

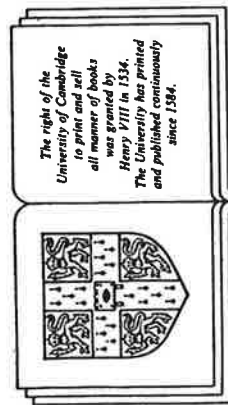
Imperialism and legitimacy: Weber's theory of politics

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Weber wrote a great deal about politics, but the general outline of his theory is surprisingly obscure. Apart from Weber's style of exposition, the reason appears to be that the causal dynamics of politics he indicates are not at all what one would expect. Weber's well-known political typologies are all conventionally internal to the state: the three forms of legitimacy, with their accompanying organizational forms of domination, plus the lineup of class, status, and party factions that contend for power. But the one place where Weber (1922/1968:901-40) offers a systematic introduction to politics, his chapter in *Economy and Society* entitled "Political Communities," has not been recognized as such. Instead of dealing with the internal affairs of a politically organized society, it devotes most of its attention to apparently subsidiary matters: imperialism and nationalism. But this chapter introduces the longest section of the book (Weber, 1922/1968:901-1372), which considers the state in all its historical forms; the fact that Weber found room here for a discussion of imperialism shows that he considered the topic to have a central importance for the whole of politics.

This sense of incongruity disappears once we get over the received notion that politics is essentially internal to a state. The thrust of Weber's thought is exactly the opposite: that politics works from the outside in, and that the external, military relations of states are crucial determinants of their internal politics. This is because of the centrality of legitimacy as a resource in the struggle for power. Legitimacy, as apprehended in the usual typological fashion, seems undertheorized. It is acknowledged to be important, but there seems to be no way to go beyond the static typology and set it in motion. How is legitimacy gained and lost, and who will get it under what conditions? Weber is suggesting that it is tied to the power position of the state in the international arena.

To the extent that this section of *Economy and Society* has been read



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at all, it has most often been by commentators who have seen it as an expression of Weber's own nationalism. Weber has been accused of an overly admiring attitude toward the militarily powerful state, and of reflecting the German nationalism of his day. This approach to Weber's analysis is misleading and simplistic. The analytical value of Weber's theoretical approach is ignored in the haste to combat what is seen as its politically activist implications. In this ideological argument, the theoretical path forward is lost. Simply put: Weber is proposing a theory of the state from the "world system" perspective. The two main possibilities for such a theory are economic or military. Hence Weber begins with a discussion of the economic position, in the form of the Marxian view of imperialism.

By historical comparisons, Weber attempts to show that certain types of capitalist interests have been imperialistic, whereas other types of capitalism have not. Capitalism, although a contributing factor in imperialism, is not the only, or even the major, determinant. Weber then turns to a military theory of imperialism, which is linked both to a theory of internal political legitimacy and to the external context of the international prestige of states.

The theoretical viewpoint Weber was developing is a good deal more fundamental than those of Weber's critics who have accused him of merely expounding nationalist ideology. Weber does *not* assume a voracious drive for military expansion, everywhere and at all times. On the contrary, his concern is to show why and how military expansionism occurs, and when it does not. The driving force of militarism, he proposes, is in the realm of prestige: the lineup of state powers in the "world" arena (however that may be defined historically in particular locations), and its interconnection with the internal prestige lineup of contending factions, which is to say the basis of their varying legitimacy.

Following Weber's sequence of argument, we see that the discussion of imperialism is preceded by a discussion of the origins of legitimacy and of the state's power-prestige in the international arena. Imperialist capitalism is introduced as a possible alternative candidate for explaining the power dynamics of states. The verdict on this being largely negative, Weber turns to what he finds to be a more significant force, nationalism. But nationalism for Weber turns out to be not racial, ethnic, or language-based but something founded on specifically political sentiments tied to the international prestige of the states in its power relations with other states. The argument is incomplete, breaking off in the middle of a sentence. But it clearly leads us back to the beginning of the chapter: The legitimacy of state rulers and the state's tendency toward imperialist expansion are reciprocally relat-

ed. A theory of imperialism is an intimate part of a theory of domestic legitimacy and domestic political domination, and vice versa.

A Weberian theory of politics, then, implies that internal politics is intimately connected with external geopolitics. The ability of internal political factions to dominate a state depends considerably on the position of the state in the transnational situation or, as we might say today, on its place in the world system. A Weberian political sociology proceeds ultimately from the outside in, and the rhythms and struggles of internal politics are strongly affected by the external fate of the state in the world. I believe it is consistent with this interpretation that Weber's introduction to the state – the chapter "Political Communities" – begins with the questions of legitimacy and imperialism, and ends with a discussion of all the different internal factions that can play a part in the domestic struggle for power. The latter section has become famous taken out of this context under the title "Class, Status, and Party" (Weber, 1946:180–95). Yet, although this section has been rightly taken as the starting point for a theory of stratification, it was written not as a discussion of stratification per se but as a roll call of the various interest groups that can play a part in the political arena. The chapter encompasses the major parts of a theory of politics; it only remains to see them as a unity. Legitimacy and its origins: that is the question of how someone can dominate the state. Imperialism, power-prestige, and nationalism: these are the processes, international in character, that determine the dynamics of legitimacy. And class, status group, and party: these are the contenders for the throne. The national state is the stage on which the drama is played, but the international arena writes the plot.

