power in its new institutions. Having downgraded its military capacities, Europe has little scope to respond when universal norms are flouted.

In the Middle East, jihadists on both sides of the Sunni-Shia divide tear at societies and dismantle states in quest of visions of global revolution based on the fundamentalist version of their religion. The state itself—as well as the regional system based on it—is in jeopardy, assaulted by ideologies rejecting its constraints as illegitimate and by terrorist militias that, in several countries, are stronger than the armed forces of the government.

Asia, in some ways the most strikingly successful of the regions to adopt concepts of sovereign statehood, still recalls alternative concepts of order with nostalgia and churns with rivalries and historical claims of the kind that dashed Europe's order a century ago. Nearly every

country considers itself to be “rising,” driving disagreements to the edge of confrontation.

The United States has alternated between defending the Westphalian system and castigating its premises of balance of power and non-interference in domestic affairs as immoral and outmoded, and sometimes both at once. It continues to assert the universal relevance of its values in building a peaceful world order and reserves the right to support them globally. Yet after withdrawing from three wars in two generations—each begun with idealistic aspirations and widespread public support but ending in national trauma—America struggles to define the relationship between its power (still vast) and its principles.

All of the major centers of power practice elements of Westphalian order to some degree, but none considers itself the natural defender of the system. All are undergoing significant internal shifts. Can regions with such divergent cultures, histories, and traditional theories of order vindicate the legitimacy of any common system?

Success in such an effort will require an approach that respects both the multifariousness of the human condition and the ingrained human quest for freedom. Order in this sense must be cultivated; it cannot be imposed. This is particularly so in an age of instantaneous communication and revolutionary political flux. Any system of world order, to be sustainable, must be accepted as just—not only by leaders, but also by citizens. It must reflect two truths: order without freedom, even if sustained by momentary exaltation, eventually creates its own counterpoise; yet freedom cannot be secured or sustained without a framework of order to keep the peace. Order and freedom, sometimes described as opposite poles on the spectrum of experience, should instead be understood as interdependent. Can today’s leaders rise above the urgency of day-to-day events to achieve this balance?

Legitimacy and Power

An answer to these questions must deal with three levels of order. World order describes the concept held by a region or civilization about the nature of just arrangements and the distribution of power thought to be applicable to the entire world. An international order is the practical application of these concepts to a substantial part of the globe—large enough to affect the global balance of power. Regional orders involve the same principles applied to a defined geographic area.

Any one of these systems of order bases itself on two components: a set of commonly accepted rules that define the limits of permissible action and a balance of power that enforces restraint where rules break down, preventing one political unit from subjugating all others. A consensus on the legitimacy of existing arrangements does not—now or in the past—foreclose competitions or confrontations, but it helps ensure that they will occur as adjustments within the existing order rather than as fundamental challenges to it. A balance of forces does not in itself secure peace, but if thoughtfully assembled and invoked, it can limit the scope and frequency of fundamental challenges and curtail their chance of succeeding when they do occur.

No book can hope to address every historic approach to international order or every country now active in shaping world affairs. This volume attempts to deal with the regions whose concepts of order have most shaped the evolution of the modern era.

The balance between legitimacy and power is extremely complex; the smaller the geographic area to which it applies and the more coherent the cultural convictions within it, the easier it is to distill a workable consensus. But in the modern world the need is for a global world order. An array of entities unrelated to each other by history or values (except at arm's length), and defining themselves essentially

by the limit of their capabilities, is likely to generate conflict, not order.

During my first visit to Beijing, undertaken in 1971 to reestablish contact with China after two decades of hostility, I mentioned that to the American delegation, China was a “land of mystery.” Premier Zhou Enlai responded, “You will find it not mysterious. When you have become familiar with it, it will not seem so mysterious as before.” There were 900 million Chinese, he observed, and it seemed perfectly normal to them. In our time, the quest for world order will require relating the perceptions of societies whose realities have largely been self-contained. The mystery to be overcome is one all peoples share—how divergent historic experiences and values can be shaped into a common order.

CHAPTER I

Europe: The Pluralistic International Order

The Uniqueness of the European Order

The history of most civilizations is a tale of the rise and fall of empires. Order was established by their internal governance, not through an equilibrium among states: strong when the central authority was cohesive, more haphazard under weaker rulers. In imperial systems, wars generally took place at the frontiers of the empire or as civil wars. Peace was identified with the reach of imperial power.

In China and Islam, political contests were fought for control of an established framework of order. Dynasties changed, but each new ruling group portrayed itself as restoring a legitimate system that had fallen into disrepair. In Europe, no such evolution took hold. With the end of Roman rule, pluralism became the defining characteristic of the European order. The idea of Europe loomed as a geographic designation, as an expression of Christianity or of court society, or as the center of enlightenment of a community of the educated and of modernity. Yet although it was comprehensible as a single civilization, Europe never had a single governance, or a united, fixed identity. It

changed the principles in the name of which its various units governed themselves at frequent intervals, experimenting with a new concept of political legitimacy or international order.

In other regions of the world, a period of competing rulers came by posterity to be regarded as a “time of troubles,” a civil war, or a “warlord period”—a lamented interlude of disunity that had been transcended. Europe thrived on fragmentation and embraced its own divisions. Distinct competing dynasties and nationalities were perceived not as a form of “chaos” to be expunged but, in the idealized view of Europe’s statesmen—sometimes conscious, sometimes not—as an intricate mechanism tending toward a balance that preserved each people’s interests, integrity, and autonomy. For more than a thousand years, in the mainstream of modern European statecraft order has derived from equilibrium, and identity from resistance to universal rule. It is not that European monarchs were more immune to the glories of conquest than their counterparts in other civilizations or more committed to an ideal of diversity in the abstract. Rather, they lacked the strength to impose their will on each other decisively. In time, pluralism took on the characteristics of a model of world order. Has Europe in our time transcended this pluralistic tendency—or do the internal struggles of the European Union affirm it?

For five hundred years, Rome’s imperial rule had ensured a single set of laws, a common defense, and an extraordinary level of civilization. With the fall of Rome, conventionally dated in 476, the empire disintegrated. In what historians have called the Dark Ages, nostalgia for the lost universality flourished. The vision of harmony and unity focused increasingly on the Church. In that worldview, Christendom was a single society administered by two complementary authorities: civil government, the “successors of Caesar” maintaining order in the temporal sphere; and the Church, the successors of Peter tending to universal and absolute principles of salvation. Augustine of Hippo, writing in North Africa as Roman rule crumbled, theologically con-

cluded that temporal political authority was legitimate to the extent that it furthered the pursuit of a God-fearing life and with it man's salvation. "There are two systems," Pope Gelasius I wrote to the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius in A.D. 494, "under which this world is governed, the sacred authority of the priests and the royal power. Of these, the greater weight is with the priests in so far as they will answer to the Lord, even for kings, in the Last Judgment." The real world order was in this sense not in this world.

This all-encompassing concept of world order had to contend with an anomaly from the start: in the post-Roman Europe, dozens of political rulers exercised sovereignty with no clear hierarchy among them; all invoked fealty to Christ, but their link to the Church and its authority was ambiguous. Fierce debates attended the delineation of Church authority, while kingdoms with separate militaries and independent policies maneuvered for advantage in a manner that bore no apparent relationship to Augustine's *City of God*.

Aspirations to unity were briefly realized on Christmas Day 800, when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, the Frankish King and conqueror of much of present-day France and Germany, as *Imperator Romanorum* (Emperor of the Romans), and awarded him theoretical title to the former eastern half of the erstwhile Roman Empire, at that point the lands of Byzantium. The Emperor pledged to the Pope "to defend on all sides the holy church of Christ from pagan incursion and infidel devastation abroad, and within to add strength to the Catholic faith by our recognition of it."

But Charlemagne's empire did not fulfill its aspirations: in fact it began to crumble almost as soon as it was inaugurated. Charlemagne, beset by tasks closer to home, never attempted to rule the lands of the erstwhile Eastern Roman Empire the Pope had allotted him. In the west, he made little progress in recapturing Spain from its Moorish conquerors. After Charlemagne's death, his successors sought to reinforce his position by appeal to tradition, by naming his possessions the

Holy Roman Empire. But debilitated by civil wars, less than a century after its founding, Charlemagne's empire passed from the scene as a coherent political entity (though its name remained in use throughout a shifting series of territories until 1806).

China had its Emperor; Islam had its Caliph—the recognized leader of the lands of Islam. Europe had the Holy Roman Emperor. But the Holy Roman Emperor operated from a much weaker base than his confreres in other civilizations. He had no imperial bureaucracy at his disposal. His authority depended on his strength in the regions he governed in his dynastic capacity, essentially his family holdings. His position was not formally hereditary and depended on election by a franchise of seven, later nine, princes; these elections were generally decided by a mixture of political maneuvering, assessments of religious piety, and vast financial payoffs. The Emperor theoretically owed his authority to his investiture by the Pope, but political and logistical considerations often excluded it, leaving him to rule for years as “Emperor-Elect.” Religion and politics never merged into a single construct, leading to Voltaire’s truthful jest that the Holy Roman Empire was “neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire.” Medieval Europe’s concept of international order reflected a case-by-case accommodation between the Pope and the Emperor and a host of other feudal rulers. A universal order based on the possibility of a single reign and a single set of legitimating principles was increasingly drained of any practicality.

A full flowering of the medieval concept of world order was envisioned only briefly with the rise of the sixteenth-century Habsburg prince Charles (1500–1558); his rule also ushered in its irrevocable decay. The stern and pious Flemish-born prince was born to rule; except for a widely noted taste for spiced food, he was generally perceived to be without vices and immune to distraction. He inherited the crown of the Netherlands as a child and that of Spain—with its vast and expanding array of colonies in Asia and the Americas—at sixteen.

Shortly after, in 1519, he prevailed in the election for the post of Holy Roman Emperor, making him Charlemagne's formal successor. The coincidence of these titles meant that the medieval vision seemed poised to be fulfilled. A single, pious ruler now governed territories approximately equivalent to today's Austria, Germany, northern Italy, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, eastern France, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, and much of the Americas. (This massive agglomeration of political power was accomplished almost entirely through strategic marriages and gave rise to the Habsburg saying "Bella gerant alii; tu, felix Austria, nube!"—"Leave the waging of wars to others; you, happy Austria, marry!") Spanish explorers and conquistadores—Magellan and Cortés sailed under Charles's auspices—were in the process of destroying the ancient empires of the Americas and carrying the sacraments together with European political power across the New World. Charles's armies and navies were engaged in the defense of Christendom against a new wave of invasions, by the Ottoman Turks and their surrogates in southeastern Europe and North Africa. Charles personally led a counterattack in Tunisia, with a fleet funded by gold from the New World. Caught up in these heady developments, Charles was hailed by his contemporaries as the "greatest emperor since the division of the empire in 843," destined to return the world to "a single shepherd."

In the tradition of Charlemagne, at his coronation Charles vowed to be "the protector and defender of the Holy Roman Church," and crowds paid him obeisance as "Caesare" and "Imperio"; Pope Clement affirmed Charles as the temporal force for "seeing peace and order reestablished" in Christendom.

A Chinese or Turkish visitor to Europe at that time might well have perceived a seemingly familiar political system: a continent presided over by a single dynasty imbued with a sense of divine mandate. If Charles had been able to consolidate his authority and manage an orderly succession in the vast Habsburg territorial conglomerate,

Europe would have been shaped by a dominant central authority like the Chinese Empire or the Islamic caliphate.

It did not happen; nor did Charles try. In the end, he was satisfied to base order on equilibrium. Hegemony might be his inheritance but not his objective, as he proved when, after capturing his temporal political rival the French King Francis I in the Battle of Pavia in 1525, he released him—freeing France to resume a separate and adversarial foreign policy at the heart of Europe. The French King repudiated Charles's grand gesture by taking the remarkable step—so at odds with the medieval concept of Christian statecraft—of proposing military cooperation to the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman, who was then invading Eastern Europe and challenging Habsburg power from the east.

The universality of the Church Charles sought to vindicate was not to be had. He proved unable to prevent the new doctrine of Protestantism from spreading through the lands that were the principal base of his power. Both religious and political unity were fracturing. The effort to fulfill his aspirations inherent in his office was beyond the capabilities of a single individual. A haunting portrait by Titian from 1548 at Munich's Alte Pinakothek reveals the torment of an eminence who cannot reach spiritual fulfillment or manipulate the, to him, ultimately secondary levers of hegemonic rule. Charles resolved to abdicate his dynastic titles and divide his vast empire, and did so in a manner reflecting the pluralism that had defeated his quest for unity. To his son Philip, he bequeathed the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, then the crown of Spain and its global empire. In an emotional 1555 ceremony in Brussels, he reviewed the record of his reign, attested to the diligence with which he had fulfilled his duties, and in the process handed the States-General of the Netherlands to Philip as well. The same year, Charles concluded a landmark treaty, the Peace of Augsburg, which recognized Protestantism within the Holy Roman Empire. Abandoning the spiritual foundation of his empire, Charles

afforded princes the right to choose the confessional orientation of their territory. Shortly afterward, he resigned his title as Holy Roman Emperor, passing responsibility for the empire, its upheavals, and its external challenges to his brother Ferdinand. Charles retired to a monastery in a rural region of Spain, to a life of seclusion. He spent his last days in the company of his confessor and of an Italian clock maker, whose works lined the walls and whose trade Charles attempted to learn. When Charles died in 1558, his will expressed regret for the fracturing of doctrine that had taken place during his reign and charged his son to redouble the Inquisition.

Three events completed the disintegration of the old ideal of unity. By the time Charles V died, revolutionary changes had raised Europe's sights from a regional to a global enterprise while fragmenting the medieval political and religious order: the beginning of the age of discovery, the invention of printing, and the schism in the Church.

A map depicting the universe, as comprehended by educated Europeans in the medieval age, would have shown Northern and Southern Hemispheres stretching from India in the east to Iberia and the islands of Britain in the west, with Jerusalem in the center. In the medieval perception, this was not a map for travelers but a stage divinely ordained for the drama of human redemption. The world, it was believed on biblical authority, was six-sevenths land and one-seventh water. Because the principles of salvation were fixed and could be cultivated through efforts in the lands known to Christendom, there was no reward for venturing past the fringes of civilization. In the *Inferno*, Dante described Ulysses' sailing out through the Pillars of Hercules (the Rock of Gibraltar and the adjacent heights of North Africa, at the western edge of the Mediterranean Sea) in search of knowledge, and being punished for his transgression against God's plan by a whirlwind that dooms his ship and all its crew.

The modern era announced itself when enterprising societies sought glory and wealth by exploring the oceans and whatever lay

beyond them. In the fifteenth century, Europe and China ventured forth almost contemporaneously. Chinese ships, then the world's largest and technologically most advanced, undertook journeys of exploration reaching Southeast Asia, India, and the east coast of Africa. They exchanged presents with local dignitaries, enrolled princes in China's imperial "tribute system," and brought home with them cultural and zoological curiosities. Yet following the head navigator Zheng He's death in 1433, the Chinese Emperor put an end to overseas adventures, and the fleet was abandoned. China continued to insist on the universal relevance of its principles of world order, but it would henceforth cultivate them at home and with the peoples along its borders. It never again attempted a comparable naval effort—until perhaps our own time.

Sixty years later, the European powers sailed from a continent of competing sovereign authorities; each monarch sponsored naval exploration largely in the hope of achieving a commercial or strategic edge over his rivals. Portuguese, Dutch, and English ships ventured to India; Spanish and English ships journeyed to the Western Hemisphere. Both began to displace the existing trade monopolies and political structures. The age of three centuries of preponderant European influence in world affairs had been launched. International relations, once a regional enterprise, would henceforth be geographically global, with the center of gravity in Europe, in which the concept of world order was defined and its implementation determined.

