



TOWER OF BABEL
(c. 1563)
Peter Brueghel,
the Elder

POWER POLITICS

A Study of World Society

BY
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"When I have applied my mind to politics so that I might examine what belongs to politics with the same freedom of mind as we use for mathematics, I have taken my best pains not to laugh at the actions of mankind, not to groan over them, not to be angry with them, but to understand them." Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus* (1675-77, Chap. 1, § 4).

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the chance of having one's own way at the price of jeopardising the democratic structure. Minorities are not likely to take such a view unless they share with the majority faith in the all-overriding value of their common association.

States cling to their sovereignty if there are values which are more important to them than the well-being of international society or even the maintenance of peace. If, rightly or wrongly, a people is convinced of the superiority of its own way of life over that of other nations, it becomes the supreme object of statesmanship to safeguard such cherished values at any price. The doctrine of State sovereignty is then no longer a mere relic of the past. The old bottles have been filled with a new and potent vintage.

CHAPTER 6

THE INTERNATIONAL ARISTOCRACY

"The legal conception of independence has nothing to do with the numerous and constantly increasing states of de facto dependence which characterise the relation of one country to other countries."
Judge Anzilotti in the *Austro-German Customs Union Case* (1931).

THE ensemble of sovereign States forms the aristocracy of international society. In the absence of a universal super-State, there is no worldly authority above the sovereign State.¹ Even those States whose official doctrine was based on the existence of a supernatural authority—as was illustrated by the Papacy in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance—did not differ essentially in their actual behaviour from those who consider themselves supreme in the order of things.

Sovereign States have expanded over the whole of the habitable globe; some of them have asserted claims even to polar regions and may yet compete for the exclusive control of outer space.² In their own territories, on the high seas and in the air, they hold the monopoly of legitimate force, and they exercise supreme jurisdiction over the individual and all manifestations of his personal and corporate activities.

The existence of this international aristocracy raises a number of questions. On what considerations does membership of the international aristocracy depend? Is its membership relatively stable or subject to fluctuation? What are the chances of survival for its smaller members? Is it possible to reconcile political hierarchies between members of the international aristocracy with their legal status of equality under international law?

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

Recognition is the form in which existing sovereign States take official notice of a newcomer to the body of subjects of international law. In accordance with international customary law, States consider themselves free—but not bound—to grant recognition to any independent community, provided two conditions are fulfilled. The group must

¹ See above, p. 86 *et seq.*

² See below, pp. 413 and 492 *et seq.*

show a certain amount of stability which augurs well for its survival as an independent entity and it must be able and willing to fulfil its obligations under international law.³

International customary law does not guarantee to international persons their territorial possessions or their independence. It is for each sovereign State to look after its own interests. If, owing to disruption from within or through war, a sovereign State is dissolved, its international personality automatically lapses. With its extinction, the bearer of rights and duties under international law disappears. The much disputed international law of State succession affects merely the relations between the remaining sovereign States or between them and new sovereign States which may have emerged out of such a cataclysm. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires as the result of the First World War, the fate of the Third Reich and the comings and goings of United Arab Republics are illustrations of the transience of sovereign States.

FLUCTUATIONS

The harshness of the rules of international customary law accurately reflects the exacting tests with which, in a system of power politics, States have to comply in order to qualify for membership in the international aristocracy and maintain this position. The partitions of Poland between Austria, Prussia and Russia in the eighteenth century and between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union in 1939 are reminders of the fact that in this aristocracy the motto *Noblesse oblige* is not universally observed.

There have been cases in which the rise of communities to national sovereignty required merely a limited amount of pressure. Thus, most of the former British and French colonial possessions received their independence with the consent of their former sovereigns.⁴ The struggles of Algeria, Cyprus and Israel for national independence conformed, however, to the time-worn pattern. As Count Bernadotte reported to the United Nations (1948), "the Jewish State was not born in peace as was hoped for . . . , but rather, like many another State in history, in violence and bloodshed"; it was established "within a semicircle of gunfire." In a system of power politics, the motto of every sovereign State must be the device chosen by William the Silent: "Je Maintiendray."

³ See below, p. 198 *et seq.*

⁴ See above, p. 75 and below, pp. 467, 495 and 536.

Some sovereign States as, for instance, France, Great Britain, Russia, Spain or Sweden have maintained their membership in the international aristocracy over centuries. Others have come and gone in rapid succession. Viewed over the whole period of the evolution of international society, the picture is one of considerable fluctuation in the number of sovereign States.

Two trends accentuate the instability inherent in any dynamic international society based on the arbitrament of force. During the last three hundred years, the process of concentration of political power,⁵ even if unsupported by nationalist movements toward unification, has led to a considerable reduction in the number of small States. By the Peace Treaty of Westphalia (1648) about six hundred sovereign and semi-sovereign States in the Holy Roman Empire were liquidated. Under Napoleon's pressure, the *Reichstag* of Ratisbon of 1803 reduced their number by another two hundred. This process of weeding out was continued at the end of the Napoleonic Wars and left thirty-six sovereign States to join the Germanic Confederation.

Contemporary nationalism has contributed both towards decreasing and increasing the number of sovereign States. Thus, as a result of the unification of Italy in 1858 seven sovereign States disappeared. Since 1815, the thirty-six members of the Germanic Confederation were reduced to twelve in the Germanic Empire. The process was continued in the Third Reich until only one and, in 1945 temporarily, no sovereign German State was left.⁶ Similarly, India's rise to independence has been accompanied by the liquidation of more than five hundred semi-sovereign States. Slav and Arab nationalism, on the other hand, led to the establishment of a considerable number of new sovereign States after the First World War.⁷ A similar development has manifested itself in the post-1945 world, especially in South-East Asia and Africa.⁸

THE FUNCTIONS OF SMALL STATES

How have small States managed to survive at all in an environment dominated by the great Powers? In any assessment of their position, one must bear in mind all those small States who fell victim to the process of the concentration of power and the unifying force of nationalism.

