

# 1 *Making Sense of the International*

## Introduction

Most students of international relations quite naturally assume that their inquiries are confined to an international domain distinct from its component parts as well as from other domains of inquiry. Although scholars have disputed the precise nature and composition of this domain, its existence has long been taken for granted to the point of being naturalized.<sup>1</sup> But when and how did such an international domain emerge, and how has its existence become so widely taken for granted?

This book tells a story how such an international realm has been conceptualized into existence and does so in sharp contrast to existing accounts. Although many accounts of the origin of the international realm have been proposed during the past decades, and although scholars have disagreed about *when* such a realm first emerged, they have been in broad agreement that it did so only by superseding imperial forms of rule which had previously been dominant in and out of Europe. Hence if we are to believe these accounts, the world was imperial before it became international. To start with the standard textbook example: to those who have located the origin of the international system to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, a system of sovereign states then replaced the Holy Roman Empire as the main loci of political authority in Europe.<sup>2</sup> To those who

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this book, I will use the term “international realm” as a deliberately vague shorthand to encompass the specifications of that realm in terms of a system, society, or community.

<sup>2</sup> The literature is extensive. Classical statements include Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Peace and Power* (New York: Knopf, 1948), 210; Leo Gross, “The Peace of Westphalia, 1648–1948.” *American Journal of International Law* 42 no. 1 (1948): 20–41; John Herz, “Rise and Demise of the Territorial State.” *World Politics* 9 no. 4 (1957): 473–493. For an analysis, see Sebastian Schmidt, “To Order the Minds of Scholars: The Discourse of the Peace of Westphalia in International Relations Literature.” *International Studies Quarterly* 55 no. 3 (2011): 601–623.

have traced its emergence to the Vienna settlement of 1815, a modern international system rose out of the failed French quest for empire during the French Revolutionary Wars, its subsequent spread being the result of successful claims to independence in the Americas and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> To still others, a recognizably modern international system emerged during the long nineteenth century with the rise and spread of the nation-state, culminating at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.<sup>4</sup> Finally, according to those who argue that a genuinely global international system emerged only after the end of the Second World War, it did so as a consequence of the universalization of the right to self-determination and the process of decolonization that soon followed.<sup>5</sup>

The historical accuracy of the above narratives has been intensely contested in recent years. According to what has become a standard objection, the Peace of Westphalia did not bring an international system of sovereign states into being. Although it granted independence to the United Provinces and conferred new territorial rights to German princes, it did not produce any recognizably modern system of sovereign states, since practices of territorial demarcation and international recognition were still unknown at that point in time. Hence the Westphalian origin of modern international relations is

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Francis Harry Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, (eds.) *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); David Armitage et al. “Interchange: Nationalism and Internationalism in the Era of the Civil War.” *Journal of American History* 98 no. 2 (2011): 455–489.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Christopher A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914. Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Eric D. Weitz, “From the Vienna to the Paris system: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions.” *The American Historical Review* 113 no. 5 (2008): 1313–1343; Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation. History, Modernity, and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World. A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Jan C. Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Decolonization: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

but a myth, however important to disciplinary identity.<sup>6</sup> Against those who take Vienna 1815 as the benchmark date, it has been objected that even if the Napoleonic wars marked the end of imperial aspirations in Europe, European imperial expansion on other continents continued unabated.<sup>7</sup> By the same token, those who have located the emergence of a modern international system to the long nineteenth century have been met with the objection that this system did little but further entrench imperial relations between Europe and the non-European world as a result of its exclusion of colonial peoples and its unequal inclusion of peripheral polities.<sup>8</sup> Finally, those

- <sup>6</sup> See, for example, Stephen D. Krasner, “Westphalia and All That.” in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (eds.) *Ideas and Foreign Policy*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 235–64; Andreas Osiander, “Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian myth.” *International Organization* 55 no. 2 (2001): 251–287; Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London: Verso, 2003); Stéphane Beaulac, *The Power of Language in the Making of International Law: The Word Sovereignty in Bodin and Vattel and the Myth of Westphalia* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2004); Derek Croxton, *Westphalia: The Last Christian Peace* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan 2013); Benjamin De Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and John M. Hobson, “The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths that Your Teachers Still Tell You About 1648 and 1919.” *Millennium* 39 no. 3 (2011): 735–758; John M. Hobson, and Jason C. Sharman, “The Enduring Place of Hierarchy in World Politics: Tracing the Social Logics of Hierarchy and Political Change.” *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2005): 63–98.
- <sup>7</sup> See, for example, Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Jeremy Adelman, “An Age of Imperial Revolutions.” *The American Historical Review* 113 no. 2 (2008): 319–340; Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order. The British Empire and the Origins of International Law 1800–1850* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2016); Jennifer Pitts, *Boundaries of the International. Law and Empire* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2018); Gabriel Paquette, *The European Seaborne Empires: From the Thirty Years War to the Age of Revolutions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).
- <sup>8</sup> See, for example, Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, colonialism and order in world politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Arnulf Becker Lorca, *Mestizo International Law. A Global Intellectual History 1842–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