A revolution of thinking about the nature of the political universe followed. How was one to conceive of the inhabitants of regions no one had known existed? How did they fit into the medieval cosmology of empire and papacy? A council of theologians summoned by Charles V in 1550–51 in the Spanish city of Valladolid had concluded that the people living in the Western Hemisphere were human beings with souls—hence eligible for salvation. This theological conclusion was, of

course, also a maxim justifying conquest and conversion. Europeans were enabled to increase their wealth and salve their consciences simultaneously. Their global competition for territorial control changed the nature of international order. Europe's perspective expanded—until successive colonial efforts by various European states covered most of the globe and concepts of world order merged with the operation of the balance of power in Europe.

The second seminal event was the invention of movable-type printing in the middle of the fifteenth century, which made it possible to share knowledge on a hitherto-unimaginable scale. Medieval society had stored knowledge by memorizing or laboriously hand-copying religious texts or by understanding history through epic poetry. In the age of exploration, what was being discovered needed to be understood, and printing permitted accounts to be disseminated. The exploration of new worlds inspired as well a quest to rediscover the ancient world and its verities, with special emphasis on the centrality of the individual. The growing embrace of reason as an objective force of illumination and explication began to shake existing institutions, including the hitherto-unassailable Catholic Church.

The third revolutionary upheaval, that of the Protestant Reformation, was initiated when Martin Luther posted ninety-five theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church in 1517, insisting on the individual's direct relationship with God; hence individual conscience—not established orthodoxy—was put forward as the key to salvation. A number of feudal rulers seized the opportunity to enhance their authority by embracing Protestantism, imposing it on their populations, and enriching themselves by seizing Church lands. Each side regarded the other as heretical, and disagreements turned into life-or-death struggles as political and sectarian disputes commingled. The barrier separating domestic and foreign disputes collapsed as sovereigns backed rival factions in their neighbors' domestic, often bloody,

religious struggles. The Protestant Reformation destroyed the concept of a world order sustained by the “two swords” of papacy and empire. Christianity was split and at war with itself.

The Thirty Years’ War: What Is Legitimacy?

A century of intermittent wars attended the rise and spread of the Protestant critique of Church supremacy: the Habsburg Empire and the papacy both sought to stamp out the challenge to their authority, and Protestants resisted in defense of their new faith.

The period labeled by posterity as the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48) brought this turmoil to a climax. With an imperial succession looming and the Catholic King of Bohemia, the Habsburg Ferdinand, emerging as the most plausible candidate, the Protestant Bohemian nobility attempted an act of “regime change,” offering their crown—and its decisive electoral vote—to a Protestant German prince, an outcome in which the Holy Roman Empire would have ceased to be a Catholic institution. Imperial forces moved to crush the Bohemian rebellion and then pressed their advantage against Protestantism generally, triggering a war that devastated Central Europe. (The Protestant princes were generally located in the north of Germany, including the then relatively insignificant Prussia; the Catholic heartland was the south of Germany and Austria.)

In theory, the Emperor’s fellow Catholic sovereigns were obliged to unite in opposition to the new heresies. Yet faced with a choice between spiritual unity and strategic advantage, more than a few chose the latter. Foremost among them was France.

In a period of general upheaval, a country that maintains domestic authority is in a position to exploit chaos in neighboring states for larger international objectives. A cadre of sophisticated and ruthless French ministers saw their opportunity and moved decisively. The Kingdom of France began the process by giving itself a new governance. In feu-

dal systems, authority was personal; governance reflected the ruler's will but was also circumscribed by tradition, limiting the resources available for a country's national or international actions. France's chief minister from 1624 to 1642, Armand-Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu, was the first statesman to overcome these limitations.

A man of the cloth steeped in court intrigue, Richelieu was well adapted to a period of religious upheaval and crumbling established structures. As the youngest of three sons from a minor noble family, he embarked on a military career but then switched to theology after his brother's unexpected resignation from the bishopric of Luçon, considered a family birthright. Lore holds that Richelieu completed his religious studies so swiftly that he was below the normal minimum age for a clerical appointment; he resolved this obstacle by traveling to Rome and personally lying to the Pope about his age. His credentials obtained, he launched himself into factional politics at the French royal court, becoming first a close aide to the queen mother, Marie de' Medici, and then a trusted advisor to her chief political rival, her minor son King Louis XIII. Both evinced a strong distrust of Richelieu, but wracked by internal conflicts with France's Huguenot Protestants, they could not bring themselves to forgo his political and administrative genius. The young cleric's mediation between these contending royals won him a recommendation to Rome for a cardinal's hat; when given it, he became the highest-ranking member of the King's privy council. Maintaining the role for nearly two decades, the "red eminence" (so called because of his flowing red cardinal's robes) became France's chief minister, the power behind the throne, and the charting genius of a new concept of centralized statecraft and foreign policy based on the balance of power.

When Richelieu conducted the policies of his country, Machiavelli's treatises on statesmanship circulated. It is not known whether Richelieu was familiar with these texts on the politics of power. He surely practiced their essential principles. Richelieu developed a radical ap-

proach to international order. He invented the idea that the state was an abstract and permanent entity existing in its own right. Its requirements were not determined by the ruler's personality, family interests, or the universal demands of religion. Its lodestar was the national interest following calculable principles—what later came to be known as *raison d'état*. Hence it should be the basic unit of international relations.

Richelieu commandeered the incipient state as an instrument of high policy. He centralized authority in Paris, created so-called intendants or professional stewards to project the government's authority into every district of the kingdom, brought efficiency to the gathering of taxes, and decisively challenged traditional local authorities of the old nobility. Royal power would continue to be exercised by the King as the symbol of the sovereign state and an expression of the national interest.

Richelieu saw the turmoil in Central Europe not as a call to arms to defend the Church but as a means to check imperial Habsburg pre-eminence. Though France's King had been styled as the *Rex Catholissimus*, or the "Most Catholic King," since the fourteenth century, France moved—at first unobtrusively, then openly—to support the Protestant coalition (of Sweden, Prussia, and the North German princes) on the basis of cold national-interest calculation.

To outraged complaints that, as a cardinal, he owed a duty to the universal and eternal Catholic Church—which would imply an alignment *against* the rebellious Protestant princes of Northern and Central Europe—Richelieu cited his duties as a minister to a temporal, yet vulnerable, political entity. Salvation might be his personal objective, but as a statesman he was responsible for a political entity that did not have an eternal soul to be redeemed. "Man is immortal, his salvation is hereafter," he said. "The state has no immortality, its salvation is now or never."

The fragmentation of Central Europe was perceived by Richelieu as a political and military necessity. The basic threat to France was strategic, not metaphysical or religious: a united Central Europe would be in a position to dominate the rest of the Continent. Hence it was in France's national interest to prevent the consolidation of Central Europe: "If the [Protestant] party is entirely ruined, the brunt of the power of the House of Austria will fall on France." France, by supporting a plethora of small states in Central Europe and weakening Austria, achieved its strategic objective.

Richelieu's design would endure through vast upheavals. For two and a half centuries—from the emergence of Richelieu in 1624 to Bismarck's proclamation of the German Empire in 1871—the aim of keeping Central Europe (more or less the territory of contemporary Germany, Austria, and northern Italy) divided remained the guiding principle of French foreign policy. For as long as this concept served as the essence of the European order, France was preeminent on the Continent. When it collapsed, so did France's dominant role.

Three conclusions emerge from Richelieu's career. First, the indispensable element of a successful foreign policy is a long-term strategic concept based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors. Second, the statesman must distill that vision by analyzing and shaping an array of ambiguous, often conflicting pressures into a coherent and purposeful direction. He (or she) must know where this strategy is leading and why. And, third, he must act at the outer edge of the possible, bridging the gap between his society's experiences and its aspirations. Because repetition of the familiar leads to stagnation, no little daring is required.

The Peace of Westphalia

In our time, the Peace of Westphalia has acquired a special resonance as the path breaker of a new concept of international order that

has spread around the world. The representatives meeting to negotiate it were more focused at the time on considerations of protocol and status.

By the time representatives of the Holy Roman Empire and its two main adversaries, France and Sweden, agreed in principle to convene a peace conference, the conflict had ground on for twenty-three years. Another two years of battle transpired before the delegations actually met; in the meantime, each side maneuvered to strengthen its allies and internal constituencies.

Unlike other landmark agreements such as the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15 or the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, the Peace of Westphalia did not emerge from a single conference, and the setting was not one generally associated with a gathering of statesmen pondering transcendent questions of world order. Mirroring the variety of contenders in a war that had ranged from Spain to Sweden, the peace emerged from a series of separate arrangements made in two different Westphalian towns. Catholic powers, including 178 separate participants from the different states constituting the Holy Roman Empire, gathered in the Catholic city of Münster. Protestant powers gathered in the mixed Lutheran and Catholic city of Osnabrück, roughly thirty miles away. The 235 official envoys and their staffs took up residence in whatever rooms they could find in the two small cities, neither of which had ever been considered suitable for a large-scale event, let alone a congress of all European powers. The Swiss envoy “lodged above a wool weaver’s shop in a room that stank of sausage and fish oil,” while the Bavarian delegation secured eighteen beds for its twenty-nine members. With no official conference head or mediator and no plenary sessions, representatives met on an ad hoc basis and traveled in a neutral zone between the two cities to coordinate positions, sometimes meeting informally in towns in the middle. Some of the major powers stationed representatives in both cities. Combat continued in

various parts of Europe throughout the talks, with shifting military dynamics affecting the course of the negotiations.

Most representatives had come with eminently practical instructions based on strategic interests. While they employed almost identical high-minded phrases about achieving a “peace for Christendom,” too much blood had been spilled to conceive of reaching this lofty goal through doctrinal or political unity. It was now taken for granted that peace would be built, if at all, through balancing rivalries.

The Peace of Westphalia that emerged from these convoluted discussions is probably the most frequently cited diplomatic document in European history, though in fact no single treaty exists to embody its terms. Nor did the delegates ever meet in a single plenary session to adopt it. The peace is in reality the sum of three separate complementary agreements signed at different times in different cities. In the January 1648 Peace of Münster, Spain recognized the independence of the Dutch Republic, capping an eight-decades-long Dutch revolt that had merged with the Thirty Years’ War. In October 1648, separate groupings of powers signed the Treaty of Münster and the Treaty of Osnabrück, with terms mirroring each other and incorporating key provisions by reference.

Both of the main multilateral treaties proclaimed their intent as “a Christian, universal, perpetual, true, and sincere peace and friendship” for “the glory of God and the security of Christendom.” The operative terms were not substantially different from other documents of the period. Yet the mechanisms through which they were to be reached were unprecedented. The war had shattered pretensions to universality or confessional solidarity. Begun as a struggle of Catholics against Protestants, particularly after France’s entry against the Catholic Holy Roman Empire it had turned into a free-for-all of shifting and conflicting alliances. Much like the Middle Eastern conflagrations of our own period, sectarian alignments were invoked for solidarity

and motivation in battle but were just as often discarded, trumped by clashes of geopolitical interests or simply the ambitions of outsized personalities. Every party had been abandoned at some point during the war by its “natural” allies; none signed the documents under the illusion that it was doing anything but advancing its own interests and prestige.

Paradoxically, this general exhaustion and cynicism allowed the participants to transform the practical means of ending a particular war into general concepts of world order. With dozens of battle-hardened parties meeting to secure hard-won gains, old forms of hierarchical deference were quietly discarded. The inherent equality of sovereign states, regardless of their power or domestic system, was instituted. Newly arrived powers, such as Sweden and the Dutch Republic, were granted protocol treatment equal to that of established great powers like France and Austria. All kings were referred to as “majesty” and all ambassadors “excellency.” This novel concept was carried so far that the delegations, demanding absolute equality, devised a process of entering the sites of negotiations through individual doors, requiring the construction of many entrances, and advancing to their seats at equal speed so that none would suffer the ignominy of waiting for the other to arrive at his convenience.

The Peace of Westphalia became a turning point in the history of nations because the elements it set in place were as uncomplicated as they were sweeping. The state, not the empire, dynasty, or religious confession, was affirmed as the building block of European order. The concept of state sovereignty was established. The right of each signatory to choose its own domestic structure and religious orientation free from intervention was affirmed, while novel clauses ensured that minority sects could practice their faith in peace and be free from the prospect of forced conversion. Beyond the immediate demands of the moment, the principles of a system of “international relations” were taking shape, motivated by the common desire to avoid

a recurrence of total war on the Continent. Diplomatic exchanges, including the stationing of resident representatives in the capitals of fellow states (a practice followed before then generally only by Venetians), were designed to regulate relations and promote the arts of peace. The parties envisioned future conferences and consultations on the Westphalian model as forums for settling disputes before they led to conflict. International law, developed by traveling scholar-advisors such as Hugo de Groot (Grotius) during the war, was treated as an expandable body of agreed doctrine aimed at the cultivation of harmony, with the Westphalian treaties themselves at its heart.

The genius of this system, and the reason it spread across the world, was that its provisions were procedural, not substantive. If a state would accept these basic requirements, it could be recognized as an international citizen able to maintain its own culture, politics, religion, and internal policies, shielded by the international system from outside intervention. The ideal of imperial or religious unity—the operating premise of Europe’s and most other regions’ historical orders—had implied that in theory only one center of power could be fully legitimate. The Westphalian concept took multiplicity as its starting point and drew a variety of multiple societies, each accepted as a reality, into a common search for order. By the mid-twentieth century, this international system was in place on every continent; it remains the scaffolding of international order such as it now exists.

The Peace of Westphalia did not mandate a specific arrangement of alliances or a permanent European political structure. With the end of the universal Church as the ultimate source of legitimacy, and the weakening of the Holy Roman Emperor, the ordering concept for Europe became the balance of power—which, by definition, involves ideological neutrality and adjustment to evolving circumstances. The nineteenth-century British statesman Lord Palmerston expressed its basic principle as follows: “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those

interests it is our duty to follow.” Asked to define these interests more specifically in the form of an official “foreign policy,” the acclaimed steward of British power professed, “When people ask me . . . for what is called a policy, the only answer is that we mean to do what may seem to be best, upon each occasion as it arises, making the Interests of Our Country one’s guiding principle.” (Of course this deceptively simple concept worked for Britain in part because its ruling class was trained in a common, almost intuitive sense of what the country’s enduring interests were.)

Today these Westphalian concepts are often maligned as a system of cynical power manipulation, indifferent to moral claims. Yet the structure established in the Peace of Westphalia represented the first attempt to institutionalize an international order on the basis of agreed rules and limits and to base it on a multiplicity of powers rather than the dominance of a single country. The concepts of *raison d'état* and the “national interest” made their first appearance, representing not an exaltation of power but an attempt to rationalize and limit its use. Armies had marched across Europe for generations under the banner of universal (and contradictory) moral claims; prophets and conquerors had unleashed total war in pursuit of a mixture of personal, dynastic, imperial, and religious ambitions. The theoretically logical and predictable intermeshing of state interests was intended to overcome the disorder unfolding in every corner of the Continent. Limited wars over calculable issues would replace the era of contending universalisms, with its forced expulsions and conversions and general war consuming civilian populations.

With all its ambiguities, the balancing of power was thought an improvement over the exactions of religious wars. But how was the balance of power to be established? In theory, it was based on realities; hence every participant in it should see it alike. But each society’s perceptions are affected by its domestic structure, culture, and history and by the overriding reality that the elements of power—however

objective—are in constant flux. Hence the balance of power needs to be recalibrated from time to time. It produces the wars whose extent it also limits.

