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**SINGAPORE**

**PERIODS OF PEACE BETWEEN MAJOR POWERS IN WORLD HISTORY**

JARED MORGAN MCKINNEY  
THE S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
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**JARED MORGAN MCKINNEY**

THE S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

2020

## Statement of Originality

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## ABSTRACT

For most of history, peace has been “only a name,” as Plato once wrote. Even so, certain international systems have experienced extended periods of peace. What enables such peace? The discipline of International Relations has only asked (and attempted to answer) this question for a limited number of cases from the modern era. However, leading explanations—hegemony (Realist), regime type (Liberal), and security communities (Constructivist)—are not directly relevant to critical dyads in the contemporary international system. The question today is how major states—such as the United States and China—that do not share identities or regime type and yet are approximately equal in terms of power might coexist. Following the methodology of the nineteenth-century pragmatic philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, this dissertation seeks to provide an initial answer in three steps. In the first step, abduction, I propose a synthesis theory of multipolar peace. Drawing on the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes as well as IR theory and modern history, I theorize that there are three essential elements required to reach a state of peace. The first is for the parties to acknowledge the balance of power to be stable. The second is for the parties to recognize each other ‘thickly’ as equals. And the third is for territorial differences to be settled in a process seen as legitimate by the actors. In the second step, induction, I seek to test my synthesis theory of peace. Since the number of appropriate cases already used by the IR discipline are inadequate to robustly test the theory, I introduce three new international systems that meet my scope conditions. These are the Ancient Near East in the Late Bronze Age (c. 1500-1200 BC), Rome and Persia in late antiquity (3<sup>rd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD), and Song China’s relations with its peers (10<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). In my final step, deduction, I apply my findings to U.S.-China relations in the contemporary era, considering how peace might be extended as China rises.

# 1 Introduction

Most princes apply themselves to the arts of war . . . instead of to the good arts of  
 peace  
 Sir Thomas More (1516)<sup>1</sup>

Why there should be international wars is no puzzle; why there should be peace is a  
 puzzle.  
 Paul Schroeder (2005)<sup>2</sup>

Development in our sense is then defined by the carrying out of new combinations.  
 Joseph Schumpeter (1911)<sup>3</sup>

War, for all of its horror, served a social purpose in the evolution of the modern states system. Surviving intense military competition necessitated the emergence of stronger states; such an emergence, in turn, required higher levels of commitment from citizens, who demanded rights and representative institutions in exchange for their sacrifices. Strong states, insisting on their monopoly on violence and promoting societal cooperation, then stamped out sub-state violence, enabling the emergence of the relatively stable, relatively peaceful, and relatively representative modern states. This, anyway, is the story told by an impressive group of scholars.<sup>4</sup> Whatever its truth, these scholars concur that war between major states

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas More and George M. Logan, *Utopia*, 3rd ed (New York, N.Y: W.W. Norton & Co, 2011), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, “The Life and Death of a Long Peace, 1763-1914,” in *The Waning of Major War: Theories and Debates*, ed. Raimo Väyrynen (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph A. Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle*, trans. Redvers Opie (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 66.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Michael Mann, *Power in the 21st Century: Conversations with John A. Hall* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 38–40; Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012); Ian Morris, *War: What Is It Good for?: The Role of Conflict in Civilisation, from Primates to Robots* (London: Profile Books, 2015); Peter Turchin, *Ultrasociety: How 10,000 Years of War Made Humans the Greatest Cooperators on Earth* (Chaplin, CT: Beresta Books, 2016). Original versions of the formulation can be found in the Enlightenment. E.g.: Richard Tuck, *The Rights of*

has now lost its utility: its ‘benefits’ have already been gained while its costs—in an age of nuclear weapons and total warfare—have become incalculable.<sup>5</sup> Avoiding war between major powers is the world-historical imperative of the twenty-first century.<sup>6</sup>

How might this be best done within the context of the emerging structure of the international system, in which the ‘unipolar’ moment has ended and China is rising as a potential equal to the United States? How might the ‘long peace’ that has characterized the post-WWII era—in which the international system’s leading powers avoided direct conflict<sup>7</sup>—be extended to the twenty-first century? In order to provide an initial answer, this dissertation develops a theory of peace and tests it provisionally by exploring significant periods of peace between major powers in world history. The research question of the project is: *How have major states, of approximately equivalent power, living in regular interaction with each other, avoided serious conflict over a significant period of time?*

Has this question already been asked and answered? Not really.

International Relations (IR) scholars have only studied periods of peace as such within the brief window of the modern era (1815-2015), a period constituting less than 5% of the recorded history of humanity. Within this small window, there are only a handful of cases relevant to the required scope conditions; consequently, the current population of cases is too small to sustain a robust theory of peace. To remedy this deficiency, this dissertation introduces new cases from the ancient and pre-modern worlds to the discipline of IR. By expanding the population of cases, I hope to enrich the discipline of IR even as I illuminate the mechanisms through

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*War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 217.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Mann, *Power in the 21st Century*, 38; Morris, *War*, chap. 7.

<sup>6</sup> See Alan Robock et al., “How an India-Pakistan Nuclear War Could Start—and Have Global Consequences,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 75, no. 6 (November 2, 2019): 273–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2019.1680049>; Owen B. Toon et al., “Asia Treads the Nuclear Path, Unaware That Self-Assured Destruction Would Result from Nuclear War,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 76, no. 2 (May 2017): 437–56, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911817000080>.

<sup>7</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, “The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System,” *International Security* 10, no. 4 (Spring 1986): 99–142; but see Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Cold War’s Killing Fields: Rethinking the Long Peace* (New York: Harper, 2018).

which the U.S. and China might, in the coming generations, coexist in one of those rare periods of major power peace.

## 1.1 Method and Organization

My approach to social science broadly, and IR specifically, is derived from Charles Peirce's understanding of the scientific method and the process of conducting research.<sup>8</sup> Peirce believed that that scientist had three tools—abduction, deduction, and induction—and that these should be used in sequence in order to construct theories that explain both physical and social reality. Abduction was the tool needed to form hypotheses about a puzzle. Deduction was the tool that connected these hypotheses with the postulated end state. And induction—the final stage in the cycle of research—was the process of observing “phenomena in order to see *how nearly* they agree with the theory.”<sup>9</sup> Induction, naturally, could not guarantee absolute truth, but—so long as the objects of investigation are indeed members of a larger group, and so long as the investigator secures a representative sample—the “generality of inductions . . . in the long run . . . approximate the truth.”<sup>10</sup> Peirce modeled the abductive and deductive elements of the scientific research process in the following manner:

The surprising fact, C, is observed;

But if A were true, C would be a matter of course,

Hence, there is reason to suspect A is true.<sup>11</sup>

Once a puzzle had been selected, and some initial hypotheses suggested, which the sociologist Richard Swedberg calls the “pre-study” or context of discovery, the task is then to turn to induction, which Swedberg calls the “main study” or context of

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<sup>8</sup> For general discussions: Robert Burch, “Charles Sanders Peirce,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/peirce/>; Richard Swedberg, *The Art of Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); for direct application to the field of International Relations: Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil, “On Acting and Knowing: How Pragmatism Can Advance International Relations Research and Methodology,” *International Organization* 63, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 701–31.

<sup>9</sup> “Three Types of Reasoning” in Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, eds., *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. V: Pragmatism and Pragmaticism (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1934), 105.

<sup>10</sup> “Grounds of Validity” in Hartshorne and Weiss: 218.

<sup>11</sup> “Pragmatism and Abduction” in Hartshorne and Weiss: 117.

justification.<sup>12</sup> If a theory was found to be reliable, it might then be used in a deductive manner to make predictions about the future.

I have based the argument and organization of this dissertation on Peirce's model. To wit:

The surprising fact, periods of peace between major powers (C), is observed.

If the leading causes of conflict, configurational and positional rivalry, were mitigated (A), C would be a matter of course.

Hence, there is reason to suspect A is true.

With the argument arranged thus, four steps must be taken to complete this study.

They are:

1. To demonstrate that peace is surprising and that it is observed (Chapter 1: Intro)
2. To show that configurational and positional rivalry are leading causes of conflict and the ways they might be mitigated across eras (Chapter 1: Intro)
3. To investigate, inductively, whether A is connected to C (Chapters 2-4)
4. To reason, deductively, what this argument implies for contemporary U.S.-China relations (Chapter 5).

The rest of this introduction will focus, as specified above, on steps one and two.

The true heart of the dissertation—three new case studies—then follows. Finally, my conclusion considers the implications that my theory and findings have for the prospects of peace between major powers in the twenty-first century.

## **1.2 The State of Nature, and the Two Ways to Escape It**

The Thirty Years War (1618-1648), which killed some eight million people in the heartland of Europe,<sup>13</sup> stimulated a wave of internationalist thought on war and peace that extends to this day.<sup>14</sup> One of the most notable texts to emerge from

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<sup>12</sup> Swedberg, *The Art of Social Theory*, chap. 1 and 230–248.

<sup>13</sup> Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>14</sup> F.H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations Between States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 23. The mood of the era is illustrated by a ballet composed by Rene Descartes (a few months before his death) celebrating the Treaty of Münster (1648). In it, a group of crippled soldiers explain: "Whoever sees what we are like / And

the mid-seventeenth century was authored by the English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Though England limited its participation in the European conflagration, the English Civil War (1642-1651) provided a parallel context of destruction and fear. Hobbes, who some twenty years earlier had translated Thucydides into English, penned his *magnum opus*, *Leviathan*, in response to England's tragedy. Though other points of entry might be selected, Hobbes' conception of the state of nature—which proved highly influential to later theorists, including Rousseau and Kant,<sup>15</sup> and indeed modern IR scholars—is a suitable place to begin this section, which will summarize the nature and history of peace.

Hobbes contended that the “natural condition of mankind” was one of “diffidence” (distrust), for each man feared that another would take from, destroy, or subdue him (*Leviathan*, XIII.3). From this he famously concluded:

during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man. For War consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known. . . . For as the nature of foul weather lieth not in a shower or two of rain, but in an inclination thereto of many days together, so the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE. (XIII.8<sup>16</sup>)

Hobbes meant this description to apply to human society in its natural condition as well as to polities, which “because of their independency, are in continual jealousies and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing and their eyes fixed on one another...” (XIII.12). Here, modern IR scholars often stop, having derived what they desired from Hobbes—the structural condition of

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thinks that war is beautiful / Or worth more than peace / Is crippled in his brain” (René Descartes, “The Birth of Peace,” trans. André Gombay, *Common Knowledge* 25, no. 1–3 [April 2019]: 553–68, <https://doi.org/10.1215/0961754X-7579449>); this was in fact the second wave of pacific internationalist thought. For the first, see: Robert P. Adams, *The Better Part of Valor: More, Erasmus, Colet, and Vives, on Humanism, War, and Peace, 1496-1535* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962).

<sup>15</sup> Tuck, *The Rights of War and Peace*, 197.

<sup>16</sup> I am using the following edition: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994).

‘anarchy’—which is said to explain the “occurrence of violence” in world history.<sup>17</sup> By stopping here, peace is definitionally excluded, at least if one follows Hobbes’ definition as quoted above: insofar as anarchy is akin to the occurrence of rain, war is the permanent condition of mankind even if fighting is not constant.

If this was the whole story, then this would be a dreary dissertation indeed, for at best our subject matter would be a discussion of happenstance days of fair-weather, or what Waltz has called those “fleeting moments of peace among states.”<sup>18</sup> Hobbes, however, did not end his discussion with resignation to the state of nature. On the contrary, he believed that getting “out from that miserable condition of war” was a most basic objective (XVII.1). Man had been placed in an “ill condition” but he had “a possibility to come out of it” (XIII.13). The way to get out of the state of nature was by submitting to the “law of nature,” the most fundamental precept of which was “to endeavor peace” (XIV.4). The laws of nature, and peace itself, however, require a defender, and this is the Leviathan. Leviathans can be established either through force, conquest, and submission, which Hobbes calls a “commonwealth by acquisition,” or through voluntary agreement of the relevant parties, which Hobbes calls a “commonwealth by institution” (XVII.15; XX.4). Here, unfortunately, Hobbes becomes diverted by other subjects, and he does not explain how (or if) states might—like individuals—escape the state of nature.

After Hobbes, it became common to see the state of war as a structural condition between states.<sup>19</sup> For Kant, for instance, peace—the escape from the state of nature—was something that had to be “founded”<sup>20</sup>; the default condition was one of war. Despite the influence of structural theories in IR, this point has been widely neglected in the causes of war literature, which assumes a state of peace and then looks for the causes responsible for ending this condition. Unsurprisingly, this

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<sup>17</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reissue Edition (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), 102; Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism* (New York: Norton, 1997), chap. 3 and pp. 159, 161.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 1.

<sup>19</sup> E.g., Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace*, 51.

<sup>20</sup> Hinsley, 62.

literature then determines that the causes of war are legion,<sup>21</sup> and sophisticated sociological queries suggest that the interaction of ideological, political, military, and economic factors produce different conflict patterns and propensities in various eras and locations,<sup>22</sup> to say nothing of the idiosyncrasies of leaders or the intrusions of chance. War is hardly the sort of “surprising fact” Peirce thought needed an explanation. Instead of furthering the encyclopedic enterprise of cataloging countless causes of war, in this dissertation I take inspiration from Hobbes and look to the ‘founding’ of peace.

Hobbes thought that there were two ways to found peace, and though he was mostly concerned with domestic societies, his argument can be extended to the international.<sup>23</sup> The first type of peace—Hobbes’ commonwealth by acquisition—is that of *pacification*: it occurs when the strong forces the inferior to submit and offer supplication. This is the peace of dominance, hierarchy, and command. The second type—Hobbes’ commonwealth by institution—is an agreement between sovereign states based on the principles of equality and reciprocity, each of which Hobbes considered part of the law of nature (*Leviathan*, cps. XIV and XV). Either peace is sufficient to end a state of war between polities, though the former does so through the formation of a new polity—an empire—while the latter does so while maintaining the sovereign independence of the parties.

To what extent does the historical record support what Hobbes inferred through philosophy: that war is normal, but that in certain conditions peace might be founded?

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<sup>21</sup> For examples: Jack Levy and William R. Thompson, *Causes of War* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Anthony C. Lopez and Dominic D.P. Johnson, “The Determinants of War in International Relations,” *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, October 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2017.09.010>; Jeremy Black, *War and Its Causes* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

<sup>22</sup> Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 4 vols., New Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012-2013).

<sup>23</sup> Careful interpreters have detected the inference. For instance: Laurie M. Johnson, *Thucydides, Hobbes, and the Interpretation of Realism*, Pbk. Edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 206. I trace the conceptions through history in: Jared Morgan McKinney, “Two Concepts of Peace,” *Modern Age* 62, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 37–46.

### 1.3 War in the Historical Record

War, taken in its broadest sense—as “*violent contact of distinct but similar entities*”<sup>24</sup>—is very ancient. Humans’ closest genetic relatives, the chimpanzee and the bonobo, exhibit the full range of social interaction, from very violent (the chimp) to remarkably peaceful (the bonobo).<sup>25</sup> Anthropological and ethnological studies of primitive societies have only confirmed the assessment of Quincy Wright more than half a century ago: “forms of violence have always been widespread among men, though there has always been much variation in warlikeness among groups.”<sup>26</sup> Where scholars disagree, often bitterly, is over just how widespread such violence has been, how much it varies between groups, and how it differs after the agricultural revolution.<sup>27</sup> The weight of evidence—for now—leans heavily in favor of Hobbes’ original philosophical deduction that war (but recall his definition, above p. 5) is humanity’s default condition.<sup>28</sup> That being said, while Hobbes did not insist that the state of nature actually described the life of primitive peoples (*Leviathan*, XIII.11), he did believe it accurately summarized the relations of ‘civilized’ polities and states (XIII.12). Moving from prehistory to history, we are on firmer ground in assessing this latter claim. The short answer is that war between

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<sup>24</sup> Quincy Wright, *A Study of War*, Second Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 5.

<sup>25</sup> Frans B. M. de Waal, *Our Inner Ape: A Leading Primatologist Explains Why We Are Who We Are* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Wright, *A Study of War*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Lawrence H. Keeley, *War before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997); Raymond C. Kelly, *Warless Societies and the Origin of War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Jack Donnelly, “The Elements of the Structures of International Systems,” *International Organization* 66, no. 4 (2012): 609–34; Douglas P. Fry, *War, Peace, and Human Nature: The Convergence of Evolutionary and Cultural Views* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> José María Gómez et al., “The Phylogenetic Roots of Human Lethal Violence,” *Nature* 538, no. 7624 (October 2016): 233–37, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature19758>; Luke Glowacki, Michael L. Wilson, and Richard W. Wrangham, “The Evolutionary Anthropology of War,” *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, September 2017, S016726811730255X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2017.09.014>; Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 102–6.

polities has been ubiquitous in world history, and that peace has indeed been generally “only a name,” as Plato once wrote (*Laws*, I 626a).

The proposition that Hobbes was generally correct, and that the default position of polities in world history has been the state of war, needs to be better specified if it is going to be usefully discussed. For instance, the fact that Egypt of the Old and Middle Kingdoms (2600-2100 BC and 2055-1650 BC) did not engage in warfare with the various polities of the larger Near Eastern “world system,” which included Anatolia, the Syrian coast, Mesopotamia, and (more loosely) Afghanistan and the Indus Valley,<sup>29</sup> is hardly evidence against the state of nature as a state of war because Egypt, content with state-building and ‘internal’ imperialism,<sup>30</sup> was politically isolated during these periods from the larger system. To meaningfully assess relations between polities, inquiry must be restricted to what IR scholars have come to call states systems. A states system describes a situation in which multiple polities regularly interact and their interaction affects the larger system.<sup>31</sup> The density of a states system depends on “interaction capacity,” a variable that differs throughout history depending on transportation and communication technologies as well as geographical settings.<sup>32</sup>

Historically, states systems have been characterized by three swings of Adam Watson’s anarchy/hierarchy pendulum<sup>33</sup>: fragmentation, multi/bi-polarity,

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<sup>29</sup> Philippe Beaujard, “The Worlds of the Indian Ocean,” in *Trade, Circulation, and Flow in the Indian Ocean World*, ed. Michael Pearson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 15–26; Andre Gunder Frank and William R. Thompson, “Afro-Eurasian Bronze Age Economic Expansion and Contraction Revisited,” *Journal of World History* 16, no. 2 (2005): 115–72.

<sup>30</sup> Andrea M. Gnirs, “Ancient Egypt,” in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 71–104.

<sup>31</sup> Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1992*, 4; Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 6. The definition given here is functional rather than cultural and includes various political formations, from city-states to empires. In this way, it is more inclusive—and to my mind, useful—than the restrictive conception that originated with the English School. See Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, ed. Hedley Bull (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977).

<sup>32</sup> Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 80 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society: A Comparative Historical Analysis*, Reissue (New York: Routledge, 2009).

and domination. Modern IR, based as it is on the last five hundred years of European history, has been almost entirely focused on the middle swing of the pendulum, but world history indicates the previous options are closer to the norm. Examples from the Bronze Age (3000-1200 B.C.) illustrate each swing.

Fragmentation describes the tendency for small independent units to interact in an unordered manner.<sup>34</sup> The pendulum has swung far towards the anarchy extreme, and instability tends to be the norm. Examples include the twenty or more Anatolian “princeloms” of the Middle Bronze Age<sup>35</sup> or the 160 different Mesopotamian kings recorded in Mari’s archive in a thirty-year period c. the eighteenth century BC.<sup>36</sup> The consequences of fragmentation are illustrated by the complaint of a king of the era: “He makes peace with one king and swears an oath, then he makes peace with (another) king and swears an oath, then he repudiates the previous king he made peace with, and the (new) king he made peace with...”<sup>37</sup> When elements of hierarchy were introduced through vassalage, as in the Mari Age, instability could be compounded through a powerful system’s effect, as Liverani describes: the “exchange of troops between states was a never-ending process, widening the scope of a war to include the entire network of alliances in the Near East.”<sup>38</sup> Look as one might in fragmented states systems, one is unlikely to discover any lasting period of peace.

Domination is the opposite of fragmentation: a single state rolls up the various polities of a system, integrating them into a new imperial superstructure. In the Bronze Age, imperial consolidation was achieved in a few instances (Sargon of Akkad and the Third Dynasty of Ur), and could lead to periods of *internal* peace,<sup>39</sup> but such empires—typically ‘marcher lords’ with limited administrative

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<sup>34</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman, “The Fragmentation and Consolidation of International Systems,” *International Organization* 51, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 173–208.

<sup>35</sup> Christian Marek, *In the Land of a Thousand Gods: A History of Asia Minor in the Ancient World*, trans. Steven Rendall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 63, 66.

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin R. Foster, “War under the Straw: Peace in Mesopotamia,” in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 67.

<sup>37</sup> Foster, 68.

<sup>38</sup> Mario Liverani, *The Ancient Near East: History, Society, and Economy*, trans. Soraia Tabatabai (New York: Routledge, 2014), 230.

<sup>39</sup> E.g., Liverani, 160.

capacity<sup>40</sup>—tended to be evanescent and would gradually disappear in the decades following the period of initial military expansion. Lasting domination would have to wait for the Achaemenids, who—through the mastery of a cosmopolitan respect for difference as well as the development of deeper ideological power<sup>41</sup>—established the first “world” or “universal” empire.<sup>42</sup> The quest for domination, when unsuccessful or fleeting, leads to constant war; when successful, it eliminates the states system, recreating a structure of isolation, which is premised on the absence of equal polities with which to be at peace. The importance of domination is revealed by the following guesstimate: in 1000 BC there were something like 600,000 polities in the world; today there are around 200.<sup>43</sup>

Multipolar or bipolar structures are midpoints between fragmentation and consolidation. More stable than fragmented systems and less subject to imperial expansion than domination systems, this structure too has nonetheless been historically defined by rivalry and warfare. This was the case (with some exceptions, discussed later) in the Late Bronze Age (c. 1550-1200 BC; LBA) as well as in the Neo-Assyrian period (c. 1000-609), where despite relentless annual expeditions and conquests, Assyria never managed to *eliminate* its peer rivals—Urartu, Elam, Egypt, and Babylon—despite ‘conquering’ them, sometimes multiple times.<sup>44</sup> The European states system of the eighteenth century AD reflected a similar stability *and* war-proneness, something also true of various bipolar systems, whether Sparta and Athens, Rome and Carthage, Byzantium and Persia, or the Soviet Union and the United States. Multipolar and bipolar systems provide the stability denied by fragmented systems and the independence denied by imperial systems.

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<sup>40</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 2012, vol. 1: chap. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Mann, vol. 1: chap. 8.

<sup>42</sup> Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 569; Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000-323 BC*, Third Edition (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 308.

<sup>43</sup> Robert L. Carneiro, “Political Expansion as an Expression of the Principle of Competitive Exclusion,” in *Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution*, ed. Ronald Cohen and Elman Service (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978), 205–23.

<sup>44</sup> Eckart Frahm, “The Neo-Assyrian Period (ca. 1000-609 BCE),” in *A Companion to Assyria*, ed. Eckart Frahm (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 161–208.

The search for an escape from the state of nature should—accordingly—be directed towards states systems organized in a manner roughly corresponding to the middle swing of Watson’s pendulum, by multi- or bi-polarity. *Prima facie*, however, the historical record is hardly encouraging. The distinguished classicist Arthur Eckstein tells us: “Wherever there were systems of independent states in the ancient world, warfare among them was a constant.” This was true, he contends, not only for the Mediterranean world system, but also in China and India as well. The whole of the ancient world, Eckstein contended, was defined by Hobbes’ war of all against all, a condition that only changed if one state achieved a total victory and imposed its *pax*.<sup>45</sup>

Though Eckstein actually only surveyed the period c. 750-190 BC, his argument is not idiosyncratic to this particular phase of ancient history, or indeed, to ancient history alone. John Jay, and America’s other Federalist Founders, did not need Kenneth Waltz to tell them about the logic of interstate anarchy. “To look for a continuation of harmony between a number of independent, unconnected sovereigns in the same neighborhood,” Jay wrote in November 1787, “would be to disregard the uniform course of human events, and to set at defiance the accumulated experiences of the ages.”<sup>46</sup> As David Hendrickson has shown, the Federalists feared that without a union of states the “dogs of war” would “break loose” as a result of the structural forces of multipolarity.<sup>47</sup> The ‘balance of power,’ as Montesquieu understood a generation earlier, actually described Hobbes’ state of war rather than any idealistic peace: “Each monarch keeps ready all the armies he would have if his peoples were in danger of being exterminated; and this state in which all strain against all is called peace.”<sup>48</sup> From the perspective of today, looking

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<sup>45</sup> Arthur M. Eckstein, “Bellicosity and Anarchy: Soldiers, Warriors, and Combat in Antiquity,” *The International History Review* 27, no. 3 (September 2005): 481–97; and most recently: “Diplomatic Practice among the Hellenistic Great Powers: A Review Article,” *The International History Review* 41, no. 5 (September 3, 2019): 1108–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2019.1638534>.

<sup>46</sup> George W. Carey and James McClellan, eds., *The Federalist* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), no. 6.

<sup>47</sup> David C. Hendrickson, *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 7.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Hendrickson, 45.

back on five hundred years of European history,<sup>49</sup> there is no reason to doubt that the Federalists were right.

Insofar as peace has existed in world history, Eckstein is unquestionably correct that it has mostly been the peace of dominance. For much of history, no one even imagined there was an alternative. Examples can be multiplied across civilizations and epochs. In relevant texts that survive from China's Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, "there is not a single word about how to create a lasting peace between amicable neighbors."<sup>50</sup> In Ancient India, where war was "the normal and more or less constant state of affairs," peace was considered merely an internal state of mind.<sup>51</sup> In Aztec Mexico, "Peaceful relations did not exist between independent polities." 'Peace' existed as such only with: "the subordinated, the dead, or with those too distant or yet too powerful to be conquered."<sup>52</sup> Republican Rome fought wars annually from 509-27 BC—nearly five hundred years.<sup>53</sup> Livy reports that 303 BC had been a peculiar year, with no foreign wars. Rather than "pass a whole year without any military operations," an expedition was dispatched to eliminate some (alleged) brigands (*Ab Urbe*, 10.1). The Roman way was not to seek peace (*pacem petere*) but to "impose it" (*pacem dare*).<sup>54</sup> Illustrating this same sensibility, the word for peace (*htp*) in Ancient Egypt

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<sup>49</sup> E.g., Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System: 1495-1975* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1983); Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony: The World Order Since 1500* (London: Routledge, 2008); Brendon Simms, *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy, from 1453 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Robin D.S. Yates, "Making War and Making Peace in Early China," in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 48.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Salomon, "Ancient India: Peace Within and War Without," in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, 60, 63; cf. Johannes Bronkhorst, "Thinking about Peace in Ancient India," in *Peace in the Ancient World: Concepts and Theories*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 67–97.

<sup>52</sup> Ross Hassig, "Peace, Reconciliation, and Alliance in Aztec Mexico," in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, 325, 313.

<sup>53</sup> Nathan Rosenstein, "Republican Rome," in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 193–216.

<sup>54</sup> Carlin A. Barton, "The Price of Peace in Ancient Rome," in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, 248.

was conceptually close to Rome's pacification, the placing of others "under peace."<sup>55</sup>

Additional examples could be adduced, but the point is clear enough and uncontested by specialists: in world history, war has been normal, frequent, and unexceptional. Peace, like Eckstein has argued, really just meant submission out of fear to someone more powerful. When peace occurred, it tended to be the side-effect of state formation<sup>56</sup> and integrative structures, such as empires, leagues, and federations.<sup>57</sup> In other words, external peace has been a result of the state-making, internal, peace referenced at the beginning of this introduction, and it has often developed in parallel with a single state's successful domination.

There is one exception to the summary. Before late antiquity, there was one people that thought more systematically about peace, developing the concept as something other than domination or an internal state of being. This was the Greeks.<sup>58</sup> While ancient India, China, Mesopotamia, and Egypt all lacked even a god of peace—as did the Aztecs—the Greek goddess *Eirene*, usually depicted holding *Plutus*, the god of prosperity, personifies the Greek exception.<sup>59</sup> Thucydides' reconstruction of Hermocrates' speech of 424 (4.58-64) is—to my mind—a more profound discussion of the nature of war, peace, and decision-making than one is wont to find in any place of comparable brevity, ancient or modern. Elsewhere, I have exegeted Euripides' concept of peace from the fifth century BC, and Isocrates' from the fourth century, both of which proposed the new idea of a peace of equals.<sup>60</sup> Until Augustine's *De civitate Dei* seven hundred years later, there is simply nothing comparable. Yet even here, despite some innovative

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<sup>55</sup> Susanne Bickel, "Concepts of Peace in Ancient Egypt," in *Peace in the Ancient World*, 43–66.

<sup>56</sup> Morris, *War*.

<sup>57</sup> Paul J. Burton, "Peace as Integration" (Draft Manuscript, November 2017).

<sup>58</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub, "Greek Concepts and Theories of Peace," in *Peace in the Ancient World*, 122–57; Hans Van Wees, "Broadening the Scope: Thinking about Peace in the Pre-Modern World," in *Peace in the Ancient World*, 158–80; Kurt A. Raaflaub, "Conceptualizing and Theorizing Peace in Ancient Greece," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 139, no. 2 (2009): 225–50, <https://doi.org/10.1353/apa.0.0034>.

<sup>59</sup> For examples of the connection between peace and prosperity: Gerardo Zampaglione, *The Idea of Peace in Antiquity* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 77, 100.

<sup>60</sup> McKinney, "Two Concepts of Peace."

attempts, lasting peace was never achieved by the Greek polities.<sup>61</sup> It was for this reason that America's Federalist founders considered the example of Ancient Greece a failure to be avoided.<sup>62</sup>

In sum, this section has established that Hobbes' state of war has been the norm of history among both primitive societies and more highly organized polities alike. It has suggested that in fragmented states systems, as well as those characterized by iterative quests for domination, the state of war appears inevitable. The principal alternative of history, the *pax* of various empires, may establish peace, but only by eliminating the states system. Assessed as an epoch (1500 or 1648-the present),<sup>63</sup> the modern era by and large ratifies the finding of the broad sweep of history: that war, and the state of war, are normal.<sup>64</sup>

#### 1.4 Some Exceptions to the Norm of War

But wait, are there not exceptions to this generalization? Indeed, there are. These exceptions are this dissertation's point of entry to the development of a theory of peace, the sort of theory that began to develop in Classical Greece and was eventually revived in the midst of the horrible violence of the early modern period—from the end of the fifteenth century until the Westphalian Settlement of the mid-seventeenth century, there were only around a dozen years of European peace<sup>65</sup>—by such thinkers as Erasmus, Hobbes, Vattel, and Kant. These thinkers, like those of Ancient Greece, had little to no practical effect at the time, but they formulated and reformulated lasting ideas on the possibility of multipolar peace.

Peirce's system of abduction begins with the observance of a surprising fact. Given the forlorn pattern of history, escaping Hobbes' state of nature certainly

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<sup>61</sup> T.T.B. Ryder, *Koine Eirene: General Peace and Local Independence in Ancient Greece* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>62</sup> Hendrickson, *Peace Pact*.

<sup>63</sup> On which see: Barry Buzan and George Lawson, "Rethinking Benchmark Dates in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 2 (June 2014): 437–62.

<sup>64</sup> E.g.: Wright, *A Study of War*; Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System*; Evan E. Luard, *War in International Society: A Study in International Sociology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); K. J. Holsti, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>65</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 648–49.

counts as surprising. In the modern era, this has been accomplished a number of times. The most significant examples are the Iroquois League, the American Peace Pact, the nineteenth-century Concert of Europe, South America since 1883, the European Union, the ‘Long Peace’ between the USSR and the U.S. (which some scholars try to extend to include a general post-WWII peace<sup>66</sup>), and the ASEAN/East Asian peace. Most modern IR theories that have something to say about peace and engage with actual evidence use one or more of these cases for inspiration, illustration, or proof. My view is that these cases are a useful place to start, but that on their own, they are inadequate to sustain a transhistorical theory of major power peace that is relevant to the past and—possibly—to the future. This is the case for both conceptual and methodological reasons.

Conceptually, the Iroquois League,<sup>67</sup> America’s constitutional confederation (aka the Peace Pact), and the European Union are all examples of Kant’s solution to Hobbes’ state of nature: a voluntary *foedus* (or covenant) between like entities that exchanges sovereign independence for peace. This solution to the problem of war has been called by modern scholars a “security community.”<sup>68</sup> America’s Peace Pact is categorized by this literature as an amalgamated community, in which two or more states merge into a larger state. Pluralistic security communities, in contrast, are said to exist when their “members possess a compatibility of core values derived from common institutions and mutual responsiveness—a matter of mutual identity and loyalty, a sense of ‘we-ness,’ or a ‘we-feeling’ among states.”<sup>69</sup> Examples of such communities include the EU, Scandinavia, and the U.S. and Canada. The “identification of a common moral purpose” is an essential

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<sup>66</sup> E.g.: Gary Goertz, Paul F. Diehl, and Alexandru Balas, *The Puzzle of Peace: The Evolution of Peace in the International System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>67</sup> Neta C. Crawford, “A Security Regime among Democracies: Cooperation among Iroquois Nations,” *International Organization* 48, no. 3 (Summer 1994): 345–85; Donald S. Lutz, “The Iroquois Confederation Constitution: An Analysis,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 28, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 99–127.

<sup>68</sup> Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 3.

<sup>69</sup> Emanuel Adler, “Imagined (Security) Communities: Cognitive Regions in International Relations,” *Millennium* 26, no. 2 (1997): 255.

precondition for the formation of such communities,<sup>70</sup> and in the twentieth century the Cold War in particular provided such motivation.<sup>71</sup> Such communities can either be “tightly coupled” and introduce elements of hierarchy (such as the EU’s institutions) or “loosely coupled,” meaning states are bound by their shared identity, norms, and mutual trust but may share few formal institutions (such as the Iroquois).<sup>72</sup> Importantly, “The development of a security community also requires states wishing to become part of it to see each other . . . as legitimate.”<sup>73</sup> In the modern era, such a sense of legitimacy is often seen as requiring democratic values and institutions, though scholars within the research program resist envelopment by the democratic peace thesis.<sup>74</sup>

Security communities are an important component of the modern system of international relations: they have succeeded remarkably (but not perfectly<sup>75</sup>) in taming the “dogs of war.” Unfortunately, the requirements for such communities—‘we’ identity, shared values and culture, a common adversary or fear, agreed upon norms of legitimacy, and the attenuation (or elimination) of sovereign independence—are so stringent as to apply in only a handful of cases. One might find echoes of such elements in various cases throughout history, but the most judicious assessment is that security communities are relatively rare, mostly relevant to the modern era, and inapplicable to the ‘hard’ cases of IR, where

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<sup>70</sup> Emanuel Adler, “Condition(s) of Peace,” *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 5 (December 1998): 171.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Jervis, “Theories of War in an Era of Leading-Power Peace,” *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (March 2002): 9; Norrin M. Ripsman, “Two Stages of Transition from a Region of War to a Region of Peace: Realist Transition and Liberal Endurance,” *International Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (November 2005): 669–93.

<sup>72</sup> Adler, “Condition(s) of Peace,” 177.

<sup>73</sup> Adler, 184.

<sup>74</sup> Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, “Security Communities in Theoretical Perspective,” in *Security Communities*, ed. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12; Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, “A Framework for the Study of Security Communities,” in *Security Communities*, ed. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 40–41; Simon Koschut, “Regional Order and Peaceful Change: Security Communities as a Via Media in International Relations Theory,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 4 (2014): 526–27.

<sup>75</sup> David C. Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate over International Relations, 1789-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

identities clash and states fear one another. Consequentially, half of the important cases of modern peace do not directly speak to the vast majority of cases from the pre-modern world as well as the emerging international system, where China and the United States, the two most powerful actors, certainly do not concur on norms of legitimacy much less share a ‘we’ identity.

This leaves the nineteenth-century Concert of Europe, South America since 1883, the ‘Long Peace’ between the USSR and the US, and the ASEAN/East Asian peace as relevant modern cases.<sup>76</sup> Of these, the Concert of Europe, which lasted one hundred years, is by far the most important, and I give it attention later on. The trouble with the other cases is that South America can only be said to have been multipolar for a bit longer than a generation (1883-1919), while the Cold War’s Long Peace was not really that long (i.e., 1945-1989): statistically, the absence of major power war in this period can be explained by chance<sup>77</sup> (though this should not be taken to mean contrivance did not also play a vital role). Arie Kacowicz’s pioneering study of the South American case is nonetheless suggestive.<sup>78</sup> He found that resolving territorial disputes between the key actors—the so-called ABC states: Argentina, Brazil, and Chile—was the most important factor in preventing war in this period, and that this was a process that required an approximate balance of power and explicit settlements (in 1902 and 1915). After 1919, because Argentina was willing to acknowledge that Brazil had become the leading power, and because Brazil remained satisfied with the territorial settlement, peace was maintained. I shall return to the ASEAN/East Asian instance in my conclusion, since it is

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<sup>76</sup> West Africa over the last half-century is also a potentially relevant case. I exclude it from discussion here because of the region’s radical power disparities given Nigeria’s predominant position and France’s role as an external hegemon. For an excellent discussion, see: Cameron G. Thies, “Explaining Zones of Negative Peace in Interstate Relations: The Construction of a West African Lockean Culture of Anarchy,” *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (September 2010): 391–415, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066109342923>.

<sup>77</sup> Bear F. Braumoeller, *Only the Dead: The Persistence of War in the Modern Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 25–28; Matthew Rendall, “Nuclear Weapons and Intergenerational Exploitation,” *Security Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 6, 2007): 525–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410701741070>.

<sup>78</sup> Arie M. Kacowicz, *Zones of Peace in the Third World: South America and West Africa in Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

potentially relevant to my overall theory and to the question of future peace in the region.

Suggestive as the modern cases may be, they lead to a looming methodological issue. One IR scholar has explained his skepticism towards case studies—which he admits to only skimming when reading new scholarship—in the following manner:

Too often scholars develop theories based on their extensive, lifelong study of particular cases and then test the theory on those same cases. Though sold as tests of theory, case studies in IR are often merely extended defenses of the author’s argument.<sup>79</sup>

In fact, methods texts have long warned against “using the same data to evaluate the theory that we used to develop it.”<sup>80</sup> I take this advice seriously, employing the Concert (and related modern cases) merely as a plausibility probe. This move—which puts a twist on Peirce’s method, but follows Swedberg’s pre-study, main-study division—allows me to actually test (rather than merely confirm) my argument. Accordingly, I form my initial theory by a development of the existing IR literature on war and peace, probe the probability of my favored variables (about which more below) by a brief look at the Concert of Europe, and then test them through development of, and reflection on, three case studies from earlier periods of world history.

## 1.5 IR Theory and Strategies of Peace

The subject matter of the discipline of IR, at least according to the English School tradition, is “political and social life that plays out in a setting where there is a plurality of polities.”<sup>81</sup> Questions of war and peace are at least *a* central aspect to

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<sup>79</sup> Keren Yarhi-Milo and Christopher J. Fettweis, “Critical Dialogue,” *Perspectives on Politics* 17, no. 4 (December 2019): 1141.

<sup>80</sup> Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 46; cf. Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 111–12; Ingo Rohlfing, *Case Studies and Causal Inference: An Integrative Framework*, Research Methods Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 90–92.

<sup>81</sup> Iver B. Neumann, “International Relations as a Social Science,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 1 (2014): 34.

such political-social life, and therefore constitutive elements of the IR discipline, and indeed others such as international history,<sup>82</sup> anthropology,<sup>83</sup> and sociology.<sup>84</sup> And yet, a recent survey concluded that IR theory “has failed to develop an account of peace, focusing instead on the dynamics of power and war....”<sup>85</sup> Many IR scholars, however, would dispute this claim. Though parsing the disagreement is not my principal purpose, I think three points might bring some clarity to the question.