who have argued that a truly global international system had to wait until the right of self-determination had been enshrined in international law and decolonization had been completed have been met with the objection that this merely perpetuated existing inequalities between North and South, albeit now of a more informal and indirect kind than before.<sup>9</sup> On all of these accounts, however, becoming international presupposes a simultaneous transition from a world of empires to a world of states, leaving scholars to disagree about *when* this happened, *how* this happened, and with *what* consequences, but not *that* this has happened. Also, apart from assuming that the world of empires and the world of states can be arranged in a neat historical succession, these accounts have focused on the formation of the component parts of the international realm rather than on the emergence of that realm itself. From this point of view, the international realm emerged as a result of the rise of the sovereign state and is therefore understood to be epiphenomenal in relation to the modern state. This in turn implies that the historical validity of the above accounts depends on the ways in which the sovereign state has been conceptualized, so that the more detailed requirements that have been packed into definitions of the corresponding concept, the later an international system seems to have appeared on the scene, as well as conversely.<sup>10</sup>

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the above accounts of the making of an international realm have been criticized for being state-centric and for neglecting the role of non-state actors in the expansion of that realm into other continents. Since European states were initially unable to project their power far enough necessary to assert dominance over non-European polities, they outsourced imperial expansion by delegating sovereign prerogatives to a range of intermediaries. Foremost of

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Quỳnh N Phạm and Robbie Shilliam, (eds.) *Meanings of Bandung: Postcolonial Orders and Decolonial Visions* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016); Luis Eslava, Michael Fakhri, and Vasuki Nesiya, (eds.) *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical Pasts and Pending Futures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

<sup>10</sup> See Julia Costa Lopez, Benjamin De Carvalho, Andrew Latham, Ayşe Zarakol, Jens Bartelson, and Minda Holm, "In the Beginning There Was No Word (for it): Terms, concepts, and early sovereignty." *International Studies Review* 20 no. 3 (2018): 489–519.

these were trading companies and company states which would wage war on and conduct diplomacy with local rulers at the behest of their respective states, all while being allowed to profit from transcontinental trade and the exploitation of natural resources in the meantime. Hence the expansion of the international realm took place against the backdrop of cultural diversity and ongoing hybridization and did not result in any imposition of the state form on colonial polities until relatively late.<sup>11</sup>

The story I will tell in this book is different. First, I believe that trying to locate the historical origin of the international realm is a futile exercise that merely risks reifying that realm into an abstract thing and to perpetuate various historical myths of its origin in order to legitimize unequal relations of power within it. By contrast, this book is an inquiry into how the international realm has been *conceptualized into existence* and how such conceptualizations have taken hold of our political imagination. Pursuing this line of inquiry, I will focus on how relations between polities have been understood by different authors across a variety of cultural and historical contexts from the sixteenth century to the present day. To clear the ground for this kind of inquiry, I will critically engage what I call the *transitionist* view, according to which the emergence of an international realm is assumed to be coeval with a transition from a world of empires to a world of states, thereby rendering the international realm coextensive with the world of states while confining the world of empires to a premodern past. In contrast to this view, I will try to substantiate an *emergentist* account of the international realm by describing how it has emerged as a consequence of sustained efforts to make sense of relations between polities from the onset of European imperial expansion to the end of decolonization, arguing that the international realm is better understood as a continuation of the imperial world by

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Andrew Phillips and Jason C. Sharman. *International Order in Diversity: War, Trade and Rule in the Indian Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Jason C. Sharman, *Empires of the Weak: The Real Story of European Expansion and the Creation of the New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Kevin Blachford, "Revisiting the Expansion Thesis: International Society and the Role of the Dutch East India Company as a Merchant Empire." *European Journal of International Relations* 26 no. 4 (2020): 1230–1248; Jason C. Sharman and Andrew Phillips, *Outsourcing Empire: How Company-States Made the Modern World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

other means rather than as its historical successor.<sup>12</sup> As I will argue, the emergence of an international realm should be understood as a response to the global space opened up by the cartographical and geographical revolutions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which generated rival claims to universal sovereignty over that space.<sup>13</sup> As Peter Sloterdijk has remarked, “[t]he globe not only became the central medium of the new homogenizing approach to location ... in addition, through constant amendments to the maps, it documented the constant offensive of discoveries, conquests, openings and namings with which the advancing Europeans established themselves at sea and on land in the universal outside.”<sup>14</sup> Third, and following from this global perspective, I will critically engage the *diffusionist* view according to which the international realm emerged and spread as a consequence of the imposition of European concepts such as sovereignty and nationhood on other peoples, eventually resulting in their inclusion into an international society of formally equal nation-states. As Hedley Bull and Adam Watson once formulated this view, “[t]he global international society of today is in large part the consequence of Europe’s impact on the rest of the world over the last few centuries.”<sup>15</sup> By contrast, I will emphasize the extent to which non-European peoples were actively involved in the shaping of the international realm by creatively appropriating European concepts and employing these for their own distinctive ideological and political ends.<sup>16</sup> Fourth, and in contrast to the often statist bias of conventional accounts of the international realm discussed above, I will show how the creation of

<sup>12</sup> For the notion of interpolity relations, see Lauren Benton, “Possessing Empire. Iberian Claims and Interpolity Law.” in Saliha Belmessous (ed.), *Native Claims. Indigenous Law against Empire, 1500–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19–40; Lauren Benton and Adam Clulow, “Empire and Protection: Making Interpolity Law in the Early Modern World.” *Journal of Global History* 12 no. 1 (2017): 74–92.