The Operation of the Westphalian System

With the Treaty of Westphalia, the papacy had been confined to ecclesiastical functions, and the doctrine of sovereign equality reigned. What political theory could then explain the origin and justify the functions of secular political order? In his *Leviathan*, published in 1651, three years after the Peace of Westphalia, Thomas Hobbes provided such a theory. He imagined a “state of nature” in the past when the absence of authority produced a “war of all against all.” To escape such intolerable insecurity, he theorized, people delivered their rights to a sovereign power in return for the sovereign’s provision of security for all within the state’s borders. The sovereign state’s monopoly on power was established as the only way to overcome the perpetual fear of violent death and war.

This social contract in Hobbes’s analysis did *not* apply beyond the borders of states, for no supranational sovereign existed to impose order. Therefore:

Concerning the offices of one sovereign to another, which are comprehended in that law which is commonly called the law of nations, I need not say anything in this place, because the law of nations and the law of nature is the same thing. And every sovereign hath the same right, in procuring the safety of his people, that any particular man can have, in procuring the safety of his own body.

The international arena remained in the state of nature and was anarchical because there was no world sovereign available to make it

secure and none could be practically constituted. Thus each state would have to place its own national interest above all in a world where power was the paramount factor. Cardinal Richelieu would have emphatically agreed.

The Peace of Westphalia in its early practice implemented a Hobbesian world. How was this new balance of power to be calibrated? A distinction must be made between the balance of power as a fact and the balance of power as a system. Any international order—to be worthy of that name—must sooner or later reach an equilibrium, or else it will be in a constant state of warfare. Because the medieval world contained dozens of principalities, a practical balance of power frequently existed in fact. After the Peace of Westphalia, the balance of power made its appearance as a system; that is to say, bringing it about was accepted as one of the key purposes of foreign policy; disturbing it would evoke a coalition on behalf of equilibrium.

The rise of Britain as a major naval power by early in the eighteenth century made it possible to turn the facts of the balance of power into a system. Control of the seas enabled Britain to choose the timing and scale of its involvement on the Continent to act as the arbiter of the balance of power, indeed the guarantor that Europe would have a balance of power at all. So long as England assessed its strategic requirements correctly, it would be able to back the weaker side on the Continent against the stronger, preventing any single country from achieving hegemony in Europe and thereby mobilizing the resources of the Continent to challenge Britain's control of the seas. Until the outbreak of World War I, England acted as the balancer of the equilibrium. It fought in European wars but with shifting alliances—not in pursuit of specific, purely national goals, but by identifying the national interest with the preservation of the balance of power. Many of these principles apply to America's role in the contemporary world, as will be discussed later.

There were in fact two balances of power being conducted in

Europe after the Westphalian settlement: The overall balance, of which England acted as a guardian, was the protector of general stability. A Central European balance essentially manipulated by France aimed to prevent the emergence of a unified Germany in a position to become the most powerful country on the Continent. For more than two hundred years, these balances kept Europe from tearing itself to pieces as it had during the Thirty Years' War; they did not prevent war, but they limited its impact because equilibrium, not total conquest, was the goal.

The balance of power can be challenged in at least two ways: The first is if a major country augments its strength to a point where it threatens to achieve hegemony. The second occurs when a heretofore-secondary state seeks to enter the ranks of the major powers and sets off a series of compensating adjustments by the other powers until a new equilibrium is established or a general conflagration takes place. The Westphalian system met both tests in the eighteenth century, first by thwarting the thrust for hegemony by France's Louis XIV, then by adjusting the system to the insistence of Prussia's Frederick the Great for equal status.

Louis XIV took full control of the French crown in 1661 and developed Richelieu's concept of governance to unprecedented levels. The French King had in the past ruled through feudal lords with their own autonomous claims to authority based on heredity. Louis governed through a royal bureaucracy dependent entirely on him. He downgraded courtiers of noble blood and ennobled bureaucrats. What counted was service to the King, not rank of birth. The brilliant Finance Minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert, son of a provincial draper, was charged with unifying the tax administration and financing constant war. The memoirs of Saint-Simon, a duke by inheritance and man of letters, bear bitter witness to the social transformation:

He [Louis] was well aware that though he might crush a nobleman with the weight of his displeasure, he could not

destroy him or his line, whereas a secretary of state or other such minister could be reduced together with his whole family to those depths of nothingness from which he had been elevated. No amount of wealth or possessions would avail him then. That was one reason why he liked to give his ministers authority over the highest in the Land, even over the Princes of the Blood.

In 1680, Louis symbolized the nature of his all-embracing rule by assuming the title “the Great” to go with his earlier self-granted appellation as “the Sun King.” In 1682, France’s North American territories were named “Louisiana.” The same year, Louis’s court moved to Versailles, where the King oversaw in elaborate detail a “theater monarchy” dedicated, above all, to the performance of his own majesty.

With a unified kingdom spared the ravages of internal war, possessing a skilled bureaucracy and a military surpassing that of any neighboring state, France was for a while in a position to seek dominance in Europe. Louis’s reign resolved itself into a series of almost continuous wars. In the end, as was the case with all later aspirants to European hegemony, each new conquest galvanized an opposing coalition of nations. At first, Louis’s generals won battles everywhere; ultimately, they were defeated or checked everywhere, most signally in the first decade of the eighteenth century by John Churchill, later Duke of Marlborough and forebear of the great twentieth-century Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Louis’s legions could not overcome the basic resilience of the Westphalian system.

Decades after Richelieu’s death, the demonstrated effectiveness of a consolidated, centralized state pursuing a secular foreign policy and centralized administration inspired imitators that united to counterbalance French power. England, Holland, and Austria created the Grand Alliance, joined later by Spain, Prussia, Denmark, and several German principalities. The opposition to Louis was not ideological or

religious in nature: French remained the language of diplomacy and high culture through much of Europe, and the Catholic-Protestant divide ran through the allied camp. Rather, it was inherent in the Westphalian system and indispensable to preserve the pluralism of the European order. Its character was defined in the name contemporary observers gave it: the Great Moderation. Louis sought what amounted to hegemony in the name of the glory of France. He was defeated by a Europe that sought its order in diversity.

THE FIRST HALF of the eighteenth century was dominated by the quest to contain France; the second was shaped by Prussia's effort to find a place for itself among the major powers. Where Louis had fought wars to translate power into hegemony, Prussia's Frederick II went to war to transmute latent weakness into great-power status. Situated on the harsh North German plain and extending from the Vistula across Germany, Prussia cultivated discipline and public service to substitute for the larger population and greater resources of better-endowed countries. Split into two noncontiguous pieces, it jutted precariously into the Austrian, Swedish, Russian, and Polish spheres of influence. It was relatively sparsely populated; its strength was the discipline with which it marshaled its limited resources. Its greatest assets were civic-mindedness, an efficient bureaucracy, and a well-trained army.

When Frederick II ascended the throne in 1740, he seemed an unlikely contender for the greatness history has vouchsafed him. Finding the dour discipline of the position of Crown Prince oppressive, he had attempted to flee to England accompanied by a friend, Hans Hermann von Katte. They were apprehended. The King ordered von Katte decapitated in front of Frederick, whom he submitted to a court-martial headed by himself. He cross-examined his son with 178 questions, which Frederick answered so deftly that he was reinstated.

Surviving this searing experience was possible only by adopting his father's austere sense of duty and developing a general misanthropic attitude toward his fellow man. Frederick saw his personal authority as absolute but his policies as limited rigidly by the principles of *raison d'état* Richelieu had put forward a century earlier. "Rulers are the slaves of their resources," his credo held, "the interest of the State is their law, and this law may not be infringed." Courageous and cosmopolitan (Frederick spoke and wrote French and composed sentimental French poetry even on military campaigns, subtitling one of his literary efforts "Pas trop mal pour la veille d'une grande bataille"), he embodied the new era of Enlightenment governance by benevolent despotism, which was legitimized by its effectiveness, not ideology.

Frederick concluded that great-power status required territorial contiguity for Prussia, hence expansion. There was no need for any other political or moral justification. "The superiority of our troops, the promptitude with which we can set them in motion, in a word the clear advantage we have over our neighbors" was all the justification Frederick required to seize the wealthy and traditionally Austrian province of Silesia in 1740. Treating the issue as a geopolitical, not a legal or moral, one, Frederick aligned himself with France (which saw in Prussia a counter to Austria) and retained Silesia in the peace settlement of 1742, nearly doubling Prussia's territory and population.

In the process, Frederick brought war back to the European system, which had been at peace since 1713 when the Treaty of Utrecht had put an end to the ambitions of Louis XIV. The challenge to the established balance of power caused the Westphalian system to begin to function. The price for being admitted as a new member to the European order turned out to be seven years of near-disastrous battle. Now the alliances were reversed, as Frederick's previous allies sought to quash his operations and their rivals tried to harness Prussia's disciplined fighting force for their own aims. Russia, remote and mysterious, for the first time entered a contest over the European balance of

power. At the edge of defeat, with Russian armies at the gates of Berlin, Frederick was saved by the sudden death of Czarina Elizabeth. The new Czar, a longtime admirer of Frederick, withdrew from the war. (Hitler, besieged in encircled Berlin in April 1945, waited for an event comparable to the so-called Miracle of the House of Brandenburg and was told by Joseph Goebbels that it had happened when President Franklin D. Roosevelt died.)

The Holy Roman Empire had become a facade; no rival European claimant to universal authority had arisen. Almost all rulers asserted that they ruled by divine right—a claim not challenged by any major power—but they accepted that God had similarly endowed many other monarchs. Wars were therefore fought for limited territorial objectives, not to overthrow existing governments and institutions, nor to impose a new system of relations between states. Tradition prevented rulers from conscripting their subjects and severely constrained their ability to raise taxes. The impact of wars on civilian populations was in no way comparable to the horrors of the Thirty Years’ War or what technology and ideology would produce two centuries later. In the eighteenth century, the balance of power operated as a theater in which “lives and values were put on display, amid splendor, polish, gallantry, and shows of utter self-assurance.” The exercise of that power was constrained by the recognition that the system would not tolerate hegemonic aspirations.

International orders that have been the most stable have had the advantage of uniform perceptions. The statesmen who operated the eighteenth-century European order were aristocrats who interpreted intangibles like honor and duty in the same way and agreed on fundamentals. They represented a single elite society that spoke the same language (French), frequented the same salons, and pursued romantic liaisons in each other’s capitals. National interests of course varied, but in a world where a foreign minister could serve a monarch of another nationality (every Russian foreign minister until 1820 was recruited

abroad), or when a territory could change its national affiliation as the result of a marriage pact or a fortuitous inheritance, a sense of overarching common purpose was inherent. Power calculations in the eighteenth century took place against this ameliorating background of a shared sense of legitimacy and unspoken rules of international conduct.

This consensus was not only a matter of decorum; it reflected the moral convictions of a common European outlook. Europe was never more united or more spontaneous than during what came to be perceived as the age of enlightenment. New triumphs in science and philosophy began to displace the fracturing European certainties of tradition and faith. The swift advance of the mind on multiple fronts—physics, chemistry, astronomy, history, archaeology, cartography, rationality—bolstered a new spirit of secular illumination auguring that the revelation of all of nature’s hidden mechanisms was only a question of time. “The true system of the world has been recognized, developed, and perfected,” wrote the brilliant French polymath Jean Le Rond d’Alembert in 1759, embodying the spirit of the age:

In short, from the earth to Saturn, from the history of the heavens to that of insects, natural philosophy has been revolutionized; and nearly all other fields of knowledge have assumed new forms . . . [T]he discovery and application of a new method of philosophizing, the kind of enthusiasm which accompanies discoveries, a certain exaltation of ideas which the spectacle of the universe produces in us—all these causes have brought about a lively fermentation of minds. Spreading through nature in all directions like a river which has burst its dams, this fermentation has swept with a sort of violence everything along with it which stood in its way.

This “fermentation” based itself on a new spirit of analysis and a rigorous testing of all premises. The exploration and systematiza-

tion of all knowledge—an endeavor symbolized by the twenty-eight-volume *Encyclopédie* that d'Alembert co-edited between 1751 and 1772—proclaimed a knowable, demystified universe with man as its central actor and explicator. Prodigious learning would be combined, d'Alembert's colleague Denis Diderot wrote, with a “zeal for the best interests of the human race.” Reason would confront falsehoods with “solid principles [to] serve as the foundation for diametrically opposed truths,” whereby “we shall be able to throw down the whole edifice of mud and scatter the idle heap of dust” and instead “put men on the right path.”

Inevitably, this new way of thinking and analysis was applied to concepts of governance, political legitimacy, and international order. The political philosopher Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron of Montesquieu, applied the principles of the balance of power to domestic policy by describing a concept of checks and balances later institutionalized in the American Constitution. He went on from there into a philosophy of history and of the mechanisms of societal change. Surveying the histories of various societies, Montesquieu concluded that events were never caused by accident. There was always an underlying cause that reason could discover and then shape to the common good:

It is not fortune which rules the world . . . There are general intellectual as well as physical causes active in every monarchy which bring about its rise, preservation, and fall. All [seeming] accidents are subject to these causes, and whenever an accidental battle, that is, a particular cause, has destroyed a state, a general cause also existed which led to the fall of this state as a result of a single battle. In short, it is the general pace of things which draws all particular events along with it.

The German philosopher Immanuel Kant, probably the greatest philosopher of the Enlightenment period, took Montesquieu a step

further by developing a concept for a permanent peaceful world order. Pondering the world from the former Prussian capital of Königsberg, casting his gaze on the period of the Seven Years' War, the American Revolutionary War, and the French Revolution, Kant dared to see in the general upheaval the faint beginnings of a new, more peaceful international order.

Humanity, Kant reasoned, was characterized by a distinctive "*un-social sociability*": the "tendency to come together in society, coupled, however, with a continual resistance which constantly threatens to break this society up." The problem of order, particularly international order, was "the most difficult and the last to be solved by the human race." Men formed states to constrain their passions, but like individuals in the state of nature each state sought to preserve its absolute freedom, even at the cost of "a lawless state of savagery." But the "devastations, upheavals and even complete inner exhaustion of their powers" arising from interstate clashes would in time oblige men to contemplate an alternative. Humanity faced either the peace of "the vast graveyard of the human race" or peace by reasoned design.

The answer, Kant held, was a voluntary federation of republics pledged to non-hostility and transparent domestic and international conduct. Their citizens would cultivate peace because, unlike despotic rulers, when considering hostilities, they would be deliberating about "calling down on *themselves* all the miseries of war." Over time the attractions of this compact would become apparent, opening the way toward its gradual expansion into a peaceful world order. It was Nature's purpose that humanity eventually reason its way toward "a system of united power, hence a cosmopolitan system of general political security" and "*a perfect civil union of mankind*."

The confidence, verging on brashness, in the power of reason reflected in part a species of what the Greeks called hubris—a kind of spiritual pride that bore the seeds of its own destruction within itself. The Enlightenment philosophers ignored a key issue: Can governmental

orders be invented from scratch by intelligent thinkers, or is the range of choice limited by underlying organic and cultural realities (the Burkean view)? Is there a single concept and mechanism logically uniting all things, in a way that can be discovered and explicated (as d'Alembert and Montesquieu argued), or is the world too complicated and humanity too diverse to approach these questions through logic alone, requiring a kind of intuition and an almost esoteric element of statecraft?