A full-scale theory of politics along these lines has scarcely been sketched, let alone worked out. I will attempt to do no more than begin the project here. Among other things, it would have to delineate the internal dynamics of the economy that create classes, and the even more complex factors producing status groups. An inkling of how these internal actors on the political stage are formed was given in Chapter 5. Here, following Weber's own exposition, I propose to draw the general connections between internal and external politics and, following logically upon this, to try to fill in what a causal theory of the external politics of states would be like. This, in fact, is a theory of geopolitics. Hence, Chapters 7 and 8 will develop and illustrate the general principles of geopolitics I have proposed elsewhere. Chapters 9 and 10 will focus again on the internal arena, to pick up some of the features of the group struggle for legitimacy. We begin, though, where Weber does, in his debate with the Marxians over the nature of imperialism.

Economic interests, imperialist and nonimperialist

Weber begins his discussion with the question of whether economic trade may not be the cause of political expansion of state territories. He answers: not necessarily. The unification of Germany, for example, was carried out contrary to the natural trade lines rather than along them. The economically determined market for east German grains would be England, not west Germany, and the market for west German industrial goods would be France, whereas those from east Germany would go to Russia. On the contrary, trade often follows arbitrary lines of political unification rather than causes them, as in Austria, or in Russia, where north-south railway lines were established first for military purposes. Similarly, in ancient times, numerous empires were established irrespective of preexisting trade routes: the Persian Empire, the Roman Empire when it moved inland away from the coastal seaports, the Chinese empires, the Mongols.¹

On the other hand, Weber (1922/1968:914) points to both modern and ancient empires in which imperial expansion did "follow the tracks of previously existing capitalist interests." The continental expansion of the United States of America, like the expansion of Great Britain overseas and of Russia in Siberia, is of this type. Weber saw this as especially likely where the areas to be penetrated were politically weak (especially tribal areas). In ancient times as well, the Athenian and Carthaginian empires, as well as the Roman during its formative period when it was confined to the Mediterranean littoral, were influenced by interests in export trade.

One may well ask if it is legitimate to consider ancient and modern states together, given their very different economic systems and social structures. Often, modern capitalist imperialism is considered qualitatively different from anything found in premodern states. Yet Weber thinks the comparison instructive. This is partly because he believes there are noneconomic processes involved in imperialism (especially the dynamics of state prestige competition) that apply to all states, whether they have modern capitalism or not. But even in the realm of economic causes, Weber holds that the key to imperialist capitalism may be found in ancient Rome itself. "Rome's overseas expansion," he states, "as far as it was economically determined,

¹ Weber's statement is only partly correct. Chinese empires usually tried to control the Kansu-Sinkiang corridor to the west, because of its wealth as a trade route. The Mongols did so, too, although the major parts of their empire (China, Persia, Russia) did not comprise the trade routes per se, and the Mongols certainly were not capitalists.

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shows features that have since recurred in basic outline again and again and which still recur today. These features occurred in Rome in pronounced fashion and in gigantic dimensions, for the first time in history. However fluid the transitions to other types may be, these 'Roman' features are peculiar to a specific type of capitalist relations, or rather, they provide the conditions for the existence of this specific type, which we wish to call *imperialist capitalism*" (Weber, 1946:166-7, italics added).

The economic interests favoring imperialism, however, are not generally those concerned with trade per se. Given that "the economic structure in general does co-determine the extent and manner of political expansion" (Weber, 1946:915), many of these economic interests may not be capitalist at all. Migrating peasant communities in the past have sought land and wiped out the previous settlers; conquering knights have taken the land with the settlers attached as a labor force for coerced production. Which alternative has occurred has depended on the economics of army supply itself; the massacres occurred when total populations were displaced, whereas serfdom resulted from armies of self-equipped knights living on a subsistence economy. Aside from these specifically predatory economic interests, however, others can be called capitalist. Plutocratic trading communities might also be interested in conquest, since the preferable investment for profits was land worked by indebted bondsmen, and warfare provided opportunities for such investment in land. This capitalist interest in the spoils of war might even come directly into conflict with a noncapitalist economic interest, such as in the struggles between the social classes in Rome in the period leading up to the political reforms of the Gracchi in the second century B.C., when the landless peasants of the expanding Roman population wanted land for themselves, whereas the wealthy investors wanted conquered lands to be leased at nominal rates.

The form of capitalist imperialism that came to dominate in Rome represents, for Weber, the type of such imperialism in world history. The Carthaginians pioneered its use on a large scale before Rome; it was later taken up "on the grand scale" by the Spaniards in South America, by the Dutch in Indonesia, and by the English, especially in the Caribbean and the American south. Colonial capitalists had tremendous opportunities for profit by enslaving the inhabitants or tying them to the soil as plantation laborers. In the absence of governmental apparatus suitable for collecting taxes, these might be farmed out to private tax-farmers, who thereby collected another form of capitalist profit. And the colonial government could enforce state

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monopolies on trade in the interests of particular capitalist enterprises.

Such interests - colonial booty capitalists, tax-farmers, privileged traders, together with suppliers of arms and credit to the state for military expeditions - form a capitalist sector favoring imperialism. Weber's thesis, however, is that these constitute only one sector of capitalists and that their interests are not identical with those of capitalists concerned with normal manufacturing and trade, who may find ample opportunities for profit without military expansion. The relative strength of imperialist capitalism, compared to, shall we say, pacifist capitalism, depends on the degree to which the economy is dependent on the state for satisfying economic demands.

Here, then, is Weber's major theoretical point regarding the power of imperialist capitalism. Where business interests exist primarily to sell goods to the state or loan capital to it, or rely on the state to provide exploitable land, monopolized trade, or opportunities for tax farming, then capitalists favor imperialism. Where the business economy is more private, less "collectivized," less dominated by politically connected monopolists, the capitalists favor pacifism. The latter situation, Weber suggests, characterized Britain in the free-trade era of the 1700s and early 1800s. The former, however, he saw (writing about 1910) as coming again into prominence, because the balance of potential profits had swung to government monopolies in foreign railroad building and other construction, monopolist trade concessions, and governmental loans. "The universal revival of 'imperialist' capitalism," Weber states, "which has always been the normal form in which capitalist interests have influenced politics, and the revival of political drives for expansion, are thus not accidental" (Weber, 1922/1968:919).