<sup>13</sup> For the idea that a global realm antedated and conditioned the rise of an international realm, see Jens Bartelson, “The Social Construction of Globality.” *International Political Sociology* 4 no. 3 (2010): 219–235.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Globes: Spheres II*. Trans. by Wieland Hoban (Cambridge, M.A.: MIT Press 2014), 785.

<sup>15</sup> Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, “Introduction.” in Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (eds), *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 1–9, at 1.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Marcos Tourinho, “The Co-Constitution of Order.” *International Organization* 75 no. 2 (2021): 258–281.

an international realm has meant that this realm has taken on a life of its own, independent of its constituent parts sometimes even to the point of being viewed as constitutive of them.

There are compelling reasons for undertaking this kind of inquiry. First, with the purported starting point of the modern international system migrating ever closer to the present day, scholars of international relations have questioned the coherence and integrity of their entire enterprise and embarked on a search for more historically accurate ways to define their subject matter. Given the obvious difficulty of locating a clean break between imperial forms of rule on the one hand, and an international system of formally equal states on the other, an increasing number of scholars have argued that world politics is better understood in hierarchical rather than in squarely anarchical terms, all while suggesting that these forms of rule have coexisted and reinforced each other throughout early modern and modern history.<sup>17</sup> This renewed focus on hierarchy in world politics has been further reinforced by an increased interest in empire and imperialism among scholars of international relations and historians of political thought. Much of this scholarship suggests that empires and states have never been mutually exclusive forms of political association but has instead emphasized the extent to which empires and states have been co-constitutive and interdependent during the early modern and modern periods. For all their differences, many of these accounts converge on

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); John M. Hobson, "The Twin Self-delusions of IR: Why 'hierarchy' and not 'anarchy' is the core concept of IR." *Millennium* 42 no. 3 (2014): 557–575; Janice Bially Mattern and Ayşe Zarakol, "Hierarchies in World Politics." *International Organization* 70 no. 3 (2016): 623–654; Ayşe Zarakol, (ed.) *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Meghan McConaughy, Paul Musgrave, and Daniel H. Nexon. "Beyond Anarchy: Logics of political organization, hierarchy, and international structure." *International Theory* 10 no. 2 (2018): 181–218; Daniel H. Nexon and Iver B. Neumann, "Hegemonic-order theory: A field-theoretic account." *European Journal of International Relations* 24 no. 3 (2018): 662–686; Paul K. MacDonald, "Embedded Authority: a relational network approach to hierarchy in world politics." *Review of International Studies* 44 no.1 (2018): 128–150; Dani K. Nedal and Daniel H. Nexon, "Anarchy and Authority: International Structure, the Balance of Power, and Hierarchy." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4 no. 2 (2019): 169–189; Lora Anne Viola, *The Closure of the International System: How Institutions Create Political Equalities and Hierarchies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

the assumption that the rise of an international system in Europe was premised on its hierarchical and imperial relations with the rest of the world.<sup>18</sup> Although these accounts have added much nuance and complexity to the understanding how hierarchical and anarchical features of world politics hang together, the implications for our understanding of the emergence of an international realm remain to be investigated. Second, an inquiry into how the international realm has been conceptualized will highlight the contingency of that realm, by showing how the political world might have looked radically different had other roads been taken at critical junctures. Although recent scholarship has broadened the scope of international relations to include politics and world orders outside Europe and prior to the rise of the West, these accounts have found it difficult to explain why the nation-state eventually was able to triumph over its competitors hence making the world international in this narrow sense.<sup>19</sup> While the emergence of an international realm has meant that many alternative forms of political association – real or imagined – fell by the wayside as the nation-state triumphed, there is nothing inevitable about this outcome. Third, and closely related to this point, an intellectual history of the international realm can help us understand the extent to which nationalism has

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, “Retrieving the Imperial: Empire and International relations.” *Millennium* 31 no. 1 (2002): 109–127; Duncan Bell, (ed.) *Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Tarak Barkawi, *Soldiers of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Lauren Benton, Adam Clulow, and Bain Attwood, (eds.) *Protection and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Hendrik Spruyt, *The World Imagined: Collective Beliefs and Political Order in the Sinocentric, Islamic and Southeast Asian International Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Ayşe Zarakol, *Before the West: The Rise and Fall of Eastern World Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).



been crucial to its rise and spread, and hence why nationalism is ready to be reactivated whenever the cohesion of the international realm or its component parts is challenged by inner or outer forces.<sup>20</sup> Finally, a related reason for embarking on this inquiry is to dissolve some of the normative problems that follow naturally when we uncritically accept transitionist accounts of the international realm. When we do this, we will face a false choice between the authoritarianism of empire and the democracy of the nation-state, since the latter presupposes the existence of a bounded and homogenous *demos*, characteristics that most conceptualizations of the former rule out almost by definition. This has given rise to the belief that supranational political authority necessarily must compromise democratic legitimacy and issue in a democratic deficit if left unchecked by constitutional rules or other arrangements.<sup>21</sup> But if there never was any clean break between empires and states other than in the nationalist imaginaries of the twentieth century, then we have no reason to assume that popular sovereignty necessarily must be thus confined but all the more reasons to explore old and new possibilities of widening its scope in a more cosmopolitan or planetary direction.<sup>22</sup>