The Enlightenment philosophers on the Continent generally opted for the rationalist rather than the organic view of political evolution. In the process, they contributed—unintentionally, indeed contrary to their intention—to an upheaval that rent Europe for decades and whose aftereffects reach to this day.

The French Revolution and Its Aftermath

Revolutions are most unsettling when least expected. So it was with the French Revolution, which proclaimed a domestic and world order as different from the Westphalian system as it was possible to be. Abandoning the separation between domestic and foreign policy, it resurrected—and perhaps exceeded—the passions of the Thirty Years' War, substituting a secular crusade for the religious impulse of the seventeenth century. It demonstrated how internal changes within societies are able to shake the international equilibrium more profoundly than aggression from abroad—a lesson that would be driven home by the upheavals of the twentieth century, many of which drew explicitly on the concepts first advanced by the French Revolution.

Revolutions erupt when a variety of often different resentments merge to assault an unsuspecting regime. The broader the revolutionary coalition, the greater its ability to destroy existing patterns of authority. But the more sweeping the change, the more violence is needed to reconstruct authority, without which society will disintegrate. Reigns of terror are not an accident; they are inherent in the scope of revolution.

The French Revolution occurred in the richest country of Europe, even though its government was temporarily bankrupt. Its original impetus is traceable to leaders—mostly aristocrats and upper bourgeoisie—who sought to bring the governance of their country into conformity with the principles of the Enlightenment. It gained a momentum not foreseen by those who made the Revolution and inconceivable to the prevailing ruling elite.

At its heart was a reordering on a scale that had not been seen in Europe since the end of the religious wars. For the revolutionaries, human order was the reflection of neither the divine plan of the medieval world, nor the intermeshing of grand dynastic interests of the eighteenth century. Like their progeny in the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century, the philosophers of the French Revolution equated the mechanism of history with the unadulterated operation of the popular will, which by definition could accept no inherent or constitutional limitation—and which they reserved to themselves the monopoly to identify. The popular will, as conceived in that manner, was altogether distinct from the concept of majority rule prevalent in England or of checks and balances embedded in a written constitution as in the United States. The claims of the French revolutionaries far exceeded Richelieu's concept of the authority of the state by vesting sovereignty in an abstraction—not individuals but entire peoples as indivisible entities requiring uniformity of thought and action—and then designating themselves the people's spokesmen and indeed embodiment.

The Revolution's intellectual godfather, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, formulated this universal claim in a series of writings whose erudition and charm obscured their sweeping implications. Walking readers step by step through a “rational” dissection of human society, Rousseau condemned all existing institutions—property, religion, social classes, government authority, civil society—as illusory and fraudulent. Their replacement was to be a new “rule of administration in the social

order.” The populace was to submit totally to it—with an obedience that no ruler by divine right had ever imagined, except the Russian Czar, whose entire populace outside the nobility and the communities on the harsh frontiers beyond the Urals had the status of serfs. These theories prefigured the modern totalitarian regime, in which the popular will ratifies decisions that have already been announced by means of staged mass demonstrations.

In pursuit of this ideology, all monarchies were by definition treated as enemies; because they would not give up power without resisting, the Revolution, to prevail, had to turn itself into a crusading international movement to achieve world peace by imposing its principles. In order to propel the new dispensation across Europe, France’s entire adult male population was made subject to conscription. The Revolution based itself on a proposition similar to that made by Islam a millennium before, and Communism in the twentieth century: the impossibility of permanent coexistence between countries of different religious or political conceptions of truth, and the transformation of international affairs into a global contest of ideologies to be fought by any available means and by mobilizing all elements of society. In doing so, the Revolution again merged domestic and foreign policy, legitimacy and power, whose decoupling by the Westphalian settlement had limited the scope and intensity of Europe’s wars. The concept of an international order with prescribed limits of state action was overthrown in favor of a permanent revolution that knew only total victory or defeat.

In November 1792, the French National Assembly threw down the gauntlet to Europe with a pair of extraordinary decrees. The first expressed an open-ended commitment to extend French military support to popular revolution anywhere. France, it announced, having liberated itself, “will accord fraternity and assistance to all peoples who shall wish to recover their liberty.” The National Assembly gave added weight to this decree and obliged itself to give it force in the proviso

that the document be “translated and printed in all languages.” The National Assembly made the break with the eighteenth-century order irrevocable by guillotining France’s deposed King several weeks later. It also declared war on Austria and invaded the Netherlands.

In December 1792, an even more radical decree was issued with an even more universal application. Any revolutionary movement that thought the decree applied to it was invited to “fill in the blank” of a document reading, “The French People to the _____ People,” which applauded in advance the next fraternal revolution and pledged support to “the suppression of all the civil and military authorities which have governed you up to this day.” This process, whose scope was implicitly limitless, was also irreversible: “The French nation declares that it will treat as enemies the people who, refusing liberty and equality, or renouncing them, may wish to preserve, recall, or treat with the prince and the privileged castes.” Rousseau had written that “whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be forced to do so by the whole body . . . [H]e will be forced to be free.” The Revolution undertook to expand this definition of legitimacy to all humanity.

To achieve such vast and universal objectives, the leaders of the French Revolution strove to cleanse their country of all possibility of domestic opposition. “The Terror” killed thousands of the former ruling classes and all suspected domestic opponents, even those who supported the Revolution’s goals while questioning some of its methods. Two centuries later, comparable motivations underlay the Russian purges of the 1930s and the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s.

Eventually, order was restored, as it must be if a state is not to disintegrate. The model once again came from Rousseau’s “great legislator.” Louis XIV had appropriated the state in the service of royal power; the Revolution commandeered the people to underwrite its design. Napoleon, who proclaimed himself “First Consul for Life,”

later Emperor, represented a new type: the “Great Man” swaying the world by the force of his will, legitimized by charismatic magnetism and personal success in military command. The essence of the Great Man was his refusal to acknowledge traditional limits and his insistence on reordering the world by his own authority. At the climactic moment of his coronation as Emperor in 1804, Napoleon, unlike Charlemagne, refusing to be legitimized by a power other than his own, took the imperial crown from the Pope’s hands and crowned himself Emperor.

The Revolution no longer made the leader; the leader defined the Revolution. As he tamed the Revolution, Napoleon also made himself its guarantor. But he also saw himself—and not without reason—as the capstone of the Enlightenment. He rationalized France’s system of government, establishing the system of prefectures through which, even at this writing, the French system of administration operates. He created the Napoleonic Code, on which the laws that still prevail in France and other European countries are based. He was tolerant of religious diversity and encouraged rationalism in government, with the end of improving the lot of the French people.

It was as the simultaneous incarnation of the Revolution and expression of the Enlightenment that Napoleon set about to achieve the domination and unification of Europe. By 1809, under his brilliant military leadership, his armies crushed all opposition in Western and Central Europe, enabling him to redraw the map of the Continent as a geopolitical design. He annexed key territories to France and established satellite republics in others, many of them governed by relatives or French marshals. A uniform legal code was established throughout Europe. Thousands of instructions on matters economic and social were issued. Would Napoleon become the unifier of a continent divided since the fall of Rome?

Two obstacles remained: England and Russia. England, in com-

mand of the seas after Nelson's crushing victory at Trafalgar in 1805, was for the moment invulnerable but not strong enough to launch a significant invasion across the English Channel. As it would a century and a half later, England stood alone in Western Europe, aware that a peace with the conqueror would make it possible for a single power to organize the resources of the entire Continent and, sooner or later, overcome its rule of the oceans. England waited behind the channel for Napoleon (and a century and a half later, for Hitler) to make a mistake that would enable it to reappear on the Continent militarily as a defender of the balance of power. (In World War II, Britain was also waiting for the United States to enter the lists.)

Napoleon had grown up under the eighteenth-century dynastic system and, in a strange way, accepted its legitimacy. In it, as a Corsican of minor standing even in his hometown, he was illegitimate by definition, which meant that, at least in his own mind, the legitimacy of his rule depended on the permanence—and, indeed, the extent—of his conquests. Whenever there remained a ruler independent of his will, Napoleon felt obliged to pursue him. Incapable of restraint by concept, temperament, or experience, he launched his forces into Spain and Russia, neither of them essential to a geopolitical design. Napoleon could not live in an international order; his ambition required an empire over at least the length and breadth of Europe, and for that his power fell just barely too short.

With the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the age of total war—the mobilization of a nation's entire resources—had arrived. The scale of bloodshed and devastation harked back to the Thirty Years' War. Napoleon's Grande Armée—now manned through conscription, including even in annexed territories—supplied and maintained itself on the assets of the conquered enemy and population, including gigantic financial "tributes." The results were an enormous increase in the size of the army and the subjection of entire regions. Not until Napoleon succumbed to the temptation to enter territories

where local resources were insufficient for the support of a huge army—Spain and Russia—would he face defeat, first by overreaching himself, above all in Russia in 1812, and then as the rest of Europe united against him in a belated vindication of Westphalian principles. At the Battle of the Nations in Leipzig in 1813, the joint armies of the surviving European states inflicted Napoleon's first major, and ultimately decisive, defeat in a battle. (The defeat in Russia was by attrition.) After the Battle of the Nations, Napoleon refused settlements that would have enabled him to keep some of his conquests. He feared that any formal acceptance of limits would destroy his only claim to legitimacy. In this way, he was overthrown as much by his own insecurity as by Westphalian principles. Europe's strongest conqueror since Charlemagne was defeated not only by an international order that rose up against him, but by himself.

The Napoleonic period marked the apotheosis of the Enlightenment. Inspired by the examples of Greece and Rome, its thinkers had equated enlightenment with the power of reason, which implied a diffusion of authority from the Church to secular elites. Now these aspirations had been distilled further and concentrated on one leader as the expression of global power. An illustration of Napoleon's impact occurred on October 13, 1806, one day before the Battle of Jena, where the Prussian army was decisively defeated. As he left to reconnoiter the battlefield with his general staff, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, then a university lecturer (he would later write *The Philosophy of History*, which inspired Marx's doctrine), described the scene in panegyrical terms as he heard the clatter of horses' hooves on the cobblestones:

I saw the Emperor—this world-soul—riding out of the city on reconnaissance. It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual who, concentrated here at a single point, astride a horse, reaches out over the world and masters it.

But in the end, this world spirit had drawn into Europe an immense new power—of Europe and yet with three-quarters of its vast territory in Asia: imperial Russia, whose armies pursued Napoleon's decimated force back across the Continent and were occupying Paris at war's end. Its strength raised fundamental issues for the balance of power in Europe, and its aspirations threatened to make impossible a return to the prerevolutionary equilibrium.

CHAPTER 2

The European Balance-of-Power System and Its End

The Russian Enigma

When the era of the French Revolution and Napoleon ended, Russian troops were occupying Paris in a stunning display of history's reversals. A half century earlier, Russia had for the first time entered the balance of power in Western Europe by participating in the Seven Years' War and demonstrated the arbitrary nature of czarist rule when it suddenly declared its neutrality and withdrew from the war because of a newly crowned Czar's admiration for Frederick the Great. At the end of the Napoleonic period, another Czar, Alexander, proceeded to prescribe Europe's future. The liberties of Europe and its concomitant system of order required the participation of an empire far larger than the rest of Europe together and autocratic to a degree without precedent in European history.

Since then, Russia has played a unique role in international affairs: part of the balance of power in both Europe and Asia but contributing to the equilibrium of the international order only fitfully. It has started more wars than any other contemporary major power, but it has also

thwarted dominion of Europe by a single power, holding fast against Charles XII of Sweden, Napoleon, and Hitler when key continental elements of the balance had been overrun. Its policy has pursued a special rhythm of its own over the centuries, expanding over a land-mass spanning nearly every climate and civilization, interrupted occasionally for a time by the need to adjust its domestic structure to the vastness of the enterprise—only to return again, like a tide crossing a beach. From Peter the Great to Vladimir Putin, circumstances have changed, but the rhythm has remained extraordinarily consistent.

Western Europeans emerging from the Napoleonic upheavals viewed with awe and apprehension a country whose territory and military forces dwarfed those of the rest of the Continent combined and whose elites' polished manners seemed barely able to conceal a primitive force from before and beyond Western civilization. Russia, the French traveler the Marquis de Custine claimed in 1843—from the perspective of a France restrained and a Europe reshaped by Russian power—was a hybrid bringing the vitality of the steppe to the heart of Europe:

A monstrous compound of the petty refinements of Byzantium, and the ferocity of the desert horde, a struggle between the etiquette of the Lower [Byzantine] Empire, and the savage virtues of Asia, have produced the mighty state which Europe now beholds, and the influence of which she will probably feel hereafter, without being able to understand its operation.

Everything about Russia—its absolutism, its size, its globe-spanning ambitions and insecurities—stood as an implicit challenge to the traditional European concept of international order built on equilibrium and restraint.

Russia's position in and toward Europe had long been ambiguous. As Charlemagne's empire had fractured in the ninth century into

what would become the modern nations of France and Germany, Slavic tribes more than a thousand miles to their east had coalesced in a confederation based around the city of Kiev (now the capital and geographic center of the state of Ukraine, though perceived almost universally by Russians as simultaneously an inextricable part of their own patrimony). This “land of the Rus” stood at the fraught intersections of civilizations and trade routes. With Vikings to its north, the expanding Arab empire to its south, and raiding Turkic tribes to its east, Russia was permanently in the grip of conflating temptations and fears. Too far to the east to have experienced the Roman Empire (though “czars” claimed the “Caesars” as their political and etymological forebears), Christian but looking to the Orthodox Church in Constantinople rather than Rome for spiritual authority, Russia was close enough to Europe to share a common cultural vocabulary yet perpetually out of phase with the Continent’s historical trends. The experience would leave Russia a uniquely “Eurasian” power, sprawling across two continents but never entirely at home in either.

The most profound disjunction had come with the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, which subdued a politically divided Russia and razed Kiev. Two and a half centuries of Mongol suzerainty (1237–1480) and the subsequent struggle to restore a coherent state based around the Duchy of Moscow imposed on Russia an eastward orientation just as Western Europe was charting the new technological and intellectual vistas that would create the modern era. During Europe’s era of seaborne discovery, Russia was laboring to reconstitute itself as an independent nation and shore up its borders against threats from all directions. As the Protestant Reformation impelled political and religious diversity in Europe, Russia translated the fall of its own religious lodestar, Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire, to Muslim invaders in 1453 into an almost mystical conviction that Russia’s Czar was now (as the monk Filofei wrote to Ivan III around 1500) “the sole Emperor of all the Christians in the whole

universe,” with a messianic calling to regain the fallen Byzantine capital for Christendom.

Europe was coming to embrace its multipolarity as a mechanism tending toward balance, but Russia was learning its sense of geopolitics from the hard school of the steppe, where an array of nomadic hordes contended for resources on an open terrain with few fixed borders. There raids for plunder and the enslavement of foreign civilians were regular occurrences, for some a way of life; independence was coterminous with the territory a people could physically defend. Russia affirmed its tie to Western culture but—even as it grew exponentially in size—came to see itself as a beleaguered outpost of civilization for which security could be found only through exerting its absolute will over its neighbors.

In the Westphalian concept of order, European statesmen came to identify security with a balance of power and with restraints on its exercise. In Russia’s experience of history, restraints on power spelled catastrophe: Russia’s failure to dominate its surroundings, in this view, had exposed it to the Mongol invasions and plunged it into its nightmarish “Time of Troubles” (a fifteen-year dynastic interregnum before the founding of the Romanov Dynasty in 1613, in which invasions, civil wars, and famine claimed a third of Russia’s population). The Peace of Westphalia saw international order as an intricate balancing mechanism; the Russian view cast it as a perpetual contest of wills, with Russia extending its domain at each phase to the absolute limit of its material resources. Thus, when asked to define Russia’s foreign policy, the mid-seventeenth-century Czar Alexei’s minister Nashchokin offered a straightforward description: “expanding the state in every direction, and this is the business of the Department of Foreign Affairs.”