In Weber's view, if socialist states were to emerge in the future, they would not escape from this dynamic.² For precisely because such states have a highly collective economy, there is a strong tendency for economic interests to seek satisfaction by state action, or at least not to oppose it. Socialist states would be just as liable as states dominated by imperialist capitalists to use force to set favorable conditions of trade or otherwise squeeze tribute out of weaker states elsewhere in the world. If Weber's theoretical proposition about the conditions for economic imperialism is correct, socialist states should be at the highly imperialist end of the continuum, along with other states with highly politically oriented economies, and at the other end from states with very privatized economies.

² Bergesen (1982) concurs from the point of view of world-system theory.

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The extent to which particular social groups favor imperialism, however, is not solely determined by their opportunities for economic profit. Noncapitalist groups as well as capitalists may sometimes profit from successful imperialism. In ancient Athens, the profits for the Athenian citizens (the *demos*) were patently obvious, paid in the form of attendance fees at public ceremonies. In the modern world, the improvement in the standard of living of the working class in countries such as England, France, and Germany due to overseas imperialism is less visible, although Weber remarks that it would become apparent by its absence were the empires to disappear. In general, aside from capitalists directly involved in government business, the modern masses have little conscious conception of what is to be gained economically by a given foreign policy. In a remarkable passage, Weber assesses the war calculations of various groups: In the case of a lost war, the "monarch" has to fear for his throne, republican power-holders and groups having vested interests in a "republican constitution" have to fear the victorious "general." The majority of the propertied bourgeoisie have to fear economic loss from the brakes being placed upon "business as usual." Under certain circumstances, should disorganization follow defeat, the ruling stratum of notables has to fear a violent shift in power in favor of the propertyless. The "masses" as such, at least in their subjective conception and in the extreme case, have nothing concrete to lose but their lives. The valuation and effect of this danger strongly fluctuates in their own minds. On the whole, it can easily be reduced to zero through emotional influence. [Weber, 1922/1968:921]

This emotional influence Weber describes as a sentiment of prestige of the state power, which may be called nationalism.

The feeling of nationalism, however, is not to be seen simply as a matter of primordial group identity. Nationalism is not identical with the solidarity of ethnic or language groups. Weber gives numerous examples of cases in which nationalist sentiments either pass beyond or subdivide ethnic or language lines. The French nation does not consist uniformly of French-speakers, nor is the nationalism of the United States confined to a particular ethnic group. Swiss nationalism cuts across three different language-speakers and ethnicities, and separates German-speaking Swiss from German-speakers in Germany. We could add examples from ancient societies: The common language of the Greeks did not give rise to a sense of political nationality, despite strong feelings of ethnic distinctiveness from the "barbarians" outside; whereas the nationalism of the Roman citizenry encompassed a steadily expanding ethnic coalition in Italy from the very beginning.

Nationalism, Weber insists, is rather a specifically political sentiment. It is "linked to memories of a common political destiny" (Weber, 1922/1968:923). It is the history of having fought together as part of a common state, against common enemies, for common political ideals, that constitutes the bond of national solidarity. Thus, the German-speaking Alsatians are nevertheless highly nationalistic French people, because their political identity comes from participation in the French Revolution and its ensuing wars against the reactionary powers of the rest of Europe. Every state, insofar as it has an emotional appeal among its own populace, derives this not from a preexisting ethnic unity in the population, but from the dramatic struggles in which they have participated. It is because people have fought on the same side either in internal conflicts for control of the state, especially in a revolution, or in external wars against outside enemies, that national sentiments exist. Participation in the state itself is the sine qua non of nationalism.

One might question, however, whether nationalism is a relevant political category for the large number of states that have little or no democratic participation in politics. Weber does not address this issue, but implicitly it seems to follow that the sentiment of nationalism has relevance to whatever groups are engaged in politics, be they large masses or small military or aristocratic elites. In every state, power depends on some degree of common sentiment. At a minimum, if a small armed elite coerces unwilling masses, nevertheless sentiments of solidarity among that coercive minority are crucial in binding it together as an effective fighting force. Beyond this minimum, the power of any state to command its populace is enhanced to the degree that obedience can be enforced by prestige rather than by the immediate application of force. And at the farthest extreme, we have the entire nation-in-arms, where widespread and intense feelings of nationalism are decisive for political events.

In this sense, nationalism is a crucial political process in all states. It is as significant in modern dictatorships as in democracies, perhaps all the more so because modern authoritarian regimes have made the most extensive efforts to mobilize public demonstrations of support for the symbols of the regime. The mass rallies of the fascist states and the omnipresent dramatization of leadership in communist states both represent deliberate efforts to keep up a heightened level of nationalist sentiment in support of the state's projects. By the same token, nationalism in Weber's sense can be regarded as a crucial factor in ancient states as well as in modern ones. Despite the fact that most agrarian states limit political and military participation to a small fraction of the population, the sentiments of nationalism are impor-

tant among that mobilized group. In the history of ancient Egypt, and of medieval China, we read of "nativist reactions," which throw out foreign regimes and reinstitute domestic ones that can claim inheritance of earlier state traditions.