The first regards the meaning of ‘peace.’<sup>86</sup> If peace is understood as non-war (or “negative peace” in the phrase of Quincy Wright), then studying the causes of war (X) is identical to studying the causes of peace (~X). Peace, in this conception, is the default; war is the anomaly. Following Hobbes, I reverse this common position: war—in my usage—is a condition of non-peace. As Hobbes understood, such a condition does not require constant battles; it merely requires the reasonable prospect for such battles, which remains so long as there is “no assurance to the contrary.” Peace is *not* the default starting place of politics; it is a destination, and reaching it requires a journey. The nature of this journey is what must be studied if a general theory of peace is to be advanced.

Peace as a destination suggests a second point of clarification. Peace must be understood as a continuum: different waypoints along the journey indicate the relative strength of the “assurance” that war is unlikely. Benjamin Miller has constructed a continuum that expresses this perspective, which I adopt here and use throughout the dissertation.

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<sup>82</sup> David Stevenson, “Learning from the Past: The Relevance of International History,” *International Affairs* 90, no. 1 (2014): 5–22.

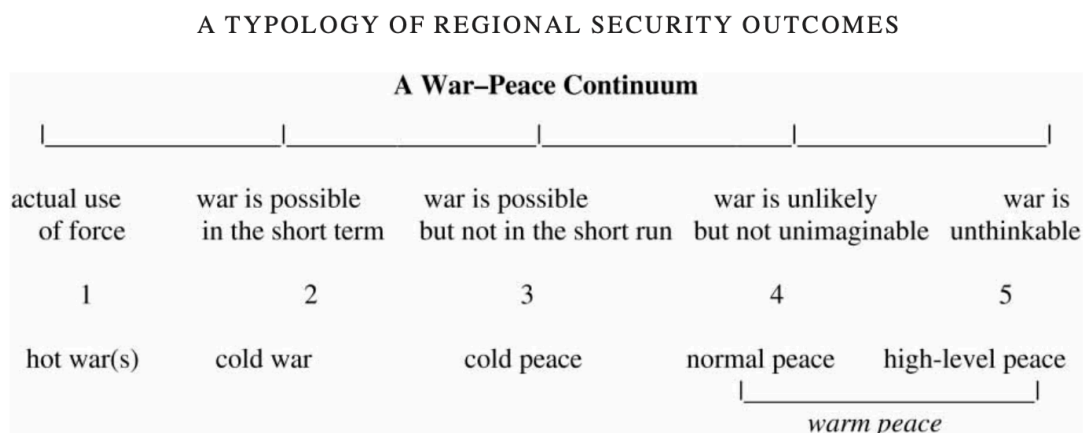
<sup>83</sup> Stephen P. Reyna and R. E. Downs, eds., *Studying War: Anthropological Perspectives* (Australia: Gordon and Breach, 1994).

<sup>84</sup> Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl, *War in Social Thought: Hobbes to the Present*, trans. Alex Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> Oliver P. Richmond, “Reclaiming Peace in International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2008): 440.

<sup>86</sup> For a fuller discussion of this point, see: Patrick M. Regan, “Bringing Peace Back in: Presidential Address to the Peace Science Society, 2013,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 31, no. 4 (2014): 345–56.

Figure 1.1: Peace Continuum



From Miller (2010).<sup>87</sup> Used with permission from the publisher.

Following both Hobbes’ philosophical deduction and my interpretation of war in history, the default condition of polities in the state of nature ranges from 1 (hot war) to 3 (cold peace), with perhaps 2 (cold war) being the most frequent circumstance. One reason there is disagreement about whether ‘peace’ has been properly studied is that different IR research paradigms have studied different waypoints on the peace continuum. Liberal IR, for instance, has mostly focused on 5 (high-level peace), where war becomes unthinkable. In contrast, Realist IR has focused on deterrence and crisis management, concepts mostly relevant to the space between 2 (cold war) and 3 (cold peace). There are of course some exceptions, and I address them below.

The third point of clarification is that context is key. As already intimated above in the section on exceptions to the norm of war, what the typical journey towards peace looks like is largely dependent on the nature of a given international system. Certain types of journeys *have* in fact been well studied by the IR discipline. These include the imperial or hegemonic peace, the formation of security communities, and the development of democratic peace. My contention is, however, that there are certain types of journeys that have not been adequately studied. The most difficult of these is *how states in multipolarity without a shared*

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<sup>87</sup> Benjamin Miller, “Contrasting Explanations for Peace: Realism vs. Liberalism in Europe and the Middle East,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, no. 1 (April 2010): 136, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523261003640967>; cf. Benjamin Miller, “Explaining Variations in Regional Peace: Three Strategies for Peace-Making,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 35, no. 2 (2000): 155–92.

*identity, democratic norms, or even a common enemy might get out of the state of war and into a state of normal peace* (4 on the continuum). This is the journey which we know the least about in pre-modern history, and it is also the journey the United States and China must undertake today if they are to avoid a hot war and transcend a state of cold war/peace.

In the rest of this section, I present a paradigmatic summary of IR scholarship on the causes of peace. While I acknowledge explaining the nuances of these various perspectives could be—and has been—a book or dissertation in itself, my task here is more modest: do these theories say anything potentially useful about the journey to multipolar ‘normal’ peace between otherwise antagonistic states in world history? Table 1.1, below, summarizes the various strategies.

*Table 1.1: IR Theory and Strategies of Peace*

Paradigm	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
Liberal	International law, norms, and organizations	Free trade/capitalism	Democratic/republican enlargement; confederation
Realist	Imperialism/hegemony	Balance of power/deterrence	Isolation; collective security; security regimes
Socialist	Democratic revolution	War and revolution	Pacifism; transcending the proprietarian nation-state
English School / Constructivism	International Society	Recognition	Identity

Table inspired by Doyle (1997)<sup>88</sup> and Richmond (2008)<sup>89</sup>

The Liberal paradigm, influential in both scholarship and policy, is a logical place to begin. The paradigm’s theory of peace is directed toward the second-image democratic transformation of states, though variants emphasize international organizations and norms, which might be categorized as third-image. Regardless of one’s preferred version of the democratic peace theory, it has little to offer the sort of transhistorical theory of peace I am seeking to build here. Everyone agrees that international law, international organizations, pacific international norms, free trade, worldwide capitalism, and democratic states and confederations had no, or

<sup>88</sup> Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*.

<sup>89</sup> Richmond, “Reclaiming Peace in International Relations.”

virtually no, influence in the pre-modern world. Indeed, the theory—in all its penumbral forms—is intentionally constructed so as to explain the “the endgame of a five-century-long trajectory toward permanent peace and prosperity.”<sup>90</sup> The entire Liberal paradigm is idiographic to the modern world. One consequence of this position is the claim—often assumed, never proven—that peace is an “invention” of the modern world<sup>91</sup> or “fundamentally a post-World War II phenomenon.”<sup>92</sup> After all, if the causes of peace only developed in the modern era, then, by definition, peace could not exist in earlier epochs.

Even so, the Liberal paradigm’s postulated connection between material interests and a rationalist account of warfare is potentially useful. The argument is that peoples and polities throughout history have used—and use—the *means* of violence whenever they assess it to be the most effective *way* to achieve various human *ends*, principally resources and reproduction and derivatively territory and dominance.<sup>93</sup> Since—according to the paradigm—taking has been economically more rational for all of history before the modern era, before indeed the nineteenth century, war has often been rational, and consequently not a puzzle at all.<sup>94</sup> Even if the narrative is essentially right, it may be that there have been different tradeoff curves for taking vs. trading in different international systems, and therefore a way to apply rationalist logic to the pre-modern calculus of war.

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<sup>90</sup> Michael Mousseau, “The End of War: How a Robust Marketplace and Liberal Hegemony Are Leading to Perpetual World Peace,” *International Security* 44, no. 1 (July 2019): 160–96, [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00352](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00352).

<sup>91</sup> Michael Howard, *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>92</sup> Goertz, Diehl, and Balas, *The Puzzle of Peace*, 8.

<sup>93</sup> Azar Gat, *The Causes of War and the Spread of Peace: But Will War Rebound?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 123; Herbert Gintis, Carel van Schaik, and Christopher Boehm, “Zoon Politikon: The Evolutionary Origins of Human Socio-Political Systems,” *Behavioural Processes* 161 (April 2019): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beproc.2018.01.007>.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); Patrick J. McDonald, *The Invisible Hand of Peace: Capitalism, the War Machine, and International Relations Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Stephen H. Balch, “On the Fragility of the Western Achievement,” *Society* 51, no. 1 (February 2014): 8–21, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-013-9730-5>; Gat, *The Causes of War and the Spread of Peace*; Jared Morgan McKinney, “Making, Taking, and Breaking in World History,” *International Studies Review*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viaa008>.

While Liberalism focuses on the second image (and warm peace), Realism (at least in its modern variations), focuses on the third image (and cold peace).<sup>95</sup> The most basic form of Realist peace is that of dominance. Peoples and states submit to a hegemon, leading to periods of internal peace. This is Hobbes' "commonwealth by acquisition" and the peace of *pacification*.<sup>96</sup> In such a peace, *Pax* stands—as she did for the Roman emperor Trajan at the beginning of the second century AD, as depicted in a series of coins he minted—over the corpses of any that dare oppose her. Throughout history, this type of peace has been ubiquitous, but it tells us nothing about the reality of or potential for inter-polity peace.

A second variety of Realism is associated with the idea of balance of power (BOP). Properly speaking, however, the BOP is not a theory of peace but of independence. The modern BOP concept was widely articulated around the middle of the seventeenth century in response to a series of costly bids for European domination and the ideological violence of the wars of religion.<sup>97</sup> The objective was to push against the unifying imperial forces of history.<sup>98</sup> Even if the BOP could prevent the emergence of a universal empire, it did not herald peace. Edmund Burke's 1760 description remains unsurpassed:

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<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Miller, "Is Peace Possible—and How?: The Four-Fold Response of International Relations Theory," *International Journal* 65, no. 1 (March 2010): 163–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070201006500110>.

<sup>96</sup> McKinney, "Two Concepts of Peace."

<sup>97</sup> Wright, *A Study of War*, 228; M.S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy* (New York: Longman, 1993), 140–70; Paul W. Schroeder, "From Hegemony to Empire: The Fatal Leap," in *Imbalance of Power: US Hegemony and International Order*, ed. I. William Zartman (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), 66–71; Mark Greengrass, *Christendom Destroyed: Europe 1517-1648* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).

<sup>98</sup> Wright, *A Study of War*, 125; Kaufman, "The Fragmentation and Consolidation of International Systems," 177, 199–200; Richard Little, "The English School vs. American Realism: A Meeting of Minds or Divided by a Common Language," *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2003): 458; Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little, and William C. Wohlforth, *The Balance of Power in World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). For this reason, some consider the BOP a 'liberal' rather than 'realist' idea, which is perfectly plausible historically, but also highlights the many different versions of the concept. See, for instance: Deborah Boucoyannis, "The International Wanderings of a Liberal Idea, or Why Liberals Can Learn to Stop Worrying and Love the Balance of Power," *Perspectives on Politics* 5, no. 04 (December 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592707072180>.

The balance of power, the pride of modern policy, and originally invented to preserve the general peace as well as the freedom of Europe, has only preserved its liberty. It has been the origin of innumerable and fruitless wars. . . . The foreign ambassadors constantly residing in all courts, the negotiations incessantly carrying on, spread both confederacies and quarrels so wide, that whenever hostilities commence, the theatre of war is always a prodigious extent. . . .<sup>99</sup>

Studies of the golden age of the BOP—eighteenth-century Europe—have demonstrated that Burke was certainly correct,<sup>100</sup> something even Waltz acknowledged.<sup>101</sup> Maintaining the BOP required launching preventive wars to reverse negative economic, military, or political trends that might lead to a disruption of the status quo.<sup>102</sup> Significant examples include the War of Spanish Succession<sup>103</sup> and the First World War.<sup>104</sup> It also required the formation of alliances intended to aggregate power against one state or another, domestic state consolidation,<sup>105</sup> and—on occasion—the elimination of players and the consolidation of the system (as seen in the four partitions of Poland).<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Herbert Butterfield, “The Balance of Power,” in *Diplomatic Investigations*, ed. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), 144–45.

<sup>100</sup> Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 175–93; Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 289–90.

<sup>101</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 45.

<sup>102</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 178–93; Friedrich Kratochwil, “On the Notion of ‘Interest’ in International Relations,” *International Organization* 36, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 15; Paul W. Schroeder, “Preventive Wars to Restore and Stabilize the International System,” *International Interactions* 37, no. 1 (2011): 96–107.

<sup>103</sup> Stella Ghervas, “Balance of Power vs. Perpetual Peace: Paradigms of European Order from Utrecht to Vienna, 1713–1815,” *International History Review* 39, no. 3 (2016): 3.

<sup>104</sup> Jack S. Levy, “The Sources of Preventive Logic in Germany Decision-Making in 1914,” in *The Outbreak of the First World War: Structure, Politics, and Decision-Making*, ed. Jack S. Levy and John A. Vasquez (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 139–66; Schroeder, “The Life and Death of a Long Peace, 1763–1914,” 59.

<sup>105</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 2012, vol. 1: chaps. 14–15.

<sup>106</sup> Wright, *A Study of War*, 126–27.

Empirical IR studies have suggested that the *balance* part of the BOP is exactly what makes BOP systems war-prone.<sup>107</sup> The conventional explanation for the association between parity and war is that if one state has a clear preponderance of power, the others are not likely to miscalculate the distribution of capabilities, while in situations of approximate parity, aggravated by the ambiguity of alliances, miscalculation is more likely.<sup>108</sup> Sociological studies at the level of individuals have found something similar, particularly as power and relationships are in flux.<sup>109</sup> In sum: the BOP should not, on its own, be seen as a strategy for peace. Instead, the evidence suggests that the dynamics associated with balancing often make war more likely (while simultaneously making independence more likely). The attempt to salvage the theory by focusing on bipolarity as a peaceful alternative has also failed both conceptually and empirically.<sup>110</sup> The best that can be said is that the BOP can create peace within coalitions, even as it produces wars between coalitions. Erasmus recognized this point five hundred years ago: “A solid peace is hardly ever achieved through treaties and alliances; more often than not they’re the causes of war.”<sup>111</sup>

Deterrence is an idea closely related to the tradeoff curves highlighted by Gat’s Liberal theory of war’s rationality and something implicit in Realist theories of the BOP. Deterrence is “simply the persuasion of one’s opponent that the costs

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<sup>107</sup> Daniel S. Geller, “Power Differentials and War in Rival Dyads,” *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1993): 173–93; Håvard Hegre, “Gravitating toward War: Preponderance May Pacify, but Power Kills,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no. 4 (August 2008): 566–89; Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, 218; John A. Vasquez, ed., *What Do We Know About War?*, Second Edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 319.

<sup>108</sup> Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, Third Edition (New York: The Free Press, 1988); James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 03 (Summer 1995): 379–414; William C. Wohlforth, “Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 28–57.

<sup>109</sup> Roger V. Gould, *Collision of Wills: How Ambiguity About Social Rank Breeds Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>110</sup> Greg Cashman, *What Causes War? An Introduction to Theories of International Conflict*, Second Edition (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 388–402.

<sup>111</sup> Erasmus, *Querela Pacis* in *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings: A New Translation with Critical Commentary*, trans. Robert Martin Adams (New York: Norton, 1989), 106.

and/or risks of a given course of action he might take outweigh its benefits.”<sup>112</sup> General deterrence has particular relevance for underlying causes of conflict, i.e., the overall assessment of the utility of war as a method of resolving disputes in a given context.<sup>113</sup> Thucydides, as usual, addressed the subject, offering the following assessment: “No one is forced into war by ignorance, nor, if he thinks he will gain from it, is he kept out of it by fear. The fact is that one side thinks that the profits to be won outweigh the risk to be incurred” (4.59). In modern lingo, this is a statement about expected utility.<sup>114</sup> The converse of Thucydides’ statement is that states will seek peace when its benefits outweigh those of war. Of course, Thucydides also tells us that most people are not very good at calculating expected utility, and that passions can overwhelm other interests (4.62). This assessment is a major theme in humanist thinking—from Erasmus to Hobbes—a pattern unintentionally emulated by the modern discipline of IR, where the identification of pathological thinking is an entire subfield.<sup>115</sup> Classical deterrence theory as a strategy of war avoidance has been severely critiqued on these grounds—i.e., if leaders and states poorly understand their own true interests, and instead react impulsively, emotionally, and pathologically, then deterrence strategies may not only fail to prevent wars, but may

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<sup>112</sup> Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 11.

<sup>113</sup> Lawrence Freedman, “General Deterrence and the Balance of Power,” *Review of International Studies* 15, no. 2 (April 1989): 199–210.

<sup>114</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

<sup>115</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, New Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” *International Security* 9, no. 1 (Summer 1984): 58–107; Daryl G. Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2007); Jack L. Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994); Stephen Walker and Akan Malici, *U.S. Presidents and Foreign Policy Mistakes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Dominic D.P. Johnson and Dominic Tierney, “The Rubicon Theory of War: How the Path to Conflict Reaches the Point of No Return,” *International Security* 36, no. 1 (July 2011): 7–40, [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00043](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00043); Christopher J. Fettweis, *The Pathologies of Power: Fear, Honor, Glory, and Hubris in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

cause them.<sup>116</sup> Even so, it seems undeniable that for neighbors to escape “the known disposition” of war, they will first need to judge its costs as exceeding its benefits. This judgment does not suggest *how* the state of nature might be escaped, but it does provide a sufficient motivation for seeking alternative pathways. I shall return to this point below.

If dominance promises peace but not independence and the BOP promotes independence but not peace, the concept of a “security regime” may provide an alternative to either unpromising outcome. A regime is defined as “principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area.”<sup>117</sup> There is considerable vagueness here, and if one is not careful, the concept could be treated so widely as to include much of the ‘stuff’ of international politics. I take a security regime as being—less vaguely—an understanding to manage conflict, or specific sorts of conflicts, in a given manner. Politics reach such understandings “to protect against a possibility the parties no longer want, but fear.”<sup>118</sup> Jervis suggests four necessary conditions for the formation of security regimes: reasonable satisfaction with the status quo; the mutual perception of the other as a security seeker; the mutual perception that security does not require expansion; and the belief that war would otherwise be

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<sup>116</sup> See Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War: The Nature of the International Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Richard Ned Lebow, *Avoiding War, Making Peace* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018); Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, chap. 3; for specific examples: Gordon H. Chang and Di He, “The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence,” *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 5 (December 1993): 1500–1524; Len Scott and Steve Smith, “Lessons of October: Historians, Political Scientists, Policy-Makers, and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *International Affairs* 70, no. 4 (1994): 659–84; Richard Ned Lebow, “Thucydides and Deterrence,” *Security Studies* 16, no. 2 (June 2007): 163–88.

<sup>117</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 185.

<sup>118</sup> Janice Gross Stein, “Taboos and Regional Security Regimes,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26, no. 3 (September 2003): 6–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390412331303035>; cf. Janice Gross Stein, “Detection and Defection: Security ‘Regimes’ and the Management of International Conflict,” *International Journal* XL (Autumn 1985): 599–627.

likely and costly.<sup>119</sup> A large literature has developed on security regimes, with much of it considering whether the U.S. and the USSR formed such regimes to manage the Cold War.<sup>120</sup> The extent to which security regimes might constitute a theory of peace depends on one's conception of peace.

There are two ways to conceive of security regimes. The first—Jervis' conception—is that they enable polities to *maintain* a state of “normal peace.” The second—represented by those who see security regimes as more common—conceives of security regimes as tools to move polities from “cold war” to “cold peace.” Neither view, hence, is a theory of “normal peace” as such: the first assumes the *presence* of normal peace while the second assumes its *absence*. Security regimes do have something useful to say about relations between states, and there is no reason in principle such regimes could not be detected in world history, but they neither solve nor attempt to solve how polities might escape the constant uncertainties and dangers of cold war and cold peace. This gap in Realist theory, which extends equals to versions that focus on the BOP and deterrence, is logical, because the paradigm is orientated towards the stability and perpetuation of identities and interests, and so has little to no reason to expect change.<sup>121</sup>

Socialist theories in general contribute little to explaining peace between polities in world history. Class rebellions have been common enough in history, and on occasion they may have reduced inequality, but they did not bring peace.<sup>122</sup> Communist ideologies in the twentieth century proved a powerful bridge from

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<sup>119</sup> Robert Jervis, “Security Regimes,” *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 357–78.

<sup>120</sup> E.g.: Joseph S. Nye Jr., “Nuclear Learning and U.S.-Soviet Security Regimes,” *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 371–402; John S. Duffield, “Explaining the Long Peace in Europe: The Contributions of Regional Security Regimes,” *Review of International Studies* 20, no. 4 (October 1994): 369–88; Benjamin Miller, “Competing Realist Perspectives on Great Power Crisis Behavior,” *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (1996): 309–57.

<sup>121</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 367; Randall L. Schweller, “New Realist Research on Alliances: Refining, Not Refuting, Waltz's Balancing Proposition,” *The American Political Science Review* 91, no. 4 (December 1997): 927.

<sup>122</sup> Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Liu Yu, “The State with a Surname: A Dialogue with Fukuyama on the State in China,” *Journal of Chinese Governance* 1, no. 3 (2016): 506–19.

feudalism and colonialism to capitalism and independence, though this too was accompanied by great violence.<sup>123</sup> As for pacifism, this would simply have recreated the peace of dominance, as Thucydides understood long ago: “it is an instinct of man’s nature always to rule those who yield” (4.61).<sup>124</sup> However, bearing these criticisms in mind, two caveats must be recognized. First, to say a theory contributes little to the sort of peace under investigation in this dissertation is not to say socialist/Marxist theories of war are necessarily incorrect. In the modern era, it is impossible to deny that proprietarian ideologies fed nationalist rivalries that in turn generated extreme violence.<sup>125</sup> Second, Piketty’s call for the creation of new federal structures and “participatory socialism,” both of which are intended to transcend the nation-state, may be the basis for a theory of peace with relevance to the modern world (though not previous eras). Political economy could and should be better integrated into the existing security community literature, though this is not a route I presently take.

This leaves the English School and Constructivism. Do they contribute anything of use? The English School idea with the most pedigree is that of international society, which Hedley Bull said existed when states were “conscious of certain common interests and common values” and “bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions.”<sup>126</sup> *Pace* Bull,<sup>127</sup> however, the existence of an international society does not result in peaceful systems, even if it mitigates various effects of anarchy. English School writers have described the eighteenth century as “*the* age of reason and of balance” in which international society thrived,<sup>128</sup> and yet (as mentioned above) this century was defined by almost constant warfare between major states. “Strong” international societies can be violent, even if there is a certain order to

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<sup>123</sup> Branko Milanović, *Capitalism, Alone: The Future of the System That Rules the World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), chap. 3.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Bertrand de Jouvenel, *On Power: The Natural History of Its Growth*, trans. J. F. Huntington (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1993).

<sup>125</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage, 1989), chap. 13; Thomas Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2020), 462–85.

<sup>126</sup> *The Anarchical Society*, 13.

<sup>127</sup> Bull, 258.

<sup>128</sup> Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, chap. 18.

their violence.<sup>129</sup> This is certainly the experience of classical Greece, and Barry Buzan,<sup>130</sup> following Wendt's example,<sup>131</sup> has since corrected this mistake.<sup>132</sup>

This leaves the Constructivist concepts of identification and recognition. Constructivism as a paradigm, orientated as is it to "contingent generalizations,"<sup>133</sup> does not have a theory of peace per se. Its contribution is to make the effects of anarchy a consequence of the type of a given international society, insisting that the construction, adaptation, and recognition of certain identities and roles will influence the peacefulness of a given system.<sup>134</sup> Constructivism hence takes us beyond the Democratic Peace argument, which looks at "regime type," and adds the category of "role identities," which "exist *only* in relation with Others."<sup>135</sup> The result is that the 'anarchy' of the international system will generate different outcomes depending on these role identities, which Wendt, following the English School, calls Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian, or simply enemy, rival, and friend.<sup>136</sup> There is no reason this framework could not be generalized to various

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<sup>129</sup> E.g., the fighting of limited wars according to a system of rules, see Michael Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), chaps. 4–5.

<sup>130</sup> Barry Buzan, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>131</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 254.

<sup>132</sup> See also Evan E. Luard, *Types of International Society* (New York: Free Press, 1976), 340; Watson, *The Evolution of International Society*, 313, 321. In a parallel move, security community theorists similarly speak of the possibility of "war communities." See Adler and Barnett, "A Framework for the Study of Security Communities," 34.

<sup>133</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (2011): 396.

<sup>134</sup> Stefano Guzzini, "'The Cold War Is What We Make of It': When Peace Research Meets Constructivism in International Relations," in *Contemporary Security Analysis and Copenhagen Peace Research*, ed. Dietrich Jung and Stefano Guzzini (London: Routledge, 2004), 40–52; Benjamin Miller and Ilai Z. Saltzman, "Beyond the Three 'Isms': Rethinking IR and the Post-Cold War Order," *International Politics* 53, no. 3 (2016): 386, 396.

<sup>135</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 227.

<sup>136</sup> Edward Keene, "Three Traditions of International Theory," in *Guide to the English School in International Studies*, ed. Cornelia Navari and Daniel M. Green (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 171–83; Barry Buzan, "The English School: A Neglected Approach to International Security Studies," *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 2 (April 2015): 126–43,

international systems in world history. In terms of Miller's peace continuum, Hobbesian systems would vary from hot war (1) to cold war (2), Lockean systems from somewhere in between cold war and cold peace (2.5) to normal peace (4), and Kantian systems would be firmly established with a high level of peace (5).

This section has surveyed the peace strategies suggested by the major IR paradigms. While the survey does not suggest any particular strategy as adequate for achieving peace along the journey that we are interested in, it does highlight a number of building blocks that might together contribute to a plausible theory. These are: a materialist conception of interest (taking vs. trading) and more broadly the rationalist comparison of the benefits of peace with those of war (a point reachable from both Liberal and Realist assumptions), the necessity of a BOP to preserve the independence of a states system, and the idea that different "role identities" lead to different conceptions of the other. The next section, below, will use these in building a relevant theory of peace. Table 1.2 first adds a summary of the problems—but also prospective contributions—of each paradigm as they relate to my objective: how states with approximately equal power but little in the way of shared norms or identities might get out of the state of war and reach the waypoint of 'normal peace.'

Table 1.2: Problems and Contributions of IR Theories about Peace

Paradigm	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3	Problem	Contribution
Liberal	International law, norms, and organizations	Free trade/capitalism;	Democratic/republican enlargement; confederation	Limited to modern era and particular second-image dyads	Highlights role of interest in rationalist account of war
Realist	Imperialism/hegemony	Balance of power/deterrence	Isolation; collective security; security regimes	Produces empire or war; cannot establish normal peace between coalitions; deterrence often fails	BOP necessary to preserve independence; security regimes a way to mitigate effects of anarchy
Socialist	Democratic revolution	War and revolution	Pacifism; transcending the proprietary nation-state	No favorable historical evidence	Possible future model for political economy, but mostly speculative
English School/Constructivism	International Society	Recognition	Identity	Shared norms $\neq$ peace; recognition not a solo performer; identity not always shared	Role identities can be constructed

More could be said about each paradigm, and my survey has not addressed a host of potentially useful mid-range theories that are not obvious derivatives of one of the big ‘isms.’<sup>137</sup> I will, however, return to some of these as I combine various

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<sup>137</sup> Examples include Benjamin Miller’s theory of ‘stateness,’ John Vasquez’s research on the steps to war, the literature on cooperation both *among* and *between* groups, and defensive realist work on stability in multipolar systems. See: Benjamin Miller, “Stateness, National Self-Determination and War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century,” *Ethnopolitics* 14, no. 5 (2015): 531–39; John A. Vasquez, *The War Puzzle Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution*; Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 167–214; Bruce Cronin, *Community Under Anarchy: Transnational Identity and the Evolution of Cooperation* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1999); Andrew Kydd, “Sheep in Sheep’s Clothing:

elements to propose a synthesis, below. The important point for now is that the IR discipline has provided some important building blocks for understanding peace and its absence, but not generated a single plausible explanation for the admittedly difficult journey to ‘normal peace’ undertaken, prospectively, by otherwise antagonistic multipolar states in world history.

## 1.6 A Synthesis Theory of Peace

In this section, I propose an initial theory that develops insights from the various IR traditions that, taken together, might make periods of peace between major powers sharing an international system unsurprising. This is Peirce’s objective for abduction, which was outlined at the beginning of the introduction. My hypothesis is as follows: *if two or more states were to acknowledge the persistence of a mutual balance of power, recognize one another ‘thickly,’ and settle their territorial disputes, then ‘normal’ peace would be a matter of course.* Let me break down each part of the hypothesis.

### *Acknowledged Balance of Power*

Since I have already dismissed the BOP as a theory of peace, it may seem odd I begin with it here. But the reason is simple enough: a BOP is required to prevent a states system from being dominated, in an imperial or hegemonic manner, by a single state. Since multipolar peace by definition can only exist within a states system, the BOP is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for peace. Even in a theoretical world in which one state was radically more powerful than another, but—for, let us say, domestic reasons—chose not to pursue dominance, the system would (*ceteris paribus*) remain in a Hobbesian state of war because the weaker state would always *fear* that the stronger would alter its conception of *interest* and subordinate it. The Realist tradition is clearly right in its insistence that survival depends on power.

But how much power? I specify a BOP as existing when states *acknowledge* that the cost of *eliminating* the other as a unit is prohibitively high. Historical circumstances determine this cost. They may include administrative capacity and

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Why Security Seekers Do Not Fight Each Other,” *Security Studies* 7, no. 1 (1997): 114–55; Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

dynastic resilience of states; the number of states in a system and their overall interaction capability; the offense-defense balance, including such variables as geography and logistical capabilities; the (non)legitimacy of hegemony/imperialism; the distribution of military forces; and the subjective assessments of individual leaders.<sup>138</sup> Whatever the reason or combination of reasons, the respective states must think that such a balance exists. The BOP hence has both subjective and objective conditions, and the two may not necessarily agree: a balance could objectively exist but not be believed in, or it could be believed in despite not objectively existing. This conception of balance I shall call the long-term balance, or BOP1.

After initial investigation of my cases (Chaps. 2-4), it became clear that there is a second version of the BOP that, in certain circumstances, influences the longevity of periods of peace. This version, which I shall call the short-term balance, or BOP2, is not entirely independent from BOP1, and at certain points they bleed together. The basic idea of BOP2 is that a balance can be stable overall, but certain moments can arise, which—if exploited by other major powers—could result in territorial or even, in rare circumstances, positional change. I specify that a short-term balance exists when *victory in a limited dispute is uncertain* for both powers. In contrast, BOP2 does not exist when at least one state assesses the use of violence/military force to revise aspects of the status quo as relatively uncostly.

The distinction between BOP1 and BOP2 might be related to that between general and immediate deterrence. A state might be deterred (BOP1) from attempts to radically revise the status quo but might nonetheless seek to hop through a short-term window of opportunity in order to achieve a local objective (BOP2). Keeping the window shut—i.e., creating a disincentive to cross-border raids, such as building fortifications or maintaining a mobile deployment force—dampens a state's incentive to disturb the peace equilibrium.

In the following chapters, examples will be given that make the distinction—but also the relation—between BOP1 and BOP2 clearer. The important

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<sup>138</sup> Various discussed in: Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*; Kaufman, Little, and Wohlforth, *The Balance of Power in World History*; Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 2012; William H. McNeill, *A World History*, Fourth Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics,” *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (1995): 660–91.

point to stress for now is that while I hypothesize that BOP1 is a *necessary condition* for any period of peace, I consider BOP2 neither necessary nor sufficient for states in multipolarity to reach the waypoint of normal peace. In terms of causality, I follow the example of epidemiologists, who (unlike political scientists) have focused significant attention on “component causes.”<sup>139</sup> A component cause is a factor that, in conjunction with a “constellation” of other variables, is sufficient to produce a given effect. Generalizations about component causes can be difficult because their effect depends on multiple other component causes, some of which may be unknown. As the scholar who introduced the concept has explained:

the strength of a causal risk factor depends on the prevalence of the complementary component causes in the same sufficient cause. But this prevalence is often a matter of custom, circumstance or chance, and is not a scientifically generalizable characteristic.<sup>140</sup>

In terms of my argument, other relevant component causes might include 1) the domestic situations of states, 2) the time perspective of decision-makers (long or short), and 3) perceptions of the overall stability and/or desirability of the peace. Whatever the specific constellation of causes, exploitation of BOP2 opportunities matters to peace’s longevity because of the recriminations and escalations that may follow.

A long-term balance, even if unacknowledged by states, will preserve the independence of states in a system. Once states come to acknowledge the balance, they can respond either with efforts to overcome the balance or, accepting the reality of balance, seek a formula for coexistence. This leads to my second and third major variables.

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<sup>139</sup> Neil Pearce, “White Swans, Black Ravens, and Lame Ducks: Necessary and Sufficient Causes in Epidemiology,” *Epidemiology* 1, no. 1 (January 1990): 47–50; Kenneth J. Rothman and Sander Greenland, “Causation and Causal Inference in Epidemiology,” *American Journal of Public Health* 95, no. Supplement 1 (2005): 144–50; M. Parascandola and D. L. Weed, “Causation in Epidemiology,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 55, no. 12 (2001): 905–12.

<sup>140</sup> Kenneth J. Rothman, “Causes,” *American Journal of Epidemiology* 104, no. 6 (1976): 590.

*Thick Recognition and Territorial Disputes*

A long-term balance of power is only the first stage on the journey to multipolar peace. Even if eliminating the other is excessively costly (BOP1), and even if attempts to exploit the short-term balance are uncertain (BOP2), states still find plenty to fight about. This is to be expected, because in the state of nature fear, honor, and interest—what Thucydides considered the principal motives for conflict (I, 75-76)—continue to conspire to produce conflict. An acknowledged BOP can mitigate existential fear, but it leaves honor and interest as powerful motivations for conflict.

Advancing on the journey to normal peace requires dealing with these motives in a way mutually satisfactory for the participants. If the BOP represents an initial Realist peace strategy, it must now be complemented by Constructivism's focus on honor and Liberalism's emphasis on interest.<sup>141</sup> Thucydides' threefold division of motivation can be directly connected to John Ruggie's threefold division of categories of war.<sup>142</sup> The first form he called constitutive war: *what* shall units (of a system) be? The struggle here is an existential one, for it involves the right to be recognized as a sovereign unit. Fear is the defining characteristic. The second form he called configurative war: *where* shall the units be? The defining characteristic of this form, which is centered on the distribution of territory, is interest. The third form of war Ruggie called positional war: *which* units shall be hegemons? Honor (or status) is the motivation most centrally connected with this form of war.

On their own, Ruggie's divisions and Thucydides' motivations are simply conceptual tools. However, there is strong reason to consider them fair approximations of reality. As reviewed in Section 1.3 above, in the course of 3,000 years, some 600,000 polities have been reduced to a mere 200.<sup>143</sup> Existential fear is the only rational response to this reality. Interest, as in Liberal IR, has been widely discussed in terms of trade. This reflects the biases of the modern era, when new

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<sup>141</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, "Thumos, War, and Peace," *Common Knowledge* 21, no. 1 (January 2015): 50–82.

<sup>142</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations," *International Organization* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 162–63.

<sup>143</sup> Carneiro, "Political Expansion."

transportation technologies began the process of making trade more valuable than territory.<sup>144</sup> In the past, however, territory was the principal expression of state interest, which is one reason territorial expansion is a virtual constant of history. Despite the theoretical decrease in territory's relative value in the modern era, it has remained—perhaps because of cultural inheritance—the leading cause of war.<sup>145</sup> We use different words for honor today—prestige, status, or face—but the concept is directly connected to conflict over system leadership<sup>146</sup> and states' desire to be treated according to their projected role conception.<sup>147</sup> After long being overlooked, status concerns are increasingly being seen today as a key cause of enmity.<sup>148</sup>

Unless states settle their territorial and status disagreements, they will be unwilling to coexist in an acknowledged BOP. Instead, they will seek to overturn the balance. Escaping Hobbes' state of nature and getting to normal peace requires the mitigation or (even better) elimination of configurative and positional disputes. Resolving the latter, my theory suggests, opens the door to settling the former. I

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<sup>144</sup> Richard Baldwin, *The Great Convergence: Information Technology and the New Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016); Romain Lecler, "What Makes Globalization Really New? Sociological Views on Our Current Globalization," *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 3 (November 2019): 355–73, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022819000160>.

<sup>145</sup> Vasquez, *The War Puzzle Revisited*; Vasquez, *What Do We Know About War?*; Douglas M. Gibling, *The Territorial Peace: Borders, State Development, and International Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jong Kun Choi and Yong-Soo Eun, "What Does International Relations Theory Tell Us about Territorial Disputes and Their Resolution?," *International Politics* 55, no. 2 (2018): 141–59, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-017-0074-4>.

<sup>146</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); "The Theory of Hegemonic War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 591–613.

<sup>147</sup> T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status Concerns and Multilateral Cooperation," in *International Cooperation: The Extents and Limits of Multilateralism*, ed. I. William Zartman and Saadia Touval (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 182–207.

<sup>148</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives for War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Thomas Lindemann, *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (Colchester, UK: ECPR, 2010); Thomas Lindemann and Erik Ringmar, *The International Politics of Recognition* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2012); Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Jonathan Mercer, "The Illusion of International Prestige," *International Security* 41, no. 4 (Spring 2017): 133–68.

follow moral philosophers in proposing ‘thick’ recognition as the solution to endless positional disputes. While thin recognition indicates an actor’s “right to exist . . . as an autonomous agent,”<sup>149</sup> thick recognition indicates the satisfaction of an actor’s fundamental self-conception.<sup>150</sup> With thin recognition someone (or something) becomes a subject rather than an object; with thick recognition, this subject’s identity is accepted.<sup>151</sup> In terms of international politics, thin recognition is an acknowledgement of another state’s right to be a state. Sociologically, something like this probably follows naturally from the acknowledgment of a BOP.<sup>152</sup> Thick recognition goes beyond this. Theoretically, it might include vertical recognition, in which—for instance—an inferior recognizes the position of a superior. This could promote positional stability,<sup>153</sup> but there is no reason to think states of approximately equal power would be willing to accept the subordination that accompanies such an arrangement.<sup>154</sup> For such states to overcome positional conflict, a compromise option—of equality, rather than superiority or inferiority—is required. Thick recognition, in this sense, changes status from a zero-sum contest to

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<sup>149</sup> Pierre Allan and Alexis Keller, “The Concept of a Just Peace: Or Achieving Peace Through Recognition, Renouncement, and Rule,” in *What Is a Just Peace?*, ed. Pierre Allan and Alexis Keller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 197.

<sup>150</sup> Allan and Keller, 199.

<sup>151</sup> Lisa Strömbom, “Thick Recognition: Advancing Theory on Identity Change in Intractable Conflicts,” *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 1 (2012): 171; Thomas Lindemann, “Concluding Remarks on the Empirical Study of International Relations,” in *The International Politics of Recognition*, ed. Thomas Lindemann and Erik Ringmar (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 216; Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann, Expanded Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25–73.

<sup>152</sup> Barry Buzan, “From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School,” *International Organization* 47, no. 3 (1993): 327–52; Wright, *A Study of War*, 226.