This process developed into a national outlook and propelled the onetime Duchy of Moscow across the Eurasian landmass to become the world’s territorially largest empire, in a slow, seemingly irresistible

expansionist urge that would remain unabated until 1917. Thus the American man of letters Henry Adams recorded the outlook of the Russian ambassador in Washington in 1903 (by which point Russia had reached Korea):

His political philosophy, like that of all Russians, seemed fixed on the single idea that Russia must roll—must, by her irresistible inertia, crush whatever stood in her way . . . When Russia rolled over a neighboring people, she absorbed their energies in her own movement of custom and race which neither Czar nor peasant could convert, or wished to convert, into any Western equivalent.

With no natural borders save the Arctic and Pacific oceans, Russia was in a position to gratify this impulse for several centuries—marching alternately into Central Asia, then the Caucasus, then the Balkans, then Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and the Baltic Sea, to the Pacific Ocean and the Chinese and Japanese frontiers (and for a time during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries across the Pacific into Alaskan and Californian settlements). It expanded each year by an amount larger than the entire territory of many European states (on average, 100,000 square kilometers annually from 1552 to 1917).

When it was strong, Russia conducted itself with the domineering certainty of a superior power and insisted on formal shows of deference to its status. When it was weak, it masked its vulnerability through brooding invocations of vast inner reserves of strength. In either case, it was a special challenge for Western capitals used to dealing with a somewhat more genteel style.

At the same time, Russia's awesome feats of expansion took place from a demographic and economic base that, by Western standards, was not advanced—with many regions thinly populated and seemingly untouched by modern culture and technology. Thus the world-

conquering imperialism remained paired with a paradoxical sense of vulnerability—as if marching halfway across the world had generated more potential foes than additional security. From that perspective, the Czar’s empire can be said to have expanded because it proved easier to keep going than to stop.

In this context, a distinctive Russian concept of political legitimacy took hold. While Renaissance Europe rediscovered its classical humanist past and refined new concepts of individualism and freedom, Russia sought its resurgence in its undiluted faith and in the coherence of a single, divinely sanctioned authority overpowering all divisions—the Czar as “the living icon of God,” whose commands were irresistible and inherently just. A common Christian faith and a shared elite language (French) underscored a commonality of perspective with the West. Yet early European visitors to czarist Russia found themselves in a land of almost surreal extremes and thought they saw, beneath the veneer of a modern Western monarchy, a despotism modeled on Mongol and Tartar practices—“European discipline supporting the tyranny of Asia,” in the uncharitable phrase of the Marquis de Custine.

Russia had joined the modern European state system under Czar Peter the Great in a manner unlike any other society. On both sides, it proved a wary embrace. Peter had been born in 1672 into a still essentially medieval Russia. By then, Western Europe had evolved through the age of discovery, the Renaissance, and the Reformation; it stood at the threshold of the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment. A gigantic (at six feet eight inches), intensely energetic figure, the young Czar set out to transform his empire in a reign that expressed the extremes of Russia’s many traits and aspirations.

Determined to explore the fruits of modernity and measure Russia’s achievements against them, Peter was a frequent visitor in the shops and factories of Moscow’s émigré German quarter. As a young ruler, he toured Western capitals, where he tested modern techniques

and professional disciplines personally. Having found Russia backward compared with the West, Peter announced his aim: “to sever the people from their former Asiatic customs and instruct them how all Christian peoples in Europe comport themselves.”

A series of ukases issued forth: Russia would adopt Western manners and hairstyles, seek out foreign technological expertise, build a modern army and navy, round out its borders with wars against nearly every neighboring state, break through to the Baltic Sea, and construct a new capital city of St. Petersburg. The last, Russia’s “window to the West,” was built by hand, by a casualty-wracked conscripted labor force, on a marshy wilderness chosen at Peter’s personal command, when he put his sword into the ground and announced: “Here shall be a town.” When traditionalists rebelled, Peter crushed them and, at least according to the accounts that reached the West, took personal charge of the torture and decapitation of the uprising’s leaders.

Peter’s tour de force transformed Russian society and vaulted his empire into the first rank of Western great powers. Yet the suddenness of the transformation left Russia with the insecurities of a parvenu. In no other empire would the absolute ruler have felt it necessary to remind her subjects in writing, as Peter’s successor Catherine the Great did half a century later, that “Russia is a European State. This is clearly demonstrated by the following Observations.”

Russia’s reforms were invariably carried out by ruthless autocrats on a population docile in its desire to overcome its past rather than energized by confidence in its future. Nevertheless, like his successor reformers and revolutionaries, when his reign was over, his subjects and their descendants credited him for having driven them, however mercilessly, to achievements they had shown little evidence of seeking. (According to recent polls, Stalin too has acquired some of this recognition in contemporary Russian thinking.)

Catherine the Great, Russia’s autocratic reformist ruler from 1762

to 1796 and overseer of a historic period of cultural achievement and territorial expansion (including Russia's conquest of the Khanate of Crimea and its laying low of the Zaporizhian Host, the onetime autonomous Cossack realm in what is today central Ukraine), justified Russia's extreme autocracy as the only system of government that could hold together such a gigantic territory:

The Extent of the Dominion requires an absolute Power to be vested in that Person who rules over it. It is expedient so to be that the quick Dispatch of Affairs, sent from distant Parts, might make ample Amends for the Delay occasioned by the great Distance of the Places.

Every other Form of Government whatsoever would not only have been prejudicial to Russia, but would even have proved its entire Ruin.

Thus what in the West was regarded as arbitrary authoritarianism was presented in Russia as an elemental necessity, the precondition for functioning governance.

The Czar, like the Chinese Emperor, was an absolute ruler endowed by tradition with mystical powers and overseeing a territory of continental expanse. Yet the position of the Czar differed from that of his Chinese counterpart in one important respect. In the Chinese view, the Emperor ruled wherever possible through the serenity of his conduct; in the Russian view, the leadership of the Czar prevailed through his ability to impose his will by unchallengeable assertions of authority and to impress on all onlookers the Russian state's overwhelmingly vast power. The Chinese Emperor was conceived of as the embodiment of the superiority of Chinese civilization, inspiring other peoples to "come and be transformed." The Czar was seen as the embodiment of the defense of Russia against enemies surrounding it on all sides. Thus while the emperors were lauded for their impartial, aloof be-

nevolence, the nineteenth-century historian Nikolai Karamzin saw in a Czar's harshness a sign that he was fulfilling his true calling:

In Russia, the sovereign is the living law. He favors the good and punishes the bad . . . [A] soft heart in a monarch is counted as a virtue only when it is tempered with the sense of duty to use sensible severity.

Not unlike the United States in its own drive westward, Russia had imbued its conquests with the moral justification that it was spreading order and enlightenment into heathen lands (with a lucrative trade in furs and minerals an incidental benefit). Yet where the American vision inspired boundless optimism, the Russian experience ultimately based itself on stoic endurance. Stranded “at the interface of two vast and irreconcilable worlds,” Russia saw itself as endowed with a special mission to bridge them but exposed on all sides to threatening forces that failed to comprehend its calling. The great Russian novelist and passionate nationalist Fyodor Dostoevsky cited “this ceaseless longing, which has always been inherent in the Russian people, for a great universal church on earth.” The exaltation over Russia’s world-spanning synthesis of civilizations evoked a corresponding despair over Russia’s status as (in the words of an influential nineteenth-century critique) an “orphan cut off from the human family . . . For people to notice us, we have had to stretch from the Bering Straits to the Oder.”

A conviction lingered in the expansive, brooding “Russian soul” (as Russian thinkers would come to call it) that someday all of Russia’s vast exertions and contradictions would come to fruition: its journey would be vindicated; its achievements would be lauded, and the disdain of the West would transform into awe and admiration; Russia would combine the power and vastness of the East with the refinements of the West and the moral force of true religion; and Moscow, the “Third Rome” inheriting fallen Byzantium’s mantle, with its Czar

“the successor of the caesars of Eastern Rome, of the organizers of the church and of its councils which established the very creed of the Christian faith,” would play the decisive role in ushering in a new era of global justice and fraternity.

It was this Russia, in Europe but not quite of it, that had tempted Napoleon with its expanse and mystique; it was his ruin (just as it was Hitler’s a century and a half later) when Russia’s people, steeled to great feats of endurance, proved capable of weathering deeper privation than Napoleon’s Grande Armée (or Hitler’s legions). When Russians burned down four-fifths of Moscow to deny Napoleon the conquest and his troops’ sustenance, Napoleon, his epic strategy thus doomed, is said to have exclaimed, “What a people! They are Scythians! What resoluteness! The barbarians!” Now with Cossack horsemen drinking champagne in Paris, this massive autocratic entity loomed over a Europe that struggled to comprehend its ambitions and its method of operation.

By the time the Congress of Vienna took place, Russia was arguably the most powerful country on the Continent. Its Czar Alexander, representing Russia personally at the Vienna peace conference, was unquestionably its most absolute ruler. A man of deep, if changing, convictions, he had recently renewed his religious faith with a course of intensive Bible readings and spiritual consultations. He was convinced, as he wrote to a confidante in 1812, that triumph over Napoleon would usher in a new and harmonious world based on religious principles, and he pledged: “It is to the cause of hastening the true reign of Jesus Christ that I devote all my earthly glory.” Conceiving of himself as an instrument of divine will, the Czar arrived in Vienna in 1814 with a design for a new world order in some ways even more radical than Napoleon’s in its universality: a “Holy Alliance” of princes sublimating their national interests into a common search for peace and justice, forsaking the balance of power for Christian principles of brotherhood. As Alexander told Chateaubriand, the French royalist

intellectual and diplomat, “There no longer exists an English policy, a French, Russian, Prussian, or Austrian policy; there is now only one common policy, which, for the welfare of all, ought to be adopted in common by all states and all peoples.” It was a forerunner of the American Wilsonian conception of the nature of world order, albeit on behalf of principles dramatically the opposite of the Wilsonian vision.

Needless to say, such a design, advanced by a victorious military power whose divisions now bestrode the Continent, posed a challenge to Europe’s concept of a Westphalian equilibrium of sovereign states. For on behalf of its new vision of legitimacy, Russia brought a surfeit of power. Czar Alexander ended the Napoleonic Wars by marching to Paris at the head of his armies, and in celebration of victory he oversaw an unprecedented review of 160,000 Russian troops on the plains outside the French capital—a demonstration that could not fail to disquiet even allied nations. After consultation with his spiritual advisor, Alexander proposed a draft joint declaration in which the victorious sovereigns would proclaim their agreement that “the course, formerly adopted by the powers in their mutual relations, had to be fundamentally changed and that it was urgent to replace it with an order of things based on the exalted truths of the eternal religion of our Savior.”

The task of the negotiators at Vienna would be to transform Alexander’s messianic vision into something compatible with the continued independent existence of their states, to welcome Russia into the international order without being crushed by its embrace.

The Congress of Vienna

The statesmen who assembled in Vienna to discuss how to design a peaceful order had been through a whirlwind of upheavals overturning nearly every established structure of authority. In the space of twenty-five years, they had seen the rationality of the Enlightenment

replaced by the passions of the Reign of Terror; the missionary spirit of the French Revolution transformed by the discipline of the conquering Bonapartist empire. French power had waxed and waned. It had spilled across France's ancient frontiers to conquer almost all of the European continent, only to be nearly extinguished in the vastness of Russia.

The French envoy at the Congress of Vienna represented in his person a metaphor of the era's seemingly boundless upheavals. Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (or Talleyrand, as he was known) was ubiquitous. He started his career as Bishop of Autun, left the Church to support the Revolution, abandoned the Revolution to serve as Napoleon's Foreign Minister, abandoned Napoleon to negotiate the restoration of the French monarch, and appeared in Vienna as Louis XVIII's Foreign Minister. Many called Talleyrand an opportunist. Talleyrand would have argued that his goals were stability within France and peace in Europe and that he had taken whatever opportunities were available to achieve these goals. He had surely striven for positions to study the various elements of power and legitimacy at close hand without being unduly constrained by any of them. Only a formidable personality could have projected himself into the center of so many great and conflicting events.

At Vienna, Talleyrand's contribution was to achieve for France a peace that preserved the "ancient frontiers," which existed when it had started its foreign adventures. And within less than three years—in 1818—he managed France's entry into the Quadruple Alliance. The vanquished enemy would become an ally in the preservation of the European order in an alliance originally designed to contain it—a precedent followed at the end of World War II, when Germany was admitted to the Atlantic Alliance.

The order established at the Congress of Vienna was the closest that Europe has come to universal governance since the collapse of

Charlemagne's empire. It produced a consensus that peaceful evolutions within the existing order were preferable to alternatives; that the preservation of the system was more important than any single dispute that might arise within it; that differences should be settled by consultation rather than by war.

After World War I ended this vision, it became fashionable to attack the Congress of Vienna order as being excessively based on the balance of power, which by its inherent dynamic of cynical maneuvers drove the world into war. (The British delegation asked the diplomatic historian C. K. Webster, who had written on the Congress of Vienna, to produce a treatise on how to avoid its mistakes.) But that was true, if at all, only in the decade prior to World War I. The period between 1815 and the turn of the century was modern Europe's most peaceful, and the decades immediately following the Congress of Vienna were characterized by an extraordinary balance between legitimacy and power.

The statesmen who assembled in Vienna in 1814 were in a radically different situation from their predecessors who drafted the Peace of Westphalia. A century and a half earlier, a series of settlements of the various wars that made up the Thirty Years' War was conjoined with a set of principles for the general conduct of foreign policy. The European order that emerged took as its point of departure the political entities that existed, now separated from their religious impetus. The application of Westphalian principles was then expected to produce a balance of power to prevent, or at least mitigate, conflict. Over the course of the next nearly century and a half, this system had managed to constrain challengers to the equilibrium through the more or less spontaneous alignment of countervailing coalitions.

The negotiators at the Congress of Vienna faced the wreckage of this order. The balance of power had not been able to arrest the military momentum of the Revolution or of Napoleon. The dynastic

legitimacy of government had been overwhelmed by Napoleon's revolutionary élan and skilled generalship.

A new balance of power had to be constructed from the wreckage of the state system and of the Holy Roman Empire—whose remnants Napoleon had dissolved in 1806, bringing to a close a thousand years of institutional continuity—and amidst new currents of nationalism unleashed by the occupation of most of the Continent by French armies. That balance had to be capable of preventing a recurrence of the French expansionism that had produced near hegemony for France in Europe, even as the advent of Russia had brought a similar danger from the east.

Hence the Central European balance also had to be reconstructed. The Habsburgs, once the Continent's dominant dynasty, were now ruling only in their ancestral territories from Vienna. These were large and polyglot (roughly present-day Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, and southern Poland), and now of uncertain political cohesion. Several of the smaller German states whose opportunism had provided a certain elasticity to the diplomacy of the Westphalian system in the eighteenth century had been obliterated by the Napoleonic conquests. Their territory had to be redistributed in a manner compatible with a refound equilibrium.