"Nationalism" has always existed wherever there is a state; in the modern era, what has been called "nationalism" in a more conventional sense has usually been regarded as a feature that emerged in nineteenth-century Europe and has spread only in the twentieth century to the rest of the world, as urbanization, market economies and mass communications have mobilized the bulk of the populace for the first time. But this is only a special form of "nationalism": a type in which special claims are made for political autonomy based on ethnicity. Even in these cases, the common ethnicity is often quasi-mythical, creating imaginary territorial boundaries along the lines of political convenience. In Weber's sense, "nationalism" in this version has simply been an upsurge of efforts to divide particular states into other states along their lines of maximal internal weakness. Thus, the prime example of modern "national autonomy" movements are those that dismantled the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires in the Balkans. Yet these were precisely the states that were crumbling under external geopolitical pressures; "ethnic" nationalism is merely the form in which the fragmentary states surviving the breakup were organized. The ethnic purity of many of these states has been a myth; Yugoslavia, for example, incorporates several ethnic groups, as a kind of miniature Austro-Hungarian Empire in itself. And at the same time that Austria-Hungary was breaking up, the Russian Empire was incorporating even more disparate ethnic groups in central Asia and the Caucasus, having earlier overridden the ethnic divisions of the Ukraine, White Russia, and the Baltic. In this case, "ethnic nationalism" was cast in a different form, one appropriate for a consolidating empire: pan-Slavism and its extensions, which attempted to claim a greater ethnic unity appropriate to an expanding state.

Moreover, in the ancient world nationalist sentiments have been important even for mass political participation. The politics of the Greek and Roman city-states were nationalistic in much the same way that those of modern states are; and even nondemocracies, such as the Mongol, Hunnic, Turkish, or German tribal armies, depended on sentiments mobilizing whole populations to act together in their wars or invasions. In each case, political unification was due to the prestige of the state within which people had a common participation and to the comparison between their own state's prestige and the prestige of foreign states.

Nationalism exists, in short, where a state is able to awe its own

followers and hence to attract more followers. "The prestige of power," Weber says (1922/1968:911), "means in practice the glory of power over other communities." A successfully expanding state attracts supporters, flocking to the winning side. Political success is the generator of nationalism. It is also true that states attacked by outsiders can experience an upsurge of nationalist sentiment, although the extent of such nationalism is more conditional. The fervor of national defense exists to the degree that a people feels confident in its state's ability to successfully resist, or to come back from a defeat for future revenge. Too protracted or severe a defeat destroys nationalism, although an initial defeat can enhance it. We may assume, extrapolating Weber, that nationalism is attached to the viability of the state, but with a time lag due to memory. If a state has a previous history of success (and most states do, else they would no longer exist at that time), then its subjects will be most likely to be aroused into nationalist fervor when an attack comes, even from powerful outside forces. Even after a defeat, the memory of their old state's former prestige may still foster nationalist sentiments, especially given that a recent defeat would make the conquering state more hated for its oppression than admired for its power. If within this memory span the conquering state suffers reversals for other reasons, the stage is set for a nationalist revival and a war of liberation.

The defeat of Prussia by Napoleon in 1805 was followed by opportunities for revolt in 1813 when the Napoleonic army was beaten in Russia; the resulting upsurge of German nationalism was well within the memory span suggested here, and its success was especially likely because the French military occupation was not a very heavy one. The upsurge of "German" nationalism that followed and eventually led to German unification by 1870 was thus only superficially ethnic in character. In reality, it was a dynamic of the prestige of the Prussian state, which had expanded steadily throughout the 1700s and was able to continue in absorbing all of Germany in the 1800s. Prussia was especially able to identify its own prestige with that of German ethnicity because of the Napoleonic conquest of Germany; the "negative prestige" of the French state constituted the other pole of the drama that constituted the victory of German nationalism.

Nationalism, then, is the result of the success of a state in power politics. It is a feeling of awe toward the state, especially in regard to its proven ability to coerce domestic consent; and a feeling of subjective participation in the state's power in relation to other states. In this latter respect it is a vote of confidence in the ability of one's state to defend one against outside enemies, and, relatedly, in its ability to expand and conquer others. Like fans following a winning football

team, the loyalty of political subjects to their state depends on its victories. A victorious state experiences the greatest nationalism; an embattled one experiences nationalism to the extent that it can draw upon memories of past victories that can probably be repeated. A long string of defeats saps national loyalty, and eventually, after time periods we have not yet measured, national loyalty disappears. In its place comes a new nationalism, adhering to some new, victorious state, and cloaked in its particular symbolic formula, whether it be an ethnic or a more strictly political ideology.

Legitimacy

It should be apparent, then, that nationalism for Weber is the essence of political legitimacy. Legitimacy, as usually defined, is the willingness of followers to accept orders given to them as properly to be obeyed. Too often this is conceived of as a kind of psychological quantity impressed on individuals by socialization, and acting as an internal gyroscope bringing about political obedience. Yet Weber's discussion shows that legitimacy is nothing if not dynamic. It is not an internalized constant but an emotional feeling that arises from assessing the prestige of the state at any given moment. Weber's nationalism is simply legitimacy carried to fervid levels. In a condition of nationalist arousal, a populace does not merely passively accept the state's orders as legitimate but is actively enthusiastic to join in fighting the state's battles for it. But just as nationalism waxes and wanes with the degree of political conflict and the changing fortunes of states, legitimacy also fluctuates from high to low. In many cases it may be nonexistent.

Weber's discussion of the origins of legitimacy, which leads off his chapter on "Political Communities," makes clear the connection between legitimacy and national violence. Originally, Weber proposes, violence was not legitimate. He sketches a situation of loose tribal ties. Violent individuals form small marauding bands; men gather together in a closed "men's house" and subjugate the women and the weaker individuals. Such groups, he proposes, may cloak their power in the religious ceremonial and the fearsome masks of "supernatural" beings described in the ethnographic literature; but the religious legitimization is spurious, merely an effort to add symbolic terror to the real violence at their disposal. Inside the secret society, the attitude toward these spirits may remain cynical and skeptical. The warriors' domination over others is based ultimately on naked force, and not conceded as a legitimate right.