<sup>153</sup> For domestic society: Noah P. Mark, “Status Organizes Cooperation: An Evolutionary Theory of Status and Social Order,” *American Journal of Sociology* 123, no. 6 (May 2018): 1601–34; Joey T. Cheng, Jessica L. Tracy, and Cameron Anderson, eds., *The Psychology of Social Status* (New York: Springer, 2014); Joseph Henrich and Francisco J. Gil-White, “The Evolution of Prestige: Freely Conferred Deference as a Mechanism for Enhancing the Benefits of Cultural Transmission,” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 22, no. 3 (2001): 165–96; For the international dynamic: Ian Clark, *Hegemony in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Schroeder, “From Hegemony to Empire: The Fatal Leap.”

<sup>154</sup> Alexander Wendt, “Why a World State Is Inevitable,” *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003): 510–20.

a “club good” that can be shared; the anthropologist Frank Stewart has called this the horizontal level of honor.<sup>155</sup> Members of status clubs are not expected to stop competing; but it is expected that one element of competition—the vertical subordination of the other—will have been eliminated, or at least mitigated.<sup>156</sup>

Even if states were to recognize each other thickly, they would still fight over territory. This is—for instance—the experience of eighteenth-century Europe. Escaping from the state of nature requires not only an acknowledged BOP (to end wars of elimination) and thick recognition (to mitigate positional conflicts), but also a territorial settlement (to end configurative conflicts). The heading to this section places thick recognition and territorial disputes alongside one another, because I want to suggest that there can be no lasting territorial settlement without the presence of thick recognition. The reason for this is intuitive, and it has been borne out by the history of European settlements. Absent equality, territorial disputes will be resolved through diktat rather than consensus.<sup>157</sup> A diktat is only likely to last as long as the short-term balance of power, under which it was imposed, remains

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<sup>155</sup> Frank Henderson Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). For early reflections on recognition, see: Murray Forsyth, *Union of States: The Theory and Practice of Confederation* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981).

<sup>156</sup> However, dueling, an activity exclusively conducted by actors that thickly recognize each other, illustrates the need for thick recognition to interact with other variables in order to reduce violence. The institution was not tamed until views on violence changed, other methods were developed for sublimating anger (such as printed pamphlets and libel suits), and the importance of *éclaircissement* became institutionalized, especially in the role of ‘seconds.’ See Robert B. Shoemaker, “The Taming of the Duel: Masculinity, Honour and Ritual Violence in London, 1660-1800,” *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 3 (2002): 525–45; Barry O’Neill, “Mediating National Honour: Lessons from the Era of Dueling,” *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 159, no. 1 (March 2003): 229–47. A forceful argument can be made that it was the failure of *éclaircissement* that enabled a mere duel between Austria and Serbia to escalate into a European War. See Ute Frevert, “Honor, Gender, and Power: The Politics of Satisfaction in Pre-War Europe,” in *An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture Before 1914*, ed. Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 233–55; Jared Morgan McKinney, “Nothing Fails like Success: The London Ambassadors’ Conference and the Coming of the First World War,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 7 (2018): 984–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2018.1482458>.

<sup>157</sup> Andreas Osiander, *The States System of Europe, 1640-1990: Peacemaking and the Conditions of International Stability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

unfavorable to the dissatisfied party.<sup>158</sup> Actors in a vertical relationship give commands and impose peace; actors in a horizontal relationship negotiate. Territorial disputes resolved through consensus and negotiation are unlikely to result in either side achieving its maximal claim; instead, the resulting settlement is likely to reflect the long-term BOP between the actors, and so maintain its legitimacy. Settlements are stable, according to Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing, if they 1) dominate other available options, 2) can be defended with sanctions, and 3) end the search for alternative options. The latter is said to happen when the settlement “meets the minimum aspiration level of each bargainer.”<sup>159</sup>

Acknowledging the presence of a BOP, recognizing each other as equals, and resolving territorial disputes through negotiations ideally positions states to escape Hobbes’ state of war—that, at least, is my hypothesis. My expectation is that any significant period of peace between major powers that share an international system will involve these three variables (and that BOP2, in turn, will extend the length of the period of peace). The variables render peace—which this chapter has already established as rare and fleeting in world history, but possible if configurative and positional conflict can be allayed—explicable. Extended periods of peace between major powers where my variables are absent would undermine my theory. In other words, it meets Karl Popper’s criterion for falsification.<sup>160</sup>

What might induce states to make these three moves, which I will hereafter call the *mechanisms* of peace? The *underlying cause* of peace, as suggested above, is simply the judgment that peace is preferable to war. Why states judge expected utility in a specific manner, however, seems unanswerable in any nomothetic sense to me. My position is that of the historian Ross Hassig, who has considered this question for a parallel line of inquiry:

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<sup>158</sup> E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939*, Reissued with New Introduction (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Patrick O. Cohrs, “The First ‘Real’ Peace Settlements after the First World War: Britain, the United States and the Accords of London and Locarno, 1923-1925,” *Contemporary European History* 12, no. 1 (February 2003): 1–31.

<sup>159</sup> Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 162–63.

<sup>160</sup> Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Reprint (London: Routledge, 2008).

“Why?” is perhaps not answerable in any general sense, as the instigating cause may be historically particular and rest on a specific constellation of persons and circumstances that cannot be generalized from example to example. But “how?” is more general and its mechanisms can, I believe, be explained.<sup>161</sup>

The most, I think, that can be hypothesized about the underlying cause of peace is that historical experience, usually in the form of repeated and pointless wars recently fought, might sway states toward a more prudent calculation of expected utility, convincing them, for instance, that their interests *rightly understood* are not likely to be served well by the continuation of the same.<sup>162</sup>

In any case, if the events that induce leaders to a less pathological calculation of expected utility might be called the *prequel* to a decision to pursue peace, the *sequel* to the implementation of my three mechanisms is for relations to be maintained through the rules, norms, and structures that emerge from thick recognition and the desire to maintain the status quo. Here there is room for various “security regimes” to manage relations, the most basic of which is probably the institutionalization of diplomacy, a practice that—while as old as states systems—has often existed in only the most primitive form.<sup>163</sup> The system develops, in other words, in a manner that reverses Waltz’s postulate<sup>164</sup>: wars occur less frequently

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<sup>161</sup> Hassig, “Peace, Reconciliation, and Alliance in Aztec Mexico,” 314.

<sup>162</sup> This is a solidly Hobbesian hypothesis. See: Arash Abizadeh, “Hobbes on the Causes of War: A Disagreement Theory,” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 2 (May 2011): 298–315. In the words of John Stoessinger: “We must be shaken, almost shattered, before we change” (*Why Nations Go to War*, 11th ed [Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010], 397). The limited warfare of the eighteenth century is an instance where little was shaken and so nothing changed (see Holsti, *Peace and War*, 106–8). Interestingly, the sociologist John A. Hall traces the rise of political civility in the England after the Glorious Revolution to a similar causal chain as that described here. See his, *The Importance of Being Civil: The Struggle for Political Decency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 32–33.

<sup>163</sup> Arthur M. Eckstein, “The Character of Pre-Modern Interstate Diplomacy,” *The International History Review* 32, no. 2 (June 2010): 319–28; Andrew Wolpert, “The Genealogy of Diplomacy in Classical Greece,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 1 (March 2001): 71–88, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592290108406189>; D. J. Mosley, “Diplomacy and Disunion in Ancient Greece,” *Phoenix* 25, no. 4 (Winter 1971): 31–330. The lack of genuine ‘bargaining’ before many wars in antiquity seems to me to cast doubt on the general validity of bargaining and signaling theories of war.

<sup>164</sup> Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, 232.

because there *is something* to prevent them. I shall call the developments after the initial peace settlement the *stickiness* of peace, an idea originally intimated by Herbert Butterfield, who thought that if two states acknowledged a BOP and were able to coexist in a period of stability, they might “lose the habit of thinking about aggression.”<sup>165</sup> Or as the anthropologist R. Brian Ferguson has put it: “protracted war or protracted peace contribute to their self-perpetuation.”<sup>166</sup>

## 1.7 The Long Nineteenth Century: A Plausibility Probe

What then of the Concert of Europe? Historians and political scientists concur that the long nineteenth century (1815-1914) was the most peaceful period among European states in the entire modern epoch. In this century, the number of battlefield deaths, relative to population, was seven times fewer than the preceding (eighteenth) century.<sup>167</sup> The contrast with the twentieth century is even more stark.<sup>168</sup> For Europe’s major powers, the century was—on the whole—a period of ‘normal peace.’ The literature on the Congress of Vienna, the Concert of Europe, and the Long Nineteenth Century is enormous, and I shall make no attempt to review it here.<sup>169</sup> My question is instead: were the three variables suggested by my

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<sup>165</sup> Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), 58.

<sup>166</sup> R. Brian Ferguson, “A Paradigm for the Study of War and Society,” in *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe, and Mesoamerica*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 427.

<sup>167</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), v. Cf. K. J. Holsti, “Governance without Government: Polyarchy in Nineteenth-Century European Politics,” in *Governance without Government Order and Change in World Politics*, ed. James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48.

<sup>168</sup> Measured by war intensity, a metric developed by Wright, *A Study of War*, 56 that indexes factors such as the length of wars, size of armies, number of casualties and countries involved, and ratio of combatants to the total population. The seventeenth century had an intensity of 500, the eighteenth an intensity of 370, the nineteenth an intensity of 120, and the twentieth an intensity of 3,080.

<sup>169</sup> Key works include A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle For Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954); Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957); Norman Rich, *Why the Crimean War? A Cautionary Tale* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985); Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*; F.R. Bridge and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1814-1914*, Second Edition (New York:

synthesis theory of peace *necessary conditions* for the success of the European Concert? As already mentioned above, methodologically, a finding in the affirmative cannot prove a theory of peace, not only because one case is inadequate for this task—thus the title of a recent collection of essays on the topic<sup>170</sup>—but also because modern IR has already assimilated the ‘lessons’ of the Long Nineteenth Century into its theorizing. An answer in the negative, however, would indicate the implausibility of my variables.

The twenty-eight years of war that preceded the Congress of Vienna certainly qualify as a *prequel* which forced Europe’s states to recalculate their priorities and interests. Repeated unilateral attempts to pursue selfish interests had only perpetuated war. Once the war had ended, the Powers assembled in Vienna to fashion a lasting peace, a first in European history. The purpose of the Congress was to put European politics on a new footing, the construction of a “system . . . under which all countries might live in peace” as Castlereagh explained to the House of Commons in March 1815.<sup>171</sup> It is remarkable the extent to which this objective—and the eventual settlement—rearticulated the ideas of Emer de Vattel (d. 1767), who in his gigantic exploration of the law of nations theorized that the purpose of a treaty of peace was “that of coming to a compromise respective of all claims and grievances on both sides, and putting an end to all disputes, by a convention as fair and equitable as circumstances will admit of” (*The Law of Nations*, IV.2.18). This is literally what was done at the Congress, which settled the various issues that might disturb Europe, territorial issues first among them (particularly the contentious Polish-Saxon questions, the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the consolidation of central Europe’s three hundred or so polities into a new German Confederation of thirty-nine, and the neutralization of the Swiss

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Routledge, 2013); Mark Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013); Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>170</sup> Peter Kruger and Paul W. Schroeder, eds., *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848: Episode or Model in Modern History?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>171</sup> Jarrett, *The Congress of Vienna and Its Legacy*, 433.

cantons, Cracow, and Moresnet).<sup>172</sup> Thereafter, the territorial settlement was maintained through a combination of *satisfaction*, *flexibility*, and *deterrence*.<sup>173</sup>

Thick recognition was an essential element in the settlement. Indeed, this is where the concept of Great Powers first emerged, to distinguish the five leading states from the handful of middle powers and the many less significant polities.<sup>174</sup> Schroeder has emphasized the great disparity in power between the system's two flanking "superpowers" (Russia and Britain), its great powers (France and Austria), and its honorary great power (Prussia).<sup>175</sup> Even so, all five powers belonged to the horizontal honor club because they were the units essential to keeping Europe's peace: recognition was based as much on *roles* as it was on power. The BOP was also a constitutive element in the system, but not in the straightforward manner IR scholars might assume. There is no reason to think Russia, for instance, thought exterminating Prussia would be prohibitively costly because of Prussia's power.<sup>176</sup> Any such attempt, however, would have generated a new European war, and *this* would have been prohibitively costly. Hence the BOP indicated the imperative of peace, the achievement of which, ironically, required the suppression of traditional BOP practices.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, chaps. 11–12; John A. Vasquez, "Conclusion: The Vienna System: Why It Worked and Why It Broke Down," in *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848: Episode or Model in Modern History?*, ed. Peter Kruger and Paul W. Schroeder (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 235–41.

<sup>173</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 77; Matthew Rendall, "Russia, the Concert of Europe, and Greece, 1821-29: A Test of Hypotheses about the Vienna System," *Security Studies* 9, no. 4 (Summer 2000): 52–90; Branislav L. Slantchev, "Territory and Commitment: The Concert of Europe as a Self-Enforcing Equilibrium," *Security Studies* 14, no. 4 (December 2005): 565–606.

<sup>174</sup> Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order*, Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law 32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>175</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, "Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?," in *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe*, ed. David Wetzel, Robert Jervis, and Jack S. Levy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 41.

<sup>176</sup> Indeed, King Frederick of Prussia was known to remark that his state's crest "should feature a monkey rather than an eagle, for it could only ape the great powers." Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics*, 24.

<sup>177</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, "The Nineteenth Century System: Balance of Power or Political Equilibrium?," *Review of International Studies* 15, no. 2 (April 1989):

To summarize: the Congress of Vienna settled Europe's configurative and positional quarrels in a manner at least minimally satisfactory to the Great Powers. This settlement followed the *prequel* of wanton war. It was also followed with a *sequel*, the Concert of Europe: this was the continuation of Congress diplomacy on an ad hoc nature for the purpose of preserving Europe's repose as events that challenged the status quo transpired.<sup>178</sup> The First World War, which ended Europe's Long Peace, is best conceived as the predictable result of the collapse of the Concert of Europe.<sup>179</sup> Indeed, one could argue (though there is not space to do so here) that it was precisely because configurative and positional issues were again matters of dispute (territory in the Balkans; Austria's status as a Great Power), and that these issues were handled according to a standard of power politics rather than consensus (trials of strength rather than negotiation; balancing instead of binding), which caused this collapse.<sup>180</sup> The key point for now, however, is simply that an acknowledged BOP, thick recognition, and a territorial settlement were all *necessary* conditions for the Nineteenth Century's Long Peace, though I certainly grant that there may have been additional relevant factors.<sup>181</sup>

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135–53; Robert Jervis, "A Political Science Perspective on the Balance of Power and the Concert," *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 3 (June 1992): 716–24.

<sup>178</sup> Richard Elrod, "The Concert of Europe: A Fresh Look at an International System," *World Politics* 28, no. 2 (1976): 159–74; Matthew Rendall, "Defensive Realism and the Concert of Europe," *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 3 (July 2006): 523–40.

<sup>179</sup> Richard Langhorne, *The Collapse of the Concert of Europe: International Politics 1890-1914* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981); McKinney, "Nothing Fails like Success."

<sup>180</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, "World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak," *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 3 (September 1972): 319–45; Samuel R. Williamson Jr., *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Paul W. Schroeder, "Stealing Horses to Great Applause: Austria-Hungary's Decision in 1914 in Systemic Perspective," in *An Improbable War? The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture Before 1914*, ed. Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 17–42.

<sup>181</sup> The list of proffered factors is long and various from "forum effects" to aristocratic solidarity. E.g.: Benjamin Miller, "Explaining the Emergence of Great Power Concerts," *Review of International Studies* 20, no. 4 (October 1994): 327–48; Charles A. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Jennifer Mitzen, *Power in Concert: The Nineteenth Century Origins of Global Governance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

## 1.8 A Word on Case Selection and Methodology

My purpose is to discover the necessary conditions for periods of peace that meet my scope conditions. The only way to do this is through a “no-variance design of selecting on the dependent variable.”<sup>182</sup> In short, I need to study periods of peace. But which periods of peace meet my scope conditions, and of these, which should I study? A survey of world history—admittedly reflecting my own limitations and biases—suggests nine possible cases: the Amarna system of the Ancient Near East, Classical and Hellenistic Greece, Mauryan India’s relations with Seleucid Persia, Rome’s relations with Persia under the Parthians and Sassanians, Song Dynasty China, Spain and Portugal in the Early Modern Period, various polities within Southeast Asia’s Mandala System, and two phases of Ottoman-Iranian relations (the century after 1639, and the half-century after 1847). From these, I used a “diverse” case selection methodology, picking cases for study that varied widely by epoch, culture, geography, and polarity. This process resulted in the selection of the Ancient Near East in the Late Bronze Age, Rome and Persia in late antiquity, and China and its neighbors during the Song era (10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD).

My method of investigation is unapologetically historical. I have sought to follow the advice of Michael Mann: to read all of the cross-disciplinary specialist literature possible, and to judge, using clearly listed criteria, whether my theoretical model helps explain the dynamics of each case.<sup>183</sup> This approach—which seeks to employ the idiographic and nomothetic in conversation—involves detailed historical narratives and summary assessments.<sup>184</sup> My plea to the political scientist is to treat the narratives seriously, particularly because they introduce new data to an IR discipline that has remained, admittedly with some notable exceptions, “remarkably parochial and ethnocentric,” as Gilpin remarked almost four decades

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<sup>182</sup> Jack S. Levy, “Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 1 (2008): 9; cf. Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Causal Case Study Methods: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching and Tracing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 56.

<sup>183</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*.

<sup>184</sup> Hidemi Suganami, “Narrative Explanation and International Relations: Back to Basics,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 2 (December 2008): 327–56, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829808097643>; George Lawson, “The Eternal Divide? History and International Relations,” *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 2 (2010): 203–26.

ago.<sup>185</sup> My plea to the historian is to consider the validity of the overall argument even if, here or there, he or she differs in interpretation (or indeed, discovers factual errors).

## 1.9 The Way Forward

This introduction is built around Paul Schroeder's insight, quoted in the epigraph, that it is not war that is puzzling, but peace. This is not a surprising finding for anyone who has taken Hobbes' state of nature seriously. Here, Azar Gat's argument is convincing: the solution to the "enigma of war" is that there is no such enigma.<sup>186</sup> In contrast, there is a peace enigma: occasionally states that could otherwise be fighting for imperial dominance, status, or territory stop fighting and agree to coexist. Scholars of IR have spent a great deal of time on why nations fight. This has not necessarily been a fool's errand, and some important regularities have emerged from this line of inquiry, which I have summarized with Ruggie's categories of configurative and positional war. Nonetheless, if it is a theory of peace that is needed in the modern era, then it is peace that must be studied, for peace is not simply non-war; it is instead an escape from the inclination towards war.

Realist theories of war (deterrence or the BOP, for instance) are orientated towards escaping events of war but say little about the inclination thereto. Liberal theories have been more concerned with the inclination, but at best find the escape from the inclination the outcome of a long idiographic process of domestic and normative development (one, moreover, that may require the imposition of war on recalcitrant others<sup>187</sup>). Constructivists and English School scholars have developed the most useful categories of thought—especially role identities and recognition—for thinking about peace, but have not actually proposed a falsifiable theory of peace.

This dissertation synthesizes elements of these approaches to develop a testable theory. I do not claim originality, strictly speaking; I have instead proposed

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<sup>185</sup> Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 5; cf. Amitav Acharya, "Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 647–59.

<sup>186</sup> Gat, *The Causes of War and the Spread of Peace*, 246.

<sup>187</sup> Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, "The Imperial Peace: Democracy, Force, and Globalization," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 4 (1999): 403–34.

“new combinations” as in Schumpeter’s conception of development quoted in the epigraph in an attempt to *abductively* render peace, if not a matter of course, then at least explicable. Chapters 2-4 *inductively* test my theory through three detailed historical case studies of international systems. These are, respectively: the Ancient Near East in the Late Bronze Age, Rome and Persia in late antiquity, and China and its neighbors during the Song era (10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). Chapter 5 then summarizes my findings and briefly applies them *deductively* to the course of U.S.-China relations emerging today.

## 2 Peace without Dominance: The Case of the Amarna System

They ate and drank *together*, being of one heart like brothers, without shunning one another, for peace and brotherhood were between them, after the manner of the god himself, Ramses II.  
Egyptian account of relations with Hatti (c. 1245 BC)<sup>188</sup>

The Ancient Near East during the Late Bronze Age (c. 1550-1200 BC; LBA) is a potentially significant period of multipolar peace. Commonly called the “Amarna Age” after a cache of diplomatic correspondence discovered at Tell el-Amarna, Egypt, in 1887, the period is often remembered as a unique golden age of politics, commerce, and stability.<sup>189</sup> Unlike the two case studies that follow (Chapters Three and Four), this international system is not entirely unknown to scholars to international relations: Raymond Cohen, in a series of pioneering essays, first assessed the period two decades ago,<sup>190</sup> and an innovative edited volume, which brought IR scholars and historians together, followed.<sup>191</sup> But here, research

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<sup>188</sup> James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Third Edition with Supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 256.

<sup>189</sup> Mario Liverani, “The Great Powers’ Club,” in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations*, ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 15.

<sup>190</sup> Raymond Cohen, “On Diplomacy in the Ancient Near East: The Amarna Letters,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 7, no. 2 (1996): 245–70; “All in the Family: Ancient Near Eastern Diplomacy,” *International Negotiation* 1, no. 1 (1996): 11–28; “Reflections on the New Global Diplomacy: Statecraft 2500 BC to 2000 AD,” in *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice*, ed. Jan Melissen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 1–18; “The Great Tradition: The Spread of Diplomacy in the Ancient World,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 1 (2001): 23–38; also see: Bertrand Lafont, “International Relations in the Ancient Near East: The Birth of a Complete Diplomatic System,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 1 (2001): 39–60; Alex Ilari Aissaoui, “Was There a Balance of Power System in the Ancient Near East?,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 30, no. 3 (July 3, 2019): 421–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2019.1641916>.

<sup>191</sup> Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, eds., *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

stalled: those IR scholars who looked at the “Amarna Age” saw what they expected to see, namely Hobbesian anarchy dressed up in the conventions of the time. The states of the Amarna System, we were told, “behaved much like the states of today and much like Realists would predict,” using “war, or the threat of war” as “the primary means of resolving conflicts.”<sup>192</sup> If the Amarna Age is just another instantiation of Waltz and Eckstein’s invariant pattern of history, then there is little of interest to discuss.

This chapter contends that an improper periodization—one that has confused IR scholars and misled historians—is the root cause of the Amarna Age’s dismissal.<sup>193</sup> On the contrary, a proper recontextualization of the ‘Age’ shows that certain phases of it were relatively, indeed uniquely, peaceful. To show this, this chapter begins by situating the Amarna Age in the broad context of historical epochs and then the general context of the LBA (Section 2.1). I next narrate the international history of the Amarna period, with a focus on different phases of war and peace (Section 2.2). The chapter then inquires what caused the periods of peace (Section 2.3): was it the result of a sort of automatic balance of power, as argued by some, or the era’s peculiar conventions of “brotherhood,” as argued by others? But first, a word on methodology.

### *Approach and Dates*

Specialists in the language, history, and archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ANE) hold varying approaches regarding the nature and interpretation of the period’s evidence. A major topic, for instance, is how ‘truthful’ texts are, since they were by and large created by state hierarchies with powerful ideological and religious motives for telling their side of the story to the disadvantage or disregard of all others. Texts can be read for *what* they say, *why* and *how* they say it, and what they *do not* say; and they can be read under a presumption of ‘guilt’ or of

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<sup>192</sup> Steven R. David, “Realism, Constructivism, and the Amarna Letters,” in *Amarna Diplomacy*, 58; Alan James, “Egypt and Her Vassals: The Geopolitical Dimension,” in *Amarna Diplomacy*, 124 in apparent agreement.

<sup>193</sup> See: E. von Dassow, “Temporality and Periodization in Ancient Near Eastern History,” *Social Science History* 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 113–43, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01455532-1461686>.

‘innocence.’<sup>194</sup> These differences certainly must be recognized by anyone engaging with the literature on the LBA, but answering them is certainly not my purpose in this chapter. My general approach is to act like a detective attempting to shine a bright light on some rather obscure places, seeking the answers to particular questions.<sup>195</sup> To do this, I rely on the consensus among specialists—the best I can judge it—as well as my own limited reading of the critical primary sources, all of which have been translated expertly. These include the Amara Letters (Egypt’s diplomatic archive covering the mid-fourteenth century BC<sup>196</sup>), inscriptions on monuments, and collections of Hittite treaties, letters, and edicts covering the whole LBA.<sup>197</sup> More diverse primary sources are widely translated and discussed across a range of specialist texts.<sup>198</sup>

Chronology offers a practical example of the various historiographical positions. Absolute dates (when something occurred relative to a standard point in history) for the Bronze Age are debated by specialists. Fortunately, the *relative* chronology (the order in which events happened) of the major actors in the LBA is generally agreed upon. This means even if the current ‘consensus’ on *absolute* chronology is somewhat incorrect, it is unlikely to significantly change the general schematization and interpretation offered in this chapter. I follow the contemporary ‘consensus’ among historians for a Low chronology, which postulates that the Egyptian New Kingdom under Ahmose began around 1540-1530 and that Ramesses II ascended the throne in 1279.<sup>199</sup> New dendrochronological evidence,

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<sup>194</sup> E.g., Gary Beckman, “The Limits of Credulity (Presidential Address),” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125, no. 3 (2005): 343–52; Itamar Singer, *The Calm Before the Storm: Selected Writings of Itamar Singer of the End of the Late Bronze Age in Anatolia and the Levant* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 731–66; Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 3–16.

<sup>195</sup> William H. Stiebing Jr. and Susan N. Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, Third Edition (New York: Routledge, 2018), 5–6.

<sup>196</sup> William L. Moran, ed., *The Amarna Letters*, trans. William L. Moran (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

<sup>197</sup> Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, Second Edition (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999); Harry A. Hoffner Jr., *Letters from the Hittite Kingdom* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

<sup>198</sup> E.g., Trevor Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East: The Royal Correspondence of the Late Bronze Age* (London: Routledge, 2003) and many of the references that follow in this chapter.

<sup>199</sup> Erik Hornung, Rolf Krauss, and David A. Warburton, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Chronology* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 8, 476 for a chronological table of Egyptian dates, 492-3.

which favors the Middle chronology,<sup>200</sup> indicates that the period of transition between the Middle and Late Bronze Age in Mesopotamia occurred earlier than some historians have recently argued, and that the Hittite sack of Babylon occurred around 1595. Since this chapter focuses its analysis on the last four centuries of the second millennium BC—for which chronologies can be tied to a solar eclipse in 763 BC<sup>201</sup>—this disagreement need not be carefully parsed. Hittite and Hurrian dates in this period tend to be less precise than Egyptian dates, even though their synchronisms (the linkage of events between different calendars/records) are sometimes well-defined; for these dates I generally follow the chronology listed in William Stiebing Jr. and Susan Helft’s recent synthesis.<sup>202</sup> All dates, unless otherwise noted, are BC.

## 2.1 State Systems in the Ancient Near East

Historians of the ANE have broadly summarized the predominant political structures of the Bronze and Iron Ages as follows: 3000-1600, an era of relatively fragmented “polyadic” city-states or “cantons”; 1600 to the end of the LBA, an era of consolidated territorial/imperial states in a multipolar system; and from the Iron Age and on, an era of dominating empires.<sup>203</sup> The first of these periods corresponds to the Hobbesian multipolar anarchy Eckstein identifies as the historical norm; the

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<sup>200</sup> Sturt W. Manning et al., “Integrated Tree-Ring-Radiocarbon High-Resolution Timeframe to Resolve Earlier Second Millennium BCE Mesopotamian Chronology,” *PLoS One* 11, no. 7 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0157144>.

<sup>201</sup> Robert Drews, *Militarism and the Indo-Europeanizing of Europe* (London: Routledge, 2017), 237, fn. 1.

<sup>202</sup> Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 251., in consultation with Marek, *In the Land of a Thousand Gods*, 553–54. The comparative chronology given in Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000-323 BC*, Third Edition (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 139; 353–55 differs slightly, but the disagreements (often just five or six years) are immaterial to my overall argument.

<sup>203</sup> Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East*, 3; Mario Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East, 1600–1100 BC* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 3, 6–7; Gary Beckman, “Hittite Treaties and the Development of the Cuneiform Treaty Tradition,” in *Die Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions Und Religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven Zur “Deuteronomismus” — Diskussion in Tora Und Vorderen Propheten.*, ed. Markus Witte et al., Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 365 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 279–80; Lafont, “International Relations in the Ancient Near East,” 40–41; Cohen, “Reflections on the New Global Diplomacy,” 12–13.

third period corresponds to the unipolar *pax* he identifies as the only alternative. The middle period—the Amarna Age—however, does not clearly correspond to either. Among specialists, there is agreement that the Amarna system was a multipolar states system with close economic, political, cultural, and religious ties;<sup>204</sup> many consider it the first “globalized,” “international,” or “complex” system.<sup>205</sup> A variety of scholars have argued that the Amarna period was an “age of peace and stability,”<sup>206</sup> “an era of international cooperation unlike anything seen before or, until quite recently, since,”<sup>207</sup> and a period of “détente and cooperation”<sup>208</sup> in which “all-out warfare between the Great Kings was a relatively rare phenomenon.”<sup>209</sup> Further quotations would be redundant.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, “Introduction: The Amarna System,” in *Amarna Diplomacy*, 10; Carlo Zaccagnini, “The Interdependence of the Great Powers,” in *Amarna Diplomacy*, 141–42, 153; Mario Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East, 1600–1100 BC* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 11, 198; Federico Zangani, “Amarna and Uluburun: Reconsidering Patterns of Exchange in the Late Bronze Age,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 148, no. 4 (2016): 230–44; Joachim Friedrich Quack, “Importing and Exporting Gods? On the Flow of Deities Between Egypt and Its Neighboring Countries,” in *The Dynamics of Transculturality: Concepts and Institutions in Motion*, ed. Antje Flüchter and Jivanta Schöttli (New York: Springer, 2015), 255–77; Marian H. Feldman, “Luxurious Forms: Redefining a Mediterranean ‘International Style,’ 1400–1200 B.C.E.,” *Art Bulletin* 84, no. 1 (March 2002): 6–29.

<sup>205</sup> Eric H. Cline, *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), xvi, 163; Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 2; Paul Collins, *From Egypt to Babylon: The International Age 1550–500* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Marek, *In the Land of a Thousand Gods*, 73; Marc Van De Mieroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean in the Age of Ramesses II* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 4; Kristian Kristiansen and Paulina Suchowska-Ducke, “Connected Histories: The Dynamics of Bronze Age Interaction and Trade 1500–1100,” *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 81 (December 2015): 361–92.

<sup>206</sup> Cohen, “The Great Tradition,” 34.

<sup>207</sup> Amanda H. Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings: How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3–4.

<sup>208</sup> Singer, *The Calm Before the Storm*, x.

<sup>209</sup> Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 44.

<sup>210</sup> For additional examples: Cohen and Westbrook, “Introduction: The Amarna System,” 5, 11; Hayim Tadmor, “The Decline of Empires in Western Asia ca. 1200 B.C.E.,” in *Symposia Celebrating the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research (1900–1975)*, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Cambridge: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1979), 1–3; Liverani, “The Great Powers’ Club,” 27.

Even so, not everyone agrees. As noted above, some of the few political scientists who have looked at the Amarna System have concluded the opposite, and some historians seem to agree. Marc Van De Mieroop states that “warfare was perpetual throughout the era and kings campaigned incessantly,”<sup>211</sup> while others seem uncertain. For instance, Stiebing and Helft say that the Amarna System “did not . . . curb international skirmishes”<sup>212</sup> and then two pages later claim that international marriages, which were part of the Amarna system, “helped to keep the peace between the Great Kings.”

Therefore, the first question of the chapter is factual: was the Amarna System relatively peaceful, or was it characterized by the constant fighting and state death typical of the ancient world?

## 2.2 War and Peace in the International History of the LBA

Some of the existing disagreement over the relative peace of the Amarna Age/System can be immediately addressed by clarifying what is meant by the designation. Strictly speaking, the archive of 350 letters found at Tell el-Amarna “covers a period of at most 30 years, from about 1360 to 1330, but perhaps as few as 15 years.”<sup>213</sup> The letters provide a small window into a brief period in the LBA, but the ‘Amarna’ label has been extended by scholars to cover the entire LBA.<sup>214</sup> The idea behind this anachronistic extension is that the ‘diplomatic system’ displayed in the Amarna letters represented the practices (inter-dynastic marriages, gift exchange, rhetorical kinship, the exchange of ambassadors, and communication in the era’s *lingua franca*, Akkadian) of the entire era. Even so, the extension is imprecise and has resulted in confusion on two levels.

“The Amarna club is not simply a *Gemeinschaft*, a community held together by bonds of sentiment,” Raymond Cohen has written, “it is also, at one and the same time, a *Gesellschaft*, an association of autonomous actors joined by negotiated agreement grounded in calculations of advantage and the realities of power.”<sup>215</sup> Yet before Thutmose III’s conquests in the second half of the fifteenth century (c. 1457-

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<sup>211</sup> Van De Mieroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 229.

<sup>212</sup> Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 224; 226.

<sup>213</sup> Van De Mieroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 110.

<sup>214</sup> E.g., Liverani, “The Great Powers’ Club,” 15.

<sup>215</sup> Cohen, “On Diplomacy in the Ancient Near East,” 266.

1425), there were no signs that the major powers of the ANE were a community in any sense of the term; nor had they negotiated any agreements.<sup>216</sup> The first signs of diplomatic contact occurred towards the end of Thutmose's reign, and the first diplomatic settlements in the reign of his successor, Amenhotep II (1425-1400). Consequently, it is with these settlements that Pinhas Artzi begins his discussion of the Amarna Age.<sup>217</sup> The ancient practices of Mesopotamian diplomacy were refashioned in the late fifteenth century as a response to the increasing system effects of Thutmose's conquests. The LBA, typically said to begin c. 1550, hence, *is not* coterminous with the Amarna System, at least if one accepts the definition of Cohen quoted above.

On a second level, the anachronism has had the unfortunate effect of confusing the question of the relative peace of the wider diplomatic system, at least for political scientists who look only at the Amarna archive. A political scientist, for instance, declares, "The major powers of the Amarna era were constantly at war or preparing for war."<sup>218</sup> And he is not wrong. The reason for this is—paradoxically—that the Amarna letters represent the nadir of the wider Amarna System: a period of time when negotiated agreements broke down, power shifted, and state death occurred (or would shortly, after the end of the archive). Astonishingly, this context has regularly been overlooked.

This chapter contends that the LBA should be re-periodized around a series of phases of war and peace. The current framing of the question of the relative peacefulness of the era precludes any definitive assessment, which explains why distinguished historians of the period can reach opposite answers (p. 52 above). The fundamental reason for confusion is that scholars have not sufficiently appreciated the extent to which the entire diplomatic system of the Amarna Era was grounded in a series of bilateral settlements between Egypt and the system's other most powerful actors: first Mitanni and then Hatti. These settlements, when successful, created the stability and prosperity so often noted as remarkable; however, prior to such agreements, subsequent to their breakdown, and along the sidelines all

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<sup>216</sup> The only recorded parity agreements of this time were made by smaller polities: e.g., between Alalah and Tunip, Alalah and Kizzuwatna, and Alalah and Ugarit. See Beckman, "Hittite Treaties," 296.

<sup>217</sup> Pinhas Artzi, "The Diplomatic Service in Action: The Mittani File," in *Amarna Diplomacy*, 205.

<sup>218</sup> David, "Realism, Constructivism, and the Amarna Letters," 62.

throughout, the system experienced the violent anarchy so typical of world history.

Table 2.1 summarizes these periods of war and peace.

*Table 2.1: Periods of Relative War and Peace between Major States in the LBA*

Phase	War or Peace	Approx. Period	Key Dyads	Number of Years	Notes
1	War	1550-1417	Egypt-Mitanni Hatti-Mitanni Egypt-Hatti	133	Period of state formation
2	Peace	1417-1350	Egypt-Hatti Egypt-Mitanni	67	Concentric invasions turn Hatti inward, resulting in loss of Great Power status
3	War	1350-1260	Hatti-Mitanni Egypt-Hatti	90	Mitanni eliminated as actor
4	Peace	1259-1177	Egypt-Hatti Hatti-Assyria	82	Hatti-Assyria peace begins after 1237.

The rest of this section explores, in detail, the origins, course, and collapse of these four periods.

*Phase 1: War (c. 1550-1417)*

The Late Bronze Age began with a period of state consolidation in Hatti, Egypt, and Mitanni in the sixteenth century that upended the existing balance of power and in time extended the scope of political interaction, joining Egypt, the Levant, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia into one unified international system.<sup>219</sup> At some point in this century, the newly unified Hittites led an expedition into Babylon that unseated the remnants of Hammurabi's Empire,<sup>220</sup> and they sacked Aleppo and

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<sup>219</sup> Kristian Kristiansen, "The Decline of the Neolithic and the Rise of Bronze Age Society," in *The Oxford Handbook of Neolithic Europe*, ed. Chris Fowler, Jan Harding, and Daniela Hofmann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1108; Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 271; Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 139.

<sup>220</sup> Trevor Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 102–5; Gernot Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, trans. Jennifer Barnes (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1989), 23. The date for Hatti's razzia is

other Syrian polities as well. But since controlling such faraway territories was not possible for the Hittite state, Mitanni (the name of the state populated by the Hurrian peoples) expanded into the power vacuum left by Hatti's conquests, uniting city-states and peoples into a new empire.<sup>221</sup> The Hittites, who alternated between conquering their neighbors and assassinating one another<sup>222</sup> then fell into a period of internal disunity, enabling further Hurrian consolidation.

One method of state consolidation popular in this era was a "razzia," a loot foray, a raid "of rapine" rather than a war "of conquest,"<sup>223</sup> that consisted of three steps: "Attack, destroy, withdraw."<sup>224</sup> It could have a strategic purpose—to intimidate or weaken an opponent—but just as often it was about fame, glory, plunder, or domestic legitimation.<sup>225</sup> In Egypt, Ahmose (c. 1539-1515) inaugurated his newly-unified kingdom with such an act of violence: a razzia into Palestine, the first in a long sequence that would—in less than a century—evolve into permanent Egyptian imperialism in Palestine and the Levant more broadly.<sup>226</sup> Like Hatti in Syria, Egypt wanted the benefits of victory, but did not desire to pay the costs of occupation and administration.

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debated with 1595 and 1499 given as the most likely alternatives Gary Beckman, "Hittite Chronology," *Akkadica*, no. 119–120 (2000): 19–32; Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton, *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*, 13. If the new dendrochronological evidence of Manning et al. "Integrated Tree-Ring-Radiocarbon High-Resolution Timeframe" is widely accepted, the debate will seemingly be resolved in favor of the former date.

<sup>221</sup> Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 172; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 27.

<sup>222</sup> Examples: Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 105, 109, 113, 119–20, 122–24; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 26–28.

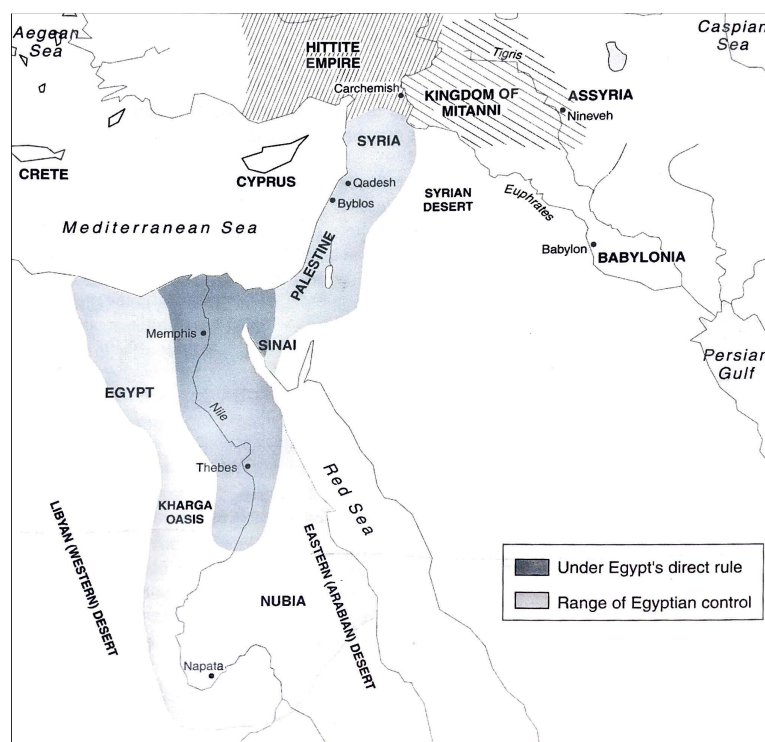
<sup>223</sup> Georges Roux, *Ancient Iraq*, Third Edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 287.