As the title of this book indicates, this is not another attempt to locate the origin of notion of an international realm to a specific point

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Jaakko Heiskanen, "Spectra of Sovereignty: Nationalism and International Relations." *International Political Sociology* 13 no. 3 (2019): 315–332; Moran Mandelbaum, *The Nation/State Fantasy. A Psychoanalytical Genealogy of Nationalism* (Houndsmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020); Siniša Malešević, *Grounded Nationalisms: A Sociological Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Jean L. Cohen, *Globalization and Sovereignty: Rethinking legality, legitimacy, and constitutionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); James Tully, "Modern Constitutional Democracy and Imperialism." *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 46, no. 3 (2008): 461–493; James Tully, "The Unfreedom of the Moderns in Comparison to their ideals of Constitutional Democracy." *The Modern Law Review* 65, no. 2 (2002): 204–228.

<sup>22</sup> For a survey of such possibilities prior to the nineteenth century, see Jens Bartelson, *Visions of World Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For recent attempts in this direction, see Inés Valdez, *Transnational Cosmopolitanism: Kant, Du Bois, and Justice as a Political Craft* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Paulina Ochoa Espejo, *On Borders: Territories, legitimacy, and the rights of place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Achille Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night. Essays on Decolonization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

in time, but rather an inquiry into the process of *becoming international*. Here I am indebted to Nietzsche, when he held that while “Heraclitus will always be in the right for saying that being is an empty fiction”, most other philosophers “kill and stuff whatever they worship, these gentlemen who idolize concepts – they endanger the life of whatever they worship ... Whatever is does not *become*; whatever becomes *is not*.”<sup>23</sup> From this point of view, any attempt to locate the origin of the international realm by attributing the origin of its structure or meaning to a specific point in time and place is but a way of turning the international into a conceptual mummy, a stale artifice devoid of dynamism. By contrast, as Michel Foucault once remarked, “[t]he genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of the origin.”<sup>24</sup> Instead of trying to locate the origins of things, Foucault proposes that we should focus on the conditions of their emergence, recognizing the fact that “[t]he isolation of different points of emergence does not conform to the successive configurations of an identical meaning; rather, they result from substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals.”<sup>25</sup> Given my present concerns, I would like to suggest that the international realm is best understood as the cumulated consequences of attempts to make sense of intercourse among different polities by attributing temporality to these processes and structure to their outcomes at different points in time. From this point of view, the story of how the world became international is a story of how the social fact of *internationality* emerged and spread independently of its champions and detractors. Some people breathed life into the international realm because they believed that they stood to benefit from its coming into being. Others were sucked into the same realm despite, and sometimes because of, their resistance and protestations around their pending losses. Yet no one was able to tell how this vortex would affect their own destinies or that of the wider world in which the international realm was embedded. Yet once this process had gained sufficient momentum, becoming international was not an offer you could refuse, but a predicament you were likely to sleepwalk

<sup>23</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, “Reason.” in Philosophy 1–2, in *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. by Richard Polt (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 18–19.

<sup>24</sup> Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” in David Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 139–164, at 144.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

into in search of other desirables such as power, liberty, and equality. As such, this process was akin to what happens when spiritually inexperienced people play around with a Ouija board late at night: what they received was quite different from that for which they had bargained.

In this case it was an empire of states. As I will suggest, the habit of distinguishing between empires and states and placing them in historical succession has occluded the extent to which the modern international system itself displays characteristics of empire. Much like Roman and medieval conceptions of empire, the modern international system aspires to be *universal* insofar as it covers all the known world and is thus also *boundless* insofar as it recognizes no spatial limits or outside. Also, by virtue of dividing humankind into distinct polities, the modern international system comes with a commitment to *multiculturalism* and toleration characteristic of premodern conceptions of empire. But the modern international system seems to lack one essential characteristic of empire. Defined by the absence of centralized authority, there is no *emperor* there to rule the international system, only a multitude of states competing for security, power, and wealth. Yet arguably, the collective conviction that the international system is anarchic in character fulfills the same function of ruling humankind by keeping it divided in a state of war as well as any imaginable emperor of all the world would have been able to do. As I will suggest in Chapter 5, this makes it possible to interpret the final globalization of the international system not as the end of empire but rather as the fulfilment of ancient visions of empire.