⁵ See above, p. 65 *et seq.* and below, pp. 118 and 497 *et seq.*

⁶ See below, p. 309 *et seq.*

⁷ See below, p. 261 *et seq.*

⁸ See below, pp. 479 and 495 *et seq.*

Six situations are especially conducive to the survival of a small State: if its existence is in the interest of the international aristocracy as such; if it is in the interest of the international oligarchy of the great Powers; if it is in the interest of at least one neighbouring great Power; if the small State is able to offer more than token resistance to any invader; if it is able to invoke the sympathy of world public opinion and if, in a collective system, such as the United Nations or in closer associations, such as the British Commonwealth, it can band together with other small States and middle Powers.

First, the chances of survival for a small State are most favourable if its existence is considered to be in the interest of the international aristocracy as such. The Vatican City and, with reservations, the area allocated to the United Nations by the United States are illustrations of this proposition.

Second, the independence of small States may be assured because the international oligarchy of the great Powers considers it to be a matter of their own joint interest.⁹ This was how the independence and permanent neutralisation of Switzerland came to be demanded by the "general interest" of Europe (Declaration of the Eight Powers—March 20, 1815). Otherwise, the choice was between domination over Europe by the great Power that controlled the Swiss passes across the Alps, or endless war between the great Powers for the possession of this strategic asset.

During the period which followed the neutralisation of Switzerland, all the neighbouring great Powers—Austria-Hungary, France and, subsequently, Germany and Italy—renounced the short-term advantages they might possibly have gained from the invasion of Switzerland. In exchange, they received the assurance that none of the other great Powers could attempt to do so without arraigning against itself all or some of the other great Powers of Europe, including Great Britain. Although Britain is not a neighbour of Switzerland, British statesmen had realised for generations that anything that prevented the domination of Europe by one country was as much in the British interest as in that of Europe as a whole.

A similar situation existed in the Low Countries. Whether they were united or separated, their possession gave a great Power predominance in Western Europe and a vantage point for attack on the British Isles. When the Low Countries were under Spanish control, France was practically encircled by Habsburg possessions, and the

⁹ See above, p. 79, and below, p. 167 *et seq.*

Holy Roman Empire was kept in a firm vice on three of her frontiers. When the Low Countries were in the hands of Louis XIV and Napoleon, Germany was at the mercy of France. When, in the First World War, Germany had occupied Belgium, she was able to carry the war deep into Northern France and, but for the assistance of Great Britain and the United States, she would have crushed France. When, in the Second World War, Hitler's armies flooded over the Netherlands and Belgium, it was the beginning of the Nazi domination of Europe. In each case, this situation made it possible for the Continental great Power in control of the Low Countries to contemplate invasion of the British Isles or serious interference with Britain's sea communications. The establishment in 1944 of rocket weapons on the Belgian and Dutch coasts drove home forcibly the lesson of the British interest in the independence of Belgium and the Netherlands, or even a wider contiguous area, from domination by any other great Power.

The possibility of nuclear long-distance missile warfare emphasises the relativity of such a "permanent" interest. Nevertheless, the neutralisation for all practical purposes of Austria (1955)¹⁰ and Laos (1962)¹¹ indicates that the pattern has not yet lost its attractiveness as an alternative to continuous struggle or *de facto* partition as practised in Germany,¹² Palestine,¹³ Viet-Nam¹⁴ and Korea.¹⁵ Similarly, the neutralisation of Antarctica (1959) is an attempt to bracket this relatively unimportant waste land out of the cold war between the world camps.¹⁶

The views of great Powers on the value of a small State as a buffer State between them may change. The classic instance is offered by the partitions of Poland between Austria, Prussia and Russia. The first partition of Poland suggested itself to the three Powers as preferable to war among themselves or Russian predominance over Poland. It was made feasible by British isolationism and France's decline in power as a result of the Seven Years' War. Yet, the horror with which eighteenth-century Europe and later generations looked at this coldly executed dissection of a body politic had a rather deterrent effect on subsequent would-be heirs of small European States.

The Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland in 1939 may be explained in one of two ways. If the Russian version is to be believed, the

¹⁰ See below, pp. 318 and 536.

¹¹ See below, pp. 369 and 536.

¹² See below, p. 309 *et seq.*

¹³ See above, p. 100 and below, pp. 365 and 475.

¹⁴ See below, p. 369.

¹⁵ See below, p. 321 *et seq.*

¹⁶ See below, p. 542 *et seq.*

Russians were merely passive spectators and, by their Non-Aggression Treaty with the Third Reich, intended to avoid being involved single-handed in war with Germany. They claimed their share of the spoils in order not to let the whole of Poland fall into Nazi hands and to save at least the Russian-inhabited parts of Poland from the Nazi yoke. The Non-Aggression Treaty of 1939 and the Secret Protocols annexed to it may, however, with greater justification be adduced as evidence of the view that the partition of Poland in 1939 did not differ in kind from the previous partitions of that country.