<sup>224</sup> Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 84.

<sup>225</sup> Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 149; Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 104–5; in the Late Medieval period, the razzia, a common feature of the Hundred Years' War, was known as *guerre guerroyante* or *chevauchee*. See Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War: The Most Radical Reinterpretation of Armed Conflict Since Clausewitz* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 132; for the modern era: Thomas Rid, "Razzia: A Turning Point in Modern Strategy, Terrorism and Political Violence," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 4 (2009): 617–35.

<sup>226</sup> Anthony J. Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt: The New Kingdom* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 65 n. 7; Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 209. K.A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II, King of Egypt* (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1982), 9.

Map 2.1: The ANE at the End of the Fifteenth Century BC



From: Stiebing and Helft (2018).<sup>227</sup> Used with permission from the publisher.

A little later, Egypt's Thutmose I (1493-1483) marched all the way to the Euphrates in a particularly vigorous razzia, clashing there with Mitanni.<sup>228</sup> According to a surviving soldier's account, Thutmose went on the Asiatic expedition "to take pleasure"—he hunted elephants, beginning something of a tradition<sup>229</sup>—suggesting the Syro-Palestine region was, for the Great Powers, an open 'hunting ground' in which Egypt, Mitanni, and Hatti (during its moments of unity) competed for glory, loot, and vassals.<sup>230</sup>

Egypt's Thutmose III (1479-1425) would, in his long reign, seek to close the Great Powers' open season in the Levant, beginning his first year as sole ruler of Egypt (c. 1457) with a campaign in Canaan during which he clashed with an alliance of Canaanite rulers probably loyal to Mitanni at the Battle of Megiddo.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>227</sup> Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 218.

<sup>228</sup> Stiebing and Helft, 211; Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, 49.

<sup>229</sup> William C. Hayes, "Egypt: Internal Affairs from Tuthmosis I to the Death of Amenophis III," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. I.E.S. Edwards et al., Third Edition, vol. 2, pt. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 337.

<sup>230</sup> Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 137.

<sup>231</sup> Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, 26.

This was no mere pleasure razzia, but the beginning of a full-on campaign to monopolize the region.<sup>232</sup> Thutmose III, the “Napoleon” of the ancient world,<sup>233</sup> would campaign in Palestine and Syria on average every other year for the next 30 years, sometimes raiding across the Euphrates in efforts to weaken “wretched Naharin” (as he termed Mitanni) and its “feeble” king,<sup>234</sup> or perhaps even destroy it à la the Hittite sack of Babylon. Thutmose III was a master “taker,” as described by his own propaganda: He is a king, valiant like Montu; a taker, from whom no one can take...<sup>235</sup>

Hatti (the land of the Hittites) was first referenced in Egyptian sources during this time, and Syrian vassals of Hatti were depicted paying tribute to Egypt.<sup>236</sup> The coastline of southern Lebanon, including the important city of Byblos, functioned as logistical hubs for Thutmose’s campaigns to the east into Syria’s hinterland,<sup>237</sup> and he conquered Kadesh on the Orontes, a vassal—probably—of Mitanni.<sup>238</sup> The Great King of Hatti himself then sent gifts to Egypt in the first such recorded instance of a relationship between the states—pleased, presumably, to see someone else fighting the Hurrians.<sup>239</sup> Gifts would also be sent by the Babylonians, Assyrians (who were then a minor power), and (if the identification is correct) from Cyprus and the Greek mainland,<sup>240</sup> indicating at least the establishment of basic diplomatic ties, or in the lingo of this dissertation, ‘thin recognition.’ Notably, no gifts were received from Mitanni.

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<sup>232</sup> Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, 57.

<sup>233</sup> Hayes, “Egypt,” 319; Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 217.

<sup>234</sup> Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 147.

<sup>235</sup> Barkal Stela in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 240.

<sup>236</sup> Lanny Bell, “Conflict and Reconciliation in the Ancient Middle East: The Clash of Egyptian and Hittite Chariots in Syria, and the World’s First Peace Treaty between ‘Superpowers,’” in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 101.

<sup>237</sup> Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, 58; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 149.

<sup>238</sup> Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, 111.

<sup>239</sup> Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 128–29; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 32; Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 149.

<sup>240</sup> Van De Mieroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 21–22.

*Phase 2: Peace (c. 1417-1350)*

Thutmose III's successor, Amenhotep II (1425-1400), would continue campaigning in Syria across the Orontes River, as well as in the land of Mitanni west of the Euphrates.<sup>241</sup> Egypt, Hatti, and Mitanni were locked into a system of competing imperialisms the focal point of which was northern Syria, where city-states/small kingdoms, sponsored by Mitanni, continued to resist vassalage to Egypt.<sup>242</sup> However, Amenhotep II's Memphis stele—which, directed as it was to a domestic audience, cast Egypt's rivals in the most humiliating manner possible regardless of the exact truth of the matter—records that after he returned from one of these campaigns (in 1417), embassies from Mitanni, Hatti, and Babylon arrived to “request peace” [*hetep*] as well as the “breath of life.”<sup>243</sup> Requesting the “breath of life” was a sign of submission, since receiving it depended on “the will of the Pharaoh, the monopolistic owner of the ‘breath.’”<sup>244</sup> *Hetep* signified reconciliation, and followed from *maat*, the guiding ethic of Egyptian life. By giving a foreigner “the breath of life,” pharaoh recognized his *maat* and integrated him in the “system of relationships that define[d] Egyptian life.”<sup>245</sup>

These acts of supposedly independent and unilateral submission on the parts of Hatti and Mitanni were the genesis of a series of bilateral parity treaties that would pull Egypt into the thousand-year-old Syro-Mesopotamian diplomatic tradition of embassies, letters, marriages, and gift-exchanges, and ritual brotherhood. This tradition had begun in the Early Dynastic period (c. 2500), where the first recorded language of diplomatic brotherhood is found in an exchange of letters between the kings of Ebla and Hamazi.<sup>246</sup> Treaties, embassies, and protocols reached a high point in the eighteenth-century Mari Age.<sup>247</sup> Egypt joining this diplomatic tradition at the end of the fifteenth century marks *the proper beginning*

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<sup>241</sup> Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, 140.

<sup>242</sup> Spalinger, 219; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 148; Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, 27.

<sup>243</sup> Jana Mynářová, “Lost in Translation. An Egyptological Perspective on the Egyptian-Hittite Treaties,” *Annals of the Náprstek Museum* 35, no. 2 (2014): 4.

<sup>244</sup> Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 98.

<sup>245</sup> Vanessa Davies, “The Dynamics of *Hetep* in Ancient Egypt” (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2010), 4, 297–99, 327.

<sup>246</sup> Cohen, “The Great Tradition,” 26–27; Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 27.

<sup>247</sup> J. M. Munn-Rankin, “Diplomacy in Western Asia in the Early Second Millennium B.C.,” *Iraq* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1956): 68–110.

*of the Amarna System*.<sup>248</sup> It negotiated parity treaties with Hatti and Mitanni, elevating bilateral relations between each power and Egypt to “brotherhood.”

Though it has long been thought that the text of these original treaties has not survived, Itamar Singer has brilliantly argued that the document usually known as the Kurustama Treaty *was* the initial treaty agreed by the “Storm-god” between Egypt and Hatti.<sup>249</sup> This initial treaty, a summary of which was quoted to the Hittite King Suppiluliuma when he requested a summary of previous relations between Hatti and Egypt—“Of old, Hatti and Egypt were friendly with each other”<sup>250</sup>—was also known later on to Mursili II, who recalled not concerning himself “with those borders” that had been agreed upon in it.<sup>251</sup> The fragments of the treaty itself that remain specify that Hatti and Egypt should not behave towards each other with “evil intentions,” that they should be “allies” that “defend” one another, and that the words of the “Storm-god” should not be “violate[d].”<sup>252</sup> Only equals pledge to defend each other; in a situation of major disparity, the larger power would be expected to defend both itself and its vassals. A century-and-a-half later Egypt and Hatti would conclude a new treaty (called the Silver Treaty, discussed below) that proclaimed (in the copy sworn by Egypt) the Powers’ mutual commitment to creating a “brotherhood” and “peace” “better than the former brotherhood and peace”<sup>253</sup> and (in the copy sworn by Hatti) to “(re)establish the relationship which Re made and which Seth made.”<sup>254</sup> Importantly, this is a relationship between Egypt’s gods and Hatti’s Storm-god, another sign of equality. In short, Egypt’s record of receiving tribute and submission indicates that at the end of the fifteenth century it began a period of friendly relations with Hatti. *Pace* the celebratory Egyptian monument, these relations were based on recognition and a territorial settlement.

What about Mitanni? The embassy of 1417 was the first peaceful contact between the two states, and a second inscription (at Karnack) calls the visit of the

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<sup>248</sup> Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 169.

<sup>249</sup> Singer, *The Calm Before the Storm*, 469–83.

<sup>250</sup> Singer, 472.

<sup>251</sup> Singer, 474.

<sup>252</sup> Singer, 475–78.

<sup>253</sup> Amnon Altman, “Tracing the Earliest Recorded Concepts of International Law,” *Journal of the History of International Law* 11 (2009): 171.

<sup>254</sup> Altman, 172.

“chiefs of Mitanni” “notable” and unheard of.<sup>255</sup> Unfortunately, no Egypt-Mitanni treaty or records survive from the end of the fifteenth century. Nonetheless, there is general agreement that this initial embassy led to a bilateral settlement not unlike the one agreed between Egypt and Hatti. The extent of scholarly debate regards *when* the treaty was finally agreed, with some arguing the settlement was not finally agreed until the beginning of the reign of Thutmose IV (1400-1390).<sup>256</sup> This consensus rests on the following facts:

- Egypt would never seriously campaign against Mitanni again, nor Mitanni against Egypt, and a frontier seems to have been mutually recognized.<sup>257</sup>
- Egyptian monuments during the reigns of Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV drop hostile references to the “foe of Nahrin.”<sup>258</sup>
- Pharaoh (probably Thutmose IV) took a daughter of the Mitannian king as his bride, Egypt’s first-ever foreign princess from a major power.<sup>259</sup>
- This princess, according to the Amarna Letters, was only given to Pharaoh after seven requests, which indicates prolonged negotiations between equals.<sup>260</sup>
- The Amarna Letters, which were exchanged in the mid-fourteenth century—so approximately two generations after the initial hypothesized peace

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<sup>255</sup> Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 150, 167–68.

<sup>256</sup> In favor of Amenhotep Van De Mieroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 19, 30; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 164–66; Betsy M. Bryan, “The 18th Dynasty before the Amarna Period (c.1550-1352 BC),” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 244–45; Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 167–87; In favor of Thutmose Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 33; Anthony J. Spalinger, “Military Institutions and Warfare: Pharaonic,” in *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, ed. Alan B. Lloyd (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 441. The solution is to date the original peace to the reign of Amenhotep and interpret Thutmose’s minor campaign into the Levant as the initial move in a renegotiation of the settlement.

<sup>257</sup> Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 292; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 18, 33; Van De Mieroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 21.

<sup>258</sup> Betsy M. Bryan, “The Egyptian Perspective on Mitanni,” in *Amarna Diplomacy*, 76.

<sup>259</sup> Stefan Jakob, “Pharaoh and His Brothers,” *BMSAES* 6 (2006): 15; Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, EA 29: 16-20.

<sup>260</sup> Wilhelm, *The Hurrians*, 28.

treaty—show that relations between Egypt and Mitanni were *already* based on “brotherhood” and “Great King” status.<sup>261</sup>

- In the ANE, such relations were first established through an oath or pact, and indeed the phrase “breath of life” implies the creation of a “legal provision” between states.<sup>262</sup>

In sum: there is convincing evidence to support the position that Egypt and Mitanni agreed to put their relations on peaceful footing at the end of the fifteenth century. No alternative account can plausibly explain the developments of the next hundred years.

Around seventy-five years of major power peace in the Levant and Mesopotamia followed as a result of Egypt’s two bilateral settlements with the leading powers of the ANE. Thutmose IV’s successor, Amenhotep III (1390-1353) was to enjoy “one of the most tranquil and prosperous periods” in Egypt’s history,<sup>263</sup> or, in the words of another scholar, “an almost unprecedented period of peace, stability and prosperity.”<sup>264</sup> Egypt’s peace with Mitanni was reaffirmed through a series of marriages both at the beginning and end of Amenhotep III’s reign. Freed from fighting over Syria, Pharaoh could concentrate on building monuments, cultivating his own divinity, and hunting bulls and lions.<sup>265</sup>

Mitanni, too, experienced stability. Even though it did not enjoy friendly relations with Hatti, the latter—by the early fourteenth century—was experiencing “concentric invasions” against its hegemony that removed it from the Great Power club and eliminated the otherwise perpetual threat it posed to the Hurrians. In this particular regard, system-wide major power peace was accidental: it only extended to Hurrian territories because Hatti was riven by an internal crisis more pressing than the luxury of Syro-Mesopotamian imperialism.<sup>266</sup> When Hatti, under Suppiluliuma (1350-1320), had restored its regional hegemony, it would revert back

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<sup>261</sup> See EA 17, 23, 26, 104, and 140.

<sup>262</sup> Mynářová, “Lost in Translation.”

<sup>263</sup> Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 221.

<sup>264</sup> Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 19; cf. Jacobus Van Dijk, “The Amarna Period in the Later New Kingdom,” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 265–306.

<sup>265</sup> Hayes, “Egypt,” 333–34, 342; Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 197.

<sup>266</sup> Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 158; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 28, 33; Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 191.

to its default position of imperialist expansion in Syria and even Mesopotamia, eventually (discussed below) bringing about the crisis that would destroy the relative peace of this period in the Amarna Era.

What should the reader make of the admission that peace in this phase of the LBA was partly “accidental”? The short answer is that the Amarna powers formed a tripolar system. Egypt had *established* peace with both other poles, but those other two poles were still inclined to war with each other. Egypt had transcended the state of nature, understood as the inclination to war; Hatti and Mitanni remained in the state of nature but were not actually at war. Thus, the accidental nature of the peace between them does not undermine my argument that this phase of peace was significant and was the result of specific practices, viz., a balance of power, thick recognition, and territorial settlement.

### *Phase 3: War (c. 1350-1260)*

This was the most violent period of the LBA, which is ironic given that most of the Amarna letters, typically heralded as proof of unparalleled friendly relations between ancient kings, were written in the first few decades of this phase. This phase is also the most complex in its historical progression. It began—following the reconstruction of Maynard P. Maidman—with the destruction of the “*pax Mittanica*” that had dominated northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria for approximately a century.<sup>267</sup> Approximately three generations of violent Great Power conflict then followed.

Ever since Mitanni had captured the golden and silver door of Assur, Assyria had been a vassal of Mitanni. But in the middle of the fourteenth century, Assur-uballit of Assyria sensed an opportunity to rebel against his overlord, Tushratta.<sup>268</sup> Mitanni’s alliance with Egypt had atrophied due to both the indifference of a new pharaoh, Akhenaten (1353-1336)—whose only real interest

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<sup>267</sup> Maynard P. Maidman, “Nuzi, the Club of the Great Powers, and the Chronology of the Fourteenth Century,” *Kaskal* 8 (2011): 77–139.

<sup>268</sup> Maidman, 129–30.

seemed to be his bizarre religious innovations<sup>269</sup>—and as a result of growing Egyptian contempt of Mitanni’s weakness.<sup>270</sup>

Hatti, meanwhile, was back on the prowl: in the mid-fourteenth century, Tudhaliya (and his successors) had recovered Hatti’s dominant position in Anatolia. The son of Tudhaliya II,<sup>271</sup> Suppiluliuma—following the Hittite pattern of stability at home therefore imperialism abroad—was spoiling for a fight. An initial razzia into Mitanni territory had failed, but now Suppiluliuma was courting Egypt and Babylon diplomatically in preparation for a more serious renewal of Hittite expansion.<sup>272</sup> Assur-uballit took the opportunity and rebelled against Mitannian rule, first expelling occupying soldiers and then advancing east against Arrapha, another Mitannian vassal state.

It was now, Maidman argues, that Suppiluliuma launched his major attack against Mitanni, forcing Tushratta to flee his capital.<sup>273</sup> Tushratta was then assassinated in a dynastic dispute, and Mitanni’s existence as an independent Great Power came to an end.<sup>274</sup> Hatti and the newly-rising Assyria would split the spoils and then become rivals of each other (the rather intricate details need not be developed here). This is the background to the famous letters (EA 15 and EA 16) in which Assur-uballit introduced himself to Egypt as a “great king” and “brother.”

After defeating the Hurrian state, Suppiluliuma, flush with success, had then extended his expedition into Syria, where he conquered Kadesh.<sup>275</sup> A Cold War with Egypt followed, or what Liverani calls a “hostile balance of power” with the focal point control over vassals in the region of Kadesh and Amurru.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Emily Teeter, “The Amarna Period Practical Aspects of ‘Monotheism,’” in *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 182–96; Davies, “The Dynamics of Hetep in Ancient Egypt,” 316–25.

<sup>270</sup> Bryan, “The Egyptian Perspective on Mitanni,” 83–84.

<sup>271</sup> Gary Beckman, “From Hattusa to Carchemish: The Latest on Hittite History,” in *Current Issues in the History of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Mark W. Chavalas (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 2007), 109.

<sup>272</sup> Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, EA 17; Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 172; Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 251.

<sup>273</sup> Maidman, “Nuzi,” 130–31.

<sup>274</sup> Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 34.

<sup>275</sup> Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, EA 75.

<sup>276</sup> William J. Murnane, *The Road to Kadesh: A Historical Interpretation of the Battle Reliefs of King Sety I at Karnak*, Second Edition (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1990), 35, 37; Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 339; Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, 161–65.

Akhenaten's response to Hatti's 'proxy warfare' (if he made one at all) was dilatory, as seen in the panicked reports in the Amarna letters.<sup>277</sup> But beginning with Tutankhaten's reign (?-1324), a pattern of Egyptian-Hittite war over Kadesh developed.<sup>278</sup> This intensified to all-out war after the so-called Zannanza Affair, the details of which remain unclear. An Egyptian queen, probably Tutankhaten's widow, proposed marrying a son of Suppiluliuma. One way or another, the prince, Zannanza, died, providing Suppiluliuma with a diplomatic breach sufficient to justify further expansion in Syria.<sup>279</sup>

The record of the next sixty years is one of system-wide war, rivalry, expansion, and imperialism. Relations between the newly-powerful Assyria and Babylon fell apart as Assyria—no longer restrained by Mitanni—sought hegemony over all of Mesopotamia, and the two would fight repeatedly, with Assyria never quite strong enough to fully annex Babylon despite winning numerous victories.<sup>280</sup> Assyria and Hatti remained hostile to one another. A Hittite king in c. 1285 rejected an Assyrian overture for brotherhood, a term which Hatti's monarch rejected as presumptuous even as he acknowledged that Assyria's defeat of Mitanni had earned it "Great King" status.<sup>281</sup> A few decades later, Assyria's Shalmaneser refused to recognize Hatti's monarch, Hattusili (1267-1240), dismissing him derisively as a mere "substitute of a great king,"<sup>282</sup> a reference to his problematic claim to the throne.

Meanwhile, Kadesh and Amurru remained a point of honor between Egypt and Hatti, and Egypt's Sety I (1290-79) would redevelop Avaris to make campaigning in the Levant easier while Hatti's Muwatalli II (1290-1273) moved his

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<sup>277</sup> Bell, "Conflict and Reconciliation," 104; Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 172–74; e.g., the letters of Rib-Hadda of Byblos, EA 101-138 in Moran, *The Amarna Letters*.

<sup>278</sup> Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, 180–81; Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 241; Bell, "Conflict and Reconciliation," 104; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 21.

<sup>279</sup> Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 187–89; Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 15; Bell, "Conflict and Reconciliation," 104; Murnane, *The Road to Kadesh*, 24–28; Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 193.

<sup>280</sup> Stefan Jakob, "The Middle Assyrian Period (14th to 11th Century BCE)," in *A Companion to Assyria*, ed. Eckart Frahm (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 117–42.

<sup>281</sup> Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 77; Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 63.

<sup>282</sup> Jakob, "The Middle Assyrian Period," 122.

capital south to Tarhuntassa to be closer to the zone of conflict.<sup>283</sup> The latter move was an attempt to resolve the endlessly reenacted geopolitical conundrum of Hittite foreign policy: how to project imperial power in Syria while not exposing the capital to external threats and dynastic intrigues.<sup>284</sup>

The war between the two states climaxed in 1274 when Ramesses II (1279-1213) gathered a 20,000-man army and advanced to Kadesh, where he fought a serious engagement with Muwatalli, the first time the two states' monarchs had personally faced one another. The outcome was a tactical draw, but a strategic defeat for Egypt as the Hittites continued to expand thereafter, bringing—for example—Amurru back into vassalage and boldly conquering Damascus.<sup>285</sup> The Battle of Kadesh, unsurprisingly, did not result in amity between the two states and c. 1272 and 1271 Ramesses advanced twice more into the disputed Syrian territories in a prolonged game of tug of war.<sup>286</sup>

#### *Phase 4: Peace (c. 1259-1177)*

Around 1259, the century of war between Hatti and Egypt ended. The two signed the 'Silver Treaty' and would never fight again. The parity treaty was one of "good brotherhood" and reciprocal friendliness and peace (and subsequent good sisterhood).<sup>287</sup> Ramesses recognized the legitimacy of Hattusili's line (instead of Mursili III's), the only non-reciprocal clause in the treaty. And the two (in an apparently more informal settlement alongside the treaty) accepted the territorial status quo and extended Egypt's right to send emissaries all the way to Ugarit,

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<sup>283</sup> Murnane, *The Road to Kadesh*, 70; Van De Mieroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean*, 38.

<sup>284</sup> Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 216, 253; Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East*, 169.

<sup>285</sup> Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 62; Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 255; Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 63; Bell, "Conflict and Reconciliation," 106–7.

<sup>286</sup> Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 68–70.

<sup>287</sup> Text in Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 96–100; Bickel, "Concepts of Peace in Ancient Egypt."

where Egyptians had not gone for a century.<sup>288</sup> “Borders were opened from the Aegean to Bahrain.”<sup>289</sup>

To cement the deal, in 1246/5 a Hittite princess was married to Ramesses.<sup>290</sup> It was subsequently recorded that Egyptians could travel all the way to Hatti “without fear around about their hearts.”<sup>291</sup> Indeed, the Hittites’ crown prince (later king Tudhaliya IV) is reported to have made the reverse journey, possibly informing the monumental architecture he would later construct.<sup>292</sup> Ramesses invited Hattusili himself, and Kitchen reports that there is a “real possibility” the leaders’ summit actually occurred,<sup>293</sup> but most scholars are more dubious as this would likely have indicated the subordination, rather than the equality, of the Hittite King.<sup>294</sup> Hattusili also married a second of his daughters to Ramesses, perhaps upon the death of the first or upon the succession of Tudhaliya.<sup>295</sup> Recent archeological finds indicate there was even a Hittite garrison permanently stationed in Avaris, apparently serving as “mercenaries” for the pharaoh beginning around the time of the two nations’ peace treaty and perhaps paralleling the earlier arrangement initiated by the “Kuruštama Treaty.”<sup>296</sup>

Ramesses’ reign after the treaty would mirror the time of peace and construction seen in the earlier reign of Amenhotep III, and Redford records that “eighty years of unparalleled prosperity lay in store for the two greatest kingdoms of the ancient world.”<sup>297</sup> The two powers seem to have welcomed interdependence

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<sup>288</sup> Trevor Bryce, “The ‘Eternal Treaty’ from the Hittite Perspective,” *BMSAES* 6 (2006): 8–9; Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 256; Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 75.

<sup>289</sup> Collins, *From Egypt to Babylon*, 78.

<sup>290</sup> Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 85; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 110.

<sup>291</sup> Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 258.

<sup>292</sup> Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 89.

<sup>293</sup> Kitchen, 91.

<sup>294</sup> Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 78–82. Personal correspondence with Gary Beckman (October 2018).

<sup>295</sup> Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 92; Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 111; Bryce, “The ‘Eternal Treaty’ from the Hittite Perspective,” 10.

<sup>296</sup> Spalinger, *War in Ancient Egypt*, 227–28; Bell, “Conflict and Reconciliation,” 112.

<sup>297</sup> Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 22; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 191; cf. Robert Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age: Changes in Warfare and*

and recently excavated storehouses in Hattusa may indicate regular grain shipments from Egypt<sup>298</sup>; Merneptah (1213-1203) certainly sent grain to Hatti and to Ugarit in response to emergency requests.<sup>299</sup> The stability the treaty brought to Egypt likely contributed to Merneptah's successful suppression of a Libyan-Nubian revolt in 1209, and allowed Hatti, once Greek Ahhiyawa lost its hold in mainland Anatolia (Milawata), to focus on the Assyrian threat, and promote stability in Syria through the provision of hegemonic services such as arbitrating between vassal states.<sup>300</sup>

Peace between Hatti and Assyria took longer to develop. As a result of territorial disputes and the latter's expansionist outlook, relations between Hatti and Assyria remained poor for the first part of this period and in 1237 a battle was fought at Nihriya, which the Assyrians won.<sup>301</sup> Even so, afterward, with Assyria increasingly occupied with digesting Babylon (which had long ceased to be a major power) and Hatti distracted with internal problems, close diplomatic and commercial relations developed along the "Great king" and "brother" model, resulting in a "prolific exchange" of letters and "lucrative trade."<sup>302</sup> The two would not fight again in the LBA.

In the words of K. A. Kitchen, the peace between Egypt and Hatti "mantled much of the Ancient Near East for nearly three-quarters of a century."<sup>303</sup> It resurrected the 'international era' of trade and relations that had initially developed in Phase 2, and extended the life of the great states of the ANE as they faced increasing internal rigidities and external threats. Peace was only able to preserve the system for so long, however, and sometime in the early decades of the twelfth

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*the Catastrophe of CA. 1200 B.C.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 131, 215.

<sup>298</sup> Bryce, "The 'Eternal Treaty' from the Hittite Perspective," 8.

<sup>299</sup> Stiebing and Helft, *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*, 268; A. Bernard Knapp and Sturt W. Manning, "Crisis in Context: The End of the Bronze Age in the Eastern Mediterranean," *American Journal of Archaeology* 120, no. 1 (January 2016): 121.

<sup>300</sup> Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 215–16; Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 337, 343–44, 347.

<sup>301</sup> Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 351; *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 199; Jakob, "The Middle Assyrian Period," 122; Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, 347–53 has a different absolute timeline than Singer.

<sup>302</sup> Singer, *The Calm Before the Storm*, 375–83; Jakob, "The Middle Assyrian Period," 130–31.

<sup>303</sup> Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, 235.

century the states of the system collapsed, opening a new ‘dark age.’ But that is another story.<sup>304</sup>

### 2.3 Peace: How and Why?

So far, this chapter has resolved the outstanding disagreement regarding the relative peace of the ‘Amarna Era’ by arguing that Phase 1 (1550-1417) and Phase 3 (1350-1260) reflected the “realist norm” in which “war, or the threat of war, was the primary means of resolving disputes,”<sup>305</sup> but that Phase 2 (1417-1350) and Phase 4 (1259-1177) diverged from this norm, and really were periods of exceptional peace. These periods were exceptional both with reference to the other phases of the LBA and also to the whole course of ANE history, which (as shown in Section 2.1) was otherwise characterized by isolation, fragmentation, domination, or constant warfare. This periodization into various phases is bounded by the formation of a true Near Eastern international system, beginning c. 1550, and the collapse of this system (for reasons that remain disputed) in c. 1177. Within these bounds, peace was the result of the unprecedented bilateral settlements between Egypt and Hatti and Egypt and Mitanni c. 1417 as well as renewed settlements between Egypt and Hatti in 1259, and between Hatti and Assyria after 1237. In the intervening century (1350-1259), the system nearly broke down as a result of Hatti’s elimination of Mitanni as a Great Power and Assyria’s violent rise. That the Great Kings of the LBA were thereafter nonetheless able to recreate the stability of Phase 2, using virtually identical mechanisms, suggests that international peace as such may have uniform inputs.

The most prudent move at this point would be to conclude this chapter here: peace is sometimes more than just a name, and Eckstein’s “ancient men” on occasion did better than the constant violence of Hobbesian anarchy. *Quod erat demonstrandum*. The path of prudence, however, would not much aid the quest to develop a robust theory of major power peace. Consequently, this section will now seek to test the extent to which my nomothetic expectations about the nature of peace (Chapter 1) are confirmed, disconfirmed, or modified by the evidence available from the LBA. As developed in my previous chapter, my expectation is

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<sup>304</sup> Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age*; Cline, *1177 B.C.*; Knapp and Manning, “Crisis in Context”; Singer, *The Calm Before the Storm*, 655–78.

<sup>305</sup> David, “Realism, Constructivism, and the Amarna Letters,” 58.

that there is a uniform underlying *motivation* for peace—the judgment that the benefits of peace outweigh those of war—as well as three *mechanisms* needed to secure a lasting peace: a recognized balance of power, thick recognition, and a territorial settlement. These mechanisms resolve the leading causes of war: the *configurative* question of boundaries and the *positional* question of hierarchy within a system. But before looking directly at these variables, a word needs to be said about existing explanations for relative peace in the Amarna era.

The consensus position among historians is that the stability of the era was a result of 1) a relatively even distribution of power, which made coexistence necessary, and 2) the development and acceptance of norms of brotherhood, which generated certain, rules, expectations, and even “international law.”<sup>306</sup> The political scientists who have studied the Amarna era were confused by periodization, and so did not see any peace that demanded explanation. Even so, it would not be difficult to expand the alternative Realist argument to my periodization. The argument would go like this: in 1417, Hatti and Mitanni were each eager to make an alliance with Egypt in order to “balance” against one another in their quest for supremacy over Northern Mesopotamia/Syria. Peace followed these alliances because Hatti was pulled away from rapacious imperial competition with Mitanni by its own internal troubles. As soon as Hatti reentered the competition, it sacked its ancient adversary, eliminating Mitanni. Now that Mitanni was out of the way, fear or ambition drove Hatti into conflict with Egypt in a third conquest for supremacy over the Levant. The contest for supremacy, demonstrably going nowhere, concluded with the 1259 agreement to split simply the prize—the Levant—in an act of cruel collusion. Thereafter, peace was sustained because Hatti was focused first on countering the Assyrian threat, and then (after 1237) on suppressing its own Anatolian vassal kingdoms. All throughout, peace should be thought of an accident of the balance of power: x & y temporarily coexist in order to fight or counter a & b. Brotherhood, and all that, were basically epiphenomenal: an expression of the dictates of power politics.

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<sup>306</sup> E.g., Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings*, 263; Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East*, 152; Raymond Westbrook, “International Law in the Amarna Age,” in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations*, ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 28–41.

I do not think either the “historians” or my putative Realists above are necessarily or wholly wrong. But neither I do not find either explanation as right as it could be, and insofar as the Realist explanation suggests peace was accidental or automatic, it is misleading. In time, I will circle back to the allegedly more parsimonious Realist explanation. For now, however, let us see how my united theoretical framework explains the periods of peace of the LBA, and their exceptions.

As explained in my introduction, my hypothesis is that three mechanisms must normally be present for a period of peace between major powers to be lasting. The first of these, called here BOP1, is a stable balance between two or more states. A balance is ‘stable’ when its inputs—which range from military power to administrative and logistical capacity—make it difficult to *eliminate* other major states. A related variable, BOP2, concerns the stability of the short-term balance.

My second mechanism of peace is Thick Recognition. In the context of international politics, Thick Recognition is an acknowledgment of equality between actors. “Thin recognition,” in contrast, involves merely an acknowledgment of the other’s right to exist. Finally, my third variable, a Territorial Settlement, asks whether states have any configurative disagreements and whether these have been resolved through negotiations in a manner *considered legitimate* by both powers.

Table 2, below, summarizes my reading of the LBA in relation to these mechanisms. In the analysis immediately below, I explain the key moments, or hinge points, as the door of peace opened—and shut—across the three centuries of the LBA.

Table 2.2: War and Peace between Major States in the LBA

Approx. Date	Dyad	BOP 1	BOP 2	Territorial Settlement	Thick Recognition	War or Peace?
1493-1417	Egypt-Mitanni	N		N	N	W
15 <sup>th</sup> cen.	Hatti-Mitanni		N	N	N	W
1417-1350	Egypt-Mitanni	Y		Y	Y	<b>P (67 years)</b>
1350-1330s	Hatti-Mitanni	Y/N	N	N	N	W
1330s-1260	Hatti-Egypt	N	N	N	N	W
1259-1177	Hatti-Egypt	Y	N	Y	Y	<b>P (82 years)</b>
1285-1240	Assyria-Hatti	Y		N	N	W
1237	Assyria-Hatti	Y	N	N	Y	W
1237-1177	Assyria-Hatti	Y	N	Y	Y	<b>P (60 years)</b>
1333-1177	Babylon-Assyria	N	N	N	Y	W

BOP1 is a mutually perceived long-term balance of power. BOP2 is the stability (Y) or exploitability (N) of the short-term BOP. Territorial Settlement indicates whether an agreement over the distribution of territory was negotiated through compromise and was *still considered legitimate* by both powers (Y), or never negotiated or negotiated but then rejected (N). Thick recognition indicates whether the relevant actors recognized each other as equals. W, when applied to long ranges of time, refers to *frequent* and *regular* conflict. A blank space indicates insufficient evidence to code the variable.

The first stage on the way to multipolar peace is indeed some sort of stable balance of power: otherwise, as in the epoch that would follow the LBA, one imperial state would simply destroy the others.<sup>307</sup> This was indeed probably what happened at the beginning of the LBA when a Hittite expedition, led by the “emerging technology” of horse chariots, suddenly ended Hammurabi’s dynasty in Babylon.<sup>308</sup> I code the period 1493-1417 as lacking a stable BOP because of the uncertainty generated by state formation in Egypt, Hatti, and Mitanni. Both Thutmose I and Thutmose III raided across the Euphrates, into Mitanni’s heartland, demonstrating complete disrespect for the latter’s power (which may indeed have

<sup>307</sup> Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 3.

<sup>308</sup> Nicholas K. Rauh, *A Short History of the Ancient World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 16. But this technological explanation is falling out of favor and may eventually be jettisoned entirely by historians.

been the point). Nonetheless, a stable long-term BOP is inadequate on its own to create an enduring peace, as seen in the persisting warfare between Hatti and Egypt from the 1330s until 1260. Not only was the military balance approximately equal, but the other inputs to the BOP—the offense-defense balance, geography and logistical capability—made the elimination of the other impossible and even minor configurational victories difficult and tiresome.

The *razzia* is a standard example of my BOP2 variable. Razzias could create and perpetuate patterns of conflict between the major powers when their raiding/dominance spheres overlapped, as they did in Syria in the LBA. Occasionally, a *razzia* could even undermine the stability of the long-term balance. An obvious example in the Amarna Era is Suppiluliuma's *razzia* into the Hurrian heartland, which exploited the short-term instability generated by 1) the indifference of an Egypt distracted by Atenism, 2) the rebellion of Assyria, and 3) the dynastic instability dogging the Hurrian monarch, Tushratta. By mastering the short-term balance, Suppiluliuma was able to accomplish precisely what a long-term balance is supposed to prevent: the elimination of a major actor. On the whole, opportunities to exploit the short-term balance seem to have been extremely common in the LBA. This was probably the result of the nature of imperial power, which on the whole relied not upon direct rule of distant territories, but instead vassal-overlord relations. In such an arrangement, the vassal would tend to submit to whomever was its biggest threat at any given time, so a *razzia* by a major power could lead to a vassal rapidly changing its allegiance, which would of course require an imperial response, forcing vassal states into a constant game of back and forth. Since communications and military operations took time, there was more or less a permanent short-term opportunity to acquire someone else's vassal. Suppressing the dynamics of this process—through a territorial settlement—was necessary to change the nature of the game. But before there could be any such settlement, thick recognition needed to be present.

Thick recognition was contrary to the political traditions of Egypt, which preferred to maintain its own complete superiority in a manner comparable to Rome in late antiquity or China for most of its history. Foreigners were stereotyped as

crocodiles, lizards, or mice<sup>309</sup> and Egypt's ruler—no mere king (šarru)—was set apart from all other monarchs, a distinction preserved by the title pharaoh, itself an invention of the New Kingdom.<sup>310</sup> The unipolar mindset, however, made negotiations and reciprocal diplomacy with other major powers—which Liverani rightly calls “the only possible starting point for the functioning of an international community”<sup>311</sup>—impossible. In and after 1417, Egypt chose to abandon strict insistence on its own superiority in order to reap the advantages of Great King diplomacy, gifts, and trade. This move would enable the distinguishing feature of the Amarna Era, the formation of what has come to be known in the scholarly literature as the “Club of the Great Powers,”<sup>312</sup> a type of relationship widely said to be analogous to the relations between Europe's Great Powers in the long nineteenth century.<sup>313</sup>

Even so, Egypt did not fully abandon its unipolar worldview when it entered the international community. As the receiver of multiple embassies, the other powers implicitly recognized Egypt as first among equals. And the Pharaoh was pleased to receive foreign princesses as his bride, but not to dispatch his own daughters. Even so, by entering into treaties in the manner of the Syro-Mesopotamian tradition, by swearing oaths before the gods, and by calling the other powers “Great King” and “brother,” Pharaoh was indicating equality. In the Egyptian language, Pharaoh was a monarch set apart. But in Akkadian, the diplomatic *lingua franca*, he too was a šarru. Liverani contends that the ambiguity enabled Pharaoh to be both set apart but also equal:

The symmetrical view is true, since negotiations and transfers of goods really took place according to the code of brotherhood and reciprocity. The centralized view is also true, since diplomatic contacts were a consequence

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<sup>309</sup> Muzhou Pu, *Enemies of Civilization: Attitudes toward Foreigners in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

<sup>310</sup> Samuel A. Meier, “Diplomacy and International Marriages,” in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations*, ed. Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 166.

<sup>311</sup> Liverani, “The Great Powers' Club,” 21; Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 280–82.

<sup>312</sup> Tadmor, “The Decline of Empires,” 3; Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 280.

<sup>313</sup> Singer, *The Calm Before the Storm*, x.

of the successful Egyptian campaigns in Syria, and also because the Asiatic partners show a degree of submissiveness and a greater interest in exchange than Egypt.<sup>314</sup>

In the end, for Egypt's partners, what mattered was that the Pharaoh was playing "the game," even if he got to assume the leading role.<sup>315</sup> And the truth was, most of Egypt's actions could be interpreted in a variety of ways: for some states, becoming a "father in law" was more honorable than receiving a foreign bride.<sup>316</sup> Ambiguity, and cultural difference, provided the space Thick Recognition needed to survive as a concept, and it in turn facilitated the third stage on the way to a multipolar peace: a broader political settlement.