The term “international” is used either in a generic sense to connote relations between distinct polities across time and space, or in a narrow sense to describe relations between *nation-states*. Although this book is intended as a genealogy of the international realm in the second sense, it starts from the assumption that a recognizably modern international realm was conceptualized to make sense of the practices of conquest and commerce brought about by the European expansion on other continents during the early modern period. As such, this book is self-consciously Eurocentric insofar as it argues that the Eurocentrism of international relations is *itself* European in origin. So when Jeremy Bentham famously coined the term “international” in 1780, this was not only to make sense of legal relations among European states, but part of an Enlightenment effort to expand the scope of legal categories to cover the fallout of intensified expansion and imperial rivalries in

Asia and the Atlantic world, as “it was calculated to express, in some significant way, the branch of law which goes commonly under the name of the *law of nations*.”<sup>26</sup> Consequently, this book argues that the international realm was conceptualized to make sense of the causes and consequences of imperial rivalry during the early modern period before it was narrowed down to describe a multitude of territorially bounded sovereign states during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Making sense of this process requires attention to changing meaning of the concepts of empire and state. Before political scientists and sociologists began to distinguish between empires and states during the twentieth century, such a distinction was mostly in the eyes of the beholder. During the early modern period, no categorical distinction was made between empires and states in legal and political thought, and whenever a distinction was being drawn, this was in order to legitimize or delegitimize particular instances of political rule in concrete contexts, and when some authors later started to conceive of an international realm in *sui generis* terms, this did not rule out that its parts could equally well be described as empires or states depending on the political context at hand. The modern categorical distinction between empires and states seems to have emerged only with the globalization of the international system in the twentieth century, and then in order to conceal the extent to which this system both depended on and perpetuated imperial forms of rule to the point of becoming an empire in its own right.

This book investigates the emergence of the international realm from the perspective of global intellectual history, a perspective from which “the global scale of the enterprise is established by the intention of the investigator and the terms of the investigation.”<sup>27</sup> Yet by also being genealogical in outlook, the story to follow does not aim

<sup>26</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 326n; Hidemi Suganami, “A Note on the Origin of the Word ‘International’.” *Review of International Studies* 4, no. 3 (1978): 226–232; David Armitage, “Globalizing Jeremy Bentham.” *History of Political Thought* 32 no. 1 (2011): 63–82; Rochona Majumdar, “Postcolonial History.” in Marek Tamm and Peter Burke (eds.), *Debating New Approaches to History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 49–64, esp. 63.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, “Approaches to Global Intellectual History.” in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, (eds.) *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 3–30, at 7; John Dunn, “Why We Need a Global History of Political Thought.” in Béla Kapossy, (ed.) *Markets, Morals, Politics: Jealousy of Trade and the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 2018), 285–309.

to provide an exhaustive account of the process through which the world became international. Instead, it aims to be a history of the present insofar as it directs attention to formative episodes in order to revise received accounts of these. By telling the story of how a wide range of authors – philosophers, lawyers, historians, publicists, diplomats, and statesmen – from across a variety of cultural and historical contexts have conceptualized relations between different polities, I will show how the international realm was assembled out of an array of disparate parts, and how the resulting worldview then was gradually naturalized to the point of excluding alternative accounts of world politics. This ambition to write a global genealogy of the international realm gives rise to some methodological challenges but also creates some opportunities for innovation. A first challenge stems from the absence of a pre-constituted object of inquiry characteristic of genealogical history. As Erez Manela has shown, even if the study of international society has become a hot topic in recent years, the *idea* of an international sphere has received relatively scant attention.<sup>28</sup> While making direct inferences about the existence of an international realm on the basis on occurrences of the corresponding term in the literature will confine the inquiry to the period after its coinage by Bentham, presupposing that anything international was present before that point will lead to anachronism. In this book, I handle this dilemma by focusing on the process of *becoming* international rather than on its outcomes. The inferences I make about this process are to a large extent indirect and based on how authors have conceptualized political authority and community in ways that imply the existence of something international. A second challenge concerns the difficulties of making inferences across different cultural and historical contexts. Just because authors separated by centuries and oceans conceptualize political authority in ways that permit us to make inferences about the presence of something international does not necessarily imply that these authors were invoking or appealing to the international in the same sense. In response to this problem, I have focused on how notions of authority, legitimacy and recognition have traveled across oceans and centuries and have taken on new meanings as

<sup>28</sup> Erez Manela, “International Society as a Historical Subject.” *Diplomatic History* 44 no. 2 (2020): 184–209, referring to David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

a consequence of being reappropriated for different ideological and political purposes, all while assuming that conceptualizing an international realm as distinct from yet subsuming individual polities was made possible by the dissemination and uptake of these concepts.<sup>29</sup> Hence a third challenge has been to make sense of the contestations of meaning that have followed the appropriation and application of these concepts in concrete contexts. Here I will assume that these contestations follow the fault lines of underlying political conflicts over the proper locus and scope of political authority in which these concepts have been weaponized by stakeholders.<sup>30</sup> As Jeremy Adelman has pointed out, “[c]onceptions of sovereignty might be seen not as explanations of how old orders fell and new orders emerged, but as the consequences of struggles to sort out rival ideas and meanings.”<sup>31</sup> Taken together, the above considerations imply that the making of an international realm is as a process of worldmaking through which actors have engaged in its construction by using a series of interrelated concepts that presuppose or imply its existence.<sup>32</sup>

In the next section, I will discuss some recent attempts account for the emergence of the international realm that have escaped the limitations of transitionism and diffusionism, arguing that whatever their merits, they leave crucial questions about the role of sovereignty, legitimacy, and recognition in this process unresolved. I end this chapter by outlining a plan for the rest of the book.