The conduct of diplomacy at the Congress of Vienna was fundamentally different from twenty-first-century practice. Contemporary diplomats are in immediate real-time contact with their capitals. They receive minutely detailed instructions down to the texts of their presentations; their advice is sought on local conditions, much less frequently on matters of grand strategy. The diplomats at Vienna were weeks away from their capitals. It took four days for a message from Vienna to reach Berlin (so at least eight days to receive a reply to any request for guidance), three weeks for a message to reach Paris; London took a little longer. Instructions therefore had to be drafted in language general enough to cover changes in the situation, so the dip-

lomats were instructed primarily on general concepts and long-term interests; with respect to day-to-day tactics, they were largely on their own. Czar Alexander I was two months from his capital, but he needed no instructions; his whims were Russia's commands, and he kept the Congress of Vienna occupied with the fertility of his imagination. The Austrian Foreign Minister Klemens von Metternich, perhaps the shrewdest and most experienced statesman at Vienna, said of Alexander that he was "too weak for true ambition, but too strong for pure vanity." Napoleon said of Alexander that he had great abilities but that "something" was always missing in whatever he did. And because one could never foresee which particular piece would be missing in any given instance, he was totally unpredictable. Talleyrand was more blunt: "He was not for nothing the son of [the mad] Czar Paul."

The other participants at the Congress of Vienna agreed on the general principles of international order and on the imperative of bringing Europe back into some form of equilibrium. But they did not have congruent perceptions of what this would mean in practice. Their task was to achieve some reconciliation of perspectives shaped by substantially different historical experiences.

Britain, safe from invasion behind the English Channel and with unique domestic institutions essentially impervious to developments on the Continent, defined order in terms of threats of hegemony on the Continent. But the continental countries had a lower threshold for threats; their security could be impaired by territorial adjustments short of continental hegemony. Above all, unlike Britain, they felt vulnerable to domestic transformations in neighboring countries.

The Congress of Vienna found it relatively easy to agree on a definition of the overall balance. Already during the war—in 1804—then British Prime Minister William Pitt had put forward a plan to rectify what he considered the weaknesses of the Westphalian settlement. The Westphalian treaties had kept Central Europe divided as a way

to enhance French influence. To foreclose temptations, Pitt reasoned, “great masses” had to be created in Central Europe to consolidate the region by merging some of its smaller states. (“Consolidation” was a relative term, as it still left thirty-seven states in the area covered by today’s Germany.) The obvious candidate to absorb these abolished principalities was Prussia, which originally preferred to annex contiguous Saxony but yielded to the entreaties of Austria and Britain to accept the Rhineland instead. This enlargement of Prussia placed a significant power on the border of France, creating a geostrategic reality that had not existed since the Peace of Westphalia.

The remaining thirty-seven German states were grouped in an entity called the German Confederation, which would provide an answer to Europe’s perennial German dilemma: when Germany was weak, it tempted foreign (mostly French) interventions; when unified, it became strong enough to defeat its neighbors single-handedly, tempting them to combine against the danger. In that sense Germany has for much of history been either too weak or too strong for the peace of Europe.

The German Confederation was too divided to take offensive action yet cohesive enough to resist foreign invasions into its territory. This arrangement provided an obstacle to the invasion of Central Europe without constituting a threat to the two major powers on its flanks, Russia to the east and France to the west.

To protect the new overall territorial settlement, the Quadruple Alliance of Britain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia was formed. A territorial guarantee—which was what the Quadruple Alliance amounted to—did not have the same significance for each of the signatories. The level of urgency with which threats were perceived varied significantly. Britain, protected by its command of the seas, felt confident in withholding definite commitments to contingencies and preferred waiting until a major threat from Europe took specific shape. The continental countries had a narrower margin of safety, assessing that their survival

might be at stake from actions far less dramatic than those causing Britain to take alarm.

This was particularly the case in the face of revolution—that is, when the threat involved the issue of legitimacy. The conservative states sought to build bulwarks against a new wave of revolution; they aimed to include mechanisms for the preservation of legitimate order—by which they meant monarchical rule. The Czar’s proposed Holy Alliance provided a mechanism for protecting the domestic status quo throughout Europe. His partners saw in the Holy Alliance—subtly redesigned—a way to curb Russian exuberance. The right of intervention was limited because, as the eventual terms stipulated, it could be exercised only in concert; in this manner, Austria and Prussia retained a veto over the more exalted schemes of the Czar.

Three tiers of institutions buttressed the Vienna system: the Quadruple Alliance to defeat challenges to the territorial order; the Holy Alliance to overcome threats to domestic institutions; and a concert of powers institutionalized through periodic diplomatic conferences of the heads of government of the alliances to define their common purposes or to deal with emerging crises. This concert mechanism functioned like a precursor of the United Nations Security Council. Its conferences acted on a series of crises, attempting to distill a common course: the revolutions in Naples in 1820 and in Spain in 1820–23 (quelled by the Holy Alliance and France, respectively) and the Greek revolution and war of independence of 1821–32 (ultimately supported by Britain, France, and Russia). The Concert of Powers did not guarantee a unanimity of outlook, yet in each case a potentially explosive crisis was resolved without a major-power war.

A good example of the efficacy of the Vienna system was its reaction to the Belgian revolution of 1830, which sought to separate today’s Belgium from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. For most of the eighteenth century, armies had marched across that then-province of the Netherlands, in quest of the domination of Europe. For Britain,

whose global strategy was based on control of the oceans, the Scheldt River estuary, at the mouth of which lay the port of Antwerp across the channel from England, needed to be in the hands of a friendly country and under no circumstances of a major European state. In the event, a London conference of European powers developed a new approach, recognizing Belgian independence while declaring the new nation “neutral,” a heretofore-unknown concept in the relations of major powers, except as a unilateral declaration of intent. The new state agreed not to join military alliances or permit the stationing of foreign troops on its territory. This pledge in turn was guaranteed by the major powers, which thereby undertook the obligation to resist violations of Belgian neutrality. The internationally guaranteed status lasted for nearly a century; it was the trigger that brought England into World War I, when German troops forced a passage to France through Belgian territory.

The vitality of an international order is reflected in the balance it strikes between legitimacy and power and the relative emphasis given to each. Neither aspect is intended to arrest change; rather, in combination they seek to ensure that it occurs as a matter of evolution, not a raw contest of wills. If the balance between power and legitimacy is properly managed, actions will acquire a degree of spontaneity. Demonstrations of power will be peripheral and largely symbolic; because the configuration of forces will be generally understood, no side will feel the need to call forth its full reserves. When that balance is destroyed, restraints disappear, and the field is open to the most expansive claims and the most implacable actors; chaos follows until a new system of order is established.

That balance was the signal achievement of the Congress of Vienna. The Quadruple Alliance deterred challenges to the territorial balance, and the memory of Napoleon kept France—suffering from revolutionary exhaustion—quiescent. At the same time, a judicious

attitude toward the peace led to France's swift reincorporation into the concert of powers originally formed to thwart its ambitions. And Austria, Prussia, and Russia, which on the principles of the balance of power should have been rivals, were in fact pursuing common policies: Austria and Russia in effect postponed their looming geopolitical conflict in the name of their shared fears of domestic upheaval. It was only after the element of legitimacy in this international order was shaken by the failed revolutions of 1848 that balance was interpreted less as an equilibrium subject to common adjustments and increasingly as a condition in which to prepare for a contest over preeminence.

As the emphasis began to shift more and more to the power element of the equation, Britain's role as a balancer became increasingly important. The hallmarks of Britain's balancing role were its freedom of action and its proven determination to act. Britain's Foreign Minister (later Prime Minister) Lord Palmerston offered a classic illustration when, in 1841, he learned of a message from the Czar seeking a definitive British commitment to resist "the contingency of an attack by France on the liberties of Europe." Britain, Palmerston replied, regarded "an attempt of one Nation to seize and to appropriate to itself territory which belongs to another Nation" as a threat, because "such an attempt leads to a derangement of the existing Balance of Power, and by altering the relative strength of States, may tend to create danger to other Powers." However, Palmerston's Cabinet could enter no formal alliance against France because "it is not usual for England to enter into engagements with reference to cases which have not actually arisen, or which are not immediately in prospect." In other words, neither Russia nor France could count on British support as a certainty against the other; neither could write off the possibility of British armed opposition if it carried matters to the point of threatening the European equilibrium.

The Premises of International Order

The subtle equilibrium of the Congress of Vienna system began to fray in the middle of the nineteenth century under the impact of three events: the rise of nationalism, the revolutions of 1848, and the Crimean War.

Under the impact of Napoleon's conquests, multiple nationalities that had lived together for centuries began to treat their rulers as "foreign." The German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder became an apostle of this trend and argued that each people, defined by language, motherland, and folk culture, had an original genius and was therefore entitled to self-government. The historian Jacques Barzun has described it another way:

Underlying the theory was fact: the revolutionary and Napoleonic armies had redrawn the mental map of Europe. In place of the eighteenth century horizontal world of dynasties and cosmopolite upper classes, the West now consisted of vertical unities—nations, not wholly separate but unlike.

Linguistic nationalisms made traditional empires—especially the Austro-Hungarian Empire—vulnerable to internal pressure as well as to the resentments of neighbors claiming national links with subjects of the empire.

The emergence of nationalism also subtly affected the relationship between Prussia and Austria after the creation of the "great masses" of the Congress of Vienna. The competition of the two great German powers in Central Europe for the allegiance of some thirty-five smaller states of the German Confederation was originally held in check by the need to defend Central Europe. Also, tradition generated a certain deference to the country whose ruler had been Holy Roman Emperor for half a millennium. The Assembly of the German Confederation

(the combined ambassadors to the confederation of its thirty-seven members) met in the Austrian Embassy in Frankfurt, and the Austrian ambassador acted as chairman.

At the same time, Prussia was developing its own claim to eminence. Setting out to overcome the handicaps inherent in its sparse population and extended frontiers, Prussia emerged as a major European state because of its leaders' ability to operate on the margin of their state's capabilities for more than a century—what Otto von Bismarck (the Prussian leader who brought this process to its culmination) called a series of “powerful, decisive and wise regents who carefully husbanded the military and financial resources of the state and kept them together in their own hands in order to throw them with ruthless courage into the scale of European politics as soon as a favorable opportunity presented itself.”

The Vienna settlement had reinforced Prussia’s strong social and political structure with geographic opportunity. Stretched from the Vistula to the Rhine, Prussia became the repository of Germans’ hopes for the unity of their country—for the first time in history. With the passage of decades, the relative subordination of Prussian to Austrian policy became too chafing, and Prussia began to pursue a more confrontational course.

The revolutions of 1848 were a Europe-wide conflagration affecting every major city. As a rising middle class sought to force recalcitrant governments to accept liberal reform, the old aristocratic order felt the power of accelerating nationalisms. At first, the uprisings swept all before them, stretching from Poland in the east as far west as Colombia and Brazil (an empire that had recently won its independence from Portugal, after serving as the seat of its exile government during the Napoleonic Wars). In France, history seemed to repeat itself when Napoleon’s nephew achieved power as Napoleon III, first as President on the basis of a plebiscite and then as Emperor.

The Holy Alliance had been designed to deal precisely with

upheavals such as these. But the position of the rulers in Berlin and Vienna had grown too precarious—and the upheavals had been too broad and their implications too varied—to make a joint enterprise possible. Russia in its national capacity intervened against the revolution in Hungary, salvaging Austria's rule there. For the rest, the old order proved just strong enough to overcome the revolutionary challenge. But it never regained the self-confidence of the previous period.

Finally, the Crimean War of 1853–56 broke up the unity of the conservative states—Austria, Prussia, and Russia—which had been one of the two key pillars of the Vienna international order. This combination had defended the existing institutions in revolutions; it had isolated France, the previous disturber of the peace. Now another Napoleon was probing for opportunities to assert himself in multiple directions. In the Crimean War, Napoleon saw the device to end his isolation by allying himself with Britain's historic effort to prevent the Russian reach for Constantinople and access to the Mediterranean. The alignment indeed checked the Russian advance, but at the cost of increasingly brittle diplomacy.

The conflict had begun not over the Crimea—which Russia had conquered from an Ottoman vassal in the eighteenth century—but over competing French and Russian claims to advance the rights of favored Christian communities in Jerusalem, then within Ottoman jurisdiction. During a dispute over which denomination, Catholic or Orthodox, would have principal access to holy sites, Czar Nicholas I demanded recognition of his right to act as “protector” of all Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire, a significant population stretching across strategic territories. The demand—which amounted to a right of intervention in the affairs of a foreign state—was couched in the terms of universal moral principles but cut to the heart of Ottoman sovereignty. Ottoman refusal prompted a Russian military advance into the Balkans and naval hostilities in the Black Sea. After six months Britain and France, fearing the collapse of the Ottoman

Empire and with it the European balance, entered the war on the Ottoman side.

The alliance systems of the Congress of Vienna were shattered as a consequence. The war received its name because a Franco-British force landed in the Crimea to seize the city of Sevastopol, home of Russia's Black Sea fleet; Russian forces held out against a siege of eleven months before sinking their ships. Prussia stayed neutral. Austria foolishly decided to take advantage of Russia's isolation to improve its position in the Balkans, mobilizing Austrian troops there. "We will astonish the world by the magnitude of our ingratitude," commented Austria's Minister-President and Foreign Minister Prince Schwarzenberg when presented with a Russian request for assistance. Instead, Austria's diplomacy supported the British and French war effort diplomatically, with measures approaching the character of an ultimatum.

The effort to isolate Russia concluded by isolating Austria. Within two years, Napoleon invaded the Austrian possessions in Italy in support of Italian unification while Russia stood by. Within Germany, Prussia gained freedom of maneuver. Within a decade Otto von Bismarck started Germany on the road to unification, excluding Austria from what had been its historical role as the standard-bearer of German statehood—again with Russian acquiescence. Austria learned too late that in international affairs a reputation for reliability is a more important asset than demonstrations of tactical cleverness.

Metternich and Bismarck

Two statesmen served as the fulcrums of these vast shifts in Germany and in Europe: the Austrian Foreign Minister Klemens von Metternich and the Prussian Minister-President—later German Chancellor—Otto von Bismarck. The contrast between the legacies of the century's two principal Central European statesmen illustrates the shift in emphasis of the European international order from legitimacy

to power in the second half of the nineteenth century. Both have been viewed as archetypal conservatives. Both have been recorded as master manipulators of the balance of power, which they were. But their fundamental concepts of international order were nearly opposite, and they manipulated the balance of power to vastly different ends and with significantly contrasting implications for the peace of Europe and the world.

Metternich's very appointment had testified to the cosmopolitan nature of the eighteenth-century society. He was born in the Rhineland, near the border of France, educated in Strasbourg and Mainz. Metternich did not see Austria until his thirteenth year and did not live there until his seventeenth. He was appointed Foreign Minister in 1809 and Chancellor in 1821, serving until 1848. Fate had placed him in the top civilian position in an ancient empire at the beginning of its decline. Once considered among the strongest and best-governed countries in Europe, Austria was now vulnerable because its central location meant that every European tremor made the earth move there. Its polyglot nature made it vulnerable to the emerging wave of nationalism—a force practically unknown a generation earlier. For Metternich, steadiness and reliability became the lodestar of his policy:

Where everything is tottering it is above all necessary that something, no matter what, remain steadfast so that the lost can find a connection and the strayed a refuge.

A product of the Enlightenment, Metternich was shaped more by philosophers of the power of reason than by the proponents of the power of arms. Metternich rejected the restless search for presumed remedies to the immediate; he considered the search for truth the most important task of the statesman. In his view, the belief that whatever was imaginable was also achievable was an illusion. Truth had to reflect an underlying reality of human nature and of the structure of

society. Anything more sweeping in fact did violence to the ideals it claimed to fulfill. In this sense, “invention is the enemy of history, which knows only discoveries, and only that which exists can be discovered.”