The variable "territorial settlement" refers to an agreed configurative distribution. But territorial settlements are usually just a part of a larger political settlement. And such broader settlements seem to have both objective and subjective/intersubjective elements. For the Hittites, for instance, foreign lands were by default "hostile"; a friend, in contrast, was "one with whom accommodation has been reached."<sup>317</sup> The objective act of settling disputes moved the other into a different subjective category. This was just as true for Egypt and Mitanni as it was for Hatti. Once initial political settlements had been reached—differences negotiated, boundaries recognized, and spheres divided—peace remained 'sticky' despite the disappearance of the original conditions that made it necessary. This is seen in relations between Egypt and Mitanni, which remained positive and peaceful even after Hatti's "concentric invasions" no longer compelled Mitanni to seek outside alliances. This can also be seen in the generations after the second Egypt-Hatti settlement (1259): even as Hatti's power declined—negating the original reason for a settlement—Pharaoh faithfully supported his brother anyway. Once they had shifted their conceptual categories<sup>318</sup> from 'enemies' to 'friends' and 'equals,'<sup>319</sup> the default position became one of cooperation instead of competition;

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<sup>314</sup> Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 182.

<sup>315</sup> Liverani, 197.

<sup>316</sup> Pu, *Enemies of Civilization*, 87.

<sup>317</sup> Gary Beckman, "The Hittites Make Peace," in *Krieg Und Frieden Im Alten Vorderasien*, ed. Hans Neumann et al. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 117.

<sup>318</sup> For IR theorizing on this point: Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, chap. 6.

<sup>319</sup> Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 280; Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 123.

the stability of the relationships, in other words, indicate this was not merely a Realist peace dependent on deterrence and the balance of power alone.<sup>320</sup> Realism might explain *why* states make political settlements (about which more below); it cannot explain why they maintain them.

Political settlements are events, but they are also processes. After each major settlement of the LBA, the system was thereafter maintained and sustained by “endless negotiations,” which preserved the equilibrium.<sup>321</sup> In a way perhaps peculiar to the Amarna Age, diplomatic contentiousness was not a bug but a feature, and permitted the peaceful “discharging” of “hidden aggressiveness”: ritual trade and disputes were a substitute for war perhaps in the same way hunting great animals could be an alternative to foreign razzias (the hunting of humans).<sup>322</sup> In other words, bilateral settlements must be maintained, indeed recreated or reenacted, through an ongoing peaceful relationship. This is the sequel stage of my theory. In this stage peace starts to stick.

The two peaceful phases of the history of the LBA (1417-1350; 1259-1177) were characterized by configurative and positional settlements. Even the seemingly always violent Assyria eventually joined this system of relations (after 1237).<sup>323</sup> The two violent phases (1550-1417; 1350-1260) were characterized by territorial disputes (which given BOP2 instability were always easy to exploit for advantage), attempts to eliminate the other (Thutmose III and Suppiluliuma), and the conception of the other as inferior, subordinate, or illegitimate (e.g., Egypt and Assyria’s treatment of Hatti in the first half of the thirteenth century). Accepting the stability of the BOP, recognizing other major powers as an equal, and settling territorial

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<sup>320</sup> Pace David, “Realism, Constructivism, and the Amarna Letters,” 64.

<sup>321</sup> Liverani, “The Great Powers’ Club,” 21–22.

<sup>322</sup> Liverani, 23, 27; Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 150; for the sublimating of hostility in late antiquity, see Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 45 (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2009), 31, 114. The concept deserves new theorization.

<sup>323</sup> “My father was your enemy ... but I am the friend of my brother,” the Assyrian monarch Tukulti-Ninurta wrote to the Hittite king at the beginning of his reign. See Singer, *The Calm Before the Storm*, 355. And in turn, the Hittite monarch reminded the young Tukulti-Ninurta of the touching last wish of his father Shalmaneser: “Become (sons) of a single father and mother!” Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East*, 137.

differences were the key mechanisms that secured peace. When the mechanisms were not in operation, war was the result.

Assuming these three variables describe accurately *how* multipolar peace happened, it still leaves unanswered *why*. Why did the major states of the ANE, in the two phases outlined above, choose to recognize each other thickly and to negotiate mutual accommodations? The answer seems to be that they (1) recognized that the balance of power was stable and no easy conquest could be achieved<sup>324</sup> *or* that the balance of power was potentially unstable and that some rivals needed to be placated and then (2) assessed the benefits of a newly cooperative relationship as superior to the status quo, even though it would require making concessions to the other.<sup>325</sup> The why question cannot be answered any more specifically than the rationalist formulation given above because the motivations of individual leaders and regimes are not uniform and are often unknowable, particularly after a gap of thousands of years. For this current inquiry, this is not a problem as my investigation is not of the underlying cause for peace, but instead its actual mechanisms.

So far, the question of why the Hatti-Egypt peace of 1417 failed in the mid-to-late fourteenth century has gone unanswered. This is an appropriate place to attempt a solution, as the failure not only had catastrophic effects in the ANE, but it also potentially challenges the robust—and sticky—account of peace I have developed above.

The system-wide breakdown in peace of the mid-fourteenth century originated in the long-simmering hostility between Hatti and Mitanni, which had never signed a Great King treaty with each other. Instead, they had managed to live in relative peace as a result of Hatti's inward turn and the maintenance of an asocial balance of power that depended on mutual deterrence and tit-for-tat responses to violations of the status quo. This was a "Realist" relationship par excellence. Hatti's new king, Suppiluliuma, however, considered himself too good for even the basic

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<sup>324</sup> E.g.: "It was becoming increasingly difficult for both [Egypt and Mitanni] to move beyond" the established frontier. Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 292. Or: "Slowly dawning on the consciousness of both [Egypt and Hatti] must have been the realization, notwithstanding a further fifteen years of fighting, of the futility of trying to move the border north or south of its present line." Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 185.

<sup>325</sup> E.g., Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 2, 45.

reciprocity inherent in such relations. In response to Hittite plundering in Hurrian lands, the Hurrian king, Tushratta, threatened to respond in kind. Suppiluliuma—by his own historical account—recorded this threat as “presumptuous,” declaring: “I, Great King, King of Hatti, maintained my pride before him.” After losing some initial engagements, Suppiluliuma saw in the rebellion of Assyria against their Hurrian overlords a grand BOP2 opportunity. He therefore launched a razzia to “the city of Washshukkanni in search of plunder.” This met with total success, and thereafter the entire land of Mitanni went “to ruin.”<sup>326</sup>

Having destroyed a Great Kingdom, Suppiluliuma then advanced into Mitanni’s sphere of domination in Syria, which abutted Egypt’s. He seems to have been obsessed with his own superiority.<sup>327</sup> He thought little, or not at all, of Hatti’s previous peace with Egypt; infrequent communication between the two powers in the last two generations, a likely result of Hatti’s withdrawal during its “concentric invasions,” would have made it easy to ignore or forget the treaty previously sworn before the Storm God.<sup>328</sup> And then some accidents of contingency interposed: the soldiers of Kadesh, vassals of Egypt, seem to have advanced against the Hittite armies as they approached the city, providing an excuse for Hatti to start gobbling up Egyptian vassals; the Zannanza Affair followed, this time providing the occasion for all-out war against Egypt. According to the Hittites’ own historiography, Suppiluliuma’s hubris was followed by nemesis: he died of the plague as punishment for violating the oath made generations earlier before the Storm God (i.e., the settlement of 1417). But even this proved inadequate to end hostilities between the two Great Powers, and it would take two generations of warfare to convince the Hittites that the balance of power was stable—Egypt would not, à la Mitanni, collapse like a house of cards—and to reveal the unlogic of the Hittite grand strategy: domination of Syria had required eliminating Mitanni, which the Hittites had managed to accomplish; but the quest for domination had now created a costly and seemingly pointless war with Egypt and facilitated the rise and territorial expansion of an even more expansionist power than Mitanni—Assyria—even as

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<sup>326</sup> Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 42–44.

<sup>327</sup> Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, EA 42.

<sup>328</sup> In contrast more than 100 letters would be exchanged by Egypt and Hatti during the reigns of Ramesses II and Hattusili III. See Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 127 ff.

Hatti's heartland was increasingly depopulated and its vassals as rebellious as ever.<sup>329</sup> Something had to give, and under Hattusili III, Hatti would rediscover the mechanisms of peace it had first agreed in 1417.

In sum: the peace of Phase 2 was shattered when the Realist anomaly of Hittite-Hurrian relations was brought to the fore by a leader of Napoleonic ambitions who capitalized on a short-term BOP opportunity to destroy one of the international system's key states. The destruction of Mitanni then recreated a conquest for supremacy in the Levant à la the competition of the fifteenth century. If peace and cooperation had been sticky before, now it was war and hostility that became sticky. It would take a full two generations for the Hittites to decide that the benefits of peace might be preferable to those of war, and once this judgment was formed, they rather suddenly rediscovered (literally: in their archives) the older pattern of relations. From this rediscovery, a new settlement followed, ending forever Egyptian-Hittite hostility.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Peace in the Amarna Era was more than a name. This does not mean it was a Kantian 'positive peace' built on a "broader vision of a world united in peace and harmony"<sup>330</sup> or what modern theorists call a Security Community. But at the same time, it was not merely a 'negative peace' in which war just happened to be temporarily absent and coexistence "passive."<sup>331</sup> This designation indeed best describes the Hittite-Hurrian relationship, which eventually wrecked the broader phase of peace. The periods of peace in the Amarna Era ranged from Cold to Normal Peace. Recognition and reciprocity were not the default orientation of any major actor in the ANE; they were, on the contrary, a learned behavior: an alternative to the costly razzias and squabbling over vassals that persisted *even* when the balance of power was stable. But once the Great Kings embraced the mechanisms of peace—acknowledging the BOP as stable, recognizing one another as equals, and settling their territorial and political differences through formal treaties—former enemies were moved into the category of ally/friend, and the

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<sup>329</sup> Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 304–5, 311, 316, 328.

<sup>330</sup> Bryce, *Letters of the Great Kings*, 79.

<sup>331</sup> Johan Galtung and Dietrich Fischer, *Johan Galtung: Pioneer of Peace Research* (Berlin: Springer, 2013), chap. 17.

newly peaceful relationship seemed to stick rather than coming unglued at every fluctuation in the immediate balance of power. The time-horizons of these powers expanded, and as relations progressed, irritants could be worked out diplomatically or—even better—left to fester as a way to maintain the relationship or to achieve triumphs without the bother of war. The Amarna peace was not principally the result of chance or lucky circumstances, but the outcome of a process whose elements were both objective (a stable balance of power; a territorial settlement; the reciprocal exchange of gifts) and intersubjective (perceiving this balance; judging peace as more valuable than conflict; mutual recognition of equality). Its prequel was costly war, and its sequel sticky peace. Whether these elements were constitutive of other prolonged periods of peace in world history is the subject of the next two chapters.

### 3 Powers at Peace: Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity

What was being done by the Persians was not peace but a delay in war, and they did not even desire peace so they should not fight a war, but they loved peace so as to fight a proper war.  
 Libanius (late 4<sup>th</sup> century AD)<sup>332</sup>

For in drawing up the writings of his will, he [Arcadius] designated the child as his successor to the throne, but appointed as guardian over him Yazdgird, the Persian King, enjoining upon him earnestly in his will to preserve the empire for Theodosius by all his power and foresight. [And] Yazdgird . . . did then display a virtue at once amazing and remarkable. For, loyally observing the behests of Arcadius, he adopted and continued without interruption a policy of profound peace with the Romans, and thus preserved the empire for Theodosius.  
 Procopius (c. 545 AD)<sup>333</sup>

The previous chapter spent a considerable amount of time narrating the international history of the Ancient Near East in the Late Bronze Age. This was necessary because IR scholars, and even historians, are uncertain of the period's relative peacefulness. As I demonstrated, once the "Amarna Age" is correctly periodized, it is apparent that there were indeed two phases of Great Power peace, and that each lasted for approximately three-quarters of a century. Peace became a possibility when the actors came to believe that its benefits outweighed war's benefits. Peace became a reality when states mutually recognized the balance of power, "thickly recognized" each other, and reached a territorial settlement.

This chapter moves forward in time to study the case of Rome and Persia in late antiquity (3<sup>rd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD). As before, the goal is to explain a significant period of peace between major powers that shared an international

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<sup>332</sup> Michael H. Dodgeon and Samuel N. C. Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (AD 226 - 363): A Documentary History* (London: Routledge, 1994), 156. The passage is referring to events that occurred in the first half of the fourth century.

<sup>333</sup> Procopius, *History of the Wars*, trans. H.B. Dewing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), bk. I, sec. 2. The passage is referring to the events of the early fifth century. I have updated the spelling of the Persian king.

system. However, unlike in the chapter on the Amarna System, there is no need to laboriously establish the existence of ‘peace’ in late antiquity because all specialists in the period agree that the Long Fifth Century was a time of extraordinary—and unique—peace between the superpowers of the era, Rome and Sassanian Persia.<sup>334</sup> The only open question in this regard is how long the Long Fifth Century was. The figures below (Fig. 1) show the possible periodizations, which range from a minimum of 139 all the way to a maximum of 177 years of peace. Either way, however, it is a long century (or a short two centuries), and in the annals of world history, an obvious deviance from the normal frequency of war.

*Table 3.1: Possible Periods of Peace, Early Beginning*

Beginning	Ending	Number of Years
363	502	139
363	528	165
363	540	177

Given the immense attention late antiquity has been given by modern historians from Edward Gibbon—for whom Rome did not fall until 1204 or 1453—on,<sup>335</sup> and the richness of the era’s primary sources when compared with any previous area or international system (including that darling of IR scholars, Classical Greece), it is disconcerting that as far as I have been able to ascertain, relations between the era’s superpowers have *never* been seriously studied by any

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<sup>334</sup> E.g.: A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, vol. 2 (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 1030–31; Fergus Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408 - 450)*, Sather Classical Lectures 64 (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2007), 70; Timothy E. Gregory, *A History of Byzantium*, 2nd ed, Blackwell History of the Ancient World (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 105, 119; Stephen Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire, AD 284-641*, Second edition (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 12, 88, 117. Tellingly, Arthur Eckstein, extending to late antiquity his contention that the ancient world was entirely Hobbesian, skips the Long Fifth Century, emphasizing instead the bloody Roman-Persian conflicts of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. See his “The Character of Pre-Modern Interstate Diplomacy,” 325–26.

<sup>335</sup> For his place in modern historiography: Mark Whittow, “Do Byzantine Historians Still Read Gibbon?,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Edward Gibbon*, ed. Karen O’Brien and Brian Young, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 78–92, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139547291.006>.

student of IR. The only IR scholarship that even approaches the topic is Edward Luttwak's book, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire*,<sup>336</sup> but Luttwak's principal focus is *Byzantium*, which can be said to have 'succeeded' Rome when the Muslim conquests reduced the Later Roman Empire to a rump Aegean empire in the mid-seventh century.<sup>337</sup> Otherwise, later Roman diplomatic practices are mentioned here and there,<sup>338</sup> but without deep discussion of late antiquity as a states system. Because Realists see history basically as repetition and Liberals are primarily interested in only the recent past, IR remains wedded to a comfortable ahistoricism.<sup>339</sup>

At the most basic level, consequently, this chapter aims to disrupt the discipline's dogmatic slumbers by introducing late antiquity's international system, furthering Barry Buzan's still mostly unfulfilled call for the English School to classify international societies across five millennia of history.<sup>340</sup> More particularly, however, this chapter will seek to explain the peace of the Long Fifth Century using the tools developed in Chapter One, and first used with relation to the Amarna

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<sup>336</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2011).

<sup>337</sup> James Howard-Johnston, "Byzantium and Its Neighbours," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Robin Cormack, John F. Haldon, and Elizabeth Jeffreys (Oxford University Press, 2008), 939–56, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199252466.013.0088>; Chris Wickham, *Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 47–50; W. V. Harris, *Roman Power: A Thousand Years of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>338</sup> E.g.: Christer Jönsson and Martin Hall, *Essence of Diplomacy*, Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Iver B. Neumann, *Concepts of International Relations, for Students and Other Smarties* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 29–30; 111; Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*, Third edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

<sup>339</sup> See Barry Buzan and Richard Little, "The Idea of 'International System': Theory Meets History," *International Political Science Review* 15, no. 3 (July 1994): 231–55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251219401500302>; Barry Buzan and Richard Little, "Why International Relations Has Failed as an Intellectual Project and What to Do About It," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 330, no. 1 (2001): 19–39; Barry Buzan and Mathias Albert, "Differentiation: A Sociological Approach to International Relations Theory," *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 3 (2010): 331.

<sup>340</sup> Barry Buzan, "The English School: An Underexploited Resource in IR," *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 03 (July 2001): 284, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210501004715>.

System in Chapter Two: the Balance of Power (long- and short-term), recognition (thin and thick), and a territorial settlement. The interplay of these elements, I argue, can explain the evolution of Roman-Persian relations from Hobbesian (i.e., enmity) to Grotian (i.e., rivalry) and then back to Hobbesian.

Indeed, the evolution in bilateral relations between these states occurred not as a result of any *gemeinschaft* “cultural unity,” the mechanism postulated by English School thinkers such as Martin Wight,<sup>341</sup> but instead “functionally from the logic of anarchy without preexisting cultural bonds”—the possibility Buzan theorized decades ago.<sup>342</sup> At the time Buzan could not think of any examples, though. This chapter traces the evolution of such a society.

Finally, this chapter also has implications for the historical understanding of war and peace in late antiquity—and therefore, for historians. As mentioned above, the period, and Roman-Persian relations in particular, have been extensively studied by specialists. Even so, there is no historical consensus on the causes of peace in the Long Fifth Century. To the contrary, the reasons offered by historians (which will be surveyed later on in the chapter) are becoming increasingly encyclopedic. Historians may be content concluding that “in the final analysis, causation and consequences were complex” as does Walter Kaegi with reference to the success of the Islamic conquests of the Persian and Roman Empires,<sup>343</sup> but this sort of ‘finding’ is of little value to the IR scholar interested in wider nomothetic processes and patterns. I believe my approach, which seeks to bring the idiographic and nomothetic into dialogue with one another—embracing both the peculiarities of an event and more general mechanisms/processes—can promote both better historical understanding and better theory. In this instance, such an approach is needed to bring some coherence to the numerous explanations currently offered by historians.

The chapter will proceed as follows. Section 3.1 narrates the history of war and peace in late antiquity. Section 3.2 then surveys historians’ existing explanations for the Long Peace of the Fifth Century. Section 3.3 reconceives the system’s periods of peace using the variables my theory of peace finds most

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<sup>341</sup> Wight, *Systems of States*, 33; cf. the argument in: Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends*.

<sup>342</sup> Buzan, “From International System to International Society,” 334.

<sup>343</sup> Walter Emil Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 286.

important: the BOP, recognition, and a territorial settlement. These, I stress, do not so much contradict the explanations offered by specialists as synthesize and order them—an outcome again reflecting Schumpeter’s conception of development as the carrying forth of “new combinations,” as quoted in the epigraph to Chapter 1.

The chapter is based on a diverse mix of primary and secondary sources. For the former, I relied foremost upon three excellent collections, which selected relevant extracts from hundreds of sources and translated them from more than half-a-dozen languages (Latin, Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, Middle Persian, Armenian, and Arabic).<sup>344</sup> When I cite from these three collections, I generally am referencing the gist of a combination of various sources on the subject, and so I refer the reader to the relevant section in the collection. Independently of the collections, I relied extensively upon Ammianus Marcellinus (c. 330-c.395), whose *Res Gestae* is the basic source for the mid-fourth century, Procopius (c. 500-c. 554), particularly the first two books (*De Bello Persico*) of his *History of the Wars*, and—for background details—on the *Chronicle* of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, which covers the years 494-506 in detail, and the *Chronicle* of Marcellinus, which covers 378 to 534/48 and gives a sense for what Marcellinus, a *vir clarissimus* of the first-half of the sixth century, thought important about the past. Following the practice of Classicists, specific modern editions of these sources are only cited if strictly necessary. As for secondary sources, my method remains that of Michael Mann<sup>345</sup>: to engage cross-disciplinary scholarship on the subject until the discussions become repetitive and additional secondary sources impart little new information. A final note on spelling: for Persian kings, I follow the simplified transliteration found in Mitchell’s recent synthesis.<sup>346</sup>

### 3.1 The Peace: There and Back Again

Although the purpose of this section is to give an overview of war and peace in the Roman East in late antiquity, every history has a pre-history, and the

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<sup>344</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 1*; Geoffrey Greatrex and Samuel N. C. Lieu, eds., *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars. Pt. 2: AD 363 - 630: A Narrative Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2002); Beate Dignas and Engelbert Winter, *Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity: Neighbours and Rivals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>345</sup> Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*.

<sup>346</sup> Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, 522–23.

dynamics of Rome's relations with Parthian Persia (247 BC – c. 224 AD) are worth a brief review. The Roman Republic had first expanded in the East in the first century BC, and Sulla formalized relations with the Parthians by establishing *amicitia* (friendship), but in a manner that symbolically indicated Persia's subordination. In mid-century, first Pompey and then Crassus launched invasions across the Euphrates, the border between the empires. After a series of wars, Augustus restored *amicitia* through a *foedus* (treaty) in 20 BC that reestablished the Euphrates as the recognized boundary and resulted in “a more or less uninterrupted peace between the two powers throughout the first century AD.”<sup>347</sup> By the beginning of the second century AD, however, Trajan (98-117) again sought to conquer Mesopotamia, but this attempt eventually failed, and the policy of aggression against Persia was reversed by Hadrian (117-38). As Augustus had done 150 years earlier, Hadrian reestablished *amicitia* on the basis of the status quo. Nonetheless, by the beginning of the third century, Caracalla (211-17) was again attempting to destroy the Persian Empire, an endeavor that failed after a bloody battle at the city of Nisibis in 217. Once again, the parties entered a *foedus*, but Rome also agreed to pay reparations to the Persians.<sup>348</sup> If a summary of a summary might be risked here, Rome's attitude toward Parthia was “conquer if possible, tolerate if required.”<sup>349</sup>

### *Rome and the Sassanians: 150 Years of Conflict*

The 220s and 230s brought major changes in both Persia and Rome. In the East, Ardashir I led a rebellion that would destroy the Parthian dynasty and inaugurate the Sassanian period (220s to 651). In the West, Alexander Severus was assassinated, beginning the “crisis of the third century” during which “the armies threw up twenty-five emperors in forty-seven years, only one of whom died in his

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<sup>347</sup> Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia*, 14.

<sup>348</sup> Dignas and Winter, chap. 1.

<sup>349</sup> The first century AD is a notable exception which indeed deserves further investigation. On the whole, Persia's attitude to Rome (and, earlier, the Seleucids) was, according to a recent analysis, the same. See Nikolaus Leo Overtoom, “The Power-Transition Crisis of the 160s–130s BCE and the Formation of the Parthian Empire,” *Journal of Ancient History* 7, no. 1 (2019): 111–55, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jah-2018-0024>.

bed.”<sup>350</sup> Ardashir would launch an aggressive new foreign policy,<sup>351</sup> intending to reconquer Mesopotamia (and possibly all of Asia Minor), thus reversing what Gibbon called “the long slumber of his predecessors.”<sup>352</sup> A series of wars followed, during which the Persians achieved a number of memorable victories, including Emperor Gordian III’s death on campaign in 244,<sup>353</sup> the sack of Antioch in 253,<sup>354</sup> and the capture of Emperor Valerian in 260.<sup>355</sup> By the mid-third century, as the fourth century Latin historian Aurelius Victor recorded,<sup>356</sup> Syria “had fallen under the dominations of brigands and a woman (i.e., Zenobia),” a reference to the rise of Palmyra as an independent polity in the face of Rome’s retreat. After a generation of internal chaos, however, in 272-3 Aurelian recaptured Antioch and eliminated Palmyra, parading Zenobia in a triumph through Rome.<sup>357</sup> With the accession of Diocletian (284-305), stability returned to Rome, allowing the empire to reassert itself in Mesopotamia, where the Persian king Narses (293-302) was definitively defeated at the Battle of Satala in 298 when Galerius captured Narses’ wives and daughters, who were returned to Narses in exchange for Persian acceptance of a Roman diktat.<sup>358</sup>

The so-called Peace of Nisibis secured for the Romans Northern Mesopotamia/Armenia as far as Lake Van, and established the Tigris river as the boundary in the South, fulfilling the century-long Roman ambition to push the border with Persia further east<sup>359</sup>; it was unquestionably a humiliation for Persia,

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<sup>350</sup> Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 24.

<sup>351</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 1*, chap. 1.

<sup>352</sup> Edward Gibbon, ed., *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1952), 87.

<sup>353</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 1*, chap. 2.

<sup>354</sup> Timothy D. Barnes, “The Persian Sack of Antioch in 253,” *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik* 169 (2009): 294–96.

<sup>355</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 1*, 58–65.

<sup>356</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, 85.

<sup>357</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, 105–8.

<sup>358</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, 126–33.

<sup>359</sup> R. C. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy: Formation and Conduct from Diocletian to Anastasius* (London: Francis Cairns, 1992), 1–7.

which for four hundred years had sought to maintain the Euphrates as the boundary between the empires.<sup>360</sup> See Map 3.1 for a general orientation.

*Map 3.1: Rome and Persia and Late Antiquity*



Source: Atlas of Iran Maps, Iran Politics Club: <https://iranpoliticsclub.net/maps/index.htm>. Used with permission.

<sup>360</sup> Dignas and Winter *Rome and Persia*, 87–88, 130, argue—following Gibbon *The Decline and Fall*, 1:151–52, whom they do not cite—that the treaty was negotiated by equals, resulted in a moderate outcome “acceptable” to the Persians, and should not be seen as planting the seeds for future conflict because of its “defensive character.” This argument is factually unsupported and conceptually wrongheaded. Narses’ ambassador came to Galerius not as an equal but “in supplication” (Peter the Patrician, frg. 13). There were no negotiations about the actual terms of the peace save the return of Narses’ wives and children; on the contrary, when Narses—who was so embarrassed about the likely terms he first emptied the room before speaking with the Roman envoy—sought to negotiate a better deal over Nisibis, he was told by the envoy that no negotiations were in fact authorized. The ‘peace,’ as (the future emperor) Julian rightly recorded in his *Orationes*, was “imposed” and accepted by the Persians only because “fear drove them” (Dodgeon and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 1*, 126). This was the typically Roman—unipolar—understanding of a treaty (see Nathan Rosenstein, “War and Peace, Fear and Reconciliation at Rome,” in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007], 236). Narses had to give “up to the Romans whatever territory they wanted” (Zonaras, XII in Dodgeon and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 1*, 131) in order to secure the return of his family. In short, this really was a diktat; it was accepted by Narses—against the better interest of the Persian Empire—because of his personal interests. Whether Rome’s intentions were “defensive” or not is irrelevant; for, as the security dilemma literature has long emphasized, ‘security’ built on the insecurity and humiliation of others tends to be ephemeral. See John H. Herz, “The Security Dilemma in International Relations: Background and Present Problems,” *International Relations* 17, no. 4 (2003): 411–16; Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *The Security Dilemma: Fear, Cooperation and Trust in World Politics*. And so it was.

The Romans themselves knew that the ‘peace’ solved nothing in the long run. In an edict just four years later, Diocletian would worry about Manichaeans acting as a fifth column, loyal instead to “the Persians – a nation hostile to us.”<sup>361</sup> It is unsurprising, therefore, that Diocletian expended great efforts thereafter to strengthen the frontier with Persia<sup>362</sup>; such activities could be usefully compared to the neglect of the Eastern frontier shown by future Roman emperors after more lasting settlements, e.g., Justinian after 532 (this treaty, and others, are discussed below). The pagan rhetor Libanius’s assessment of the mood of the first half of the fourth century (the Persians “loved peace so as to fight a proper war”), quoted in this chapter’s epigraph, illustrates Hobbes’ point that peace should be seen not as non-war, but an escape from the state of war: despite the absence of open warfare, both sides knew they were not at peace.

By 336/7, unrest in Armenia, incursions into Roman territory, and Persian persecution of Christians provoked Constantine to undertake a “conquest” of the “enemy” in the words of Eusebius,<sup>363</sup> though he died before he could carry it out. The quarter-century to 363 was one of constant hostility and frequent war between the two empires, with three major Persian sieges of Nisibis in 337, 346, and 350<sup>364</sup> followed by an eight-year break as both empires focused on the Huns.<sup>365</sup> A letter from Shapur II to Constantius II in 358, preserved by Ammianus Marcellinus (XVII, 5.3-5) makes clear that the disputed issue was the lands of Mesopotamia and Armenia taken by the Romans in the treaty of 298.<sup>366</sup>

When Julian became emperor in 361, he was determined to put an end to the Persian problem by obtaining a victory even more decisive than that of 298. He believed the emperors who had preceded him had been too meek, failing in three hundred years to conquer more provinces beyond the Tigris while Alexander the Great, in just ten years, conquered not just Persia but India too (Julian, *Ceasares*, 324). Ammianus Marcellinus, who accompanied Julian on the campaign and admired the pagan emperor, recorded (XXII, 12.1-2) the following motivations for

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<sup>361</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 1*, 135–36.

<sup>362</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, 136–39.

<sup>363</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, 152–55.

<sup>364</sup> Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia*, 90.

<sup>365</sup> Jackson Bonner, “A Brief Military History of the Later Reign of Šāpur II,” *Historia I Świat*, no. 6 (2017): 98–99.

<sup>366</sup> Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 19–20.

the invasion: 1) revenge for sixty years of disturbances in the Orient; 2) relief from the boredom of inactivity; 3) so he could achieve glory and the surname “Parthicus.” Such individual motivations, however, complement and do not displace the driving theory behind the invasion as expressed in a speech by Julian: that a true Roman emperor would eradicate anything that vexed the empire (Amm Marc. XXIII, 5.20).<sup>367</sup>

The expedition met with disaster when, outside the walls of Ctesiphon in 363, Julian was killed.<sup>368</sup> Jovian, proclaimed emperor by the army, then accepted the peace conditions imposed on him by Shapur in exchange for safe passage out of Persian territory. In this regard— notable concessions in return for immediate relief (Amm. Marc. XXV, 7.11)—the settlement of 363 was a mirror image the settlement of 298.<sup>369</sup> However, Blockley argues that it differed in one fundamental respect.<sup>370</sup> By fixing the new boundary at the Nymphius River and by eliminating the Roman outposts in Singara and Nisibis, strongholds that otherwise persistently threatened Persia’s geopolitical position in Mesopotamia, the Persians achieved a territorial equilibrium that was both tolerable to both empires and defensible. This point is proven by the bare fact that the equilibrium was maintained for the next two hundred years, a fact stressed by Augustine (in the midst of this period) a few generations later (*De civ. Dei* IV.29).<sup>371</sup>

Nonetheless, a Mesopotamian equilibrium did not mean general peace. The Romans, acquainted with victory and dominance, were certainly bitter about the whole affair, and already in 365 Valens set off on a new Eastern campaign. In the event, he had to return to put down a rebellion before even reaching the frontier, but

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<sup>367</sup> See Benjamin Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*, Rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), chap. 9 particularly p. 393. and for Rome’s theory of ‘peace,’: Rosenstein, “War and Peace, Fear and Reconciliation.”

<sup>368</sup> Dodgeon and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 1*, chap. 9.

<sup>369</sup> However, al-Tabari, recalling the Persian tradition in the ninth century, narrated not Roman supplication but mutual obeisance, indicating the agreement may have been remembered as more equal than that of 298 (Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 2*, 9.

<sup>370</sup> R. C. Blockley, “The Romano-Persian Peace Treaties of A.D. 299 and 363,” *Florilegium* 6 (1984): 28–49; Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 27–30.

<sup>371</sup> Hence Geoffrey Greatrex’s comment that the peace of the Long Fifth Century was “in no way the result” of the 363 settlement is highly exaggerated (“The Background and Aftermath of the Partition of Armenia in A.D. 387,” *The Ancient History Bulletin* 14, no. 1–2 (2000): 44).

he would try again in 370/1 and 377, but was distracted by events closer to home both times (Amm. Marc. XXX, 2.1-8). The thorn in the side of both empires was disputes in Armenia, which Shapur II had tried, and failed, to conquer.<sup>372</sup> Valens would die in 378 at Adrianople, and Shapur II, by then an old man, the following year. Both sides were distracted by internal problems, and so in the early 380s negotiations were opened to resolve the dispute over influence in Armenia; by around 387 an agreement was reached that essentially recognized the legitimacy of the existing spheres of influence in Armenia, corresponding to the loyalties of the land's two kings.<sup>373</sup>

It is—finally—here, towards the end of the 380s, that the Long Fifth Century began. With two minor exceptions, there would be a general peace between Rome and Persia in Syria, Armenia, and Mesopotamia until 502. This peace, as Gibbon would bitterly lament,<sup>374</sup> was based on a new theory of international relations: compromise and coexistence, rather than victory and domination; diplomacy as a “substitute” for war, rather than its “adjunct.”<sup>375</sup> This long peace was not a theme emphasized by the ‘Classicizing’ historians of late antiquity. The Greco-Roman historiographical tradition was much more interested in war and conflict; peace did not make a very good story.<sup>376</sup> Even so, it was the period of extraordinary peace that enabled Constantinople to manage affairs (particularly the

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<sup>372</sup> Greatrex, “The Background and Aftermath.”

<sup>373</sup> R. C. Blockley, “The Division of Armenia between the Romans and the Persians at the End of the Fourth Century A.D.,” *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 36, no. 2 (1987): 222–34; Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 42–43; Dignas and Winter, *Rome and Persia*, 185.

<sup>374</sup> Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall*, 1:380–81.

<sup>375</sup> Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 166; Jan Willem Drijvers, “Rome and the Sasanid Empire: Confrontation and Coexistence,” in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 450, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444306101.ch29>; Mark Humphries, “International Relations,” in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*, ed. Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 247, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521782746.008>.

<sup>376</sup> Drijvers, “Rome and the Sasanid Empire,” 441; and more generally: Michael Kulikowski, “Classicizing History and Historical Epitomes,” in *A Companion to Late Antique Literature*, ed. Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018), 141–59, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118830390.ch9>.

Goths and Huns) in the Lower Danube<sup>377</sup> and positioned the Eastern Empire to ameliorate the decline of the West; why it ultimately failed in this latter objective is disputed, but the failure cannot be blamed on conflict in the Long Fifth Century with the superpower to the East.

*The Long Fifth Century: One Achievement, Two Exceptions*

From 387 to 502 there was one crowning achievement for Roman-Persian relations in the East, and two relatively minor exceptions to the general peace. Both the achievement and the exceptions indicate the nature of the era's bilateral superpower relations even as they provide clues to the causes of the long peace's collapse.

The achievement is described by Procopius (*Wars*, I, 2): at the beginning of the fifth century, Arcadius was approaching death but his son, Theodosius II, was still a child, and Arcadius feared an unstable transition of power. He therefore appointed Yazdgird I (399-420), the Persian king, Theodosius' guardian. Yazdgird I accepted the position, apparently keeping watch on the Roman king through his 'representative,' the eunuch Antiochus.<sup>378</sup> For Greek historian Agathias (IV.26.6-7), writing 170 years later, such an episode—"to hand over one's dearest possessions to a stranger, a barbarian, the ruler of one's bitterest enemy . . . one who belonged to an alien and heathen faith"—was unthinkable. The contrast between the friendly Roman-Persian relations of the Long Fifth Century, and the increasingly bitter and total rivalry of the late sixth century, is highly instructive. The historicity of the adoption has been debated by scholars, and obviously cannot be seriously commented on here other than to note that a significant number of commentators find the story plausible, at least.<sup>379</sup> Perhaps the more important point is that—exact

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<sup>377</sup> R. M. Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 66–74.

<sup>378</sup> Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 52; Kenneth G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 82–83.

<sup>379</sup> E.g., Henning Börm, "Procopius and the East," in *Brill's Companion to Procopius*, ed. M Meier and F. Montinaro (Leiden: Brill, Forthcoming).

historicity aside—the story is a metaphor for the Golden Age of Roman-Persian cooperation that preceded the hostility of Justinian’s era (when Procopius wrote).<sup>380</sup>

The exceptions to the “Golden Age” occurred in 420-2 and 441. As it happened, both these “bugs” were converted into “features,” a process that mirrored the manner in which diplomatic contentiousness functioned constructively in the Amarna era<sup>381</sup> and illustrates the relative robustness of the fifth century’s international system—i.e., the system would not be destroyed by a few treaty violations. Each will be considered in turn.

The origins of the first war, lost to the mists of time by Byzantine historians who—remembering just one war—combined the events of 420-2 with those of 441,<sup>382</sup> have been brilliantly reconstructed by Kenneth Holum<sup>383</sup> and more recently confirmed and extended by Michael Gaddis.<sup>384</sup> In around 412, Pulcheria, the daughter of Arcadius, sidelined Antiochus and became herself “guardian” of Theodosius II; by 414, she had had Anthemius, a moderate former ambassador to Persia, arrested, and had solidified her hold on the reins of power.<sup>385</sup> Pulcheria, motivated by a “godly resolve,” facilitated the proclamation of a new law inviting persecution of Jews; Cyril’s pogrom against Jews in Alexandria followed, as did the murder of Hypatia.<sup>386</sup> A border war seems to also have been fought with Persia in 416/17.<sup>387</sup> Pulcheria’s imperial policy, hence, coincided with the fanatical resolution of certain Christians, who believed—in the words of a fifth-century abbot—that “there is no crime for those who have Christ.”<sup>388</sup> Such holy men, in 419 or 420, destroyed Magian fire-temples in Persia, producing an international

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<sup>380</sup> Anthony Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 65–67.

<sup>381</sup> Liverani, “The Great Powers’ Club,” 23, 27.

<sup>382</sup> Geoffrey Greatrex, “The Two Fifth-Century Wars Between Rome and Persia,” *Florilegium* 12 (1993): 1–14.

<sup>383</sup> “Pulcheria’s Crusade A.D. 421-22 and the Ideology of Imperial Victory,” *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 18 (1977): 153–72.

<sup>384</sup> Michael Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire*, *Transformation of the Classical Heritage* 39 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 196–202.

<sup>385</sup> Holum, *Theodosian Emperors*, 91, 96–97.

<sup>386</sup> Holum, 98–99.

<sup>387</sup> Andreas Luther, “Ein ‘Übersehener’ Römisch-Persischer Krieg Um 416-417?,” *Gymnasium* 121, no. 2 (2014): 183–93.

<sup>388</sup> Gaddis, *There Is No Crime*, 151.

incident. The Persian king ordered the bishop in charge to rebuild the temple, and sought otherwise to resolve the issue in a manner that would preserve his face; the intemperate manner in which these overtures were declined provoked a stern reaction—their execution, and a more general persecution of Christians—which, indeed, may have been the very intention of the zealots, for whom persecution was a glorious purifying fire.<sup>389</sup>

Pulcheria responded with righteous indignation and quick action: instead of initiating negotiations to resolve the trouble, as was the practice of the empire under Theodosius I and Arcadius, the government chose (in 420) to break the treaty with Persia and begin a war.<sup>390</sup> The war that followed in 421-22 was a stalemate. Its failure coincided with a Hunnic invasion of the Danube provinces and Theodosius II's marriage.<sup>391</sup> These three events broke Pulcheria's decade-long grip on government power. Meanwhile, Procopius (not the historian, but rather the son-in-law of the onetime Persian ambassador Anthemius) negotiated a renewed peace treaty with Persia in 422. Based on the *status quo ante*, the treaty restricted the movement of refugees, prohibited the building of new fortifications on the frontier, proclaimed mutual religious toleration, and (possibly) affirmed a Roman commitment to pay subsidies to support the defense of the Caspian Gates.<sup>392</sup> What began as a religious crusade had ended with an expanded agreement for coexistence, and Gibbon is correct to find the "tranquility of the East" to have been "scarcely interrupted."<sup>393</sup>

The second exception occurred in 441. It was more of a cross-border show of force than an actual war and seems to have only lasted a few weeks. Yazdgird II, who had recently succeeded to the throne and had to amass resources to fight the Kidarite Huns, had requested a subsidy from the Romans. Such payments, received in gold, were a domestic signal of the Persian monarch's excellence and could be

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<sup>389</sup> Gaddis, 197–202.