## **Becoming International**

The idea that the modern international realm emerged in tandem with the modern state is not without historical support. There is no shortage

<sup>29</sup> See Christopher L. Hill, “Conceptual Universalization in the Transnational Nineteenth Century.” in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, (eds.) *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 134–158; Richard Whatmore and Knud Haakonssen, “Global Possibilities in Intellectual History: A Note on Practice.” *Global Intellectual History* 2 no. 1 (2017): 18–29.

<sup>30</sup> See Lauren Benton, “Beyond Anachronism: Histories of International Law and Global Legal Politics.” *Journal of the History of International Law* 21 no. 1 (2019): 7–40.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremy Adelman, “Empires, Nations, and Revolutions.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 79 no. 1 (2018): 73–88, at 76.

<sup>32</sup> Compare Duncan Bell, “Making and Taking Worlds.” in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, (eds.) *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 254–279.

of accounts that assume that empires and states can be ordered in historical succession, and that the international realm is the exclusive domain of the latter. Sometimes this is reflected in their periodization of the subject matter itself. For example, although some historians of political thought have focused on how Roman ideas of *imperium* were revived to justify imperial rule during the early phases of European overseas expansion, they have had little to say about the meaning and usages of the concept of empire during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>33</sup> Although more recent scholarship has focused on nineteenth century imperialism and its relationship to liberalism, the changing meaning of empire and its relationship to the state seem to have largely escaped attention.<sup>34</sup> Hence there has been a tendency among historians of legal and political thought to use the concept of empire in a generic sense to subsume very different kinds of polity with the only qualification that they must be somehow distinct from nation-states by virtue of their decentralized authority structures and multicultural composition. This tendency has been reinforced by some accounts of the concept of the state and its history, which by having had little to say about its relationship to conceptions of empire have come close to taking the triumph of the modern state for granted.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World. Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500–c.1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Frances A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975); Anthony Pagden, *Burdens of Empire. 1539 to the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire. A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jeanne Morefield, *Covenants without Swords: Liberal Idealism and the Spirit of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Duncan Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order. Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Quentin Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol II: The Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 349; Quentin Skinner, "The Sovereign State: A Genealogy." in Hent Kalmo and Quentin Skinner (eds.) *Sovereignty in Fragments. The Past, Present, and Future of a Contested Concept* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 26–46; James J. Sheehan, "The Problem of Sovereignty in European History." *The American Historical Review* 111 no.1 (2006): 1–15.

But as I would like to suggest, the idea that empires and states are categorically distinct forms of political rule is of a rather recent vintage, and so is its offspring, the doctrine I have labeled transitionism. Most modern definitions of the term “empire” assume that empires and nation states not only are categorically distinct forms of rule but that they can be ordered in historical sequence. This leaves theorists of empire with the difficulty of characterizing empires both as a variation of the state form *and* its historical negation. Either way empires are characterized less in *sui generis* terms, but more often in terms of their difference from the state. As Michael Doyle had it in his classical work, “[e]mpire, then, is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence.”<sup>36</sup> As a consequence of this ambiguous view of what sovereignty is, “empires seem to combine aspects of both domestic and international politics ... with the domestic order, societies in an empire share the characteristic of individuals effectively subject to a single sovereign ... with the international order, societies in an empire share the characteristic of a less-than-full integration of social interaction and cultural values.”<sup>37</sup> When understood in transhistorical terms, empires thus straddle the divide between the pre-modern and the modern worlds, since they “stand between what may be called the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern’ political systems and regimes.”<sup>38</sup> Hence empires are hard to make sense of without contrasting them with what supposedly appeared on the scene *after* their demise. Thus, there is a broad agreement that empires are distinct from territorially bounded states, and especially so from the modern nation-state. In a more recent version of this argument, we learn that “empires are large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people. The nation-state, by contrast, is based on the idea of a single people in a single territory constituting itself as a unique political community.”<sup>39</sup> But as

<sup>36</sup> Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 45.

<sup>37</sup> Doyle, *Empires*, 35–6.

<sup>38</sup> Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires* (New York, the Free Press, 1963), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the politics of difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 8.



Jennifer Pitts has remarked on this tendency to conceive of empires and states in historical succession, “if empires have often been analyzed in terms set by the nation-state, they have also too often been cast into a teleological history in which the imperial form precedes that of the nation state and grows increasingly atavistic with the triumph of the nation state-model.”<sup>40</sup> Hence, for all their merits, the above accounts presuppose that the emergence of the modern international system occurred in tandem with a transition from empires to states. But if the distinction between empires and states does not really map onto the historical realities it is supposed to capture, this indicates that the meaning of these concepts should be contextualized and historicized to better understand what was at stake in making of the international realm.