For Metternich, the national interest of Austria was a metaphor for the overall interest of Europe—how to hold together many races and peoples and languages in a structure at once respectful of diversity and of a common heritage, faith, and custom. In that perspective, Austria’s historical role was to vindicate the pluralism and, hence, the peace of Europe.

Bismarck, by comparison, was a scion of the provincial Prussian aristocracy, which was far poorer than its counterparts in the west of Germany and considerably less cosmopolitan. While Metternich tried to vindicate continuity and to restore a universal idea, that of a European society, Bismarck challenged all the established wisdom of his period. Until he appeared on the scene, it had been taken for granted that German unity would come about—if at all—through a combination of nationalism and liberalism. Bismarck set about to demonstrate that these strands could be separated—that the principles of the Holy Alliance were not needed to preserve order, that a new order could be built by conservatives’ appealing to nationalism, and that a concept of European order could be based entirely on an assessment of power.

The divergence in these two seminal figures’ views of the nature of international order is poignantly reflected in their definitions of the national interest. To Metternich, order arose not so much from the pursuit of national interest as from the ability to connect it with that of other states:

The great axioms of political science derive from the recognition of the true interests of *all* states; it is in the general interest that the guarantee of existence is to be found, while particular interests—the cultivation of which is considered

political wisdom by restless and short-sighted men—have only a secondary importance. Modern history demonstrates the application of the principle of solidarity and equilibrium . . . and of the united efforts of states . . . to force a return to the common law.

Bismarck rejected the proposition that power could be restrained by superior principle. His famous maxims gave voice to the conviction that security could be achieved only by the correct evaluation of the components of power:

A sentimental policy knows no reciprocity . . . Every other government seeks the criteria for its actions solely in its interests, however it may cloak them with legal deductions . . . For heaven's sake no sentimental alliances in which the consciousness of having performed a good deed furnishes the sole reward for our sacrifice . . . The only healthy basis of policy for a great power . . . is egotism and not romanticism . . . Gratitude and confidence will not bring a single man into the field on our side; only fear will do that, if we use it cautiously and skillfully . . . Policy is the art of the possible, the science of the relative.

Ultimate decisions would depend strictly on considerations of utility. The European order as seen in the eighteenth century, as a great Newtonian clockwork of interlocking parts, had been replaced by the Darwinian world of the survival of the fittest.

The Dilemmas of the Balance of Power

With his appointment as Prussian Minister-President in 1862, Bismarck set about to implement his principles and to transform the

European order. With the conservative monarchies of the East divided in the aftermath of the Crimean War, France isolated on the Continent because of the memories evoked by its ruler, and Austria wavering between its national and its European roles, Bismarck saw an opportunity to bring about a German national state for the first time in history. With a few daring strokes between 1862 and 1870, he placed Prussia at the head of a united Germany and Germany in the center of a new system of order.

Disraeli called the unification of Germany in 1871 “a greater political event than the French Revolution” and concluded that “the balance of power has been entirely destroyed.” The Westphalian and the Vienna European orders had been based on a divided Central Europe whose competing pressures—between the plethora of German states in the Westphalian settlement, and Austria and Prussia in the Vienna outcome—would balance each other out. What emerged after the unification of Germany was a dominant country, strong enough to defeat each neighbor individually and perhaps all the continental countries together. The bond of legitimacy had disappeared. Everything now depended on calculations of power.

The greatest triumph of Bismarck’s career had also made more difficult—perhaps impossible—the operation of a flexible balance of power. The crushing defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, which Bismarck had adroitly provoked France into declaring, was attended by the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, a retributive indemnity, and the tactless proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors of Versailles in 1871. Europe’s new order was reduced to five major powers, two of which (France and Germany) were irreversibly estranged from each other.

Bismarck understood that a potentially dominant power at the center of Europe faced the constant risk of inducing a coalition of all others, much like the coalition against Louis XIV in the eighteenth century and Napoleon in the early nineteenth. Only the most restrained

conduct could avoid incurring the collective antagonism of its neighbors. All of Bismarck's efforts thereafter would be devoted to an elaborate series of maneuvers to forestall this "cauchemar des coalitions" (nightmare of coalitions), as he called it, using the French phrase. In a world of five, Bismarck counseled, it was always better to be in the party of three. This involved a dizzying series of partly overlapping, partly conflicting alliances (for example, an alliance with Austria and a Reinsurance Treaty with Russia) with the aim of giving the other great powers—except the irreconcilable France—a greater interest to work with Germany than to coalesce against it.

The genius of the Westphalian system as adapted by the Congress of Vienna had been its fluidity and its pragmatism; ecumenical in its calculations, it was theoretically expandable to any region and could incorporate any combination of states. With Germany unified and France a fixed adversary, the system lost its flexibility. It took a genius like Bismarck to sustain the web of counterbalancing commitments keeping the equilibrium in place by a virtuoso performance that forestalled general conflict during his tenure. But a country whose security depends on producing a genius in each generation sets itself a task no society has ever met.

After Bismarck's forced departure in 1890 (after a clash with the new Kaiser Wilhelm II over the scope of his authority), his system of overlapping alliances was maintained only tenuously. Leo von Caprivi, the next Chancellor, complained that while Bismarck had been able to keep five balls in the air simultaneously, he had difficulty controlling two. The Reinsurance Treaty with Russia was not renewed in 1891 on the ground that it was partly incompatible with the Austrian alliance—which, in Bismarck's view, had been precisely its utility. Almost inevitably, France and Russia began exploring an alliance. Such realignments had happened several times before in the European kaleidoscope of shifting orders. The novelty now was its institutionalized permanence. Diplomacy had lost its resilience; it had become a

matter of life and death rather than incremental adjustment. Because a switch in alliances might spell national disaster for the abandoned side, each ally was able to extort support from its partner regardless of its best convictions, thereby escalating all crises and linking them to each other. Diplomacy became an effort to tighten the internal bonds of each camp, leading to the perpetuation and reinforcement of all grievances.

The last element of flexibility was lost when Britain abandoned its “splendid isolation” and joined the Entente Cordiale of France and Russia after 1904. It did so not formally but *de facto* via staff talks, creating a moral obligation to fight at the side of the counterpart countries. Britain set aside its settled policy of acting as balancer—partly because of a German diplomacy that, in a series of crises over Morocco and Bosnia, had sought to break up the Franco-Russian alliance by humiliating each of its members in turn (France over Morocco in 1905 and 1911, Russia over Bosnia in 1908) in the hopes of impressing on the other its ally’s unreliability. Finally, the German military programs introduced a large and growing navy challenging Britain’s command of the seas.

Military planning compounded the rigidity. Since the Congress of Vienna, there had been only one general European war—the Crimean War. (The Franco-Prussian War was confined to the two adversaries.) It had been conducted about a specific issue and served limited aims. By the turn of the twentieth century, military planners—drawing on what they took to be the lessons of mechanization and new methods of mobilization—began to aim for total victory in all-out war. A system of railways permitted the rapid movement of military forces. With large reserve forces on all sides, speed of mobilization became of the essence. German strategy, the famous Schlieffen Plan, was based on the assessment that Germany needed to defeat one of its neighbors before it could combine with others to attack from east and west. Pre-emption was thereby built into its military planning. Germany’s neigh-

bors were under the converse imperative; they had to accelerate their mobilization and concerted action to reduce the impact of possible German preemption. Mobilization schedules dominated diplomacy; if political leaders wanted to control military considerations, it should have been the other way around.

Diplomacy, which still worked by traditional—somewhat leisurely—methods, lost touch with the emerging technology and its corollary warfare. Europe's diplomats continued to assume that they were engaged in a common enterprise. They were reinforced in that approach because none of the many previous diplomatic crises of the new century had brought matters to the breaking point. In two crises over Morocco and one over Bosnia, the mobilization schedules had no operational impact because, however intense the posturing, events never escalated to the point of imminent confrontation. Paradoxically, the very success in resolving these crises bred a myopic form of risk-taking unmoored from any of the interests actually at stake. It came to be taken for granted that maneuvering for tactical victories to be cheered in the nationalist press was a normal method of conducting policy—that major powers could dare each other to back down in a succession of standoffs over tangential disputes without ever producing a showdown.

But history punishes strategic frivolity sooner or later. World War I broke out because political leaders lost control over their own tactics. For nearly a month after the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince in June 1914 by a Serbian nationalist, diplomacy was conducted on the dilatory model of many other crises surmounted in recent decades. Four weeks elapsed while Austria prepared an ultimatum. Consultations took place; because it was high summer, statesmen took vacations. But once the Austrian ultimatum was submitted in July 1914, its deadline imposed a great urgency on decision making, and within less than two weeks, Europe moved to a war from which it never recovered.

All these decisions were made when the differences between the

major powers were in inverse proportion to their posturing. A new concept of legitimacy—a meld of state and empire—had emerged so that none of the powers considered the institutions of the others a basic threat to their existence. The balance of power as it existed was rigid but not oppressive. Relations between the crowned heads were cordial, even social and familial. Except for France’s commitment to regain Alsace-Lorraine, no major country had claims against the territory of its neighbor. Legitimacy and power were in substantial balance. But in the Balkans among the remnants of the Ottoman possessions, there were countries, Serbia in the forefront, threatening Austria with unsatisfied claims of national self-determination. If any major country supported such a claim, a general war was probable because Austria was linked by alliance to Germany as Russia was to France. A war whose consequences had not been considered descended on Western civilization over the essentially parochial issue of the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince by a Serb nationalist, giving Europe a blow that obliterated a century of peace and order.

In the forty years following the Vienna settlement, the European order buffered conflicts. In the forty years following the unification of Germany, the system aggravated all disputes. None of the leaders foresaw the scope of the looming catastrophe that their system of routinized confrontation backed by modern military machines was making almost certain sooner or later. And they all contributed to it, oblivious to the fact that they were dismantling an international order: France by its implacable commitment to regain Alsace-Lorraine, requiring war; Austria by its ambivalence between its national and its Central European responsibilities; Germany by attempting to overcome its fear of encirclement by serially staring down France and Russia side by side with a buildup of naval forces, seemingly blind to the lessons of history that Britain would surely oppose the largest land power on the Continent if it simultaneously acted as if it meant to threaten Britain’s naval preeminence. Russia, by its constant probing in all directions,

threatened Austria and the remnants of the Ottoman Empire simultaneously. And Britain, by its ambiguity obscuring the degree of its growing commitment to the Allied side, combined the disadvantage of every course. Its support made France and Russia adamant; its aloof posture confused some German leaders into believing that Britain might remain neutral in a European war.

Reflecting on what might have occurred in alternative historical scenarios is usually a futile exercise. But the war that overturned Western civilization had no inevitable necessity. It arose from a series of miscalculations made by serious leaders who did not understand the consequences of their planning, and a final maelstrom triggered by a terrorist attack occurring in a year generally believed to be a tranquil period. In the end, the military planning ran away with diplomacy. It is a lesson subsequent generations must not forget.

Legitimacy and Power Between the World Wars

World War I was welcomed by enthusiastic publics and euphoric leaders who envisioned a short, glorious war for limited aims. In the event, it killed more than twenty-five million and shipwrecked the prevailing international order. The European balance's subtle calculus of shifting interests had been abandoned for the confrontational diplomacy of two rigid alliances and was then consumed by trench warfare, producing heretofore-inconceivable casualties. In the ordeal, the Russian, Austrian, and Ottoman Empires perished entirely. In Russia, a popular uprising on behalf of modernization and liberal reform was seized by an armed elite proclaiming a universal revolutionary doctrine. After a descent into famine and civil war, Russia and its possessions emerged as the Soviet Union, and Dostoevsky's yearning for "a great universal church on earth" transmogrified into a Moscow-directed world Communist movement rejecting all existing concepts of order. "Woe to the statesman whose arguments for entering a war

are not as convincing at its end as they were at the beginning,” Bismarck had cautioned. None of the leaders who drifted into war in August 1914 would have done so could they have foreseen the world of 1918.

Stunned by the carnage, Europe’s statesmen tried to forge a post-war period that would be as different as possible from the crisis that they thought had produced the Great War, as it was then called. They blotted from their minds nearly every lesson of previous attempts to forge an international order, especially of the Congress of Vienna. It was not a happy decision. The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 refused to accept Germany back into the European order as the Congress of Vienna had included acceptance of a defeated France. The new revolutionary Marxist-Leninist government of the Soviet Union declared itself not bound by the concepts or restraints of an international order whose overthrow it prophesied; participating at the fringes of European diplomacy, it was recognized only slowly and reluctantly by the Western powers. Of the five states that had constituted the European balance, the Austrian Empire had disappeared; Russia and Germany were excluded, or had excluded themselves; and Britain was beginning to return to its historical attitude of involving itself in European affairs primarily to resist an actual threat to the balance of power rather than to preempt a potential threat.

Traditional diplomacy had brought about a century of peace in Europe by an international order subtly balancing elements of power and of legitimacy. In the last quarter of that century, the balance had shifted to relying on the power element. The drafters of the Versailles settlement veered back to the legitimacy component by creating an international order that could be maintained, if at all, only by appeals to shared principles—because the elements of power were ignored or left in disarray. The belt of states emerging from the principle of self-determination located between Germany and the Soviet Union proved too weak to resist either, inviting collusion between them. Britain was

increasingly withdrawn. The United States, having entered the war decisively in 1917 despite initial public reluctance, had grown disillusioned by the outcome and withdrawn into relative isolation. The responsibility for supplying the elements of power therefore fell largely on France, which was exhausted by the war, drained by it of human resources and psychological stamina, and increasingly aware that the disparity in strength between it and Germany threatened to become congenital.

Rarely has a diplomatic document so missed its objective as the Treaty of Versailles. Too punitive for conciliation, too lenient to keep Germany from recovering, the Treaty of Versailles condemned the exhausted democracies to constant vigilance against an irreconcilable and revanchist Germany as well as a revolutionary Soviet Union.

With Germany neither morally invested in the Versailles settlement nor confronted with a clear balance of forces preventing its challenges, the Versailles order all but dared German revisionism. Germany could be prevented from asserting its potential strategic superiority only by discriminatory clauses, which challenged the moral convictions of the United States and, to an increasing degree, Great Britain. And once Germany began to challenge the settlement, its terms were maintainable only by the ruthless application of French arms or a permanent American involvement in continental affairs. Neither was forthcoming.

France had spent three centuries keeping Central Europe at first divided and then contained—at first by itself, then in alliance with Russia. But after Versailles, it lost this option. France was too drained by the war to play the role of Europe's policeman, and Central and Eastern Europe were seized by political currents beyond France's capacity to manipulate. Left alone to balance a unified Germany, it made halting efforts to guard the settlement by force but became demoralized when its historical nightmare reappeared with the advent of Hitler.

The major powers attempted to institutionalize their revulsion to war into a new form of peaceful international order. A vague formula for international disarmament was put forward, though the implementation was deferred for later negotiations. The League of Nations and a series of arbitration treaties set out to replace power contests with legal mechanisms for the resolution of disputes. Yet while membership in these new structures was nearly universal and every form of violation of the peace formally banned, no country proved willing to enforce the terms. Powers with grievances or expansionist goals—Germany, imperial Japan, Mussolini's Italy—soon learned that there were no serious consequences for violating the terms of membership of the League of Nations or for simply withdrawing. Two overlapping and contradictory postwar orders were coming into being: the world of rules and international law, inhabited primarily by the Western democracies in their interactions with each other; and an unconstrained zone appropriated by the powers that had withdrawn from this system of limits to achieve greater freedom of action. Looming beyond both and opportunistically maneuvering between them lay the Soviet Union—with its own revolutionary concept of world order threatening to submerge them all.