Third, at least one neighbouring great Power may regard the existence of a small State to be to its own advantage. The 1939 partition of Poland furnishes a negative example of this type of situation. In 1919, Poland had been re-established by the Allied and Associated Powers to prevent direct contact between Germany and the Soviet Union. Poland pursued policies equally directed against both countries. Thus, it could expect to last only as long as the Principal Allied and Associated Powers were able and willing to sustain her.¹⁷

From 1933 onwards, Poland could have based her existence—though rather precariously—on complete subordination to German or Russian requirements. In either case, her future depended on peace between the two neighbouring great Powers or, in case of war between them, on re-establishment by the victorious side. If, in 1938, the Western Powers had taken a more resolute line about Czechoslovakia,¹⁸ Poland could also have taken her place in a revitalised system of mutual security against Germany. Such a policy would have required effective co-ordination of Polish defence plans with those of the Soviet Union. This would not only have meant that Poland would have had to grant to Russia bases on Polish territory, but also a shift in her internal political balance.

The price of such a policy would have been the elimination of the quasi-feudal Beck regime. But Beck and the interests which they represented were not willing to sacrifice themselves for the sake of such a policy. The way out sought by the Polish ruling clique was a policy of maintaining Polish independence against both Germany and Russia. The British and French guarantees to Poland were directed only against Germany. Nevertheless, both the Soviet Union and Germany regarded Poland as an outpost of the Western Powers against themselves and treated her as such.

¹⁷ See below, pp. 178 and 277.

¹⁸ See below, pp. 193 and 283 *et seq.*

The history of Finland during the inter-war period drives home the same lesson. Finland's security depended on friendly relations with the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union became increasingly aware of the pro-German sympathies and policies of Finland, Finland's independence rested on German support. When, by her war against the Western Powers, Germany was immobilised, Finland had to pay the price of having ignored geographical and military realities.

The position of the East European allies of the Soviet Union reflects the same situation. Small States in the orbit of a great Power must not be in a position to act, or appear to act, contrary to the vital interests of the great Powers on whose good will their existence depends. Thus, even on the assumption that Soviet policy in Europe was merely defensive, the Soviet Union would have to insist on friendly governments in neighbouring countries.

Actually, the Soviet Union is separated from the Western Powers not only by conflicting power interests, but also by diametrically opposed ideologies and ways of life. She, therefore, feels uncertain of the loyalties of such governments unless the economic and social systems of their countries are at least more assimilated to her own than to those of the Western Powers. The reaction of the Western Powers towards potential Soviet systems in France, Italy and Spain is not likely to be different in kind from the Soviet attitude to anti-Communist regimes in her zone of influence and security. United States reactions to the Communist-supported Arbenz regime in Guatemala (1954)¹⁹ and Castro Cuba (since 1961)²⁰ bear out this proposition.

The conformity a great Power expects is illustrated in the extreme by United States policy when the Government of Colombia was slow in realising the interest of world civilisation and commerce in a trans-oceanic canal under United States control through Colombian territory. There is little doubt that Colombia conducted her diplomatic negotiations on the projected Canal in an exasperating manner. The essential point, however, is that even a small sovereign State is entitled to its share of sovereign stupidity. In this case it was not. A timely revolution broke out in the Canal Zone; under the protection of a United States gunboat the revolutionary Government established itself and, within three days, the United States recognised the independence of the Republic of Panama. Twelve days later, the Hay-Varilla Treaty of November 18, 1903, was concluded, and the Canal Zone under United States control was established.

¹⁹ See below, pp. 367 and 502.

²⁰ See below, pp. 369, 397 and 502 *et seq.*

The policy of the United Kingdom and the United States towards Greece since 1945 conformed to the same pattern.²¹ The Communist-controlled Government of the National Liberation Front (EAM) did not appear to offer the necessary guarantees for permanent friendliness towards the Western Powers. A royalist regime was more likely to prove dependable. Thus, with active British participation, one authoritarian regime was replaced by another. As Bevin pertinently observed in the House of Commons (January 23, 1948), the question of Greece was not a decision between royalist, socialist or liberal governments. It was a "case of power politics" and, as Djilas has revealed, this was also Stalin's view of the matter.

Fourth, even in cases in which a small State cannot count on support from other great Powers, it is not necessarily in a hopeless position. From 1940 until 1944, Switzerland was entirely surrounded by the Axis Powers. If they refrained from the invasion of Switzerland, it was not because they showed any more respect for Swiss independence than for that of Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands or Belgium. They knew that the Swiss army would fight, the Swiss people would wage a determined and prolonged resistance in the mountains and, if necessary, they would blow up the passes and tunnels across the Alps. Thus, the Axis Powers would have been forced to direct considerable forces to Switzerland, especially if Swiss resistance had been stiffened by air from outside. They would have lost the use of the railway and road connections between Germany and Italy which Switzerland was obliged to grant to the Axis Powers. Swiss factories which produced goods useful to them—and, inevitably, not always within the limits of a strictly interpreted neutrality—would have become legitimate targets for aerial attack. Finally, by the invasion of Switzerland, Germany and Italy would have deprived themselves of a valuable sounding board of world public opinion and one of the few common meeting places left for peace overtures. In many ways, Sweden's position during the Second World War was similar to that of Switzerland, and both States continue to base their foreign policies on the principle of a watchful and armed neutrality.