Nevertheless, a real sense of legitimacy does spring from this kind of

organization of violence. Legitimacy comes from a special type of emotion: the emotion that individuals feel when facing the threat of death in the company of others. The group that faces death together has a special bond. It is a "community of political destiny" of a sort matched by no other. Such groups acquire a solidarity deriving from a "community of memories" deeper than ethnic, linguistic, or other cultural ties. It is for this reason that nationalism is not linked to specific cultural backgrounds, but can bring together whoever happens to have been united by fighting together in a common organization.

So far we have seen only the source of a peculiar type of solidarity, confined within fighting groups. Legitimacy in the full sense arises from this, however, because the individual is expected to face death in the interest of the group as a whole. Accordingly, the individual concedes the right of the group to expect him (or her) to engage in self-sacrifice for the sake of the group, as well as to support the group in all aspects relating to the common safety. This gives rise to a particular type of violence that is accepted as legitimate by the members of the group on whom it may be turned: violent punishment directed by the group as punishment against any of its members who act treasonably or harm the group by disobedience or cowardice in warfare. For the first time, violence is now connected with a right that people (at least some of them) will concede applies to themselves as well as others.

At this level, it should be noted, violence is legitimate only as used within the fighting group, for purposes of disciplining its own members. The violence that the group uses against outsiders is not legitimate; it is merely successful coercion, or not. Thus, sentiments of legitimate authority exist only within particular disciplined groups; outside these groups, there is no claim of legitimacy. Weber extends this model to groups other than military ones, to other pockets of legitimacy that emerge in various premodern societies. Religious groups generate this sense of the obligation of the individual to the group, above all to the extent that in a hostile environment members are expected to undergo martyrdom for the faith. Kin groups with their obligation to take blood vengeance for injuries to any of their members; aristocracies with codes of honor requiring the settlement of affairs through dueling; the sworn secrecy of bandit societies: all of these generate specific sentiments of legitimate authority for insiders, even though outsiders are completely cut off from these inner realms.

The crucial development in the modern phenomenon of legitimacy occurs when the state manages to acquire a monopoly of violence on

a given territory. When this occurs, the collectivity involved in warfare becomes much more extended. When aristocracies no longer fight other small forces of opposing aristocracies in the midst of peasants indifferent to the outcomes, the sphere of legitimate authority is ready for a sizable extension. When an entire populace is attacked, it becomes realistic for states to claim that everyone is responsible for aiding in the group's defense. The sentiment that linked only the members of a fighting group together into an authority structure, conceding the legitimate rights of disciplinary coercion over its members, now becomes extended to the whole society. It is the military transition to mass warfare that makes every member of a modern state subject to the legitimate discipline of the state.

This is not to say that premodern rulers do not attempt to coerce their followers or to demand their unconditional obedience. What differs, rather, is the emotional mechanism. Where the masses had previously been coerced, so to speak, from "outside," now there is a psychological (more properly, in Durkheimian terms, ritual) mechanism that may sometimes produce a willingness of the masses to see each other coerced, and even to concede that they have duties the failure of which would rightly bring their own punishment. This does not happen all the time, and Weber was well aware (as surely we should be) that legitimacy is a fluctuating sentiment. But what is distinctive about modern politics is that such mass sentiments do regularly occur at times of major political events, and hence the fluctuation in legitimacy can be a crucial determinant of the fate of governments and of states.

The argument as stated gives too much of the impression of an evolutionary sequence from nonlegitimate violence, through the internal legitimacy of discipline in conflict groups, to the mass legitimacy of the modern state. In fact, we can easily give historical cases (many of them in the preceding pages) of mass political participation and hence mass sentiments of legitimacy in premodern states. The politics of Rome and the Greek city-states, and the mass posttribal nomad armies, provides examples; one might well add some of the Crusades and other cases. Conversely, the small-scale in-group legitimacy of fighting organizations does not disappear in the modern era, nor does illegitimate violence. What we have, rather, is a set of analytical constructs: three different conditions that give rise to varying sentiments conceding the legitimacy of violence used for group discipline. The major point is that whatever group is mobilized as a fighting group will undergo automatic processes that generate these emotions legitimating authority.

Legitimacy and imperialism

We may now attach the model of internal legitimacy to the Weberian theory of nationalism and imperialism. Legitimacy, for Weber, is not a constant quantity. It varies depending on the extent to which people feel their group is in a situation involving the potential threat of death. The group involved in a fight feels the pressure for group discipline, and concedes the legitimacy of its leadership, much more strongly than the same group in time of peace. The same applies on an extended scale to a whole society, if it is collectively organized for defense and attack. Legitimacy not only is intermittent over time; Weber (1922/1968:902) even remarks that in a prolonged state of peace, a society tends toward nonlegitimacy, in fact toward a condition of anarchy.

It is for this reason that so much of the peacetime discourse of politics nevertheless is aimed, overtly or covertly, at war. A state maintains its internal legitimacy to the extent that it can invoke its external power against threatening rival states. Its legitimacy depends not only on the actual emotions that take place during fighting but also on the sentiments that can be generated by waving the flag in peacetime. The state with high prestige vis-à-vis other states assures itself of a higher degree of legitimacy for its demands for internal obedience. Thus, Weber (1922/1968:904) can conclude that "it is on this prestige that the consensus of specific legitimacy of action is founded."