<sup>390</sup> Holm, "Pulcheria's Crusade," 162–63; Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 2*, 38.

<sup>391</sup> Holm, "Pulcheria's Crusade," 169–70.

<sup>392</sup> Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 57–58; Holm, "Pulcheria's Crusade," 170–71.

<sup>393</sup> Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall*, 1:535.

used more concretely to hire Hunnish mercenaries.<sup>394</sup> Theodosius II, “confident in the peace” with Persia, was focusing his efforts on retaking Vandal North Africa, and had apparently chosen not to honor the tradition (or agreement, depending on one’s interpretation) of paying the Persians a subsidy intended to partially reimburse Persia for its defenses of the passes through the Caucasus, which also benefitted the Romans.<sup>395</sup> It is hard to deny the inference that Theodosius acted overconfidently at this juncture. Persia was in fact the least of the Eastern Empire’s problems. The real threat to Constantinople—the empire’s true dilemma<sup>396</sup>—was on the north/south axis (between the Huns in the north and the Vandals in the south); the dilemma was that Constantinople was only strong enough to oppose one at a time.<sup>397</sup> The Vandals broke their treaty with Constantinople and took Carthage in October 439, and Theodosius responded (in 441) with a huge expedition to recover the entrepot. And yet: the expedition had to be recalled because of a Hunnic invasion of Thrace and the Persian show of force. Even if assuaging the Huns would have been difficult,<sup>398</sup> paying the Persians their subsidy (around 500 pounds

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<sup>394</sup> Henning Börm, “‘Es War Allerdings Nicht so, Daß Sie Es Im Sinne Eines Tributes Erhielten, Wie Viele Meinten...’: Anlässe Und Funktion Der Persischen Geldforderungen an Die Römer (3. Bis 6. Jh.),” *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 57, no. 3 (2008): 336–38.

<sup>395</sup> Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 2*, 44–45; Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 61–63. For the latest views on Persian defenses, which are increasingly believed to have been stupendously extensive and constructed in the mid-fifth century, see: Karim Alizadeh, “Borderland Projects of Sasanian Empire: Intersection of Domestic and Foreign Policies,” *Journal of Ancient History* 2, no. 2 (2014): 93–115, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jah-2014-0015>; James Howard-Johnston, “The Sasanian State: The Evidence of Coinage and Military Construction,” *Journal of Ancient History* 2, no. 2 (2014): 144–81, <https://doi.org/10.1515/jah-2014-0032>.

<sup>396</sup> Pace Zeev Rubin, “The Mediterranean and the Dilemma of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 1, no. 1 (June 1986): 13–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518968608569501>, who argues the dilemma was on the west/east axis (between the barbarians in the west and the Persians in the east).

<sup>397</sup> E.A. Thompson, “The Foreign Policies of Theodosius II and Marcian,” *Hermathena*, no. 76 (1950): 58–75.

<sup>398</sup> William Bayless, “The Treaty with the Huns of 443,” *The American Journal of Philology* 97, no. 2 (Summer 1976): 176–79 challenges Thompson’s argument that the Huns invaded in response to Theodosius refusing to make the subsidy payment promised them in 438; suggesting on the contrary, that the attack was simply opportunistic. In a fuller argument, Thompson E.A. Thompson, *The Huns*, Revised Edition, The Peoples of Europe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 88, 221,

of gold), “a negligible sum”<sup>399</sup> significantly less than the annual income of a single senator,<sup>400</sup> should not have been an issue, even if it came at an additional cost to the emperor’s prestige.<sup>401</sup> Once Theodosius saw that the Persians were serious, this is indeed what he did.<sup>402</sup> The affair ended, like the war of 420-22, with a renewed peace treaty and the addition of a commitment for the respective kings to live in “brotherly” relations.<sup>403</sup>

This peace would hold until 502, despite there being numerous opportunities to break it over the course of the next 80 years, such as a revolt in Armenia against Zoroastrian imperialism, which the Romans openly permitted the Persians to crush in 451, or the raids of Persian Arabs across the Roman border, which was settled diplomatically in 485.<sup>404</sup> This is not the place to explore the history of this phase of relations, but a dedicated study could almost certainly find around a dozen proximate causes for war that, instead of triggering a war, were pushed to the side or resolved diplomatically.<sup>405</sup>

War did, nonetheless, break out in 502. The causes appear to have mirrored those of 441, though the sources reveal some subtle differences. As in 441, the Persians demanded their subsidy in a moment of weakness: Kavad I (488-96; 499-531), who had only recently regained the throne after being deposed, needed to hold together a coalition of Hephthalite Huns and Arab allies, as well as satisfying his

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suggests giving up the bishop of Margus, who had apparently provoked the Huns, could have been adequate to prevent an all-out war. Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 137, suggests the Huns under Atilla were actually socialized into the system of international relations.

<sup>399</sup> Rubin, “The Mediterranean and the Dilemma,” 39.

<sup>400</sup> Thompson, “The Foreign Policies,” 73.

<sup>401</sup> Such payments, by ‘de-thesaurizing’ unproductive gold, may indeed have helped to stimulate the overall economy since the gold generally found its way back to the Roman Empire. A. D. Lee, *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History*, Ancient World at War (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 2007), 122 n. 10. The same was true of payments in the Song era of Chinese history, discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>402</sup> Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 61.

<sup>403</sup> Evangelos Chrysos, “Some Aspects of Roman-Persian Legal Relations,” *Kleronomia* 8 (1976): 19 fn. 4.

<sup>404</sup> Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 69, 84, 87.

<sup>405</sup> See Henning Börm, “A Threat or Blessing? The Sasanians and the Roman Empire,” in *Diwan: Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Carsten Binder et al., 1. Auflage (Duisburg: Wellem Verlag, 2016), 631–33; Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 2*, chap. 4.

own nobility. The first part of this task required the Persian king to pay out subsidies, particularly to the Huns, to whom Kavad owed tribute, but his treasury was empty (Procopius, *Wars*, I.7); the second part required prestige, which could be gained either from a Roman subsidy, or a military victory.<sup>406</sup> Kavad's position was actually quite desperate: there was a famine in Persia, and various tribes were besieging the Persian stronghold of Nisibis; his regime's survival depended on either being given tribute by the Romans, or on taking it.<sup>407</sup> Kavad requested the subsidy from the Roman emperor, Anastasius. Procopius records (*Wars*, I.7.1-2)<sup>408</sup> that Anastasius' advisors counseled him "that it was disadvantageous to strengthen the friendship of their enemies with the Hephthalites with their own money; rather it was better (for the Romans) to stir them up against each other as much as possible." Kavad, in consequence, simply sought to take tribute, launching a plundering invasion first into Armenia and then into Mesopotamia, both of which were poorly defended. Initial Persian successes were finally matched in 504, when the Romans began plundering in Persia's territory, undermining, henceforth, Kavad's incentive for continuing the war.<sup>409</sup> At the end of 506, a truce was agreed for seven years (Procopius, *Wars*, I.9.24).

#### *The Breakdown of the Long Peace*

This seven-year truce was a transition point. The war of 502 had ended normal peace (a 4 on the spectrum presented in cp. 1); with the signing of the truce, Roman-Persian relations entered a period of cold peace (a 3 on the peace spectrum) that lasted until 540 or 571. Some sixth-century historians (such as John Malalas)

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<sup>406</sup> Blockley, *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 90.

<sup>407</sup> Geoffrey Greatrex, *Rome and Persia at War, 502 - 532*, Arca 37 (Leeds: Cairns, 1998), 7, 51–52, 76–77.

<sup>408</sup> Trans. from H.B. Dewing's edition.

<sup>409</sup> F. K. Haarer, *Anastasius I: Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World*, 1st ed (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 2006), 63; Greatrex, *Rome and Persia*, 112–15.

conceived of 502-532 as a single war,<sup>410</sup> as do some modern scholars.<sup>411</sup> Blockley, in contrast, suggests that it was a proper peace modeled on the earlier agreements. He argues that the short time period indicated a shift in the bilateral mood: no longer were the powers orientated toward “long-term stability”; the game now was “short-term advantage.”<sup>412</sup> This change in mood is precisely what I am calling ‘cold peace.’

Around 521 or 522, the king of Lazica, a client of the Persians, decided he wanted to switch sides, generating new enmity between Rome and Persia.<sup>413</sup> Kavad I undertook a search of his archives in order to properly formulate the Persian response, and in this process the story of Yazdgird I adopting Theodosius may have been rediscovered.<sup>414</sup> Kavad, who wished to see his third son, Khusro, succeed him, then dispatched (in c. 525) a bold proposal for a deep bilateral rapprochement to Constantinople: a new guardianship agreement. As Procopius (*Wars*, I.11) tells the story, Kavad saw the agreement as a way to “put an end both to the war and the causes of war”—in other words, to restore the ‘normal peace’ that had predominated prior to 502. Procopius reports that the proposal was dismissed by Proclus, an advisor to the emperor, as an “innovation” that essentially surrendered the empire to the Persians. The court in Constantinople countered with a different offer: that the Persian prince would be adopted in the manner “befitting a barbarian.” Khusro himself came to the Tigris River for the negotiations, which were also intended to dispose of the Lazica question (as well as a similar dispute in Iberia).

When Khusro received word that Constantinople would see him adopted as a barbarian he was “deeply injured” and vowed “vengeance” for the Roman insult.

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<sup>410</sup> Greatrex, *Rome and Persia*, 1 fn. 1; Geoffrey Greatrex, “Byzantium and the East in the Sixth Century,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 480, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521817463.019>.

<sup>411</sup> James Howard-Johnston, “The Sasanians’ Strategic Dilemma,” in *Commutatio et Contentio: Studies in the Late Roman, Sasanian, and Early Islamic Near East. In Memory of Zeev Rubin*, ed. Henning Börm and Josef Wiesehöfer (Düsseldorf: Wellem Verlag, 2010), 45.

<sup>412</sup> *East Roman Foreign Policy*, 91–92, 162; cf. R. C. Blockley, “Subsidies and Diplomacy: Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity,” *Phoenix* 39, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 69–70.

<sup>413</sup> Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 2*, 79–80.

<sup>414</sup> Greatrex, *Rome and Persia*, 135.

The Persian overture had been returned, in the words of the most recent specialist to reexamine these events in detail, “with deliberate provocation”<sup>415</sup>: it was simply not the case that adoption implied a Persian inheriting the Roman throne, as Theodosius and Yazdgird obviously understood a century earlier.<sup>416</sup> Justin and Justinian did not want to put relations on a normal peace footing. And so war followed, first by proxies in the Transcaucasus, then more openly in Armenia (c. 527), and then by means of a preemptive Roman invasion of Mesopotamia.<sup>417</sup> Kavad responded in 530 with a major invasion, which was defeated at Dara; in 531, the Persians made up for this by defeating the Romans at Callinicum. That the Nika revolt followed directly on the heels of Justinian’s defeat was probably not coincidental.<sup>418</sup> Tired of war in the East—and perhaps now hankering for war in the West, where it might be easier to secure a prominent victory<sup>419</sup>—Justinian then paid the Persians 11,000 pounds of gold—“by far the largest recorded single payment to any foreign people or state during late antiquity”<sup>420</sup>—and recognized Khusro properly as a “brother” “according to the ancient custom” in order to secure a new “eternal peace” (Procopius, *Wars*, I.22.17).<sup>421</sup>

Despite the agreement of 532 being called the “eternal,” it ended just eight years later. Justinian, evidently unaware that short-term calculations now ruled the day, allowed Roman fortifications and garrisons in the east to deteriorate so he could focus on reconquering North Africa and Italy.<sup>422</sup> In 540, Khusro I invaded Syria, sacking Antioch. It had been almost three hundred years since the Romans had been so seriously defeated. War would continue, in a desultory manner, until

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<sup>415</sup> P. J. Heather, *Rome Resurgent: War and Empire in the Age of Justinian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 91–95; Jared Morgan McKinney, “International Relations in Late Antiquity,” *International Studies Review* 21, no. 3 (September 2019): 539–41, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viz034>; cf. Greatrex, *Rome and Persia*, 136.

<sup>416</sup> Heather, *Rome Resurgent*, 92.

<sup>417</sup> Greatrex, *Rome and Persia*, 142–50.

<sup>418</sup> Heather, *Rome Resurgent*, 109 ff.

<sup>419</sup> Heather, 118.

<sup>420</sup> A. D. Lee, *From Rome to Byzantium AD 363 to 565: The Transformation of Ancient Rome*, Edinburgh History of Ancient Rome (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 258.

<sup>421</sup> Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 2*, 96–97.

<sup>422</sup> Greatrex and Lieu, 99–102; Greatrex, *Rome and Persia*, 220–21; Heather, *Rome Resurgent*, 214.

562, when it was ended by the payment of subsidies to the Persians in a settlement supposed to last fifty years.<sup>423</sup>

The Fifty Years' Peace lasted ten years, scarcely better than the eight that followed the "eternal peace." In 572, in a watershed decision, Justin II cast "aside the traditional solidarity which had bound together the two sedentary empires in the face of a threatening outer world."<sup>424</sup> Allying himself with the new Turkish Empire, he sought to destroy the Persian Empire. Justin, the sixth-century historian Menander the Guardsman recorded (frag. 13.5), "thought that the power of the Persians would easily be overthrown and annihilated." War, which seems to have grown increasingly cruel,<sup>425</sup> would be fought between the Persians and Romans for "forty-three of the fifty-five years between 573 and 628."<sup>426</sup> In 616, Khusro II would imitate Justin II in seeking to eliminate his rival.<sup>427</sup> In the end, however, Persia's fervor seems to have waned,<sup>428</sup> and Rome and Persia, exhausted, reestablished peace in 630, just in time to "lose to those who should not conquer them" having "waste[d] their own strength."<sup>429</sup> Normal peace had given way to cold peace, which in turn had given way to war and cold war.

### 3.2 Why the Long Peace? Existing Explanations

As noted in the introduction, the Long Peace of Late Antiquity has not only not been explained by IR scholars, it is entirely unknown to them. In contrast, among historians the Long Peace suffers not from a deficiency of explanations, but an excess. There are perhaps a dozen different explanations, depending on how one counts, and exponentially more possible combinations of explanations. This has the

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<sup>423</sup> Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 2*, 131–33.

<sup>424</sup> Howard-Johnston, "Commutatio et Contentio," 50.

<sup>425</sup> Greatrex and Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier Pt. 2*, chaps. 11, 13.

<sup>426</sup> Heather, *Rome Resurgent*, 321.

<sup>427</sup> Howard-Johnston, "Commutatio et Contentio," 64; Howard-Johnston, "The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity: A Comparison," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, ed. Averil Cameron, vol. III: States, Resources and Armies, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 1 (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1995), 164.

<sup>428</sup> James Howard-Johnston, "Heraclius' Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the East Roman Empire, 622-630," *War in History* 6, no. 1 (January 1999): 33–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/096834459900600101>.

<sup>429</sup> Peter the Patrician, Fragments 6.1, trans. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*, 236. For a survey see Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, 176 ff.; Harris, *Roman Power*, chaps. 6–7.

cumulative effect of making the peace seem overdetermined—even predetermined—and certainly does not contribute very much to a nomothetic understanding of peace. This section will review these explanations, seeking to organize them in the most coherent manner possible while commenting on their merits and limitations. Section 3.3 then attempts a more parsimonious reconstruction.

### *Structural Explanations*

There are four “structural” explanations, which I organize here as geographic, balance of threat, informational, and financial.

The geographic explanation contends that the *limes* from the Black Sea to the Red Sea, which is said to have remained a relatively stable boundary between the two empires for some 600 years, reflected the “geopolitical” realities of the region, the recognition of which promoted stability between the empires.<sup>430</sup> A related explanation is that the topographic features of Mesopotamia, which channeled conflict along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, promoted the dominance of the defense,<sup>431</sup> as both the Romans and Persians built strongholds that had to be conquered if the frontier was to be changed. Since besieging cities took time, generally either side could gather a field army to challenge the invasion,<sup>432</sup> preventing the swift conquest of territories. Nonetheless, neither of these explanations, plausible as they are, accounts for variation in the frequency of war and peace across this same half-millennium period.

The most common structural explanation is that other threats, to both Rome and Persia, disrupted what Theodor Mommsen called the “eternal feud” between the two superpowers,<sup>433</sup> forcing them to direct their energies to more immediate

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<sup>430</sup> E. W. Grey, “The Roman Eastern Limes from Constantine to Justinian,” *Proceedings of the African Classical Association* 12 (1973): 24–40.

<sup>431</sup> Greatrex, *Rome and Persia*, 14.

<sup>432</sup> Brent D. Shaw, “War and Violence,” in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. G.W. Gowersock, Peter Brown, and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 139–40; cf. John Hugo Wolfgang Gideon Liebeschuetz, *From Diocletian to the Arab Conquest: Change in the Late Roman Empire*, Variorum Collected Studies Series CS 310 (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 1990), chap. 20.

<sup>433</sup> Börm, “A Threat or Blessing?,” 624.

challenges.<sup>434</sup> A variation on this theme is that Persia, from the mid-fifth to early sixth centuries, became the “Sick Man of the Near East” and oriented itself towards the east.<sup>435</sup> Persia’s pivot towards the west, in the sixth century, is supposedly what ended the period of peace.<sup>436</sup> This explanation, in its general and specific forms, can be classified as a subtype of BOP theory called by IR scholars “balance of threat.”<sup>437</sup> Rome and Persia set aside their existential struggle, and even chose to cooperate, in order to focus on the greater threats to their existence and prosperity.

John Lukacs’ maxim “true, but not true enough” applies well to this explanation. True: only serious external threats and repeated BOP1 stalemates between Rome and Persia could prod the two superpowers to abandon their respective ideologies of victory, reducing their conception of security from the all-encompassing demand for the submission of all other states to more modest formulas for coexistence.<sup>438</sup> “Disgraceful peace” (*pax inhonesta*) might be judged preferable to “dangerous war” (*bellum anceps*) in certain circumstances (Tacitus, *Annales*, 15.25), for ideology, on occasion, must defer to the realities of power. This realization is a key part of the initial necessary judgment (*why peace*): that the benefits of peace outweigh those of war/hostility. However, on its own, it indicates nothing about the mechanisms and necessary components of a lasting peace (*how peace*). These mechanisms will be discussed further in Section 3.3 below, but as the history of this period would reveal, these included two careful territorial settlements (one, in 363, dividing Mesopotamia; the other, in c. 387, Armenia); Rome’s payment of subsidies to Persia (probably beginning in the 420s); and the

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<sup>434</sup> Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, 132; Howard-Johnston, “Commutatio et Contentio”; Heather, *Rome Resurgent*, 76, 213.

<sup>435</sup> This sickness could also include domestic level variables, such as “dynastic disputes, internal rebellions,” etc., as noted by: Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602*, 2:1030. One scholar even claims that the period of Persian weakness began around 350. See: Hyun Jin Kim, *Geopolitics in Late Antiquity: The Fate of Superpowers from China to Rome*, Routledge Studies in Ancient History (London: Routledge, 2019), 32.

<sup>436</sup> Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 162–68; James Howard-Johnston, “The Grand Strategy of the Sasanian Empire,” in *Diwan: Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. Carsten Binder et al. (Duisburg: Wellem Verlag, 2016), 598–99.

<sup>437</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, New Edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>438</sup> Susan P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2002).

development of the language of equality (“brotherhood”). Threat perception has an important part in the overall story, but to use it to explain both peace and war across two centuries of history stretches the concept beyond its breaking point.

Two more ‘structural’ variables should be briefly noted: Lee shows that strategic intelligence of major expeditions acted as a “constraint” and contributed to the stability of the frontier.<sup>439</sup> In a similar vein, Shaw argues that the lack of fiscal flexibility, of the sort that enabled the military revolution of early modern Europe, constrained states’ war-making capability, and so promoted stability.<sup>440</sup> Both of these points, like geographic/geopolitical explanations, are true. But, since they remained true throughout the entire period, they cannot explain any variation in war and peace.

### *Domestic Explanations*

There are three domestic explanations, which I classify here as dynastic legitimacy, grand strategy, and Nestorianization.

The dynastic stability explanation is the most innovative. Henning Börm connects major-power violence of the third century to an incentive for insecure emperors to engage in war in the East to solidify their domestic position.<sup>441</sup> In contrast, during the Long Fifth Century, when Roman emperors no longer went on campaign, the incentives shifted: campaigns against Persia were no longer potentially personally rewarding; instead, since any victorious general could become a rival to the emperor, they were potentially personally costly. Since for the Long Fifth Century, Börm accepts the argument that Persia pivoted to the east, he concludes that it had no interest in aggressing in the west. Almost by chance, the period of peace would end as a consequence of the Persians unexpectedly successful sack of Antioch in 540, which hardened Rome’s latent ideological hostility towards Persia.<sup>442</sup> There is much to be said for this argument, which mirrors Paul Schroeder’s contention that after the Napoleonic Wars, the monarchs of Europe came to understand that new wars would also cause new revolutions.

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<sup>439</sup> A. D. Lee, *Information and Frontiers: Roman Foreign Relations in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), chap. 4.

<sup>440</sup> Shaw, “War and Violence,” 140.

<sup>441</sup> Börm, “A Threat or Blessing?”

<sup>442</sup> Börm, 635.

Since the latter was highly undesirable, the former needed to be avoided. Even so, just as the Long Nineteenth Century ended with Great Power war (which brought on the revolutions), so did the Long Fifth Century. Rome's dynastic incentives (i.e., the extent to which war strengthened or undermined the emperor's domestic political position) do not contribute anything to explaining the origins of the great seventh-century war between Persia and Rome. Nor, beginning with the war of 502, extending to Justinian's hostile rejection of Persia's adoption overture in c. 525, and ending with the decisions for war in 540 and 572, do they explain the sixth-century wars; the two exceptions to the Long Peace, 420-22 and 441, are similarly left in the cold. Furthermore, the timing of the shift is somewhat off: by most accounts, bilateral stability was rooted in the agreements of 363 and 387, but it was only after Theodosius I's death in 395 that emperors stopped going on campaign. A second limitation to the argument is that Roman emperors had long been adept at propaganda—using everything from ivory carvings to equestrian statues and coins—to claim the ideology of victory, even if it had been accomplished by a subordinate.<sup>443</sup>

The grand strategy explanation has been articulated by Greatrex<sup>444</sup> in a polemic meant to refute Isaac's<sup>445</sup> contention that late Roman policy was a strategic and motivated principally by greed and glory. Greatrex contends that, to the contrary, after Julian's invasion of Mesopotamia (which was itself perfectly justifiable) the Romans were not responsible for starting any war with Persia until 572, and even then, it was only the unhinged Justin II. The implied explanation for peace is this: so long as the Persians were weak or occupied with other affairs, there could be peace in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Armenia because the Romans just wanted to defend the status quo. This argument is unacceptable both conceptually and factually. Conceptually it represents a distressingly rudimentary theory of the causes of war. Since Thucydides, war has been understood to have both underlying and proximate causes—and “who started it” analysis tends only to focus on the latter of these. But even then, the path to war is dynamic, and can involve

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<sup>443</sup> See Lee, *War in Late Antiquity*, 30–50.

<sup>444</sup> Geoffrey Greatrex, “Roman Frontiers and Foreign Policy in the East,” in *Aspects of the Roman East*, vol. 1: Papers in Honour of Professor Fergus Millar FBA (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2007), 103–73.

<sup>445</sup> Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*.

government actions that vary from mere innocent resistance to negligent or even reckless acts.<sup>446</sup> Factually, Greatrex's assessment reverses much of his earlier scholarship, and certainly contradicts the reconstruction I have offered in this chapter. The Persians stirred up trouble after 298 because they were unsatisfied with Rome's imposed peace, which was the underlying cause of the decades of conflict that followed in the fourth century. In 420-22, the Romans appears to have been the instigator with reference to both underlying cause (growing Christian fanaticism) and the decision to resolve the dispute through war rather than diplomacy (the proximate cause). In 441, though not the instigator, Constantinople can be said to have acted thoughtlessly; in 502, recklessly; in 525 and thereafter, with belligerent intent; and in 540, with contributory negligence. In short, if the Romans had a defense strategy from the fourth through the sixth centuries, it was certainly not implemented in a consistent or coherent manner.

A final domestic-level variable is the suggestion that the "Nestorianization" of the Persian church, said to have been introduced at a church council in 486, facilitated Persian Christians' independence from the western church and thereby reduced the likelihood of Roman 'humanitarian intervention' into Persian lands as well as Persian suspicions of Christians as fifth columnists.<sup>447</sup> The awkward fact that Persian Christians did not really know what Nestorius actually believed until the mid-sixth-century aside,<sup>448</sup> it should be evident that the date of the Church of the East's independence (towards the end of the fifth century) is too late to have played any significant role in the peace that had already lasted 100 years, i.e., since c. 387. That being said, the initial moves toward independence had occurred in 410 (synod at Seleucia-Ctesiphon) and 424 (insistence that the eastern Katholikos was autocephalous).<sup>449</sup> Thus, the growing independence of the Persian Church likely *contributed* to great power harmony.

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<sup>446</sup> Hidemi Suganami, *On the Causes of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 173 ff.

<sup>447</sup> E.g., Peter Edwell, "Sasanian Interactions with Rome and Byzantium," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran*, ed. Daniel T. Potts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 849, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199733309.013.0026>.

<sup>448</sup> S.P. Brock, "The 'Nestorian' Church: A Lamentable Misnomer," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 78, no. 3 (1996): 23–55.

<sup>449</sup> Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia: From 550 BC to 650 AD*, New ed. (London: Tauris, 2006), 202–5.

### *Social/Relational Explanations*

A third basket of explanations might be called social or relational. A group of distinguished scholars emphasize a change in attitude, affecting both ends and means.<sup>450</sup> The traditional objective of the two superpowers was lowered from imperial victory to coexistence; in modern parlance, this shift could be rephrased as moving from primacy to parity. Meanwhile, the default tool of problem solving—war—was replaced by diplomacy. Evangelos Chrysos goes so far as to speak of “the birth of a new system of international legitimacy where abiding by signed agreements beyond political calculation acquires first priority,” which he dates to 363.<sup>451</sup> If 363 was the beginning, Chrysos sees 387 (the partition of Armenia) as the high point, the mutual acceptance of “a respectful order of international law” (in the words of the German jurist Karl-Heinz Ziegler). This order was extended in later treaties, and complemented by new innovations, such as making sovereign states, rather than mere sovereigns, the partners of a treaty, as seen in Justinian’s Eternal Treaty.<sup>452</sup> The social explanation summarized here suffers from an obvious problem: it looks much more like the “stuff” of peace itself, i.e., the dependent variable, or at best, like an intervening variable that links more fundamental causes with the effect we are seeking to explain. Births are the start of something new, but they must be preceded by conception and gestation.

### *First-Image Explanations*

A final explanation appeals to what IR scholars, following Waltz, have called the first image, i.e., the individual level of causal analysis.<sup>453</sup> Mitchell, for instance, suggests that “Higher levels of belligerence later in the sixth century reflected the personalities of the respective rulers, Khusro I and Justinian.”<sup>454</sup> This

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<sup>450</sup> Blockley, “The Romano-Persian Peace Treaties”; “Subsidies and Diplomacy”; *East Roman Foreign Policy*; Humphries, “International Relations”; Drijvers, “Rome and the Sasanid Empire,” 450; Howard-Johnston, “The Two Great Powers,” 162; “The Grand Strategy of the Sasanian Empire,” 590.

<sup>451</sup> Evangelos Chrysos, “Byzantium and Persia,” in *Le Relazioni Internazionali Nell’alto Medioevo*, Settimane Di Studio Della Fondazione Centro Italiano Di Studi Sull’Alto Medioevo, LVIII (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano Di Studi Sull’Alto Medioevo, 2011), 810.

<sup>452</sup> Chrysos, 814.

<sup>453</sup> Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*.

<sup>454</sup> Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, 132.

is not a widely-accepted explanation among historians for the reason already mentioned above: the BOP (or “third image”) explanation is the most common, and it makes the first image epiphenomenal. For example, Heather sees Justin/Justinian and Kavad/Khusro as simply responding to the incentives generated by the presence or absence of external threats in combination with domestic (“second image”) political incentives.<sup>455</sup> In short, if one thinks that events should be explained, insofar as it is possible, with reference to variables in the following order of importance: first, structural; second, domestic and social; and only lastly, individual, then it should not be surprising that by the time one reaches the first image there may not be much left to explain. This may be the case in the present instance; if so, it should not distract us from the reality that individuals interpret incentives, and the ‘structural’ and ‘individual’ in fact always go together.

### *Conclusion*

This section has surveyed four conceptual baskets of Long Peace explanations, organized by a framework inspired by Waltz’s levels of analysis. It contended:

- that structural explanations either did not have much capability to explain variation in war and peace (geographic, informational, and financial) or, even if explaining the motivation for peace, did not say much about peace’s mechanisms (threat/BOP);
- that domestic explanations influenced incentives, but failed to explain the two exceptions to the peace and why the peace eventually broke down (dynastic legitimacy and Nestorianization), or were poorly conceptualized (grand strategy);
- that social explanations are best interpreted as intervening variables;
- and that first-image explanations have not been generally seen to add much beyond that already predicted by other variables.

In sum: there are a good number of plausible interpretations, but none on its own can explain the origins of, the exceptions to, and the breakdown of, the Long Peace. To be fair, virtually all historians—implicitly or explicitly—mix and match a few explanations, usually contending that their preferred variable should be given more attention. Even so, the mix and match approach has not resulted in any

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<sup>455</sup> Heather, *Rome Resurgent*, 213, 322–25.

consensus. A pessimistic view is that explanations have fragmented; an optimistic view is that they are becoming encyclopedic. Either way, the outcome is unsatisfactory for anyone interested in peace as a concept. Section 3.3, below, attempts a more rigorous, and parsimonious, explanation.

### 3.3 Why the Long Peace? A Theory and a Synthesis

In Chapter One, I surveyed the literature on the causes of peace, from which I derived a theory that privileged three variables: an acknowledged BOP, thick recognition, and a territorial settlement. This section seeks to integrate the explanations offered by historians of late antiquity into my theory of Great Power peace. In other words, this section will use the nomothetic to better explain the ideographic.

For more than a century and a half after the rise of the Sassanian dynasty, Rome and Persia fought regularly. The causes of this long conflict were both “configurative” (*where* would each empire be constituted?) and “positional” (*which* power would be able to impose its will on the other?).<sup>456</sup> Any ‘success’ in this initial period approximates Hedley Bull’s description of the BOP in an international system: “a moment of deadlock in a struggle to the death.”<sup>457</sup> Hence the Persian capture of Valerian in 260 was reversed by the Roman victory of 298, which was in turn undermined by two generations of Persian subversion of the terms of the *diktat* of 298, which in turn (in part) inspired Julian’s quest in 363 to ‘solve’ the Persian problem. As testified by the art of the time—from Shapur I’s relief at Bishapur to Galerius’ Victory Arch<sup>458</sup>—both sides held to some version of the unipolar peace: i.e., peace was to be imposed on the adversary from a position of superiority. The fact that there was a roughly even distribution of power (even if the precise details changed with time) made achieving such a vision of peace impossible, for even apparent successes (as in 298) simply led to bitterness and revanchism. The two empires generally recognized the other’s right to exist (‘thin’ recognition), but neither was interested in solving disputes in a non-unipolar fashion. This century and a half of conflict should be seen as the *prequel* to the Long Peace.

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<sup>456</sup> For the framework: Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond,” 162–63.

<sup>457</sup> Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 101–2.

<sup>458</sup> See Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 53–99.

Beginning in 363, the hot war between the two empires began to cool. Persia's peace terms, imposed on the starving Roman army outside the walls of Ctesiphon, were undoubtedly a humiliation to the Romans' unipolar conception of peace. They nonetheless configured a territorial equilibrium that was rational. It took Rome some time to genuinely own a settlement they had accepted in weakness rather than imposed on the Persians from a position of strength. They were not initially satisfied, and dreamed of a reversal in Mesopotamia. But they failed to make a serious attempt. This stage of the settlement between the empires is best seen as a midpoint, a cold war relaxing into a cold peace (a 2.5 on the peace continuum). The will to fight was present to some degree, but contingent events, especially the disaster at Adrianople in 378, precluded actual conflict. After that loss to the barbarians, the Romans clearly had more pressing concerns than attempting to overturn a territorial equilibrium which both geography and 150 years of history indicated was essentially stable. The benefits of this territorial equilibrium were now seen to outweigh the potential benefits of seeking to overturn it. Accordingly, no Roman emperor until Justin II would seriously attempt to change the fundamentals of the Mesopotamian settlement.

A cold peace was unlikely to remain cool long, for Rome and Persia had outstanding disputes over Armenian clients and territories. Converting relations to a normal state of peace with Persia (and vice versa) would require an additional settlement, one negotiated rather than imposed. This was accomplished in 387, when the powers discovered a non-violent way to "mediate estrangement"<sup>459</sup>: diplomacy. The result of this 'new' way to solve problems was the partition of Armenia in c. 387, the first bilateral agreement between Rome and Persia that was rationally negotiated rather than imposed. It can be usefully compared with Galerius' envoy's statement in 298: he was not, in fact, authorized to make any compromise. With the Mesopotamian peace of 363 now having been *de facto* accepted by Constantinople, and with the Armenian question solved, the entire "configurative" problem—who gets what territory?—was resolved. It would essentially not be reopened until the sixth century. This was *not* for lack of opportunities. Problems in Armenia would come by like "streetcars": all one side or

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<sup>459</sup> James Der Darian, "Mediating Estrangement: A Theory for Diplomacy," *Review of International Studies* 13 (1987): 91–110.

the other had to do was board the streetcar, which could then be ridden to conflict.<sup>460</sup> Instead, both powers chose to resolve such disputes through diplomacy. In other words, peace was not just an event (363 or 387) but also a process that required continual commitment.<sup>461</sup>

What about “positional” conflict? And how does ‘recognition’ help explain the Long Peace? Thick recognition between Rome and Persia was also a process rather than event. Perhaps as early as 324/5, Constantine (likely) called Shapur II “my brother” in a friendly letter intended to announce his Christian faith.<sup>462</sup> By the 350s, the language of brotherhood was certainly established (Amm. Mar. 17.5.3, 10).<sup>463</sup> It is clear that the term was meant to signify equality of rank,<sup>464</sup> but in this respect, the term should probably just have been seen as an initial component in full recognition. After all, Justinian’s envoys, in the sixth century, could call Kavad the emperor’s “brother” even as they fought a war provoked by the Romans’ insistence that he be adopted unequally, like a barbarian!

The Treaty of 363, which as I have argued above began the establishment of a configurational equilibrium, should also be seen as deepening positional recognition between the empires. As A.D. Lee has brilliantly shown, the mutual exchange of hostages (while terms were being negotiated) was a costly signal that

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<sup>460</sup> See William Thompson, “A Streetcar Named Sarajevo: Catalysts, Multiple Causation Chains, and Rivalry Structures,” *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (September 2003): 453–74. For one example of a refusal to board, consider the criticism of the Armenian historian Elishe directed against the decision of Emperor Marcian in c. 450: “this ignoble man thought it better to preserve the pact with the heathen [Persia] for the sake of terrestrial peace, than to join in war for the Christian covenant.” Quoted in Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 97–98.

<sup>461</sup> Cf. Paul W. Schroeder, “The Cold War and Its Ending in ‘Long-Duration’ International History,” in *Systems, Stability, and Statecraft: Essays on the International History of Modern Europe*, ed. David Wetzell, Robert Jervis, and Jack S. Levy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 266.

<sup>462</sup> Kyle Smith, *Constantine and the Captive Christians of Persia: Martyrdom and Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 57 (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), chap. 1.

<sup>463</sup> I do not see Peter the Patrician’s sixth century attribution of the “two eyes of the earth” metaphor to a Persian envoy in 299 as credible. Even if the something of the kind was said, it would have represented merely an idealized aspiration and not a present reality.

<sup>464</sup> Chrysos, “Some Aspects of Roman-Persian Legal Relations”; Drijvers, “Rome and the Sasanid Empire,” 450.

each side recognized the other as an equal.<sup>465</sup> Previously, barbarians and even Parthians were forced to surrender hostages to Rome; never did Rome surrender hostages to an adversary. That Persia too received hostages indicates the genuine nature of the growing sense of equality. From the Roman perspective, this transition can be said to have been symbolized by Theodosius' obelisk, which he put in the middle of the hippodrome in Constantinople in 390. In theory, Theodosius still asserted Roman superiority by displaying Persians performing *proskynesis*; however, he “encrypted” the scene by positioning it in such a way that it would not be seen by visiting Persian dignitaries visiting the games.<sup>466</sup> Twenty or so years later, the equality of the empires reached its fullest symbolic extension with Yazdgird's guardianship over Theodosius, which—apocryphal or not—was seen by Romans and Persians alike to have been an act of profound fraternal friendship and cooperation.

Thick recognition is the first step toward diplomatic cooperation, which is premised on the possibility of mutual compromise. These were all knives in the heart of the unipolar conception of peace, which was based on *pacification*.<sup>467</sup> In the presence of a long-standing configurational conflict, a slightly thicker form of recognition was unable in the 350s to stem the tide of conflict. But after 363, it got thicker and thicker, legitimating over the long term both the territorial configurations and the diplomatic compromises that together constituted the Long Peace.

With the configurational and positional questions ‘solved,’ the most important causes of major war had been transcended. Both sides had come to acknowledge the stability of the overall BOP, the immediacy of other threats, and begrudgingly, the equality of the other. If war is conceived of as being analogous to a state of human sickness, and peace the state of health,<sup>468</sup> then it could be said that by the end of the fourth century the two empires had figured out how to inoculate

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<sup>465</sup> A. D. Lee, “The Role of Hostages in Roman Diplomacy with Sasanian Persia,” *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte*, 40, no. 3 (1991): 366–74.

<sup>466</sup> Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 111–14.

<sup>467</sup> Zampaglione, *The Idea of Peace in Antiquity*, chap. 2; Jeri Blair DeBrohun, “The Gates of War (and Peace): Roman Literary Perspectives,” in *War and Peace in the Ancient World*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 260.

<sup>468</sup> David Sobek, *The Causes of War* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2009), 2.

themselves against the basic virus—which we shall call fear and its dialectical twin, aggression—that had generated almost constant sickness for centuries. Beating cholera is an important step towards a state of human health, but it does not result in total wellness. Other sicknesses remain.

The two most important of these motives are what Thucydides called interest and honor (and Hobbes “gain” and “reputation”). A long-term BOP could thwart a successful war of conquest, but it could not on its own prevent the short wars and razzias motivated by concerns for gain or reputation (both staples of the Roman and Persian traditions<sup>469</sup>). These sorts of wars were influenced by more immediate factors: the short-term/local BOP and an individual leader’s risk acceptance (something informed by domestic incentives such as the need for money or prestige<sup>470</sup>). Paradoxically, the inoculation against the most virulent form of sickness (unipolar dominance/hegemonic war) could actually create the conditions for the spread of lesser sicknesses. A stability-instability paradox seems to have been in operation. A doctrine of the nuclear age, this paradox postulates an inverse relationship between the probability of nuclear war and the probability of conventional war.<sup>471</sup> When nuclear war seems likely, conventional war becomes less likely (and vice versa). In the context of late antiquity, hegemonic war took the place of nuclear weapons. The very fact that hegemonic war no longer seemed probable enabled, on occasion, lesser forms of war. Roman leaders do not seem to have comprehended the paradox or spent much time worrying about less virulent forms of war. This led them to frequently neglect the short-term balance with Persia. The neglect would then be exploited when incentives were right in the Persian court—for instance, when a new monarch needed a victory to establish his prestige or when subsidies were needed to hire mercenaries to fight the Huns. Since small wars (for profit or reputation) often had salubrious domestic effects, and since—per the stability-instability paradox—they were likely to remain limited,

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<sup>469</sup> E.g., Harris, *Roman Power*.