Fifth, within limits, small States may also count on another force: world public opinion. Since the days of the Renaissance, the ideal of the Greek city State has had a particular attraction for the educated classes of Europe. In the Anglo-Saxon countries the interest in small countries is shared by a much wider circle. The common man includes

²¹ See below, pp. 176, 320 and 325.

them in his chivalrous feelings for the underdog at large. In the pre-1939 period, this attitude showed its strength in the reaction of public opinion over Ethiopia. It made it impossible for British and French statesmen to maintain the detached attitude they had taken towards Mussolini's hints at a possible expansion of the Italian colonial empire, or to sanction the Hoare-Laval Plan for the virtual partition of Ethiopia.²²

Public opinion in Western countries considered that both World Wars were closely bound up with the issue of the small State. Whatever other reasons may, in fact, have contributed to the two World Wars, in the view of the man in the street France and Great Britain went to war in 1914 because of Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality, and the immediate cause of the Second World War was Germany's brutal and unprovoked attack on Poland. Official war aims, such as the principle of national self-determination in Wilson's war speeches and its reiteration in the Atlantic Charter, responded to these widely held popular views.²³ However much war leaders at the end of both World Wars were inclined to forget these principles or apply them only within narrow confines, governments in mass democracies are liable to become the captives of their own ideologies. Even in autocratic States such as Czarist Russia, the government thought it wise to take into account popular sympathies for the Christian nations in the Balkans, and these played their part in the emancipation of these countries from the Ottoman Empire and the maintenance of their independence. This popular attitude appears even to have influenced the government of the Soviet Union in its attitude during the Second World War towards Bulgaria and King Boris.

Sixth, small States have found a public forum for voicing their grievances in the Assembly of the League of Nations and the General Assembly of the United Nations.²⁴ To mention merely one instance, the embarrassment of the members of the League of Nations at the Special Session of the Assembly in 1936, calling the sanctions against Italy,²⁵ was acute while they had to suffer the ordeal of listening to the moving and sombre speech by the Emperor of Ethiopia. From this point of view, the public meetings of the League Council also had a limited value, and the same is true of the Security Council of the

²² See below, pp. 138, 280 and 382 *et seq.*

²³ See below, pp. 249, 261 and 289 *et seq.*

²⁴ See below, pp. 277, 346, 399 and 503 *et seq.*

²⁵ See below, p. 382 *et seq.*

United Nations.²⁶ The mere possibility of matters being raised in any of these organs has a restraining influence on great Powers.

The climate of international, and even more so supra-national, organisations may even further contribute to taking the power sign out of relations between great Powers and small States. Thus, whenever, in the General Assembly of the United Nations, the two world camps are involved in one of their interminable wrangles, they can no longer hope to command the requisite majorities unless they are able to back their policies by at least a modicum of persuasive argument.²⁷ Even more so, the atmosphere in meetings such as Commonwealth Conferences²⁸ or sessions of the Council of Ministers of the three European Communities²⁹ makes it inadvisable to employ any of the cruder forms of great-Power pressure.

SOVEREIGN EQUALITY AND POLITICAL HIERARCHY

In its power aspects, the aristocracy of sovereign States is hierarchic. Small Powers co-exist with great Powers and world Powers. Yet all sovereign States are subjects of international law which postulates equality among them.³⁰ In the words of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the *Norwegian Claims Case* (1922): "international law and justice are based upon the principle of equality between States."

How is this antinomy between de facto hierarchy and legal equality of sovereign States to be resolved? The problem is not limited to the realm of international law. It must be faced in any system of municipal law. There have been stages in the evolution of municipal law when social inequalities were reflected in the law. In its extreme form this spectacle presented itself in legal systems which recognised slavery and, for most purposes, reduced slaves to the position of mere chattels. In our own time, such discrimination found its resurrection in the outlawry of the Jews in the Third Reich and the apartheid policy of the Union of South Africa.

Apparent analogies in the field of international institutions, such as the privileged treatment of great Powers in the United Nations, must not be pressed too hard. No sovereign State needs to join any such institution unless it wants to do so. Thus, such differentiation is at least formally in accordance with the equality of sovereign

²⁶ See below, pp. 354 and 378 *et seq.*

²⁷ See below, p. 495 *et seq.*

²⁸ See above, p. 75 *et seq.*

²⁹ See above, p. 80 *et seq.*, and below, p. 441 *et seq.*

³⁰ See above, p. 91 *et seq.*, and below, p. 198 *et seq.*

States; for it is based on the consent of the other members of such institutions.³¹

No doubt, such consent is often entirely formal. But so is the freedom of contract in municipal law. Here, too, equality does not mean equality between rich and poor, between the individual and powerful corporations, but merely equality before the law. Everybody must decide for himself whether he wants to bring a case before a court. He may find that to do so will ruin him. Similarly, small States may prefer not to insist on their rights under international law against a great Power. Yet, if they appeal to international law, the law is the same both for small States and world Powers. If, as on the level of international customary law, there is no provision for the judicial settlement of international disputes, this is less apparent.³² In this case, all that a party can do is to assert its own view of the law and, if it is strong enough, back its conviction by the application of reprisals or resort to war.³³

At this point, the supremacy of power reasserts itself. If, however, States agree to the judicial settlement of a dispute, the parties, whether great Powers or small States, come before the tribunal or Court of their choice on a footing of perfect equality. The same applies to international conferences. Unless anything to the contrary has been agreed, sovereign States participate in international conferences on a footing of absolute equality and can rely on the protection afforded to them by the unanimity principle.³⁴ The more completely organised international society is, the more true it is that "a dwarf is as much a man as a giant is; a small republic is no less a sovereign State than the most powerful kingdom. From this equality it necessarily follows that what is lawful or unlawful for one nation is equally lawful or unlawful for every other nation" (*Vattel, Le Droit des Gens*—1758).