This analysis of legitimacy may sound strange in relation to Weber's better-known typology of charismatic, traditional, and rational-legal forms of legitimacy. Did Weber have two different and unrelated theories of legitimacy? I do not think so. The three types of legitimacy refer to the way that legitimacy is structured; the community-of-violence theory explains the source and strength of the feelings of legitimacy. Thus charismatic leaders become the personal focus of authority, whereas traditional leaders inherit their offices through kinship or religious practices, and rational-legal leaders are chosen and base their orders on enacted constitutions or laws. To what degree the populace accords legitimacy to such persons depends on the strength of emotions aroused by their political community of fate. The fate of the state's power-prestige determines the amount of legitimacy there will be; the typology merely indicates who will be the recipient of this legitimacy. For the dynamics of legitimacy, then, the power-prestige model is a more important predictor of the behavior of political subjects than the typology. In this view, previous discussion of legitimacy in terms of religious ceremonial or rational-

legal ideologies are too static. Such arguments place too much emphasis on the ability of religion or ideology to create legitimacy, whereas in fact these merely channel emotions onto particular recipients.³

One might nevertheless challenge this interpretation empirically on the grounds that it makes states' legitimacy depend unnecessarily on their belligerence. It would seem to make it impossible for a state to be legitimate in peacetime, thus proposing a highly pessimistic view of the world, as well as one that does not fit all the historical facts. Weber himself seems to give evidence against this theory, pointing out that political elites are not always nationalistic and imperialistic but are at times opposed to imperialism. The Spartan aristocracy for long periods was anti-expansionist; similarly, the Roman aristocracy after the Punic Wars, when the conquest of Italy had been completed, opposed further imperial expansion in favor of a "little Italy" policy. Similarly, the British aristocracy in the 1700s and 1800s favored a peaceful foreign policy, intervening merely to maintain the balance of power; their anti-imperialism continued up through political opposition to the wave of colonial expansion in the 1800s. Weber explains such anti-imperialistic sentiments on the grounds that these elites felt threatened domestically by political opponents who would benefit more from imperial expansion than themselves. The Spartans and Romans feared the democratization that had occurred in other city-states undergoing mass military mobilization, and felt their power challenged by imperialist demagogues appealing to the masses. The Roman aristocracy was right in their fears; the democratizing war party led by Marius and later by his relative, Julius Caesar, eventually

³ This is consistent with a formal theory of rituals, which would apply to religious and political rituals as well. A ritual requires not only a particular formula, focus of attention, and an assembled group, but also a strong common emotion (Collins, 1975:153-5). Given the emotion, a ritual is an effective machine for creating sacred symbols and using them to designate social membership and authority. But the emotion comes from outside the ritual itself. The violence model explains where the most important emotional ingredient of legitimacy rituals comes from. In traditional societies we can systematically observe the connection between religious impressiveness and the hierarchy of political power (Swanson, 1962); and a similar connection seems to exist in modern secular regimes between the degree of political centralization and authoritarianism, and the extent of ideological ceremony and ideological sacredness. Such correlations, however, are static; and one may question whether the religion is so strongly believed in at all points in historical time. I would suggest, along the lines of Weber's analysis, that the impressiveness of the gods depends on the political success of the ruler, especially in military affairs. One might say: It is the gods (or other sacred objects) who are tested on the battlefield; some are promoted and exalted as a result, while others lose their holiness. Compare the argument of Girard (1977) that religious ceremonies always include an element of violence.

destroyed the oligarchy. A theoretical question remains, however: How can elites oppose imperialism if their sole base of legitimacy depends on belligerent sentiments and the prestige of military expansion?

I believe there are two answers to this question. These are barely touched by Weber, but they are not inconsistent with his analysis. One answer is that legitimacy is intermittent and not continuously necessary for domination. The second answer is that there are internal equivalents of war that create domestic legitimacy.

First, it should be recognized that political domination does not depend solely on legitimacy. Widespread emotions of legitimacy make it easier to rule; but the existence of armaments in the hands of a few can enforce domination a good deal of the time, especially in the absence of some strongly organized movement of revolt, which itself would require a strong counterlegitimacy. Moreover, from the point of view of a fine-grained microanalysis (Collins, 1981a) a great deal of social order is based on routine. Things stay the way they are because people are physically dispersed across the landscape in certain ways - the rich man in his castle, the poor man in his hut, and so forth - and the cognitive complexities of changing the physical organization of things tends to require more energy and more coordinative activities than simply leaving things as they are. This is not to say that the persons in power may not wish to generate strong sentiments of compliance in order to institute actions of their own; hence, some of the time they wish to arouse feelings of legitimacy. But this is intermittent. During any given 24-hour period, or any 365-day year, there are probably fairly few minutes during which many of the populace are called upon to experience the emotions endowing the state with legitimacy. Much of the time the state can survive by routine, or by a relatively low degree of "legitimacy arousal."

The second answer is that when legitimacy becomes important for politicians, it can be aroused domestically as well as on the international scene. It may be true historically, as Weber claims, that it is external violence that gives rise to the first and strongest feelings of legitimate obligation to the state. But the mechanism is a general one: Whenever a group finds itself in a community of fate regarding potential violence from some outside group, internal legitimacy for its authority structure is generated. Thus, internal conflicts can also generate legitimacy, provided they are potentially dangerous enough (and provided also that the group leaders can plausibly claim that they will win and crush their domestic enemies). Thus, class conflict may be a basis for internal legitimacy. The ruling class need not base its claims to domination entirely on some ideology proclaiming the

justice of its rule; a challenge from some other class can be even more effective in stirring up the emotions buttressing or establishing its legitimacy. It then becomes the defender of order against the party of disorder, where "disorder" means explicitly violence in the streets, threats to persons and property.

Other domestic enemies may also be invoked. Religious heretics or supernaturally inspired threats (such as witches) may on occasion represent significant enough threats to generate legitimacy; other special minorities or deviants may also serve (Bergeson, 1977). Crime may also usefully serve this purpose. Perhaps the generalization may be made that in a society in which notions of class conflict are not part of the official ideology, and ethnic and religious persecution is taboo (as in the United States after 1960), crime is magnified as a violent threat in order to generate feelings of domestic legitimacy for the state.