<sup>470</sup> For such incentives in Roman history, see Raaflaub’s brilliant survey “Born to Be Wolves? Origins of Roman Imperialism,” in *Transitions to Empire: Essays in Greco-Roman History, 360-140 B.C. in Honor of E. Badian* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 273–314.

<sup>471</sup> Paul S. Kapur, “Stability-Instability Paradox,” in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Political Behavior*, ed. Fathali M. Moghaddam (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483391144.n364>.

Persia's kings generally seem to have been quite happy to exploit the short-term BOP not despite of, but because of, the other stability inducing variables (overall BOP, thick recognition, and territorial settlement).

With this in mind, let us briefly reconstruct the various wars of the period. The first, Pulcheria's crusade, was caused by *de facto* non-recognition of Persian sovereignty. Pulcheria facilitated the persecution of non-Christians in Roman lands but denied the Persian king the right to regulate the activities of Christians in his own land, much less persecute them. She then returned to the old unipolar conception of peace by immediately resorting to war, rather than a process of mutual diplomatic compromise. In short, 420-2 can be said to have resulted from a failure to inoculate, quickly remedied once Theodosius II asserted himself within the court in Constantinople. The second, that of 441, resulted from the confluence of short-term instability in the overall balance (Theodosius II was distracted with the Vandal problem) and Yazdgird II's domestic problems. The "war" was quickly solved by a short-term pay-off. The third, that of 502, subtly reversed the events of 441. This time it was Anastasius' turn to attempt to exploit the short-term BOP, but—and this was something new—at the expense of the fraternal cooperation that actually facilitated the long-term balance.<sup>472</sup> Unlike in the previous wars, the temporary instability would negatively impact the overall stability. The fourth war, in 528, was caused not by short-term instability but instead by Justinian's unwillingness to reset overall relations. This was finally accomplished in the Treaty of 532. The fifth war, in 540, started as an attempt to exploit the short-term balance (and, possibly, to *maintain* the long-term balance by undermining Justinian's reconquest of the western empire) but its fantastic success (the sack of Antioch) put in question the overall stability of the BOP as well as the original territorial settlement. After 22 years of desultory fighting, a new settlement was achieved. It could have been maintained indefinitely, but in 572 Justin II sought to fundamentally revisit the two empires' configurational and positional settlements, birthing a new era of total war.

This reconstruction can be summarized by Table 3, where BOP1 reflects the general stability of the system and BOP2 the stability of the short-term balance.

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<sup>472</sup> E.g., Kavad I would write Justin I: "It is crucial that we, who are brothers, speak to each other in friendship and not let these dogs make a laughing stock of us." Quoted in Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 205.

Figure 3.1: War and Peace between Rome and Persia in Late Antiquity

Approx. Date	BOP1	BOP2	Territorial Settlement	Thick Recognition	War or Peace?
298-363	N		N	N	W
363	Y	Y	Y	Partial	P
387-501	Y		Y	Y	<b>P (114 years)</b>
420	Y	Y	Y	N	W
441	Y	N	Y	Y	W
502	Y	N	Y	Y	W
507-526	Y	Y	Y	Y	<b>P (19 years)</b>
528	Y	Y	Y	N	W
532-540	Y	Y	Y	Y	<b>P (8 years)</b>
540	Y	N	Y	Y	W
562-572	Y	Y	Y	Y	<b>P (10 years)</b>
572	N	N	N	N	W

BOP1 is a mutually perceived long-term balance of power. BOP2 is the stability (Y) or exploitability (N) of the short-term BOP. Territorial Settlement indicates whether an agreement over the distribution of territory was negotiated through compromise and was *still considered legitimate* by both powers (Y), or never negotiated or negotiated but then rejected (N). Thick recognition indicates whether the relevant actors recognized each other as equals. W, when applied to long ranges of time, refers to *frequent* and *regular* conflict. A blank space indicates insufficient evidence to code the variable.

Figure 3.1 suggests the following findings. War can occur when recognition is not thick (420, 528), when just the short-term balance has been neglected (441, 502, 540), or when a configurational and positional settlement is deemed unacceptable (298, 572). Ideally, this chart would also include lines for non-events (such as Rome's decision not to invade Persia after its humiliation in 484, which would have returned an N with respect to the BOP2) but given available data this would probably be impossible. Generally speaking, I would hypothesize that the effects of BOP1, a territorial settlement, and thick recognition muted the importance of BOP2. In other words, short-term instability in the BOP should not be thought to automatically cause war; instead, it simply created conditions in which war is possible. The likelihood of war in such cases depends on domestic incentives and the status of the stability/instability paradox (what epidemiologists call "component causes"). Overall, if the major independent variables are present (BOP1, territorial settlement, and thick recognition) they nearly eliminate the fear/aggression dynamic

that causes the worst wars. The minor variable (BOP2) facilitates smaller wars but can also explain peace's profound breakdown in 540.

A system with a mutually-recognized configurational and positional equilibrium can generate peace for a significant amount of time. This equilibrium will remain sticky so long as 1) both sides believe in it<sup>473</sup> and maintain it with diplomacy and 2) the short-term exploitation of the BOP does not get out of hand. The peace of the Long Fifth Century ended when both of these conditions were fatally undermined—not in a single event, but in a cumulative process of ungluing. On two occasions (420, 528) the Romans stopped believing in this first condition, but then were re-socialized into accepting it once the taste of war became bitter. The second condition failed when Justinian's "contributory negligence" and the Persians' keenness to exploit the short-term BOP were sufficient to undermine the whole system (540). That the original system was essentially recreated in 562 is interesting, but from then on, neither side believed very strongly in the conditions necessary for maintaining the equilibrium: cold war/peace eventually melts into hot war.

### 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has done three things. Using a mix of primary and secondary sources, it has surveyed the international history of war and peace between the Romans and the Persians in late antiquity. It then reviewed historians' explanations for why the Long Fifth Century was peaceful (bilaterally), concluding that historians are increasingly explaining the period like they have the "fall of Rome," i.e., in a fragmented and encyclopedic manner. Finally, it suggested that historians' explanations can be ordered and organized by a typology that focuses on the interaction between the BOP (in two forms, long-term stability or BOP1 and short-term stability or BOP2), a territorial settlement and thick recognition. It concluded in particular that the presence of these variables could generate configurational and positional stability, so long as the actors believed in the system and did not over-exploit the short-term BOP. The fifth century's Long Peace appears to be a case of functional (*gesellschaft*) progression from the primitive anarchy of the previous

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<sup>473</sup> This is a basic underlying cause for war or peace, and is shaped by the sort of incentives discussed in Section Two: geography, domestic politics, leaders' personalities, etc.

centuries to a developed anarchy oriented towards cooperation and coexistence.<sup>474</sup> In this developed anarchy, international law was created or (given the example of the Amarna system) recreated and diplomacy—rather than war—was the norm. Despite theoretical and ideological antagonism, the two empires developed a sense of *raison de système* that brought order to much of the Near East and facilitated the political and territorial survival and economic flourishing of both empires.

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<sup>474</sup> Barry Buzan, “Peace, Power, and Security: Contending Concepts in the Study of International Relations,” *Journal of Peace Research* 21, no. 2 (June 1984): 116, 121; “From International System to International Society,” 341.

## 4 The Song Great Peace

Ever since our dynasty pacified the region east of the Yellow River, for more than eighty years, there have been no internal or external disturbances. And so there has been no time of peace more glorious than ours ever since the Three Dynasties [of antiquity]. Sima Guang (1061)<sup>475</sup>

The Song Dynasty (960-1279) was the longest lasting continuously sovereign dynasty in Chinese history. It has long been recognized as a period of unique “efflorescence.” According to Ian Morris’ social development scale, c. 1100 was the point at which China had the strongest lead ever relative to the West.<sup>476</sup> By many metrics—including per capita production, scientific innovation, urbanization levels, industrial capacity, foreign commerce, and state revenue extraction—China would not be as prosperous until the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) or even the PRC era.<sup>477</sup> Song prosperity was enabled by a period of relative peace.<sup>478</sup> Such peace is

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<sup>475</sup> *Zhuangjia ji*, 21.4b, trans from: Hilde Godelieve Dominique De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 388 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 7.

<sup>476</sup> Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules - For Now: The Patterns of History and What They Reveal About the Future* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 167–69.

<sup>477</sup> Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); John Chaffee, “Song China and the Multi-State and Commercial World of East Asia,” *Crossroads* 1, no. 2 (September 2010): 33–54; William Guanglin Liu, “The Making of a Fiscal State in Song China, 960-1279,” *The Economic History Review* 68, no. 1 (February 2015): 48–78, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ehr.12057>; Peter J. Golas, *Picturing Technology in China: From Earliest Times to the Nineteenth Century* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), chap. 3; Stephen Broadberry, Hanhui Guan, and David Daokui Li, “China, Europe and the Great Divergence: A Study in Historical National Accounting, 980-1850,” *University of Oxford, Discussion Papers in Economic and Social History*, no. 155 (April 2017); Robert Findlay, “Asia and the World Economy in Historical Perspective,” *WIDER Working Paper*, no. 85 (August 2018).

<sup>478</sup> Don J. Wyatt, “China, Imperial: 5. Song Dynasty Period, 960-1279,” in *The Encyclopedia of Empire*, ed. Nigel Dalziel and John M. MacKenzie (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2016), 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118455074.wbeoe311>.

not altogether unknown in Chinese history—the Great Qing Peace of 1760-1839 is another such example<sup>479</sup>—but the Song period was unique in that it was a multipolar peace, a concept otherwise almost unknown in Chinese history.<sup>480</sup>

Historians of China have frequently commented on the importance and uniqueness of peace in the Song Era, as indeed did prominent contemporaries as seen in this chapter's epigraph, who sometimes called it the "Great Peace."<sup>481</sup> Even so, like the Amarna Age and Rome and Persia in late antiquity, the case remains entirely neglected by IR scholars. As far as I have been able to ascertain, only two have seriously dealt with the period: Yuan-Kang Wang, who uses the Song era as a case study to support his argument that Chinese decision-making is motivated by *realpolitik* logic rather than Confucian culture,<sup>482</sup> and Fei-Ling Wang, who, in a sweeping survey of Chinese history and thought, considers the period an alternative to the *tianxia* (all under heaven) model that has otherwise predominated.<sup>483</sup> Otherwise, IR scholars have tended to focus nearly exclusively on China's Ming and Qing Dynasties.<sup>484</sup> Productive points have emerged from the study of these two

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<sup>479</sup> Tonio Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), chap. 16.

<sup>480</sup> Some attempts at multipolar coexistence were made in the Spring and Autumn period (771-476 BC) with the Zhou king as a dispenser of legitimacy and mediator of disputes. But the system was basically unstable and still relatively violent. One might fruitfully compare this Chinese period with the Greece of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC, with the Persian King playing the role of partial-hegemon and mediator. See Ryder, *Koine Eirene*.

<sup>481</sup> Nicolas Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 55, 62, 64; Dieter Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule: The Song Transformation of China*, History of Imperial China (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2011), 278.

<sup>482</sup> Yuan-Kang Wang, *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics*, Contemporary Asia in the World (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), chaps. 3–4.

<sup>483</sup> Fei-Ling Wang, *The China Order: Centralia, World Empire, and the Nature of Chinese Power* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017).

<sup>484</sup> John King Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); David C. Kang, "Hierarchy in Asian International Relations: 1300-1900," *Asian Security* 1, no. 1 (2005): 53–79; David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); David C. Kang, "Measuring War in Early Modern East Asia, 1368–1841: Introducing Chinese and Korean Language Sources," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2016): 766–

latter dynasties, including the tendency for East Asian states to not balance against China in the ways predicted by Neorealist theory.<sup>485</sup> Nonetheless, the neglect of the Song era by IR comes at a high cost.<sup>486</sup> In general, it leaves the impression that the only form of international relations known in Chinese history is the hierarchical tributary system. This has led to much handwringing among contemporary commentators fearful of the recreation of perennial Chinese regional hierarchy.<sup>487</sup> And in particular—with reference to my research program—this neglect leaves unexamined what is potentially the best documented and longest lasting period of peace between relative equals in all of world history.

Chapter Two focused extensively on the periodization and description of two periods of peace in the Late Bronze Age. Chapter Three extended this method but emphasized the investigation and analysis of the various explanations for peace in late antiquity's Long Fifth Century, where historians have offered many competing explanations. This chapter is built around the investigation and

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77; Robert E. Kelly, "A 'Confucian Long Peace' in Pre-Western East Asia?," *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 3 (September 2012): 407–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066111409771>; Erik Ringmar, "Performing International Systems: Two East-Asian Alternatives to the Westphalian Order," *International Organization* 66, no. 1 (January 2012): 1–25; Feng Zhang, *Chinese Hegemony: Grand Strategy and International Institutions in East Asian History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015); Ji-Young Lee, *China's Hegemony: Four Hundred Years of East Asian Domination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). An exception is: Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Some summary thoughts on the Song era are in Bjørnar Sverdrup-Thygeson, "A Neighbourless Empire? The Forgotten Diplomatic Tradition of Imperial China," *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 7, no. 3 (2012): 245–67.

<sup>485</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, "What (If Anything) Does East Asia Tell Us About International Relations Theory?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 15, no. 1 (June 15, 2012): 59–62, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.040908.120058>; David C. Kang, *American Grand Strategy and East Asian Security in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). For the argument that even European states do not balance according to the theory: Paul W. Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 108–48.

<sup>486</sup> Frederick W Mote, *Imperial China, 900-1800* (Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 376–77.

<sup>487</sup> Howard W. French, *Everything Under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power* (New York: Random House, 2017). On the different uses of history: Maximilian Mayer, "China's Historical Statecraft and the Return of History," *International Affairs* 94, no. 6 (November 1, 2018): 1217–35, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iyy209>.

comparison of four phases of the Song era, two peaceful (Phases 2 and 4) and two violent (Phases 1 and 3), though—as seen in Table 4.1, below—Song-Liao relations were considerably more peaceful, and therefore of greater interest, than Song-Jin relations.

*Table 4.1: Periods of War and Peace in the Song Era*

Phase	War or Peace	Approx. Period	Dyad	Number of Years	Notes
1	War	976-1004	Song-Liao	28	
2	Peace	1005-1119	Song-Liao	114	Song and Xia remain in a state of war
3	War	1125-1141	Song-Jin	16	1161 Jin invasion resumes the conflict
4	Peace	1165-1205	Song-Jin	40	After 1206, relations return to a state of war through the collapse of the Jin in 1234

The goals of the chapter are to 1) present a periodization and historical narrative that permit discussion of this period in a manner comparable to the earlier case studies, 2) better understand the dynamics that enabled peace to flourish and wane across the phases, and 3) further theorize what makes stable peace possible. Section 4.1, immediately below, will proceed with a short discussion of sources and historiography, followed by the narrative history of the Song era. Section 4.2 will undertake a comparative analysis of the two broad periods of peace. As in my previous chapters, throughout my investigation, I have remained attentive to my postulated underlying motive for peace (the judgment that peace’s benefits outweigh those offered by the alternative) as well as the factors that I suggest make the realization of peace possible (an acknowledged balance of power, “thick” recognition, and a territorial settlement).

#### **4.1 The International History of the Song Dynasty**

A generation ago, it would have been very difficult—indeed, likely impossible—for a non-specialist to seriously engage with the international history of the Song Dynasty. The Song bureaucracy generated an immense number of documents, but few have survived in their original state, enduring editing, abridgment, and copying across multiple successor dynasties. Even the great

histories of the era, by Li Tao and Li Xinchuan, only survive in partial form and have been selectively amended by later critics.<sup>488</sup> Language barriers aside, one cannot simply pick up an official Song chronicle—assuming the faculty for reading, for instance, 11,000 pages on the eleventh century alone, the length of a single modern edition—and expect it to be a reliable guide to a given question, not just because of the problems of preservation and interpolation, but because history was for the Chinese inherently political, attracting the regular attention, and even intervention, of the emperor himself.<sup>489</sup> One reason for the explicit politicization was history’s importance to contemporary court politics: the goal was to identify patterns in history in order to inform wise decision making.<sup>490</sup> When one leaves the court-centric sources, additional problems present themselves. The Chinese seem to have lacked the genre of the private historian of contemporary events reflected in the writings of a Thucydides, an Ammianus Marcellinus, or a Procopius, and there is certainly today no extant text analogous to the wide-ranging—and indeed, international—explorations offered by these historians. But this is not to say there are not private sources, for there certainly are. There are more than 20,000 extant personal letters from the Song era, many more than exist for Europe of the same period<sup>491</sup>; there are more than 10,000 surviving Northern Song poems; and Sichuan University has recently published an incredible 360-volume collection of Song prose including the writings of more than 9,000 authors.<sup>492</sup> A review of the project

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<sup>488</sup> Charles Hartman, “Sung Government and Politics,” in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. John Chaffee and Denis Crispin Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 24–27, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHO9781139193061.003>; Charles Hartman, “Chinese Historiography in the Age of Maturity, 960-1368,” in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, ed. Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson, vol. 2: 400-1400 (Oxford University Press, 2012), 37–57, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199236428.001.0001>.

<sup>489</sup> Johannes L. Kurz, “The Consolidation of Official Historiography during the Early Northern Song Dynasty,” *Journal of Asian History* 46, no. 1 (2012): 13–35.

<sup>490</sup> Robert M. Hartwell, “Historical Analogism, Public Policy, and Social Science in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century China,” *The American Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (June 1971): 690–727.

<sup>491</sup> De Weerdt, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 19–20.

<sup>492</sup> Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 23.

criticized the editors for omitting other relevant texts!<sup>493</sup> In short, the contested nature and stunning magnitude of the primary sources pose a serious challenge to the non-historian.

Happily, for my purposes, a series of cutting-edge texts have been published in the last generation that draw on a wide range of these sources, opening up the international politics of the Song Era to wider discussion and examination. These include in particular F. W. Mote's magisterial *Imperial China*,<sup>494</sup> D. C. Wright and Peter Lorge's scholarship on Song-Liao relations,<sup>495</sup> the essays in the *Cambridge History of China*,<sup>496</sup> Patricia Ebrey's biography of Emperor Huizong,<sup>497</sup> Nicholas Tackett's work on Song identity,<sup>498</sup> and Hilde De Weerd's wide-ranging study of discourse and networks.<sup>499</sup> In my discussion below, I rely on these recent examinations, complemented by older discussions,<sup>500</sup> specialized journal articles, and some of the primary sources organized and translated by Hans Bielenstein and Wittfogel and Feng.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>493</sup> Sukhee Lee, "A Bibliographical Note on 'Quan Song Wen' 全宋文," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, no. 37 (2007): 161–71.

<sup>494</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*.

<sup>495</sup> David Curtis Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Kitan Liao*, *History of Warfare* 33 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Peter Allan Lorge, *The Reunification of China: Peace through War under the Song Dynasty* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>496</sup> Denis Crispin Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its precursors, 907–1279, Pt. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>497</sup> Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Emperor Huizong* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>498</sup> Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*.

<sup>499</sup> De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks*.

<sup>500</sup> E.g.: Morris Rossabi, ed., *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Jinsheng Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988).

<sup>501</sup> Hans Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade in the Chinese World, 589-1276*, *Handbook of Oriental Studies*, Section 4, China, *Handbuch Der Orientalistik* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005); Karl A. Wittfogel and Chia-Sheng Feng, *History of Chinese Society, Liao (907-1125)* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1949). For the dates given in this chapter, I default to the western year, which usually begins one month earlier than the Chinese year.

### *Background*

The Song Dynasty was formed through war. The Tang, its predecessor, had been on the ropes since the An Lushan rebellion (755-763)—the worst event in the history of the world, according to Steven Pinker’s (rather dubious) casualty figures<sup>502</sup>—which was eventually defeated, but only at the cost of radical decentralization. The Tang would muddle along until 907, when, irrevocably weakened by the Huang Chao Rebellion (874-84), the emperor was deposed, opening the last warring states period in Chinese history, conventionally called the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.<sup>503</sup> Two important developments for the future ideological and geopolitical position of the Song emerge from the period of Tang weakness and eventual disintegration.

The first was that the weakness of the imperial center facilitated the rise of genuine multi-state diplomacy. In the midst of the An Lushan rebellion, the Tang formed an alliance with the Uighurs, who traded horses and checked the power of the Tibetans and rebels in exchange for the marriage of an actual daughter of the Chinese emperor, who accepted “personal humiliation in exchange for powerful and reliable military support.”<sup>504</sup> A century earlier, the Tang had married an obscure royal family member—not a real princess—to the Tibetan king in an effort to end Tibetan raiding, which was a distraction to the Tang court’s ambitions for conquering the Koryŏ Kingdom of northern Korea. This had not led to long-term peace, however, as the Tibetan and Tang empires were engaged in a rivalry driven by the desire to control the Silk Road caravan routes and pastureland, what Denis Twitchett calls the oil fields of the ancient world.<sup>505</sup> In the aftermath of the An Lushan rebellion, the Tang renewed their diplomacy with the Tibetans, negotiating a treaty of equals (Treaty of Qingshui, 783).<sup>506</sup> As neither side kept their promises,

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<sup>502</sup> Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, 194; for a severe critique: Michael Mann, “Have Wars and Violence Declined?,” *Theory and Society* 47, no. 1 (2018): 37–60.

<sup>503</sup> See Peter Allan Lorge, ed., *Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011).

<sup>504</sup> Denis Crispin Twitchett, “Tibet in Tang’s Grand Strategy,” in *Warfare in Chinese History*, ed. Hans Van De Ven (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 142.

<sup>505</sup> Twitchett, 113–37.

<sup>506</sup> Kazushi Iwao, “Reconsidering the Sino-Tibetan Treaty Inscription,” *Journal of Research Institute: Historical Development of the Tibetan Languages* 49 (March 2013): 19–28.

the treaty solved nothing.<sup>507</sup> Nonetheless, this—and a similar, but much more successful treaty in 821—established patterns that would be renewed in the Song era.<sup>508</sup> As in the Amara era, the practices of the peace of equality were as much an inheritance as they were a reinvention.

The second important development was the rise of a predatory Khitan state. Abaoji, a charismatic leader, gained recognition as the “khan of khans” of the Khitan people, a collection of steppe tribes inhabiting parts of Manchuria and Mongolia, in 907, the same year the last Tang emperor was deposed.<sup>509</sup> Abaoji began a process of unifying the Khitan tribes into a structure closer to that of a hierarchical state, a process that involved building cities—and filling them with Chinese craftsmen to manufacture the products of civilization—collecting land and agricultural taxes, and developing a written language. Raiding Chinese territories, which were weakly governed by the statelets of the post-Tang era, was a lucrative strategy for Abaoji, who was a master ‘taker.’<sup>510</sup> Comments recorded by a Chinese ambassador who conversed with him in the mid-920s reveal the spirit of the enterprise: “It probably would be quite difficult to get all of Hebei Province, but if I can have just Zhenzhou and Youzhou that also would suffice!”<sup>511</sup> Abaoji would die of fever shortly afterward, but his program lived on. In the 930s the Khitans capitalized on civil war in northern China, enlisting the emperor of the Later Jin, one of the five warring dynasties, as a subordinate “son” and compelling him to hand over the nineteen prefectures that ran from Datong in the west to Youzhou in the east—territories that would later be remembered as the “Sixteen Prefectures.”<sup>512</sup> Relations with the Later Jin had soured by the 940s, and in 946-7 the Khitans conquered Kaifeng, where the Khitan emperor proclaimed a dynastic name—Liao—and asserted himself to be the successor of the Tang, the rightful emperor of China. Facing opposition, the Liao quickly left Kaifeng, and internal instability would prevent further expansion during the next decade. Thereafter the Jin were

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<sup>507</sup> Twitchett, “Tibet in Tang’s Grand Strategy,” 152–56.

<sup>508</sup> Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, 7.

<sup>509</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 38–39.

<sup>510</sup> Balch, “On the Fragility of the Western Achievement”; McKinney, “Making, Taking, and Breaking in World History.”

<sup>511</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 47.

<sup>512</sup> Mote, 65.

replaced by the Later Zhou, who able to reclaim two of the Sixteen Prefectures in the region of Guannan.<sup>513</sup>

From decades of inter-dynastic warfare, a leader emerged, Zhao Kuangyin (Taizu), who from 960 until his death in 976 reunified China under one dynasty—the Song—through a process of war and diplomacy. Peter Lorge considers Taizu’s death the “true end” of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period.<sup>514</sup> It also opened a period of openly hostile Liao-Song relations. In 974/5, formal diplomatic relations had been established between the two dynasties, and border trade had been permitted.<sup>515</sup> But Song attacks directed against the last holdout from the previous era of disunity, the Northern Han, provoked the Liao. Taizu’s attempt in 976 was defeated, but his successor, Taizong, tried again in 979, perhaps seeking to legitimate his new position through victory. In both cases the Liao, whose territory bordered the Han, intervened against the Song. Taizong’s army, however, succeeded in crushing the Liao cavalry in the constricted space of a mountain pass, preventing them from relieving the siege of the Northern Han’s capital, which then surrendered.<sup>516</sup>

Soldiers and leaders frequently think that victory in war clarifies the balance of power. But this is a myth. More often than not, victory is simply the result of luck.<sup>517</sup> Taizong fell for the myth and decided to push ahead with an all-out invasion of the Liao, intending to recapture the Sixteen Provinces. The two armies met just outside modern Beijing. The outcome was Taizong fleeing in a mule cart. A series of Liao counter attacks and raids followed, but these were met successfully by Song armies.<sup>518</sup> After the death of the Liao emperor, Taizong would launch another major invasion in 986, which failed.<sup>519</sup> The Liao responded with their own invasion in 988; after a series of successes, it too met with failure.<sup>520</sup> By the last

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<sup>513</sup> Mote, 66–68; for the full story: Lorge, *The Reunification of China*, chap. 4.

<sup>514</sup> Lorge, *The Reunification of China*, 183.

<sup>515</sup> Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, 13; Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade*, 559, 561.

<sup>516</sup> Lorge, *The Reunification of China*, 181, 188–93.

<sup>517</sup> Ann Hironaka, *Tokens of Power: Rethinking War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>518</sup> Lorge, *The Reunification of China*, 195–211.

<sup>519</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 69.

<sup>520</sup> Lorge, *The Reunification of China*, 222–25.

decade of the tenth century, both the Song and the Liao seemed to have realized that victory seemed unlikely, and so turned their attention to other matters: the Song to putting down an internal rebellion, fighting the Tanguts, and building defenses on frontier with the Liao, and the Liao to invading Korea. By the end of the century, however, Liao attention was forced to return to the Song question, setting up the series of events that would lead to the most successful peace treaty in all of Chinese history. But first, something must be said about the Xi Xia people and the state Song defenses.

Once united by their respective founders, the Song and Liao were unquestionably the principal powers of East Asia. But other polities and groups—particularly the Xi Xia, Koryŏ (Korea), and Jurchens—played notable roles as well. Map 4.1, below, depicts the geopolitical situation.

*Map 4.1: Song China*



Source: Columbia University, Asia for Educators, “China in 1000 CE.” Used with permission from the publisher.

The Song had formally recognized the Xia, which occupied the land within the bend of the Yellow River, as a state at least by 967, when the title “King of Xia” was bestowed posthumously on its leader Li Yixing.<sup>521</sup> The Song wanted to

<sup>521</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 171–72.

subordinate the Xia in a way analogous to the position of Koryō, while the Xia sought to assert their equality. As early as the 980s an influential Xia leader had dropped his Song surname. In 986 the Xia had sided with the Liao during their war with the Song, and thereafter the Xia ritually submitted each year in the Liao court. The Liao, in turn, recognized Xia's status as a kingdom in 990, a rank the Song had retracted.<sup>522</sup> Not until after the settlement of 1005 would the Xia partially pivot away from the Liao. The Jurchens, for the time being, would prove a manageable thorn in the Liao's side. And the Koryō would adeptly play the game of tributary politics, moving its allegiance as demanded by power realities.

In the early 990s, the Song began the construction of a defensive line grander in scale than the French attempt almost a millennium later. Called the "Great Stumbling Block" by Wittfogel and Feng<sup>523</sup> and the "Great Ditch of China" by Peter Lorge,<sup>524</sup> the defenses would stretch from the disputed passes of Guannan to the Gulf of Bohai. As early as 987, a Song general had recommended the construction of such defenses, but the emperor was not yet willing to abandon his dreams of offensive conquest, something implied by the construction of massive defensive works. Even so, by 989, already a military commissioner was directing the construction of a series of lakes and ponds along the frontier, some more than fifty km long and wide, and by the early 990s the emperor would endorse the project.<sup>525</sup> These hydraulic barriers would be accompanied by the planting of defensive woodlands composed of Chinese elm and willows, resilient and fast-growing trees,<sup>526</sup> and an increasingly sophisticated food production system and transportation network, which were needed to sustain the deployment of large numbers of soldiers. The result—increasing in significance relative to progress—was the elimination of the Khitan cavalry's freedom of movement, which had

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<sup>522</sup> Mote, 177–78.

<sup>523</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society*, 534–37.

<sup>524</sup> Peter Allan Lorge, "The Great Ditch of China and the Song-Liao Border," in *Battlefronts Real and Imagined: War, Border, and Identity in the Chinese Middle Period*, ed. Don J. Wyatt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2008), 59–74, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230611719\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230611719_4).

<sup>525</sup> Yuan Julian Chen, "Frontier, Fortification, and Forestation: Defensive Woodland on the Song-Liao Border in the Long Eleventh Century," *Journal of Chinese History* 2, no. 2 (July 2018): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jch.2018.7>.

<sup>526</sup> Chen, 7–10.

heretofore posed a permanent threat to the Song capital of Kaifeng.<sup>527</sup> Eventually some three million trees would be planted, stretching—along with the other stumbling blocks—around 350 kms. The Song also recruited a special militia force composed of frontier dwellers eager to fight the Khitans, called the Strongmen, and this force—which relied on guerrilla tactics, was to prove particularly effective.<sup>528</sup>

These defenses were positively Clausewitzian in their effect. The Chinese had identified “the ultimate substance of enemy strength”—fast-moving cavalry, able both to effectively ravage the countryside and threaten the Song capital—and they had, through defensive measures paradoxically, attacked the source of this strength.<sup>529</sup> Liao raids, and in turn, the wider tribal configurations within the Liao state, were funded by the plunder collected by the raiders. But in 999 and 1001 major Liao incursions were defeated, and in 1002 and 1003 two more ended in stalemate.<sup>530</sup> Cross-border trade had been interrupted because of the hostilities, and those who dared violate the embargo faced execution.<sup>531</sup> Meanwhile, the Khitans were worried that the increasingly strong Song fortifications—the canal transport network in particular, which could supply large numbers of soldiers—would be used as a springboard for a full-scale invasion of the Sixteen Provinces,<sup>532</sup> the capture of which by the Song would pose an existential threat to the Liao state by robbing it of its richest agricultural land. The Liao, realizing their situation to be increasingly perilous, launched a massive invasion in the winter of 1004.

Two armies participated. One, numbering 50,000 was dispatched to tie down the elite Song border soldiers on the northwest frontier. The other, numbering 200,000 and led by the Liao emperor and empress dowager, marched deep into Hebei province. The Song emperor, Zhenzong, led the Chinese army in response, which gathered at Shanyuan, a small town north of Kaifeng. The Song position was problematic, both because its experienced soldiers were still on the western frontier and because Shanyuan was not large enough to support an entire imperial army.

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<sup>527</sup> Lorge, “The Great Ditch,” 61–64.

<sup>528</sup> Nap-Yin Lau, “Waging War for Peace? The Peace Accord between the Song and the Liao in AD 1005,” in *Warfare in Chinese History*, ed. Hans Van De Ven (Boston: Brill, 2000), 186–91.

<sup>529</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 617.

<sup>530</sup> Lau, “Waging War for Peace?,” 191–98.

<sup>531</sup> Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 97.

<sup>532</sup> Lorge, *The Reunification of China*, 244–45.

Even so, the Khitans were also uncertain of their own position, particularly after their leading general was killed by a well-placed arrow.<sup>533</sup> It was within this context that the Liao extended peace feelers, negotiations began, and the Covenant of Shanyuan was agreed.

### *The Covenant*

The Khitan invasion reflected the basic military asymmetries between the two states. While the Khitan cavalry were best adapted to raiding the countryside, Song infantry, especially crossbowmen, could be used to great effect when protected by the walls of fortified strongpoints. Despite two attempts in force (in the disputed prefecture to the north and just north of Shanyuan), Khitan forces were unable to capture strongly defended Chinese cities.<sup>534</sup> Evidently aware of the asymmetry, and wary of risking a full-on clash at Kaifeng, the Khitans had dispatched a former Song official, captured two years previously and enlisted in the service of Liao court, with a proposal for envoys “to discuss peaceful and amicable relations.”<sup>535</sup>

Emperor Zhenzong responded with a letter, the text of which has been preserved in a collection of edicts from Song emperors, acknowledging the wisdom of negotiations and expressing his willingness to “take an oath” to establish peace.<sup>536</sup> As these letters were being exchanged, hostilities continued, with the Liao steadily advancing towards Kaifeng. The Liao reply to Zhenzong’s friendly overture demanded the cession of the Song-held Guannan territory in exchange for peace. The Song court, animated both by the strategic importance of this territory and the connection between territory, nationhood, and dynastic legitimacy, was unwilling to make any territorial concession and dispatched an envoy to propose the payment of annual gifts instead. The Liao emperor and empress dowager accepted this counteroffer, and 200,000 bolts of silk and 100,000 taels of silver were agreed upon as the annual payment. Oath letters were then drawn up to this effect. The letters also included a commitment to “abide by the [present] territorial boundaries,” a fugitive refugee clause, and a defensive arms control agreement

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<sup>533</sup> Lau, “Waging War for Peace?,” 208–10.

<sup>534</sup> Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 57–60.

<sup>535</sup> Wright, 62.

<sup>536</sup> Wright, 62–64.

declaring that “it shall not be permissible to initiate construction on [new] walls and moats or open or dig [new] river channels.” Importantly, the oath letter also sought to limit the threat of increasing Khitan demands by specifying that “Neither side shall make requests outside [this] oath deposition.”<sup>537</sup> Informally, the two sides also agreed to the use of the language of kinship: the Chinese emperor was to call the Liao Empress Dowager his “junior aunt” while the Liao emperor was to call his Chinese counterpart “elder brother.”<sup>538</sup>

The Covenant of Shanyuan was to hold for more than a century, and in some ways, two. It would be the most enduring treaty in Chinese history. But this would have been far from apparent at the time. “Given their knowledge of Chinese history,” Lorge has written, “none of the people on either side had any reason to believe that the agreement would last for more than a few years. They would have been hard-pressed to find good historical models of stable long-term treaties.”<sup>539</sup> Why the Covenant was so enduring will be discussed in Section 4.2. But the historical narrative must first be carried forward, albeit for reasons of space in an increasingly condensed manner.

### *The Great Peace*

The Chinese view of peace was akin to the Roman *pax*: something to be achieved through the voluntary or forced submission of others. It had little theoretical space for coexistence with an equal. Immediately after the Covenant was agreed, it began to be decried on these grounds. As the eleventh century progressed, it would become increasingly chic to denounce the treaty on these grounds. Su Shi, for instance, would argue that “as long as the two enemies in the north and in the west were suffered to exist, no Chinese dynasty could ever attain real peace”<sup>540</sup> and Wang Anshi would speak of “the constant anxiety about the situation on the borders.”<sup>541</sup> But in the aftermath of the Covenant, Wang Dan, the newly appointed Grand Councilor, insisted that the Song avoid conflict with the Liao even when

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<sup>537</sup> Wright, 74–75.

<sup>538</sup> Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade*, 63; Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 46; Mote, *Imperial China*, 70–71.

<sup>539</sup> Lorge, *The Reunification of China*, 277.

<sup>540</sup> Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, 24.

<sup>541</sup> Wittfogel and Feng, *History of Chinese Society*, 327.

faced with various provocations, such as the Khitan invasion of Korea in 1010.<sup>542</sup> The evidence for Wang Dan's motivations is slight, but a twelfth-century critic may not have been incorrect to explain it by him "being obsessed [only] with the fear of worldly losses."<sup>543</sup> Ideology, in short, was placed on the back burner and actual decisionmakers remained focused on a cost-benefit assessment of the "appeasement" policy toward the Liao.<sup>544</sup> For the entire eleventh century, this would remain the predominant Song position. Two crises would demonstrate the dynasty's sustained commitment to the settlement as well as the efficacy of the diplomatic system that grew out of it.

After the Shanyuan Covenant, Song-Xia relations remained stable for a generation following what Mote has called the "devious pattern of dual relations" wherein the Xia ritually submitted to either Song and Liao, or both, depending on what was most convenient at any given time.<sup>545</sup> However, a new king took the throne in 1032, and began rejecting Chinese practices. In 1038 he announced to the Song that he was "Da Xia huangdi" claiming equal status with the Liao and Song "Sons of heaven."<sup>546</sup> This—like Justinian's rejection of Kavad I's adoption request in 525—was tantamount to a declaration of war, which immediately followed. Bloody and indecisive engagements ensued, which the Song generally got the worst of. The Liao capitalized on the conflict, reopening the issue of disputed territory supposedly solved by the 1005 Covenant.<sup>547</sup> Fu Pi, the Chinese envoy to the Liao, responded to the demands by posing Schroeder's Law<sup>548</sup> as a question: "Among

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<sup>542</sup> Unsurprisingly, this led to much bitterness. In fact, Koryō was able to arrange its own settlement with the Liao, and became an independent power center in the eleventh century. See Michael C. Rogers, "National Consciousness in Medieval Korea: The Impact of Liao and Chin on Koryō," in *China among Equals*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 151–72.

<sup>543</sup> Don J. Wyatt, "In Pursuit of the Great Peace: Wang Dan and the Early Song Evasion of the 'Just War' Doctrine," in *Battlefronts Real and Imagined War, Border, and Identity in the Chinese Middle Period* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 91.

<sup>544</sup> Christian Schwarz-Schilling, "The Treaty of Shanyuan - Then and Now: Reflections 1000 Years Later," *Crossroads* 1, no. 2 (September 2010): 7–21.

<sup>545</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 178.

<sup>546</sup> Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade*, 488; Mote, *Imperial China*, 181–82.

<sup>547</sup> Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade*, 581.

<sup>548</sup> Paul W. Schroeder, *Austria, Great Britain, and the Crimean War: The Destruction of the European Concert* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 405.

brotherly states, how can one have glory and the other be humiliated”?<sup>549</sup> The Liao court agreed this was a fair point, and eventually it was agreed that the Song would not make any territorial concessions but would increase annual payments “presented” (*na*) to the Liao (to 200,000 taels of silver and 300,000 bolts of silk), a somewhat humbling formulation.<sup>550</sup>

As part of the renewed deal, and in response to Xia aggression in their territory, the Liao entered the war against the Xia, strengthening the Song’s bargaining position. In 1044 a deal was negotiated in which the Xia ruler would call himself “subject” (*chen*) and in exchange the Song would pay to the Xia 255,000 total units of silver, silk and tea annually.<sup>551</sup> This was, like the Covenant of 1005, a compromise settlement. The Song traded status for peace.<sup>552</sup> This was a trade the Song emperor, Renzong, was willing to make because he “viewed the world through the lens of the Chanyuan paradigm” by which the ideology of *tianxia* was less valuable than the stability of peace.<sup>553</sup> Even so, the agreement did not adequately demarcate the border, leading to frequent incursions and clashes during times of ‘peace.’<sup>554</sup>

In 1081, the Chinese launched an invasion of Napoleonic scale intended to “destroy the Xia Nation.”<sup>555</sup> The timing of the war reflected the success of Wang Anshi’s reforms, which raised the state’s share of national revenue to an all-time high and resulted in an increasingly common perception that the Song were in a position of strength vis-à-vis the Xia. This perception was reinforced when the Song discovered the Xia were being led by a child and a woman. The Shenzong emperor

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<sup>549</sup> Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 211.