³¹ See above, p. 40 *et seq.*, and below, p. 227 *et seq.*

³² See below, p. 230 *et seq.*

³³ See below, pp. 193 and 378 *et seq.*

³⁴ See above, p. 91 *et seq.*, and below, p. 234 *et seq.*

CHAPTER 7

THE INTERNATIONAL OLIGARCHY

"The Conference of the Big Three is a very exclusive club, the entrance fee being at least five million soldiers or the equivalent."
Stalin at the Yalta Conference (1945).

THE evolution of the international aristocracy has been paralleled by the growth of an international oligarchy from its ranks. The Powers which, at any time, belong to this inner ring exercise supreme control over international affairs. Each of these States considers itself entitled to concern itself with any major issue of an international character, irrespective of whether it directly affects its own interests or not. They jealously guard this privileged position against newcomers; for, with the addition of any new great Power, their own relative influence is weakened in proportion to the number and power of additional members. At the same time, they have to watch one another and take care that none of them will become so strong as to threaten the existence of the oligarchy itself. In doing so, they serve their own interests but, simultaneously, help to conserve both the international oligarchy of great Powers and the international aristocracy of all sovereign States.

EVOLUTION

As in the international aristocracy,¹ so in the oligarchy of the great Powers there has been constant fluctuation. At the end of the fifteenth century, the controlling influence in Western Europe was exercised by France and the Holy Roman Empire, with Spain and England as increasingly powerful States on the periphery. The rise of the Habsburg Empire created a new great Power. With the union of the Spanish and Austrian possessions of the Habsburgs and the additional strength accruing to this Dynasty from its control of the Holy Roman Empire and the Spanish colonies in the New World, the other European Powers were faced with the prospect of a world State.

France became the centre of resistance against Habsburg domination. She was not strong enough to undertake this task alone or even

¹ See above, pp. 15 and 99 *et seq.*

with the support of the Protestant German Princes. Francis I, therefore, allied himself with the Ottoman Empire. By introducing into the diplomatic game the most feared Muslim Power against another Christian nation, the Most Christian King revolutionised the international relations of his time. When, owing to internal disruption, France temporarily ceased to count, England and the United Provinces took her place. These Powers, developing maritime empires of their own and establishing themselves as great Powers in the course of their struggle against Spain, continuously harassed and weakened Spain at sea and overseas. On land, the France of Richelieu and Mazarin, allied with Protestant Sweden, played her part in ending Spanish aspirations to world domination.

By 1648, France and Sweden had become the dominant Powers, other principal Powers being England and the United Provinces. In spite of heavy losses, Austria and Spain maintained their position as great Powers. In the next phase it was France which sought domination over Western Europe, while the States in North-Eastern Europe were determined to break the control of Sweden over this region. The Battle of La Hogue in 1692 crippled French preponderance at sea. Subsequently, the Grand Alliance of the European Powers against Louis XIV prevented the union of France and Spain and the revival of Habsburg domination through a reunion of the possessions of the Austrian and Spanish Habsburgs. The Peace Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 put an end to the second major attack on the basic structure of the European inter-State system.

Apart from Sweden, four States were major Powers in Northern and North-Eastern Europe: Denmark, Prussia, Poland and Russia. The defeat inflicted in 1709 on Charles XII of Sweden by Peter I of Russia at Poltava terminated Sweden's pre-eminence in the Baltic and her career as a great Power. The Peace Treaty of Nystad of 1721 established Russia as a new great Power on the Eastern fringe of the European State system which, by then, had integrated into one single and coherent system of power politics.

At the end of the War of the Spanish Succession and the Nordic War, the new oligarchy of the great Powers consisted of Great Britain, Austria, Russia and France, which still kept her place as a great Power. Sweden and the United Provinces ceased to be great Powers. After some futile attempts to re-establish her previous position, Spain, too, resigned herself to the same fate. Frederick II established Prussia as the fifth great Power by his attack on Austria and his successful

resistance to the might of overwhelming coalitions of the great Powers.²

The consolidation of Prussian power had far-reaching implications. Prussia formed the nucleus of the Power which, in the twentieth century, was twice to challenge the world aristocracy of sovereign States. Beyond this, the absorption of France in the European wars of this period gave Great Britain the opportunity to expand her colonial empire on a vast scale in Northern America and India and, by Wolfe's capture of Quebec in 1759 and Clive's victories in India, to eliminate France as a rival on a world scale.

The defection of the thirteen American colonies temporarily weakened Great Britain but did not affect her position as a great Power. By not aiming at hegemony in Europe when this was within her reach, she avoided the fate of Spain and France. Helped by her geographical position, which limited the stakes involved in participation in Continental wars, Great Britain restricted her ambitions in Europe to the maintenance of her place in the European oligarchy and identified her own interests with those of the European aristocracy and oligarchy of States.³

The impetus of the French Revolution and the military genius of Napoleon I enabled France to make another determined attempt—as formidable as it was futile—to attain supremacy in Europe. Yet Napoleon was not merely fighting a coalition of European Powers of the traditional type, but also two trans-continental empires. While the one, Great Britain, was in undisputed control of the sea, the other, Russia, was a land mass in Eastern Europe and Asia beyond Napoleon's grasp. After Napoleon's fall, France had to be content to be readmitted to the inner circle of the great Powers, to what then became known as the Concert of Europe.