Recent scholarship has done much to complicate the distinction between empires and states. For example, while it has been common to associate the emergence of the modern international system with the rise of territorially bounded states, Lauren Benton has shown that it was not until relatively late that sovereign authority became territorially bounded in Europe, and that it remained unbounded in the context of colonial empires for a long time thereafter. As she has argued, while international lawyers were busy articulating notions of territorial sovereignty, they were also “forced to recognize that imperial sovereignties preserved and created highly variegated legal geographies.”<sup>41</sup> By the same token, as Jeremy Adelman has argued, “sovereignty did not have only one layer to it, radiating outward to territorial boundaries with concentric circles of authority; it had many layers, which rearranged according to shifting structures and circumstances.”<sup>42</sup> If this is the case, people frequently tried to turn the polity in which they lived into something else – to claim autonomy from an overbearing emperor in the name of a people or to extend one people’s power over others to make an empire, we should not

<sup>40</sup> Jennifer Pitts, “Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010): 211–235, at 225.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36; Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Jeremy Adelman, “An Age of Imperial Revolutions.” *The American Historical Review* 113 no. 2 (2008): 319–340, at 330.

put “things into neatly defined boxes” but instead “look at ranges of political possibilities and tensions and conflicts among them.”<sup>43</sup> Still others have pointed out that empires and nation-states never were mutually exclusive but rather overlapping forms of political association.<sup>44</sup> As Krishan Kumar has summarized the main upshot of this view, “empires have been part of the modern world as much as, and arguably more than, nation states. An ‘age of nation-states’ did not succeed an ‘age of empire’; nationalism did not succeed imperialism. Nationalism was certainly the new thing, and nineteenth century imperialism showed the impress of the new thinking and the new forces.”<sup>45</sup> As other scholars have pointed out, notions of nationhood remained entangled with those of empire with little or no contradiction between them being felt among the advocates and critics of empire alike.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, a closer look at the modern history of empires makes it possible to argue that the relationship between empires and states never was a matter of mere coexistence or succession. Instead, by the late eighteenth century, received understandings of empire were blended with the new languages of conquest, colonization, and commerce, which ushered in re-conceptualizations of empire and new practices of imperial governance.<sup>47</sup> By the same token, a series of recent studies have maintained that the difference between states and empires either is non-existent or overstated, and instead investigated

<sup>43</sup> Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 8.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, John Breuilly, “Modern Empires and Nation-States.” *Thesis Eleven* 139 no. 1 (2017): 11–29; John A. Hall, “Taking Megalomanias Seriously: Rough Notes.” *Thesis Eleven* 139 no. 1 (2017): 30–45.

<sup>45</sup> Krishan Kumar, *Visions of Empire. How Five Imperial Regimes Shaped the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 35. Also Krishan Kumar, *Empires. A Historical and Political Sociology* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2021).

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, “Liberalism, Nation, and Empire.” in Sankar Muthu (ed.) *Empire in Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 232–260; Uday Singh Mehta, “Edmund Burke on Empire, Self-Understanding, and Sympathy.” in Sankar Muthu (ed.) *Empire in Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 155–183.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Sankar Muthu, “Introduction.” in Sankar Muthu (ed.), *Empire in Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–6; J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Volume 4, Barbarians, Savages and Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 229ff; Richard Koebner, *Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), chs. 3–4.

the myriad of different ways in which claims to sovereignty and empire have been negotiated and reconciled in political and legal practice from the early modern period onwards.<sup>48</sup>

But to the extent that we are prepared to accept the above accounts, we ought to abandon or at least revise transitionist accounts of the international system within academic international relations, and instead focus on how the very idea of a distinct international sphere did emerge and spread in the first place. As David Armitage has argued, “the receptivity of large parts of the world to ‘the contagion of sovereignty’ which almost universally affected it still demands explanation, especially by attending to the determinants of its reception and domestication. Only then can we fully understand the energetic co-production of the national and the international around the globe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”<sup>49</sup> Some of these concerns are indeed reflected in recent attempts to explain how the modern international system was globalized. Legal historians who have studied the role of international recognition have emphasized how colonial and peripheral polities were compelled to conform to European standards of sovereignty and civilization in order to become recognizably as states, and how those which were eventually admitted into international society often were so on unequal terms and found themselves in positions of lasting inferiority.<sup>50</sup> Other historians have highlighted the extent to which violent contestations of sovereignty through revolutions and civil wars in the Americas paved the way for declarations

<sup>48</sup> See Dominic Lieven, “Dilemmas of Empire 1850–1918. Power, Territory, Identity.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 2 (1999): 163–200; Ken MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession in the English New World: The legal Foundations of Empire, 1576–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Krishan Kumar, “Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States: Two Principles, One Practice?.” *Theory and Society* 39, no. 2 (2010): 119–143; Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*; Saliha Belmessous (ed.), *Native Claims. Indigenous Law against Empire, 1500–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Saliha Belmessous (ed.), *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>49</sup> Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 32–114; Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat. How the East Learned to Live with the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

of independence during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>51</sup> Still others have described how intensified territorial competition among European empires towards the end of the nineteenth century generated widespread contestations of their sovereignty claims by anticolonial nationalists, some of which eventually issued in pleas for self-determination.<sup>52</sup>