In the end the Versailles order achieved neither legitimacy nor equilibrium. Its almost pathetic frailty was demonstrated by the Locarno Pact of 1925, in which Germany “accepted” the western frontiers and the demilitarization of the Rhineland to which it had already agreed at Versailles but explicitly refused to extend the same assurance to its borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia—making explicit its ambitions and underlying resentments. Amazingly, France completed the Locarno agreement even though it left France's allies in Eastern Europe formally exposed to eventual German revanchism—a hint of what it would do a decade later in the face of an actual challenge.

In the 1920s, the Germany of the Weimar Republic appealed to Western consciences by contrasting the inconsistencies and punitiveness

of the Versailles settlement with the League of Nations' more idealistic principles of international order. Hitler, who came to power in 1933 by the popular vote of a resentful German people, abandoned all restraints. He rearmed in violation of the Versailles peace terms and overthrew the Locarno settlement by reoccupying the Rhineland. When his challenges failed to encounter a significant response, Hitler began to dismantle the states of Central and Eastern Europe one by one: Austria first, followed by Czechoslovakia, and finally Poland.

The nature of these challenges was not singular to the 1930s. In every era, humanity produces demonic individuals and seductive ideas of repression. The task of statesmanship is to prevent their rise to power and sustain an international order capable of deterring them if they do achieve it. The interwar years' toxic mixture of facile pacifism, geopolitical imbalance, and allied disunity allowed these forces a free hand.

Europe had constructed an international order from three hundred years of conflict. It threw it away because its leaders did not understand the consequences when they entered World War I—and though they did understand the consequences of another conflagration, they recoiled before the implications of acting on their foresight. The collapse of international order was essentially a tale of abdication, even suicide. Having abandoned the principles of the Westphalian settlement and reluctant to exercise the force required to vindicate its proclaimed moral alternative, Europe was now consumed by another war that, at its end, brought with it once more the need to recast the European order.

The Postwar European Order

As a result of two world wars, the concept of Westphalian sovereignty and the principles of the balance of power were greatly diminished in the contemporary order of the Continent that spawned

them. Their residue would continue, perhaps most consequentially in some of the countries to which they were brought in the age of discovery and expansion.

By the end of World War II, Europe's world-ordering material and psychological capacity had all but vanished. Every continental European country with the exception of Switzerland and Sweden had been occupied by foreign troops at one time or another. Every country's economy was in shambles. It became obvious that no European country (including Switzerland and Sweden) was able any longer to shape its own future by itself.

That Western Europe found the moral strength to launch itself on the road to a new approach to order was the work of three great men: Konrad Adenauer in Germany, Robert Schuman in France, and Alcide de Gasperi in Italy. Born and educated before World War I, they retained some of an older Europe's philosophical certitudes about the conditions for human betterment, and this endowed them with the vision and fortitude to overcome the causes of Europe's tragedies. At a moment of greatest weakness, they preserved some of the concepts of order of their youth. Their most important conviction was that if they were to bring succor to their people and prevent a recurrence of Europe's tragedies, they needed to overcome Europe's historical divisions and on that basis create a new European order.

They had to cope first with another division of Europe. In 1949, the Western allies combined their three occupation zones to create the Federal Republic of Germany. Russia turned its occupation zone into a socialist state tied to it by the Warsaw Pact. Germany was back to its position three hundred years earlier after the Peace of Westphalia: its division had become the key element of the emerging international structure.

France and Germany, the two countries whose rivalry had been at the heart of every European war for three centuries, began the process of transcending European history by merging the key elements of

their remaining economic power. In 1952, they formed the Coal and Steel Community as a first step toward an “ever closer union” of Europe’s constituent peoples and a keystone of a new European order.

For decades, Germany had posed the principal challenge to Europe’s stability. For the first decade of the postwar period, the course of its national leadership would be crucial. Konrad Adenauer became Chancellor of the new Federal Republic of Germany at the age of seventy-three, an age by which Bismarck’s career was nearing its end. Patrician in style, suspicious of populism, he created a political party, the Christian Democratic Union, which for the first time in German parliamentary history governed as a moderate party with a majority mandate. With this mandate, Adenauer committed himself to regaining the confidence of Germany’s recent victims. In 1955, he brought West Germany into the Atlantic Alliance. So committed was Adenauer to the unification of Europe that he rejected, in the 1950s, Soviet proposals hinting that Germany might be unified if the Federal Republic abandoned the Western alliance. This decision surely reflected a shrewd judgment on the reliability of Soviet offers but also a severe doubt about the capacity of his own society to repeat a solitary journey as a national state in the center of the Continent. It nevertheless took a leader of enormous moral strength to base a new international order on the partition of his own country.

The partition of Germany was not a new event in European history; it had been the basis of both the Westphalian and the Vienna settlements. What was new was that the emerging Germany explicitly cast itself as a component of the West in a contest over the nature of international political order. This was all the more important because the balance of power was largely being shaped outside the European continent. For one thousand years, the peoples of Europe had taken for granted that whatever the fluctuations in the balance of power, its constituent elements resided in Europe. The world of the emerging Cold War sought its balances in the conduct and armament of two

superpowers: the United States across the Atlantic and the Soviet Union at the geographic fringes of Europe. America had helped restart the European economy with the Greek-Turkish aid program of 1947 and the Marshall Plan of 1948. In 1949, the United States for the first time in its history undertook a peacetime alliance, through the North Atlantic Treaty.

The European equilibrium, historically authored by the states of Europe, had turned into an aspect of the strategy of outside powers. The North Atlantic Alliance established a regular framework for consultation between the United States and Europe and a degree of coherence in the conduct of foreign policy. But in its essence, the European balance of power shifted from internal European arrangements to the containment of the Soviet Union globally, largely by way of the nuclear capability of the United States. After the shock of two devastating wars, the Western European countries were confronted by a change in geopolitical perspective that challenged their sense of historical identity.

The international order during the first phase of the Cold War was in effect bipolar, with the operation of the Western alliance conducted essentially by America as the principal and guiding partner. What the United States understood by alliance was not so much countries acting congruently to preserve equilibrium as America as the managing director of a joint enterprise.

The traditional European balance of power had been based on the equality of its members; each partner contributed an aspect of its power in quest of a common and basically limited goal, which was equilibrium. But the Atlantic Alliance, while it combined the military forces of the allies in a common structure, was sustained largely by unilateral American military power—especially so with respect to America's nuclear deterrent. So long as strategic nuclear weapons were the principal element of Europe's defense, the objective of European policy was primarily psychological: to oblige the United States to treat Europe as an extension of itself in case of an emergency.

The Cold War international order reflected two sets of balances, which for the first time in history were largely independent of each other: the nuclear balance between the Soviet Union and the United States, and the internal balance within the Atlantic Alliance, whose operation was, in important ways, psychological. U.S. preeminence was conceded in return for giving Europe access to American nuclear protection. European countries built up their own military forces not so much to create additional strength as to have a voice in the decisions of the ally—as an admission ticket, as it were, to discussions regarding the use of the American deterrent. France and Britain developed small nuclear forces that were irrelevant to the overall balance of power but created an additional claim to a seat at the table of major-power decisions.

The realities of the nuclear age and the geographic proximity of the Soviet Union sustained the alliance for a generation. But the underlying difference in perspective was bound to reappear with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

After four decades of Cold War, NATO had achieved the vision of the Cold War's end that its founders had proclaimed. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 led rapidly to the unification of Germany, together with the collapse of the Soviet satellite orbit, the belt of states in Eastern Europe with an imposed Soviet control system. In a testament to the vision of the allied leaders who had designed the Atlantic Alliance and to the subtle performance of those who oversaw the denouement, the century's third contest over Europe ended peacefully. Germany achieved unification as an affirmation of liberal democracy; it reaffirmed its commitment to European unity as a project of common values and shared development. The nations of Eastern Europe, suppressed for forty years (some longer), began to reemerge into independence and to regain their personalities.

The collapse of the Soviet Union changed the emphasis of diplomacy. The geopolitical nature of the European order was

fundamentally transformed when there no longer existed a substantial military threat from within Europe. In the exultant atmosphere that followed, traditional problems of equilibrium were dismissed as “old” diplomacy, to be replaced by the spread of shared ideals. The Atlantic Alliance, it was now professed, should be concerned less about security and more about its political reach. The expansion of NATO up to the borders of Russia—even perhaps including it—was now broached as a serious prospect. The projection of a military alliance into historically contested territory within several hundred miles of Moscow was proposed not primarily on security grounds but as a sensible method of “locking in” democratic gains.

In the face of a direct threat, international order had been conceived of as the confrontation of two adversarial blocs dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. As Soviet power declined, the world became to some extent multipolar, and Europe strove to define an independent identity.

The Future of Europe

What a journey Europe had undertaken to reach this point. It had launched itself on global explorations and spread its practices and values around the world. It had in every century changed its internal structure and invented new ways of thinking about the nature of international order. Now at the culmination of an era, Europe, in order to participate in it, felt obliged to set aside the political mechanisms through which it had conducted its affairs for three and a half centuries. Impelled also by the desire to cushion the emergent unification of Germany, the new European Union established a common currency in 2002 and a formal political structure in 2004. It proclaimed a Europe united, whole, and free, adjusting its differences by peaceful mechanisms.

German unification altered the equilibrium of Europe because no

constitutional arrangement could change the reality that Germany alone was again the strongest European state. The single currency produced a degree of unity that had not been seen in Europe since the Holy Roman Empire. Would the EU achieve the global role its charter proclaimed, or would it, like Charles V's empire, prove incapable of holding itself together?

The new structure represented in some sense a renunciation of Westphalia. Yet the EU can also be interpreted as Europe's return to the Westphalian international state system that it created, spread across the globe, defended, and exemplified through much of the modern age—this time as a regional, not a national, power, as a new unit in a now global version of the Westphalian system.

The outcome has combined aspects of both the national and the regional approaches without, as yet, securing the full benefits of either. The European Union diminishes its member states' sovereignty and traditional government functions, such as control of their currency and borders. On the other hand, European politics remains primarily national, and in many countries, objections to EU policy have become the central domestic issue. The result is a hybrid, constitutionally something between a state and a confederation, operating through ministerial meetings and a common bureaucracy—more like the Holy Roman Empire than the Europe of the nineteenth century. But unlike the Holy Roman Empire (for most of its history, at least), the EU struggles to resolve its internal tensions in the quest for the principles and goals by which it is guided. In the process, it pursues monetary union side by side with fiscal dispersion and bureaucracy at odds with democracy. In foreign policy it embraces universal ideals without the means to enforce them, and cosmopolitan identity in contention with national loyalties—with European unity accompanied by east-west and north-south divides and an ecumenical attitude toward autonomy movements (Catalan, Bavarian, Scot) challenging the integrity of states. The European “social model” is dependent upon yet discom-

forted by market dynamism. EU policies enshrine tolerant inclusiveness, approaching unwillingness to assert distinctive Western values, even as member states practice politics driven by fears of non-European influxes.

The result is a cycle testing the popular legitimacy of the EU itself. European states have surrendered significant portions of what was once deemed their sovereign authority. Because Europe's leaders are still validated, or rejected, by national democratic processes, they are tempted to conduct policies of national advantage and, in consequence, disputes persist between the various regions of Europe—usually over economic issues. Especially in crises such as that which began in 2009, the European structure is then driven toward increasingly intrusive emergency measures simply to survive. Yet when publics are asked to make sacrifices on behalf of “the European project,” a clear understanding of its obligations may not exist. Leaders then face the choice of disregarding the will of their people or following it in opposition to Brussels.

Europe has returned to the question with which it started, except now it has a global sweep. What international order can be distilled from contending aspirations and contradictory trends? Which countries will be the components of the order, and in what manner will they relate their policies? How much unity does Europe need, and how much diversity can it endure? But the converse issue is in the long run perhaps even more fundamental: Given its history, how much diversity must Europe preserve to achieve a meaningful unity?

When it maintained a global system, Europe represented the dominant concept of world order. Its statesmen designed international structures and prescribed them to the rest of the world. Today the nature of the emergent world order is itself in dispute, and regions beyond Europe will play a major role in defining its attributes. Is the world moving toward regional blocs that perform the role of states in the Westphalian system? If so, will balance follow, or will this reduce

the number of key players to so few that rigidity becomes inevitable and the perils of the early twentieth century return, with inflexibly constructed blocs attempting to face one another down? In a world where continental structures like America, China, and maybe India and Brazil have already reached critical mass, how will Europe handle its transition to a regional unit? So far the process of integration has been dealt with as an essentially bureaucratic problem of increasing the competence of various European administrative bodies, in other words an elaboration of the familiar. Where will the impetus for charting the inward commitment to these goals emerge? European history has shown that unification has never been achieved by primarily administrative procedures. It has required a unifier—Prussia in Germany, Piedmont in Italy—without whose leadership (and willingness to create *faits accomplis*) unification would have remained stillborn. What country or institution will play that role? Or will some new institution or inner group have to be devised for charting the road?

And if Europe should achieve unity, by whatever road, how will it define its global role? It has three choices: to foster Atlantic partnership; to adopt an ever-more-neutral position; or to move toward a tacit compact with an extra-European power or grouping of them. Does it envisage shifting coalitions, or does it see itself as a member of a North Atlantic bloc that generally adopts compatible positions? To which of its pasts will Europe relate itself: to its recent past of Atlantic cohesion or to its longer-term history of maneuvering for maximum advantage on the basis of national interest? In short, will there still be an Atlantic community, and if so, as I fervently hope, how will it define itself?

It is a question both sides of the Atlantic must ask themselves. The Atlantic community cannot remain relevant by simply projecting the familiar forward. Cooperating to shape strategic affairs globally, the European members of the Atlantic Alliance in many cases have described their policies as those of neutral administrators of rules and distributors of aid. But they have often been uncertain about what

to do when this model was rejected or its implementation went awry. A more specific meaning needs to be given to the often-invoked “Atlantic partnership” by a new generation shaped by a set of experiences other than the Soviet challenge of the Cold War.

The political evolution of Europe is essentially for Europeans to decide. But its Atlantic partners have an important stake in it. Will the emerging Europe become an active participant in the construction of a new international order, or will it consume itself on its own internal issues? The pure balance-of-power strategy of the traditional European great powers is precluded by contemporary geopolitical and strategic realities. But nor will the nascent organization of “rules and norms” by a Pan-European elite prove a sufficient vehicle for global strategy unless accompanied by some accounting for geopolitical realities.

The United States has every reason from history and geopolitics to bolster the European Union and prevent its drifting off into a geopolitical vacuum; the United States, if separated from Europe in politics, economics, and defense, would become geopolitically an island off the shores of Eurasia, and Europe itself could turn into an appendage to the reaches of Asia and the Middle East.

Europe, which had a near monopoly in the design of global order less than a century ago, is in danger of cutting itself off from the contemporary quest for world order by identifying its internal construction with its ultimate geopolitical purpose. For many, the outcome represents the culmination of the dreams of generations—a continent united in peace and forsaking power contests. Yet while the values espoused in Europe’s soft-power approach have often been inspiring, few of the other regions have shown such overriding dedication to this single style of policy, raising the prospects of imbalance. Europe turns inward just as the quest for a world order it significantly designed faces a fraught juncture whose outcome could engulf any region that fails to help shape it. Europe thus finds itself suspended between a past it seeks to overcome and a future it has not yet defined.