In the post-1815 period the pentarchy of Europe consisted of Austria, France, Great Britain, Prussia and Russia. The Ottoman Empire, having fought as the ally of the victorious Anglo-French coalition in the Crimean War, was admitted in 1856 to the Concert of Europe. Though Austria had defeated Italy on land and at sea, the latter's alliance with Prussia, the victor in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, was the foundation for Italy's claim to be treated as a great Power. This claim was recognised when, in 1867, she was invited to take part in the London Conference on the neutralisation of Luxembourg. On the establishment of the German Empire in the course of

² See above, p. 58 and below, pp. 114 and 171.

³ See below, p. 161 *et seq.*

the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1, Germany stepped into Prussia's shoes.

The United States of America was the first non-European Power to become a great Power on the successful conclusion of her war with Spain which also established her as a colonial Power in the Caribbean and Pacific. Japan followed suit with her victory over Russia in the War of 1904–5. Her status as a great Power was promptly recognised at the Second Hague Peace Conference of 1907. Under the abortive Convention on the Establishment of an International Prize Court, Japan was to be one of the eight Powers with permanent judges on the International Prize Court.

During this period Great Britain and Russia continued the further expansion of their empires, each suspecting the other of plans for world domination. The other great Powers did not share these apprehensions to the same extent as, in earlier periods, they had feared the designs of Spain and France. In any case they, as well as Great Britain and Russia, concentrated on the more imminent danger from another quarter—Germany. Faced with the German challenge, Great Britain and Russia came to terms and, in 1907, adjusted their relations in Asia.

With the expansion of the European State system into a world society, the aristocracy of European States grew into a world aristocracy, and the world oligarchy of the great Powers reacted as their predecessors had done on the European scene. With the exception of Austria-Hungary, still a great Power by the grace of Germany, and the Ottoman Empire, a great Power by distrust among the other great Powers, the remaining great Powers united against the most formidable in their midst. The result of the policies of increasingly aggressive challenges to the existing status quo by Germany and Austria, and defensive reactions by the other Powers, was the First World War and the collapse of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian Empires.

In the post-1919 period the new world oligarchy was formed by the United States, Great Britain, France, Japan and, for limited purposes, Italy. For a time it looked as if Great Britain were to challenge the dominating position of the United States. In 1918 Lloyd George still thought that "Great Britain would spend her last guinea to keep a navy superior to that of the United States or any other Power." But at the Washington Conference Great Britain resigned herself to parity

with the United States, and her foreign policy worked increasingly on the axiom of the impossibility of war between the Anglo-Saxon States.⁴

Between 1919 and 1933 Germany ceased to be a great Power. By a series of bluffs of growing insolence Nazi Germany attained the place of a great Power on credit. The Soviet Union gradually re-established Russia's former position, but was treated as a great Power at a discount. As the Nazi leaders themselves proclaimed, the Second World War was merely a continuation of the War of 1914–18. With an exchange of partners Germany renewed her attempt at world domination with even more disastrous results than in the First World War and, out of the cataclysm of the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two dominant Powers.⁵

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

It is tempting to ascribe the status of a great or world Power to any single quality which distinguishes the members of the international oligarchy from other sovereign States.

The possession of large territories appears to be a feature great Powers have in common. There instantly come to mind, however, countries such as India, Australia, Argentina, Brazil or Canada. In spite of their vast spaces they are not great Powers. Similarly, a connection exists between the population of a country and its status as a great Power. Again, however, India and, until recently, China⁶ offer examples which make it impossible to attribute undue significance to population as such. Internal weakness may in part explain the failure of any of these colossi to play the part of a great Power in the contemporary world. Conversely, the factor of internal unity of even a relatively small country as one of the constituent elements of a great Power should be borne in mind. The existence of a strong monarchy in Tudor England was one of the factors on which England's rise to the status of a great Power depended. Similarly, Richelieu's ruthless centralisation of France or the consolidation of Prussia's resources under Frederick William I were the foundations on which Louis XIV of France and Frederick II of Prussia could base their policies of expansion. Yet well-filled treasuries depend on flourishing economies. Economic and industrial strength of a country is, therefore, a further prerequisite of great-Power politics. A comparison, however,

⁴ See above, p. 48 *et seq.* and below, pp. 232 and 266.

⁵ See below, pp. 118 and 497 *et seq.*

⁶ See above, p. 65 and below, pp. 497 and 500 *et seq.*

of the political weakness of Germany in the last years of the Weimar Republic with her enhanced international status during the Appeasement Period⁷ suggests that wealth alone is not decisive.

There remains military strength in its widest sense, including land, sea, air and space power. If related to this factor each of the previously mentioned elements acquires a new significance: it is a *sine qua non* of military power. At least in terms of the prenuclear age,⁸ large territorial Powers have strategic opportunities denied to small States. They have the means of strategic retreat and defence in depth which, by themselves, small States necessarily lack. Big populations enable great Powers to provide the manpower which gives them a superiority and resilience where a small State would be utterly exhausted. Industrial strength enables them to rely on themselves for the production of the sinews of war. Wealth enables great Powers to stand, within limits, the competition in unproductive investment, wastefulness, and destruction inseparable from armament races and war. Finance, therefore, has been described as a fourth arm of defence; for if it fails, the prop that sustains the whole of a country's defence effort in peace and war collapses.

Even science has become harnessed to power politics. Mathematics have been important for military art since the introduction of long-range firearms. The more technical progress has been applied to warfare, the more theoretical and applied sciences have become directly relevant from the military point of view. Devices such as radar, rockets, nuclear weapons and spacecraft have made nations fully conscious of their need for a scientific *potentiel de guerre*. Again, in isolation, this means little, as is proved by the "export" of German nuclear and missile specialists to Western and Eastern countries. Linked, however, with the wealth and technological facilities at the disposal of world Powers, the scientific manpower and equipment of a country becomes a further essential factor in its military position.