Yet these explanations assume that the conceptual resources necessary for raising and staking claims to sovereignty were available across contexts characterized by imperial relations among those involved. They assume that the contagion of sovereignty somehow already had happened. For example, declarations of independence are meaningful and likely to be met with success only against the backdrop of shared norms of sovereignty, and such norms are meaningful only to the extent that actors already share the belief that political authority and territory ought to be congruent. Similarly, pleas for self-determination are meaningful only against the backdrop of shared notions of nationhood, and notions of nationhood are meaningful only to the extent that those involved also share a conviction that political authority and community ought to coincide within the same territory. Yet the explanations discussed above tell us little about how these assumptions necessary to contest imperial authority and raise claims to independence and self-determination became available to actors who were immersed in worlds defined by dense and long-standing imperial relations, and how these actors appropriated new conceptual resources for their own political ends. That most colonial and peripheral polities ended up as nation-states appear especially enigmatic considering that it took until the very end of the nineteenth century until the concept of the nation-state had found its way into political science of the time, and then still with plenty of red flags attached.<sup>53</sup> Hence it is necessary to reconstruct the discursive

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780–1914*, 140ff; Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*, 175–219.

<sup>52</sup> Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, 199–243; David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, (eds.) *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); David Armitage et al. “Interchange: Nationalism and Internationalism in the Era of the Civil War.” *Journal of American History* 98 no. 2 (2011): 455–489.

<sup>53</sup> OED. For the first use of the term “nation-state” in English, see Charles Malcom Platt, “A Triad of Political Conceptions: State, Sovereign, Government.” *Political Science Quarterly* 10 no. 2 (1895): 292–323.

antecedents through which the international realm became possible to conceptualize, rather than assuming that the necessary conceptual resources already were available to the interlocutors.

### Outline of the Book

In the next chapter, I will describe how Roman and medieval notions of *imperium* were re-appropriated during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to describe the sovereignty claims of nascent states as well as to legitimize their territorial aggrandizement in Europe and beyond. Since early modern conceptions of sovereignty came with few restrictions on the scope of rule in terms of peoples or places that could be legitimately subjected to its authority, early modern authors made no categorical distinction between empires and states. But even if these authors had no clear conception of a distinctive international realm, they nevertheless developed a rich vocabulary for describing relations between different polities in and out of Europe. Many of those who resisted imperial aggrandizement during this period maintained that the quest for universal sovereignty violated the natural liberty of both individuals and states and proposed that upholding the balance of power between European empires *cum* states was crucial to the preservation of natural liberty. From this Enlightenment historians and lawyers concluded that European powers constituted a system of sovereign and formally equal states held together by public law and balance of power in equal measures, relegating the quest for empire to the non-European world which from this point becomes a constitutive outside of the international realm.

Chapter 3 analyzes the many attempts to reconcile notions of empire with proliferating claims to independence during the Age of Revolutions, arguing that such claims and their relative success were precarious and contingent on the ideological context at hand, and rarely if ever translated into a demise of empires or imperial forms of rule. Claims to independence during this period are best understood in the context of emergent norms of international legal recognition, and against the backdrop of the competing visions of empire that animated global great power rivalries in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. When seen from this perspective, the rise of independent states in the Americas looks less like a successful revolt against empire and an expansion of international society into

a new continent and more like a continuation of empire with indirect means in a world defined by the interconnectedness of nominally sovereign states.

Chapter 4 deals with the rise of nationalism and pleas for self-determination during the latter half of the nineteenth century and describes some attempts to reconcile these with notions of empire and imperial rule. When the principle of nationality became constitutive of statehood towards the end of that century, this principle was used to justify wars of unification in Europe. But this principle also provided a new and potent justification of colonial rule at a moment when earlier standards of sovereignty and civilization were increasingly contested. Whereas European peoples were deemed ripe for self-government by virtue of constituting homogenous nations, non-European peoples were considered unfit for self-government on the grounds that they lacked the defining characteristics of nationhood and should therefore remain under European tutelage. Yet the idea of nationality was soon appropriated by anticolonial nationalists to debunk empire and imperial rule and to support claims to self-determination of non-European peoples. Although most of those claims were initially unsuccessful, the spread of anticolonial nationalism and the contestations of standards of legitimacy and recognition that ensued made membership of the international system the obvious escape route from imperial domination.

Chapter 5 describes how anti-imperialists of various stripes successfully raised claims to self-determination during the second half of the twentieth century, and how this issued in the final globalization of the international system and the universalization of the nation-state as the only *prima facie* legitimate form of rule to the exclusion of other forms of political association. Even if this spelled the end of formal imperial relations between the West and the rest of the world, critics were quick to point out how informal hierarchical relations were reproduced and further entrenched under conditions of sovereign equality. By amalgamating these seemingly incompatible forms of political association while marginalizing alternative forms in the process, a global international system was naturalized into brute fact of modern political life, with myths of origin invented in its support. Hence, rather than spelling the end of empire, it is possible to interpret the globalized international system not only as a continuation of imperial relations but as an empire in its own right.

In Chapter 6, I conclude this book by spelling out the implications of the preceding analysis for how we best should understand the coming into being of the international realm as the default setting of world politics, and how we best should understand the corresponding universalization of the nation-state as the predominant locus of political authority in the modern world. I end this chapter by discussing some contemporary proposals to overcome or reform the modern international system *cum* empire by invoking the concepts of globality and the planetary in search of viable alternatives and a normative ground from which to contest the many excesses of the modern international world.