It should be noted that, under certain circumstances, the two answers to the question of nonnationalist legitimacy can come together. Legitimacy may well be intermittent and largely superfluous to routine daily life. But this does not mean the state will fall apart from sheer lack of legitimacy. When the state does begin to crack, it is because organized groups spring up to claim legitimacy for themselves (expressly because they are combat groups). This in turn means that a situation of genuine domestic threat now exists, and hence politicians in power can point to an internal conflict of groups. Moreover, the more serious the rebellion, the more of the population it mobilizes into political participation. As the situation approaches a revolutionary crisis, everyone is forced to take an emotional stand by declaring his or her loyalty to one side or the other. This constitutes a Schelling-type "consensus-game," in which individuals try to join in the side they expect is most likely to win, lest they be endangered by being caught on the losing side (Schelling, 1962). Usually the side with the best "track record" of past coercive successes (the existing state) will gain most of these "swing votes," helping assure its victory. And from the point of view we are considering here, it gains something else: a renewed basis of legitimacy. In internal politics, as in external power-prestige games, the same dynamic applies: the state that successfully surmounts a situation of widespread violent threat gets a significant infusion of legitimacy. Ultimately this is the lifeblood (or should one say the heroin fix) of politics.

Geopolitics, external and internal

Returning now to the question with which we began: How are the dynamics of imperialism to be explained? We must confine ourselves

here, as Weber does, to imperialism in the sense of foreign military intervention to establish an empire; covert forms of imperial domination, such as those promoted by unequal exchange in a formally free market (Emmanuel, 1972) are presumably the result of some other dynamic. Weber's argument is twofold: (1) Colonial booty capitalism plays a role in fostering imperialism; this is a strong influence to the degree that the economy revolves around provisions to and flowing from the state. Yet this economic interest in imperialism, even in these instances, is the less important factor. (2) The most important factor is the interests of political leaders in stirring up domestic legitimacy through success in the external military competition with other states. Internal legitimacy is the good to be sought through engaging in the prestige game in the international arena; the prize for the rulers of the "Great Power" is paid in the coin of internal politics.

We have, however, just seen that there are alternative, homegrown ways of generating legitimacy without venturing abroad. How do we weigh these relative to foreign-military-based legitimacy? When will politicians attempt to play on one rather than the other? (And for that matter, why shouldn't they play on both at once?) The challenge is to take the elements Weber has provided and spin them into a full-blown predictive theory.

It is clear that such a theory must involve two different realms of explanation, the external arena of military relations among states, and the internal arena of domestic political factions. I propose that we know something of the determinants operating in both of these realms, and also that internal and external politics influence each other. The result of such a theory, then, should be to explain which states will be most (and least) imperialistic externally, and similarly, which factions will achieve the most legitimacy internally, and by which kind of appeal.

First the external arena. This may be defined as a network of states concerned about their military prestige vis-à-vis one another. The prestige emulation goes on constantly, during peacetime as well as during war. Thus the relations among states may be seen as a kind of status system analogous to that found among social groups within a society. Bendix (1967, 1978) has taken such concepts as the "reference group" from social psychology to apply to the process by which the leaders of an entire society take another as "reference society" to catch up with; hence, the process of "modernization" is an endless chain of emulation of successful "world powers" by aspiring ones. It follows that imperial expansion is carried out in order to claim or maintain one's status as a Great Power, rather than for economic motives per se.

This analysis helps make sense out of many phases of world history. Thus the scramble for colonies after 1880 was set off as the rising German state and the revived French one acted to emulate and challenge British domination of world power-prestige; the result was an "inflationary" phase of prestige competition. (Along this line of reasoning, it was the external prestige-dynamic that brought England unwillingly out of its anti-imperial mood — not because, as Weber stated, colonial booty capitalism became internally dominant; rather, the change in mood presumably occurred only as the result of the colonial race.) The possession of colonies was secondary and symbolic: Great Powers fought for such things, whether or not they were worth the cost in economic terms. It is consonant with this analysis that World War I was not fought between the states whose economic interests in the colonies were most clearly opposed (because this would have brought about a war between France and Russia on one side, against England as the principal enemy, probably in alliance with Germany); instead, England joined its colonial rivals against Germany, which was the state making the strongest bid to overtake England in international military prestige. Similarly, it can be argued that the post-World War II confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union is fundamentally a prestige competition among the two Great Powers, and would exist whether or not economic interests were at stake. It is in keeping with this analysis that both U.S. and Soviet political elites have based their strongest claims for legitimacy on the foreign threat from the other.

It remains to make this theory more precise. After all, there are many states in the international arena. At any given time, which ones will be the most imperialistic, and against whom will their imperialism be directed? In Bendix's (1967) terms, who will be the "reference society," and who will be its primary emulator?