Thus, in a system of power politics, the total warpower of a country is the ultimate test of its status in the international hierarchy. Total warpower is not a single factor in the same sense as territory or population. It is an estimation of the whole power of a State, political, technological, financial, and military, from a specific point of view: How will a country stand the test of war?

⁷ See below, p. 193.

⁸ See below, pp. 158, 258, 413 and 492 *et seq.*

When Elizabethan England faced Philip II of Spain, she could not compare in power with Spain's imperial might. She was, however, self-sufficient in the production of the food required for her population and immune from attack as long as her ships could keep the Armada and invasion armies assembled in the Spanish Netherlands away from her shores. Conversely, her aggressive power at sea and overseas was strong enough to make her a match for even the greatest Power of Europe.

However similar in other respects the structure of the United Provinces was to that of Elizabethan England, the United Provinces were contiguous to France at a time when the armies of Louis XIV made France the strongest land power. While Great Britain emerged from the War of the Spanish Succession as the strongest Power in Europe, the exertions the United Provinces had to make for their survival reduced them to the rank of a small State. In spite of her defeat, France remained a great Power. She had kept the nucleus of her territory and population and, in an age in which the outcome of war on land still largely depended on the size of armies and superior generalship, great land Powers could recover rapidly from defeat.

This situation remained basically the same in the nineteenth century, as is shown by the position regained by France shortly after the downfall of the first Napoleonic Empire. It changed when, since the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, military power came to be reckoned as much in terms of industrial war potential as of manpower.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution made its impact on military strategy and tactics felt. Prussia's victory over Austria in 1866 was largely due to the superiority of the Prussian breech-loader. German superiority over France in the War of 1870 rested on the superiority of her means of communication, especially the German railway system, and, subsequently, even more broadly on her greater industrial capacity, especially in coal and iron, the foundation of the steel industry. Compared with Germany's firing power and organisation of supplies, even Russia's phenomenal manpower mattered little. Yet, once the industrial potential of the United States of America was geared to the Allied war effort in the First World War, the issue was settled, provided that their combined sea power could assure the delivery of ammunition and equipment to the European battlefields.

Preparation for nuclear and missile warfare puts an even greater premium on the industrial potential. If, in addition, a Power has at its

disposal practically inexhaustible reserves of manpower; if its centres of war production are widely dispersed, and if it can claim a second-strike capacity—that is to say power to hit back effectively even after a full-scale nuclear attack—it may truly consider itself to be a world Power. What matters is not strength measured by any absolute standard, but relative superiority as compared with that of any other Power or likely combination of Powers.⁹ The probability that, as civilised communities, neither the United States of America nor the Soviet Union could survive an all-out war between themselves does not affect the picture as much as may be thought. So long as, in certain contingencies, nuclear Powers contemplate nuclear war, and the other side takes this possibility seriously, total warpower must be measured in terms of nuclear war, however maniac such a proposition may appear.

Total warpower alone does not make a State a great or world Power. During the Italo-Ethiopian War, the military strength of Fascist Italy was negligible as compared with that of the United Kingdom and France, not to speak of the combined strength of the sanctionist countries. Nevertheless, Mussolini was in a position to defy them all; for their action was limited to passing pious resolutions and indulging in the application of ineffective sanctions.¹⁰ The great Powers of the League front did not mean to pull their full weight and Mussolini knew it.

Similarly, during the Appeasement Period, Germany was inferior on land to the French army, at sea to the United Kingdom and, in the air, she had, at most, reached equality with the Western Powers. The Western Powers did not make any serious effort to enlist the support of the Soviet Union and discounted the considerable military contribution Czechoslovakia herself could have made. They had no intention of calling Hitler's bluff. They had the men, the ships and the money, but not the political will to stake them in the game the Axis Powers had forced them to play. Thus, they had to accept the Nazi and Fascist blackmailers on a footing of equality, and, in fact, handed to them the spoils of an unfought war.¹¹

In a system of power politics, a great Power distinguishes itself from other sovereign States by its relative superiority in political, technological, financial and military power, its relative equality of power in comparison with other States of the same category, and its resolve to use its power for the maintenance of its place in the international oligarchy of great Powers.

⁹ See below, p. 160 *et seq.*

¹¹ See below, p. 193.

¹⁰ See below, p. 382 *et seq.*

COMPRESSION

The expansion of European society into a worldwide society and the trend towards the concentration of power have brought about an extreme shrinkage in the number of great Powers forming the international oligarchy. If a State is to remain a great Power on a world scale, its power radius must be worldwide and must be in a position roughly corresponding to that of other great Powers, to intervene effectively in any quarter of the globe. It may, then, claim to be a world Power.

The United States and the Soviet Union are world Powers or super-Powers because they share exclusively an unmatched combination of three distinguishing features, which put them in a class of their own: each of them is a hegemonic Power with worldwide interests, surrounded by a bevy of junior partners, allies and satellites¹²; each of them is a nuclear Power with a second-strike capacity,¹³ and each of them is a space Power.¹⁴

In terms of productive capacity (coal, steel, electricity and nuclear energy) and technological development, in particular automation, the United States still holds the lead, but the Soviet Union is catching up fast. In stocks of nuclear weapons, the United States is vastly superior to the Soviet Union but the Soviet Union has sufficient overkill capacity to ensure co-extinction,¹⁵ and this is all that is needed to establish equality of nuclear warpower.

For purposes of open non-nuclear or limited nuclear war between the world Powers—an unlikely contingency¹⁶—it is worth recalling that while the United States owns the world's biggest navy, the Soviet Union is the second-strongest sea Power and has the world's biggest submarine fleet. Moreover, on land, the Russian army is quantitatively superior to any but the Chinese army, and the Russian camp stretching from the Pacific to the Elbe is more immune to the use of sea power than that of its Western potential enemies. Thus, the two antipodes and their auxiliaries are sufficiently evenly matched to have created a world diarchy and, for the time being, a bipolarised world.

In the immediate post-1945 period, it was still possible to consider the United Kingdom as a world Power.¹⁷ In the sense that the United

¹² See below, p. 497 *et seq.*

¹³ See below, p. 492 *et seq.*

¹⁴ See below, p. 492 *et seq.*

¹⁵ See below, p. 494 *et seq.*

¹⁶ See above, p. 258 *et seq.* and below, p. 494 *et seq.*

¹⁷ See 2nd ed., p. 121 *et seq.*

Kingdom is the centre of a global Commonwealth¹⁸ and, until the liquidation of its remaining colonial empire,¹⁹ has worldwide responsibilities, this remains true. Yet, in terms of nuclear warpower,²⁰ it is hardly any longer justified to classify the United Kingdom as a world Power. It lacks a second-strike capacity and, thus, her possession of nuclear weapons is no longer a credible deterrent. The failure of the Suez venture²¹ and the willingness of a United Kingdom Government to accept a place in the European Communities on the conditions nearly agreed upon in the Brussels negotiations of 1962–63²² have further made manifest trends that, on the level of power,²³ cannot easily be reversed.

China stands in a category of her own. Like France, she was made a permanent member of the Security Council by favour or courtesy. Yet, by fighting the United States-led United Nations forces to a standstill in Korea,²⁴ Communist China affirmed her place as a regional great Power in Eastern Asia.²⁵ By defying, first, Stalin and, subsequently, Khrushchev, and challenging Russia's ideological leadership of the Communist camp, the Peking regime equally firmly made its declaration of independence against Russian claims to political and ideological hegemony over Red China. Thus, China has laid the foundations for a claim to be treated as a world Power in her own right, but this day has not yet come. It will have to await the transformation of China into a credible nuclear Power.²⁶

Any of these arguments applies with even greater force to France. Should the Franco-German axis inside the European Communities be more than a transient phenomenon, the coalescence of the two major elements in the European Communities might herald a phase of German hegemony in the supranational framework emerging in Western Europe.²⁷ Until this agglomeration and its Far-Eastern counterpart become full-scale nuclear Powers with second-strike capacity, it would be premature to think, on the plane of pure power, in terms of a multi-polarised system of world affairs.

As middle Powers, the United Kingdom, France and China can expect to be consulted on any issue within the radius of their actual

¹⁸ See above, p. 75 *et seq.*

¹⁹ See below, p. 479 *et seq.*

²⁰ See above, p. 116 and below, p. 494.

²¹ See below, pp. 397 and 504.

²² See below, p. 441 *et seq.*

²³ See above, p. 76, and below, p. 492 *et seq.*

²⁴ See below, p. 395 *et seq.*

²⁵ See below, p. 500.

²⁶ See below, p. 497 *et seq.*

²⁷ See below, pp. 497 and 500.

power, but no more. In the shape of the non-permanent members of the Security Council, the intermediate position of middle Powers has received some recognition in the Charter of the United Nations. In choosing candidates for vacancies in this category, the General Assembly is enjoined to take into consideration primarily the contribution such members can actually make to the maintenance of international peace and security.²⁸

On the institutional level, particularly in the United Nations, but only while the nuclear stalemate between the world Powers lasts,²⁹ the power hierarchies of world society tend to be blurred. This situation gives some substantive meaning to the pleonasm of "sovereign equality" in the Charter, and never more than when the super-Powers are content to neutralise each other or vie for the favours of the world electorate in the General Assembly of the United Nations.³⁰

CHAPTER 8

MINOR MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAST

"The conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in American experience. The total influence—economic, political and even spiritual—is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal Government. We must not fail to comprehend the grave implications. We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by the military-industrial complex . . . the potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist."

Eisenhower's Farewell Address (1961).

STATES—national and multi-national alike—are the stars on the international scene. In an environment dominated by power this must be so as long as States hold the monopoly of legitimate force and, in case of conflict with one another or other rivals, can rely on the loyalty of most of their subjects. Although minor members of the international cast, such other groups also affect international relations.

Whether such groups represent economic interests, such as industry or finance, or whether they are of a religious, scientific or ideological character, such as churches, parties or trade unions, they share an essential feature: in their efforts to influence international relations, these groups become political pressure groups and, therefore, must work primarily through the media of the State and public opinion.

THE PLAYERS IN ACTION

To avoid a doctrinaire attitude towards the multitude of forces inside international society, it is advisable to analyse their action and interaction in a concrete case. Almost any instance of international conflict or co-operation will serve the purpose. As, in systems of power politics,¹ international relations are competitive and antagonistic, an illustration drawn from the long list of international conflicts is probably more representative than any selected from the field of international co-operation.

It would be tempting to choose as a test case one of the many current disputes separating the world Powers. A *cause célèbre* of the

²⁸ See below, p. 537 *et seq.*

²⁹ See below, pp. 491 and 534 *et seq.*

³⁰ See below, pp. 370, 397, 495 and 535 *et seq.*

¹ See above, p. 14 and below, p. 140 *et seq.*