The answer, I would suggest, is that the militarily most powerful state becomes the "reference society" at any given time. (Thus, in Bendix's modernization sequence we see a series of attempts to catch up first with Spain, then with England, France — later with Germany, Soviet Russia, and the United States giving a choice of leading models.) This may serve as a provisional answer. To explain which states will be the prime emulators, the would-be challengers, we must go beyond this to consider the conditions that give a state a real chance of success. For if domestic legitimacy is to be gained by winning power in the international arena, it should also be kept in mind that legitimacy can also be lost as well as won. Rulers of states that fight unsuccessful wars jeopardize their own legitimacy at home, and would have been better off if they had not attempted the wars. Some-

times domestic politics leaves rulers little choice in this matter; but leaving this condition aside for the moment and considering only the external lineup of states, it is possible to say which states should be most likely to attempt external expansion – simply put, the states that have the greatest chance of military success. Here we may invoke geopolitical theory of the determinants of the expansion and contraction of states' borders (Collins, 1978; Chapter 7 of this volume). Without going into the details of this model, it can be noted that states that have a size and resource advantage over their neighbors, or that have a "marchland advantage" in the positional lineups among multifront confrontations, will be most tempted to expand at the expense of other states around them. It is these conditions that determine which states are relatively more and less imperialistic at any particular time in world history. In short, the dynamics of international prestige emulation, insofar as they can be predicted solely from the external relations among states, are based on the principles of geopolitics. We turn now to the internal dynamics of imperialism. The most significant internal principle is that whichever political faction carries out a war will get the credit or blame for its success or failure. The party that carries out a successful war enhances its domestic legitimacy; that which leads a military defeat loses legitimacy. Within time limits that are still to be determined, this principle should help explain the ups and downs of domestic politics. At the extreme, this principle is congruent with a theory of revolution that emphasizes military defeat or exhaustion as its primary cause (Skocpol, 1979; Collins, 1978).⁴ The argument made here implies that the revolutionary downfall of a state is due not simply to economic difficulties or disintegration of its military apparatus in defeat (which may not occur in every case of revolution) but also to its loss of legitimacy. Presumably this would depend on the regime's basing its claims strongly on prestige in the international arena.⁵

Short of revolution, one would expect that military success or defeat would affect the ascendancy and decline of domestic political factions. This analysis has yet to be tested empirically. The theoretical claim, though, is extensive. It implies that the fate of domestic parties depends largely on the fate of their state in the international arena. Since that international fate is predictable, in turn, from the geopoliti-

⁴ The latter proposes that military overextension of states typically leads to rapid disintegration of territorial power.

⁵ For example, the fall of the Shah's government in Iran in 1978 was to a considerable extent due to the fact that it was linked closely to U.S. military support. Defeat of a U.S.-supported regime in Vietnam caused a sharp drop in this source of power-prestige, and drastically curtailed the legitimacy of the Iranian government.

cal structure of the world system, the inference is that world geopolitics is a major determinant of the rise and fall of internal political factions in its constituent states.

The nature of this linkage is not yet specified. The geopolitical system does not tell us who will be the domestic actors in this drama; it only predicts the rise and fall of each, starting from the possession of domestic power by one or another state at a given time. Political theory as more conventionally pursued still holds a place in this kind of world-system theory; it shows the domestic social bases on which political factions are formed, and explains their domestic political resources and their lines of cleavage. Among these bases, several types of economic cleavage are prominent.⁶ But this type of analysis is essentially static. It tells us who the political factions will be at a given time in a particular society. If we wish to predict their fortunes, their rise and fall into and out of power, we must turn to the world arena.⁷

Internal legitimacy and external power-prestige are connected. Weber's theory of imperialism was primarily an introduction to his theory of politics. Overall, Weber was more concerned with the political effects of imperialism than with its causes. But because he arrives at this conception by attempting to show that the causes of imperialism are primarily the internal struggle for legitimacy, we may extrapolate. Internal political factions rise and fall because they are tied to success or failure in foreign policy. This success or failure depends on the contingencies of the world system of geopolitical advantages and disadvantages. These dynamics of internal legitimacy-seeking create the impetus within any particular state for engaging in subsequent ventures in imperialism.

The theory may be extended on both fronts. We may examine the internal dynamics that produce classes and other factions, and the

⁶ Among the best of such analyses are Wiley (1967) and Paige (1975). But see Summers and Goldfrank (1979), for a critique of the latter as unable to predict the ascendancy of particular factions because it ignores the world context.

⁷ Weber's point that certain political elites, such as the Spartan ruling class or the Roman or British aristocracy, were anti-imperialist because of fear of mass demagogic opposition at home suggests another refinement to this analysis. That is, not only do world geopolitical relations affect the internal fates of political factions, but also the contingencies of domestic political struggles affect whether or not a state tends to be imperialistic. Certain factions will throw the brakes to impede an imperial policy that might otherwise be favorable in the external arena. On the whole, though, I think this is a secondary factor. Rome and Britain eventually embarked on imperial expansion despite opposition by domestic elites; and Sparta's failure to do so may be attributed largely to the extent of opposition among its neighbors. On balance, I would judge that the dynamics of internal/external political relations are most heavily weighed by the external situation. The internal situation can slow down reaction to the external opportunities, but not by more than fifty years, if that.

economic conditions that constitute much of the internal environment of politics. Among these economic forces, though, will be precisely the demands made by the state to finance itself; and this is largely a matter of the military state's demands for the resources to take advantage of geopolitical opportunities in the external arena or merely to keep up with the degree of international competition in military technology. State fiscal crises, with their ramifying effects on domestic economies, are more often than not results of geopolitical overextension or other geopolitically determined pressures. The military resources of the state, of course, are also used to maintain internal "order," albeit often in the form of the authority of a privileged class over others. This privileged group may well take the form of parasitical inhabitants of the state itself. The growth of this group beyond certain bounds may become another cause of "fiscal crisis," such as the one that beset the top-heavy bureaucracy of Sung China (Chapter 3). In a sense, the state acts to extract resources from within a territory, in order to transfer them to a center that maintains coercive control. The state itself might be conceived as a form of "internal geopolitics," and its strains and dynamics can come from the contingencies of exerting military threat both internally and externally.

This leads us again to the external front, which is, of course, an object of interest in its own right. For if the causal dynamics of international politics are related in so many ways to a state's external power position, an ultramicro viewpoint on the dynamics of the entire system of interacting states is what we must focus on theoretically. The following two chapters, therefore, treat some generalizations that have already been developed along these lines.