<sup>550</sup> Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade*, 582; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 212–16.

<sup>551</sup> Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade*, 490.

<sup>552</sup> Michael C. McGrath, “Frustrated Empires: The Song-Tangut Xia War of 1038–44,” in *Battlefronts Real and Imagined*, ed. Don J. Wyatt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2008), 151–90, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230611719\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230611719_7).

<sup>553</sup> Paul Jakov Smith, “A Crisis in the Literati State: The Sino-Tangut War and the Qingli-Era Reforms of Fan Zhongyan, 1040–1045,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 45, no. 1 (2015): 136, <https://doi.org/10.1353/sys.2015.0002>.

<sup>554</sup> Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 226; e.g., Ruth W. Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High: Buddhism and State Formation in Eleventh-Century Xia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), 57.

<sup>555</sup> Paul Jakov Smith, “Eurasian Transformations of the Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries: The View from Song China, 960-1279,” *Medieval Encounters* 10, no. 1–3 (2004): 295.

thought this was his opportunity and launched a massive attack. After some initial defeats, the Xia switched to a retreat, scorch the earth, and harass strategy. The Song, defeated by cold and hunger, accepted a compromise peace after the death of Shenzong in 1085.<sup>556</sup> However—once again—the settlement did not clarify the frontier, where there were hundreds of fortified garrisons and forts variously dispersed,<sup>557</sup> leading to repeated razzias in the 1080s and 1090s.<sup>558</sup> The basic problem was that the Song saw the frontier with the Xia as something to be opportunistically expanded, rather than settled as a permanent border, and so any peace agreement was inexorably only temporary.

In clear contrast with the perpetual Song-Xia antagonism, after some painful frontier wars, the Song did agree to demarcate their border with Vietnam, an agreement that led to peaceful relations in the late eleventh century and a boundary that has lasted now around a millennium. One reason the Song were willing to make concessions in this case, even as they refused to do so vis-à-vis the Liao, was the willingness of the Vietnamese leaders to subordinate themselves to China, submitting to the rituals of the tributary system in exchange for the benefits of trade and peace.<sup>559</sup> At the same time, a border dispute with the Liao had been peacefully resolved in the 1070s through a process of rational negotiation between equals.<sup>560</sup> Wang Anshi's advice to the emperor during this latter case—"assess the overall situation and disregard 'trivial matters'"<sup>561</sup>—was a perfect specimen of realism.

It may feel strange that the above narrative of the Great Peace seems to be concentrated on war. And rightly so, for it highlights something true of each period of peace surveyed in this dissertation: peace is always partial and relative. War

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<sup>556</sup> Paul C. Forage, "The Sino-Tangut War of 1081-1085," *Journal of Asian History* 25, no. 1 (1991): 1–28.

<sup>557</sup> De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 245–49.

<sup>558</sup> Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High*, 72.

<sup>559</sup> James A. Anderson, "Treacherous Factions": Shifting Frontier Alliances in the Breakdown of Sino-Vietnamese Relations on the Eve of the 1075 Border War," in *Battlefronts Real and Imagined*, ed. Don J. Wyatt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2008), 191–226, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230611719\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230611719_8).

<sup>560</sup> For the fascinating details: Christian Lamouroux, "Geography and Politics: The Song-Liao Border Dispute of 1074/75," in *China and Her Neighbors*, ed. Sabine Dabringhaus and Roderick Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 1–28; Klaus Tietze, "The Liao Song Border Conflict of 1074-1076," in *Studia Sino-Mongolica: Festschrift Für Herbert Franke*, ed. W. Bauer (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979), 127–51.

<sup>561</sup> Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, 70.

between equals, as seen in the Warring States Period, is the most destructive, and total. The Chinese idea of “Great Unity”—“There are neither two suns in Heaven nor two Monarchs on earth,” Confucius is supposed to have said—precluded, by necessity, the possibility of a system of international relations based on the principles of equality and coexistence.<sup>562</sup> Ideologically, the Chinese system, typically called the “*tianxia* order” or the “tributary system” promised only the peace of hierarchy.<sup>563</sup> In the Qin and Han era, nomads would resist China’s demands that they submit. But by 54 BC, they agreed to China’s framework because, as Thomas Barfield has summarized, the nomads discovered “that the tributary system was a sham – demanding mere tokens of submission in exchange for huge benefits.”<sup>564</sup> This lesson would have to be rediscovered by various groups in later Chinese history, but—as seen, for instance, in the discussion of the Vietnamese above—generally the pattern was repeated. There are of course complexities and exceptions. Peter Perdue, for instance, argues that the Ming did not perceive the Mongols as human, and therefore subject to persuasion and incorporation into the Chinese system, which led to an exclusive reliance on force and violence.<sup>565</sup> But the point remains that hierarchy and subordination, or frightful war, were the typical alternatives in Chinese history.

The Song era was an exception to this pattern, as seen in the Great Peace experienced between the Song and Liao. But the exception was only partial, as seen in the bloody flareups of violence with the Xia. The Xia wanted to be integrated into the system of equals. The Song wanted to subordinate the Xia according to the practices of the tributary system. In 1044, the Song partially brought the Xia into the system, agreeing to send them, as the Liao, annual payments. But this arrangement could only hold as long as the BOP seemed to require it, and regular territorial disputes ensured the two states remained at enmity. It would ultimately prove too vexatious to the *tianxia* ideology to maintain equal relations with not just

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<sup>562</sup> Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 30.

<sup>563</sup> Wang, *The China Order*.

<sup>564</sup> Thomas Jefferson Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China*, Repr, Studies in Social Discontinuity (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996), 60.

<sup>565</sup> Peter C. Perdue, “Culture, History, and Imperial Chinese Strategy: Legacies of the Qing Conquests,” in *Warfare in Chinese History*, ed. Hans Van De Ven (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 252–87.

one but two neighboring states. The result was that the Great Peace was, on the whole, less great, a statistical fact that can be seen in the data discussed in Section 4.2. Even so, that the Song chose to ignore the demands of *tianxia* in their relations with the Liao did reflect a moral judgment that peace was more important than ideology. This basic point can be seen in an anecdote from mid-eleventh century:

Renzong once wore a beautiful jade belt. Those assisting him all stared at it. When he returned to the palace, the emperor said to his courtiers: “Why are you all staring at my belt without end?” They responded: “We have never seen something this extraordinary.” The emperor said: “I should leave it to the head of the northern barbarians.” Those around him said: “This is one of the most precious items in the empire; it would be a shame to give it to the foreigners.” The emperor responded: “In the central kingdom we regard the welfare of the people as a treasure. How could this be worth cherishing?” All the officials cheered, “Long live the emperor.”<sup>566</sup>

It was the fading of such a spirit, and the return of the *tianxia* imperative, that would end the eleventh-century period of peace.

### *Tianxia Returns: The End of the Beginning*

“Only through creativity does one’s merit remain behind. / Dancing butterflies are confused by fragrant pathways; / Fluttering about, they chase the evening breeze.”<sup>567</sup> These words, beautifully inscribed on a silk by Emperor Huizong, who ascended to the Song throne in 1100, have survived some 900 years. Against the Emperor’s will, however, his legacy involved more than butterflies and, for that matter, the sixty-five children he sired<sup>568</sup>; indeed, Huizong presided over or was responsible for, depending on one’s interpretation, the initial blunders that led to the loss of the northern third of China, including the great imperial city, Kaifeng, with its population of some 1.5 million people, the grandest city in the whole world at the time.<sup>569</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 408–9.

<sup>567</sup> Ebrey, *Emperor Huizong*, 220.

<sup>568</sup> Ebrey, 302.

<sup>569</sup> Christian de Pee, “Purchase on Power: Imperial Space and Commercial Space in Song-Dynasty Kaifeng, 960-1127,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53, no. 1–2 (2009): 149–84, <https://doi.org/10.1163/002249910X12573963244322>.

Huizong's foreign policy maintained the tradition of bloody and futile invasions of the Xia, which the Song attempted again in 1103-6 and 1113-119. As always, the proximate cause of war was disputes over the un-demarcated border. In the wars, fought over a "barren stretch of land," hundreds of thousands of Song soldiers were killed.<sup>570</sup> On the heels of these disasters, the inevitable consequence of the state's increasingly predatory economic policies, which confiscated wealth that it then burned in fruitless wars,<sup>571</sup> arose in the form of the Fang La rebellion, which required soldiers to be moved from the northern frontiers to the interior of China—the usual precursor to a successful nomadic invasion<sup>572</sup>—and resulted in horrific casualties, possibly in the millions.<sup>573</sup>

At the same time as the Song fought the Xia and suppressed rebellion, the court in Kaifeng decided the time was opportune to reopen the Sixteen Prefectures questions. A charismatic chieftain, Aguda, had united both the "wild" and the "tame" Jurchens, defeating the Liao in 1115.<sup>574</sup> Recently, the timing of the Jurchen push west and south has been explained with reference to the era's climatic anomalies, particularly droughts and cold spells, which both forced the Jurchens to migrate and generated internal instability in Liao territories.<sup>575</sup> Be that as it may, the Song court saw an opportunity. One influential counselor reasoned: "although North and South have gotten along for a hundred years, we have suffered repeated humiliations for several reigns. The best military strategy is to compound weakness and to attack when the other side is blinded."<sup>576</sup> After a series of diplomatic missions, at the end of 1119 Huizong decided to make an alliance with the Jurchens

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<sup>570</sup> Ari Daniel Levine, "The Reigns of Hui-Tsung (1100–1126) and Ch'in-Tsung (1126–1127) and the Fall of the Northern Sung," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis Crispin Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, vol. 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279, Part 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 614–22, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521812481.009>.

<sup>571</sup> Smith, "Eurasian Transformations," 298.

<sup>572</sup> Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 9.

<sup>573</sup> Levine, "The Reigns of Hui-Tsung (1100–1126) and Ch'in-Tsung (1126–1127)," 626.

<sup>574</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 201.

<sup>575</sup> Yali Li, Gideon Shelach-Lavi, and Ronnie Ellenblum, "Short-Term Climatic Catastrophes and the Collapse of the Liao Dynasty (907–1125): Textual Evidence," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 49, no. 4 (March 2019): 591–610, [https://doi.org/10.1162/jinh\\_a\\_01339](https://doi.org/10.1162/jinh_a_01339).

<sup>576</sup> Ebrey, *Emperor Huizong*, 380–81.

against the Liao. The emperor did not allow any final discussion of the question by those he knew disagreed.<sup>577</sup>

When the Song attempted to fulfill their part of the alliance, by attacking the Liao Southern Capital in 1122 and 1123, their armies met with failure. The Liao defenders eventually surrendered the city—with no battle having even been fought—to the Jurchens, who six months later would hand it over, entirely looted, to the Song. The Jurchens (who took the dynastic name Jin) were indisputably in a stronger bargaining position, and the final agreement, negotiated in 1123, “was largely dictated by the Jin.”<sup>578</sup> Even so, the respective oath letters indicated equality between the states, and were drawn up according to the Shanyuan precedent: the Song bought territory in exchange for a large one-off payment and a promise for annual payments.<sup>579</sup> The agreement would last only until 1125, when the Jin invaded, ostensibly because the Song had violated various provisions of the agreement—which it appears they had—but also because the Jin had ceased to believe in the military prowess of the Song.

In response, Huizong abdicated. His eldest son, who took the throne, then agreed to pay the Jin an outrageous sum—180 times more than was paid annually to the Liao—in exchange for them abandoning the siege of Kaifeng.<sup>580</sup> The Song oath letter was addressed by a “nephew” to his Jin “uncle,” it included a war guilt clause, and it was not counter-sworn by the Jin emperor but only accepted by a Jin commander.<sup>581</sup> Unsurprisingly, such an inequitable situation could not last, and it did not. After bitter fighting in the north, the Jin returned to Kaifeng the next year, this time capturing the city. The new Song emperor had squandered the interim obsessively purging various officials and seeking to curtail the influence of his father, whom he forced to return to Kaifeng.<sup>582</sup> The result was that when the city fell, both emperors were taken into exile by the Jin. The northern third of China was

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<sup>577</sup> Ebrey, 383–85.

<sup>578</sup> Ebrey, 411.

<sup>579</sup> Herbert Franke, “Treaties between Sung and Chin,” in *Etudes Song: In memoriam Etienne Balazs*, ed. Françoise Aubin (Paris: Mouton, 1970), 60–68.

<sup>580</sup> Ebrey, *Emperor Huizong*, 434–38; Levine, “The Reigns of Hui-Tsung (1100–1126) and Ch’in-Tsung (1126–1127),” 633–39.

<sup>581</sup> Franke, “Treaties between Sung and Chin,” 69–76.

<sup>582</sup> Ebrey, *Emperor Huizong*, 439–74.

thereafter integrated into the Liao empire, and a renewed southern Song government, in Hangzhou, would fight the still-advancing Jin.

After a torturous Song recovery, and a decade and a half of desultory fighting, a new treaty was agreed in 1141/2 as a result of the Jin realization that the Southern Song “could not be conquered, let alone occupied.”<sup>583</sup> The Song were subordinated in the manner of the Xia of 1044: the emperor acknowledged himself to be a “subject” (*chen*), the Huai River was established as the new boundary, and a heavy annual indemnity agreed. But the greatest indignity was for the Song to accept the investiture of their emperor by the Jin, making the Song into mere vassals.<sup>584</sup> Nonetheless, the calculation for the Song was clear: to trade status for peace. The agreement was to last for twenty years, until a new Jin ruler—Prince Hailing—launched an invasion (in 1161) analogous to the Song’s action against the Xia in 1081: an attempt at extermination in order to establish a peace of dominance.<sup>585</sup> The attack failed, successfully stopped by Song naval forces on the Yangtze River; no further war of conquest/extermination would be attempted by the Jin.<sup>586</sup> In consequence of their defeat, the Jin negotiated a new peace with the Song, subordinating the latter through kinship relations (uncle/nephew) rather than the more humiliating lord/vassal relationship.<sup>587</sup> A period of peace followed, this one lasting some forty years, until 1205.<sup>588</sup> Map 4.2 depicts the new geopolitical situation.

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<sup>583</sup> Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 77.

<sup>584</sup> Franke, “Treaties between Sung and Chin,” 76–81; Tao Jing-shen, “The Move to the South and the Reign of Kao-Tsung (1127–1162),” in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis Crispin Twitchett and Paul Jakob Smith, vol. 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279, Part 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 682–84, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521812481.010>.

<sup>585</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 232–36.

<sup>586</sup> Jing-shen, “The Move to the South,” 707.

<sup>587</sup> Franke, “Treaties between Sung and Chin,” 81.

<sup>588</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 237.

Map 4.2: *The Southern Song*



Source: Columbia University, Asia for Educators, “China in 1000 CE.” Used with permission from the publisher.

### *How Peace was Lost: The Beginning of the Ends*

The Song broke the peace at the beginning of the thirteenth century. The Jin were becoming increasingly worried about Mongol invasions to the North and internal stability. Perceiving opportunities in the short-term balance of power, the Song attempted to realize their utopian dreams of reconquering their lost territories.<sup>589</sup> When the effort failed (in 1206), the Song had to eat crow, upping their annual indemnity and acknowledging—as in 1125—their war guilt, though they managed to avoid being reduced back to vassal status.<sup>590</sup> The two empires would never again enjoy a state of normal peace with each other, and I shall but briefly carry the narrative forward here.

The Mongols, united under Genghis Khan in 1206, soon started raiding into Jin territory. As a century earlier, changing weather conditions, affecting in

<sup>589</sup> De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 151; Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 85; Mote, *Imperial China*, 314–15; Richard L. Davis, “The Reigns of Kuang-Tsung (1189–1194) and Ning-Tsung (1194–1224),” in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis Crispin Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, vol. 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279, Part 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 791, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521812481.012>.

<sup>590</sup> Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 86; Davis, “The Reigns of Kuang-Tsung (1189–1194) and Ning-Tsung (1194–1224),” 805.

particular grazing lands, seem to have pushed the Mongols out from their traditional lands.<sup>591</sup> The Jin capital, located near modern Beijing, fell in 1215. Far from united balancing against the advancing Mongols, the Jin managed to start wars with both the Xia and the Song. The Jin's poor performance against the Mongols is partly explained by the preceding period of peace. The Jin had fought with the Song in 1161 and 1206, but these wars had been brief; for the entire period, they had also maintained peaceful relations with the Xia and Koryŏ.<sup>592</sup> As a result, the skill of the mighty Jurchen armies that defeated the Liao and Song a century earlier had atrophied. As the Jin battled for their existence against the Mongols, the Song—ignoring the 'lessons' of the Song-Liao fiasco a century earlier—refused to aid the Jin and indeed worked with the Xia against them.<sup>593</sup> The Xia would themselves fall to the Mongols in 1227 in a war of elimination led by Genghis Khan himself. No Song or Jin army would come marching to the relief of the Xia capital, besieged for five months. The Mongols were able to defeat the region's states one by one. By the 1250s, they turned their attention to conquering the Song, which by 1279 completely collapsed.

Song-Jin relations were significantly less peaceful than Song-Liao relations. Even so, and despite the interruptions to the peace (like the Jin invasion of 1161), specialists concur that overall the Song and Jin had been "remarkably successful in securing peace and profits for all"<sup>594</sup> from 1142 to around 1206. The annual payments the Song made to the Jin, like those of the eleventh century, were actually of negligible cost when compared to the size of the Song economy and the benefits of peace. The payments, like Rome's transfers to Persia in late antiquity, were returned to China through border trade, stimulating the economy of the whole region. The dynamism of the Southern Song economy during this period is well

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<sup>591</sup> Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 87; Davis, "The Reigns of Kuang-Tsung (1189–1194) and Ning-Tsung (1194–1224)," 830–31.

<sup>592</sup> Davis, "The Reigns of Kuang-Tsung (1189–1194) and Ning-Tsung (1194–1224)," 818.

<sup>593</sup> Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 91; Mote, *Imperial China*, 248, 255.

<sup>594</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 285; cf. Kuhn, *The Age of Confucian Rule*, 80, 84; Gong Wei Ai, "The Reign of Hsiao-Tsung (1162–1189)," in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. Denis Crispin Twitchett and Paul Jakob Smith, vol. 5: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279, Part 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 710–55, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521812481.011>; Davis, "The Reigns of Kuang-Tsung (1189–1194) and Ning-Tsung (1194–1224)," 818.

known.<sup>595</sup> The Southern Song, which no longer had a contiguous border with either the Xia or Koreans, also maintained peaceful relations with these other actors, as did the Jin. The system worked, more or less, until the coming of the Mongols, who “did not recognize anything approaching the system of equality and reciprocity in interstate relations that had long and successfully maintained the peace among the Song, Liao, and Jin.”<sup>596</sup>

## 4.2 Comparing Periods, Explaining Exceptions, Theorizing Peace

This chapter will now pivot from historical narrative to causal comparison. Can the different periods of relative peace, and the various breakdowns of peace, be explained by my unified theoretical framework? As developed in my previous chapters, this involves an underlying desire for peace (deriving from the judgment that the benefits of peace outweigh those of war) as well as implementation of three mechanisms (an acknowledged balance of power, thick recognition, and a territorial settlement) that make peace realizable. In turn, if my framework can help us understand the Song era, the Song era may suggest further improvements of the framework.

From the beginning of the Song Dynasty, the Chinese and the Liao were locked into a “configurative” struggle: *where* would the boundaries of the two empires extend? Beginning in 976, the Song and Liao fought one another directly for an entire generation (976, 979, 980, 986, 988, 999, 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, etc.). Neither side fought these wars with the specific objective of eliminating the other. In fact, the two states had tentatively recognized the others’ right to exist in the 970s. Nonetheless, the conflict also had a positional aspect: *which* power was ‘China’? The Song had a strong ideological/cultural motive to ‘restore’ unity to the boundaries of China: this was how the Mandate of Heaven was secured, through a combination of correctness (*zheng*) and control (*tong*).<sup>597</sup> The Khitans posed a special threat to the acquisition of the Mandate because from the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century, when they conquered Kaifeng, their emperor changed his reign name to “all

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<sup>595</sup> Broadberry, Guan, and Li, “China, Europe and the Great Divergence,” chap. 7.

<sup>596</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 437.

<sup>597</sup> Mote, 9.

under heaven,” essentially asserting a claim to be the legitimate emperor of China, a claim buttressed by Khitan capital cities built on the model of imperial Chinese cities.<sup>598</sup>

The Song and the Liao fought until it was impossible to not realize that 1) the balance of power was stable and 2) that the costs of hostility were increasingly high relative to any possible benefit. The stability of the balance was partly a reflection of the offense-defense balance. Khitan cavalry was particularly adept at offensive raids. In contrast, Song walled cities and large infantry armies were well adapted to the defense of strong points. For the first decade, Khitan raids could be self-funding following the ‘taking’ model of nomadic peoples. But with the construction of the Great Ditch, which forced Khitan raids into certain predictable routes, the taking model was proving increasingly untenable by the end of the tenth century. Launching a massive invasion in 1004, the Liao responded by threatening the ‘breaking’ of the Song state. This was a risky move that pitted Song strengths (defense of strong points) against Liao weaknesses (overextended cavalry formations on a tight timetable). In the actual event, neither side wanted to risk an all-out clash of imperial armies. And so they decided to ‘mediate their estrangement’<sup>599</sup> through diplomacy.

The Shanyuan Covenant categorically resolved the two states’ configurational and positional disagreements. Like Rome and Persia in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, this required accepting a new model of international relations: one premised on equality rather than hierarchy. Such acceptance resulted not from the munificence of either side, but from a hardnosed analysis of the long-term balance of power (BOP1) as well as the risky uncertainty of the short-term balance (BOP2) generated by the Liao invasion. Of course, as in both previous cases studied, peace was not only an event but also a process that required continual commitment. In the early 1040s, in the midst of the Xia-Song war, the Liao perceived a BOP2 opportunity and insisted on better terms; after negotiations, a compromise was achieved. This illustrates the maturation of bilateral diplomatic relations and both sides’ ongoing commitment to reaping the benefits of peace. The continuous

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<sup>598</sup> Hu Lin, “A Tale of Five Capitals: Contests for Legitimacy between the Liao and Its Rivals,” *Journal of Asian History* 44, no. 2 (2010): 104–12; Mote, *Imperial China*, 66.

<sup>599</sup> Der Darian, “Mediating Estrangement: A Theory for Diplomacy.”

socialization between court officials of both sides, in a manner akin perhaps to the bonhomie of nineteenth-century European diplomats,<sup>600</sup> helped recreate this sensibility throughout the Long Eleventh Century.

Before comparing the success of this bilateral relationship with 1) the failure of Song-Xia relations and 2) the mere partial success of Song-Jin relations in the next century, a short digression on the nature and symbols of thick recognition is warranted. Equality is indicated with different symbols in different cultures and eras. In the Song era, which as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter drew on Tang culture and practices, there were a full dozen symbols that indicated thick recognition, or its absence. These included: sending ‘state letters’ rather than ‘edicts’; practicing the correct funeral mourning ceremonies; the observance of name taboos (respecting the names of dead emperors); using dynastic names (southern dynasty and northern dynasty) and other formal indicators of equality, such as “two states” or “brotherly states,” “emperor,” or “Great Song” and “Great Liao”; the modification of place names that implied the other’s inferiority; the creation of special diplomatic bureaus, such as the Song Department for Ingoing and Outgoing State Credentials, which dealt only with the Liao and then the Jin; even the brand of tea served indicated the other’s status, as did seating arrangements.<sup>601</sup> Within the context of thick recognition, there was, nonetheless, some flexibility for asymmetry. In the Late Bronze Age, this was seen in how other Great Powers would marry their daughters to Egypt’s pharaoh despite his refusal to reciprocate. In late antiquity, this was seen in how the Romans paid subsidies to the Persians, something also true of the Song in its relations with first Liao and then Jin. The lesson seems to be that as long as most of the indicators of thick recognition are

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<sup>600</sup> Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, chap. 1; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, chap. 3. 608 men were sent on 679 diplomatic missions to the Liao in a bit more than a century. See Wright, 101.

<sup>601</sup> Jinsheng Tao, “Barbarians or Northerners: Northern Sung Images of the Khitans,” in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 66–86; Herbert Franke, “Sung Embassies: Some General Observations,” in *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 116–48; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 19, 25, 79, 145–53; Lorge, *The Reunification of China*, 15.

present, one or two can be compromised/traded without officially removing a state from the category of formal equal.

The Xi Xia struggle for recognition demonstrates the vital importance attached to equality, and its symbols, in the Song era. The Xia fought the Song for six bitter years (1038-1044) in an attempt to achieve recognition as an equal. Renzong, the Song emperor, was willing to give up his most “beautiful jade belt” to secure peace with the Liao; but he and his court, in contrast, were unwilling to relinquish any significant symbols of thick recognition in response to the Xia quest. Peace did not break out, despite the existence of a long-term BOP, because the Song were ideologically and culturally disinclined to make the judgment that the benefits of peace outweighed those of war. As a result, when the two sides agreed to a cessation of hostilities in 1044, it involved only partial recognition and no territorial settlement. The latter was almost certainly connected to the former: the Song preferred to think of a vague frontier where BOP2 advantages could be exploited in the future rather than the hard border of another sovereign state. This was indeed precisely what happened in 1081, when the Song thought a BOP2 advantage might have created an opportunity to undermine the persistent BOP1 equilibrium. It is difficult to attribute even such strategic motivations to the futile wars repeated in 1103-1106 and 1113-1119, when it should have been perfectly obvious that the Xia were a military equal of the Song.

This is an appropriate juncture to consider the argument of Yuan-kang Wang, who, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, is one of the few political scientists to have engaged extensively with the Song era. Wang’s agenda is to prove that (Confucian) culture was epiphenomenal to Song Chinese decision making. Instead, Wang contends, the Song made the decisions Neorealist theory would predict—that is, according to him, proactive offensive action when a state is powerful, and a reactive defense posture otherwise.<sup>602</sup> Wang sets up the argument so that Song offensive action is proof for the Neorealist model of politics. This is insupportable, however, because recovering and maintaining China’s traditional territory and insisting on China’s superior position relative to that of its neighbors—the “Great Unity” ideology—both of which required offensive action, were

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<sup>602</sup> Wang, *Harmony and War*, chaps. 3–4.

constitutive elements of China's cultural worldview.<sup>603</sup> Consequently, offensive action supports rather than disproves the influence of culture, even Confucian culture, in this context.<sup>604</sup> Far from being epiphenomenal, China's culture *contributed* to the frequency of conflict during the Song era, as seen in the case of the Xia discussed above.

It was precisely the *culturally constructed* conviction that China must undertake operations to cleanse “the Central Plains of a century of humiliation”<sup>605</sup> that motivated waves of Chinese irredentism. Chinese aggression was always rooted in the judgment of the court that the “sake of the great merit” (retaking China's lost lands, or asserting China's superior status) outweighed the benefits of the “great peace.”<sup>606</sup> This was not, as Wang would have us believe,<sup>607</sup> the generic pursuit of power and expansionism—the supposed imperatives of structural realism. It was the specific enactment of China's ideological and nationalist objectives.<sup>608</sup> This is why

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<sup>603</sup> See, inter alia, Pines, *The Everlasting Empire*; Wang, *The China Order*. Song Dynasty Confucians were also aggravated by the ideological differences of their Khitan and Tangut neighbors, who were largely Buddhists, and therefore ‘other.’ Harriet T. Zurndorfer, “What Is the Meaning of ‘War’ in an Age of Cultural Efflorescence? Another Look at the Role of War in Song Dynasty China (960-1279),” in *Transformations of War from Antiquity to Clausewitz*, ed. Marco Formisano and Hartmut Böhme, *Transformationen Der Antike* 19 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 97–98.

<sup>604</sup> As Confucius himself once observed: “everyone has the Way of Wen [civil] and Wu [martial] within himself.” Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Raymond Stanley Dawson, *Oxford World's Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 19.22.

<sup>605</sup> Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*, 50–54.

<sup>606</sup> Tackett, 59.

<sup>607</sup> Wang, *Harmony and War*, 181–85.

<sup>608</sup> Importantly, the same is true of the reconquest of Tibet in 1950 or a prospective Chinese reacquisition of Taiwan today, neither of which can be said to be driven by a generic quest for power or expansionist drive to “dominate the region,” but instead particular nationalist conceptions generated by limited territorial disputes that have become elevated to symbols of nationhood. For Taiwan: Steve Chan, *China's Troubled Waters: Maritime Disputes in Theoretical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 19–31, 60–63; for limited territorial claims: Kenneth A. Schultz and Henk E. Goemans, “Aims, Claims, and the Bargaining Model of War,” *International Theory* 11, no. 03 (November 2019): 344–74, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971919000071>; for China's dispute in the ECS see Jihyun Kim, “The Clash of Power and Nationalism: The Sino-Japan Territorial Dispute,” *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 5, no. 1 (April 2018): 31–56, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347797017750268>; for the SCS dispute see Chris P. C. Chung, “Drawing the U-Shaped Line: China's

China fought repeated wars with the Xia despite the existence of a long-term balance of power, but refrained from doing so with the Liao. For whatever reason, the Song had decided the *tianxia* worldview could be compromised in the latter case but not the former, and so the result was not general expansionism but frequent war in one relationship and lasting peace in another. The supposed dictates of power politics in the Long Eleventh Century were dependent on the recognition decisions made by the Song Court, which were in turn determined by ideological and cultural constructions and objectives.

The Song-Liao peace broke down after 1119, when the Song emperor Huizong sought to exploit a BOP2 advantage. In terms of rational choice theory, the Song sought to maximize for “positive effects” (reclaiming the lost Sixteen Prefectures) rather than expected value (maintaining stability and peace).<sup>609</sup> After more than a century of peace with their northern neighbor, the Song no longer judged the benefits of peace to outweigh those of war. So they attempted the inherently risky reconquest of their lost territories, but in a reckless way. After all, years of war with the Xia and internal rebellion had weakened the state, but even so the Song did not treat the Jurchens, with whom they conspired against the Liao, as equals. They dispatched low-level diplomats to conduct their plans<sup>610</sup> and violated provisions of their oath covenants.

The twenty years of Song-Jin war, which followed the destruction of the Liao, can be explained most basically by the collapse of both BOP1 and BOP2. The Jin advanced through “a succession of raids and adventitious campaigns” that were never checked.<sup>611</sup> These raids, from the Jin perspective, were “rational” and “paid handsomely” in terms of increasing their state’s territory, population, and riches.<sup>612</sup> Only by the beginning of the 1140s, when the Song had demonstrated that the BOP1 still operated, was a serious settlement possible. This settlement would hold

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Claim in the South China Sea, 1946–1974,” *Modern China* 42, no. 1 (January 2016): 38–72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0097700415598538>; Kuik Cheng-Chwee, “Explaining the Contradiction in China’s South China Sea Policy: Structural Drivers and Domestic Imperatives,” *China: An International Journal* 15, no. 1 (February 2017): 163–86.

<sup>609</sup> See David G. Winter, *Roots of War: Wanting Power, Seeing Threat, Justifying Force* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>610</sup> Mote, *Imperial China*, 208–9.

<sup>611</sup> Mote, 210.

<sup>612</sup> Mote, 285.

for almost a century, with two exceptions: 1161 and 1206. These were exceptions not because elements of the peace broke down but because first the Jin and then the Song stopped believing in the benefits of peace and so sought to overturn the coexistence framework. The same judgment, facilitated by doubts about both BOP1 and BOP2, motivated the final collapse of the system, when the Song voluntarily cooperated with the Mongols in the destruction of the Jin.

Strong parallels can be drawn between both the beginnings and the endings of Phase 2 (1005-1119) and Phase 4 (1142/61-1206). Both phases of peace had as a prequel a generation of constant war. Both phases also ended when a new threat to China's northern neighbor arose (first the Jurchens and then the Mongols) and the Song believed it to be advantageous to join with this new actor to destroy their treaty partner. Both times Song China was much worse off after their northern neighbor had been destroyed. The relative peacefulness of Phase 2 and Phase 4 can be said to be approximately equivalent because the Song fought on and off with the Xia in Phase 2 and twice with the Jin in Phase 4. Even though Phase 2 and Phase 4 both began and ended in similar ways, they differed in the middle. In Phase 2, the Song—who refused to integrate the Xia into the Great Power system—would expend considerable energy seeking the subordination or elimination of the Tangut state while coexisting perfectly with the Liao. In contrast, in Phase 4, first the Jin and then Song unilaterally attempted to upend their coexistence formula, but each time the respective courts realized, after some bloody and futile fighting, that the benefits of peace and the costs of war were real enough, and so the formulas were reembraced. The implications of the phases are that: 1) the Song dynasty would only recognize another state as an equal if its survival depended on so doing; 2) this lesson had to be periodically re-learned through the shedding of much blood to little effect; and 3) the optimism of the Song Court regarding its ability to reset regional relations, reclaiming lost territories and reasserting the *tianxia* model of relations, was repeatedly belied by reality.

Two empirical indicators can be used to approximate the relative peace of Phases 1-4. Although both are imperfect, they illustrate and confirm the narrative and analysis given above. The first, Figure 4.1, derives from the data collected by a group of researchers at Emory University, which was itself based on data pieced

together by researchers working for the People's Liberation Army Press.<sup>613</sup> Figure 4.1 traces references to wars in Song records, though it does not speak to the scale or length of any given war.

*Figure 4.1: War in Song Records*

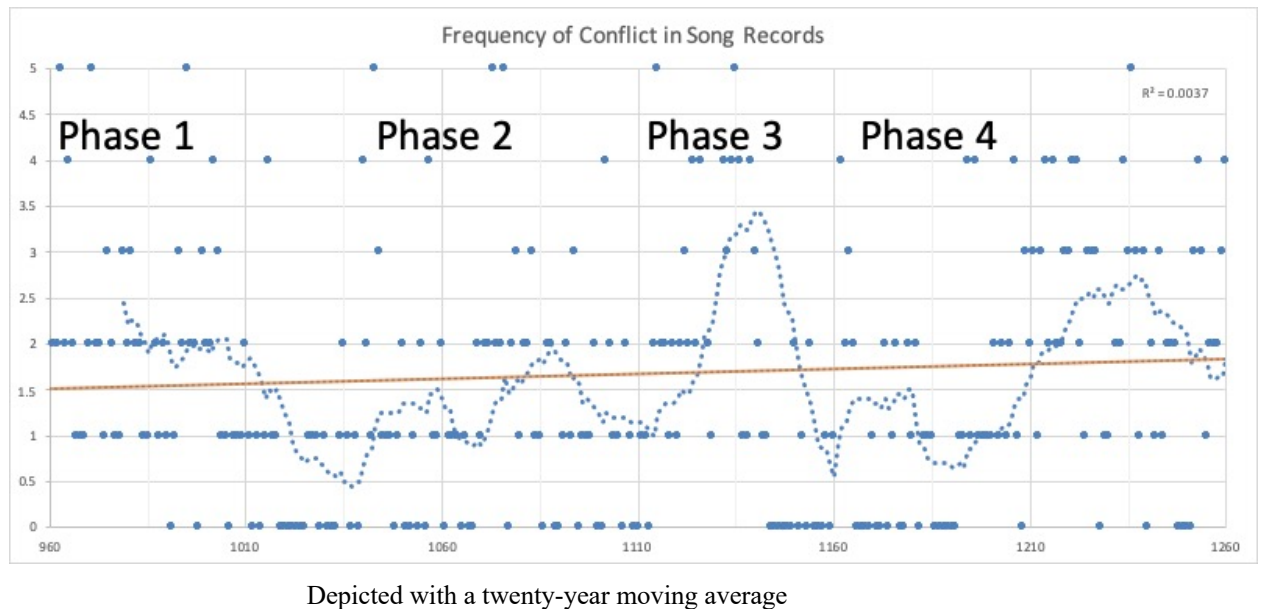
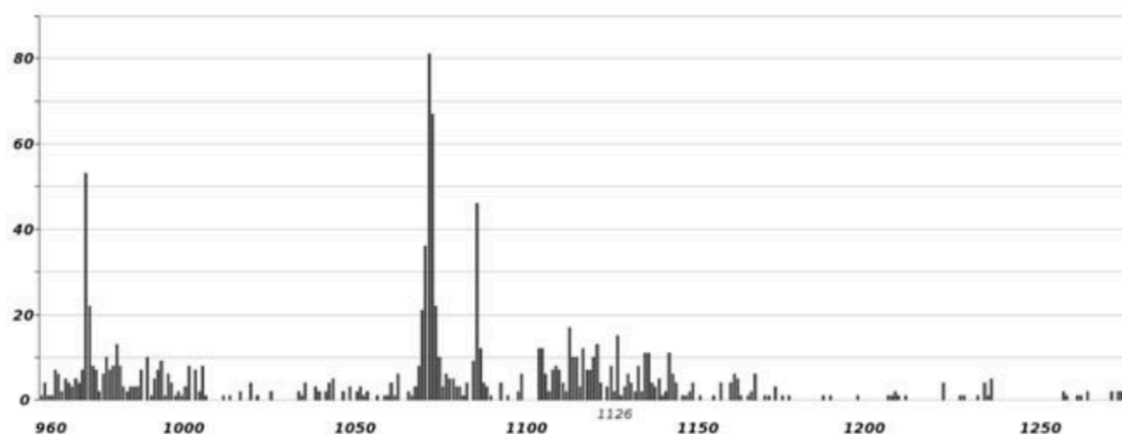


Figure 4.2, meanwhile, is from a historical-geographical information system research project based on pioneering use of Song spatial and demographic records. It shows changes in bureaucratic jurisdictions. Since these tended to change both directly before and after wars, as a result of preparations for conflict or reordering after a victory or defeat, the spatial map can be used as a proxy for stability/instability, and, consequently, the magnitude of conflict, making it an appropriate complement to Figure 4.1, which only indicates frequency.

<sup>613</sup> I am indebted to Tonio Andrade for sharing his data file with me and corresponding on the subject.

Figure 4.2: *Spatial Renovation*



“Spatial renovation in Song Dynasty China” from: Meeks and Mostern<sup>614</sup>; based on Chinese records of county and prefectural organization. Used with permission.

Together, both figures indicate frequent conflict/instability before 1005, a break until either the 1040s (the Song-Xia war) or the 1070s/80s (the second Song-Xia war), and then clusters of conflict during the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (the Song-Xia and Song-Liao-Jin conflicts). The data sets then diverge in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Overall, however, they can be seen as representative of war and stability in the Song Era.

Having summarized the phases of peace and war in the Song era, Table 4.2 now indicates the presence or absence of my variables with reference to the phases of peace and particular wars. Like Figures 4.1 and 4.2, Table 4.2 should be used as a visual aid, rather than a definitive statement, of this chapter’s reconstruction of the various wars. Some of the categories can be answered discretely (e.g., Value of Peace; War or Peace), but others, such as Thick Recognition, are more correctly conceived as continuous variables, and so their reduction to discrete categories can only be said to be approximately representative of reality. Moreover, I acknowledge that the variables are not perfectly independent, as, for example, a BOP2 opportunity might be taken precisely because a state suspected that BOP1, the long-term balance, was vulnerable to being changed. Cells are left blank either when I am unsure of the proper coding or when it does not apply because, for example, the short-term balance cannot be approximated for an entire era.

<sup>614</sup> Elijah Meeks and Ruth Mostern, “The Politics of Territory in Song Dynasty China, 960–1276 CE,” in *Toward Spatial Humanities: Historical GIS and Spatial History*, ed. Ian N. Gregory and Alistair Geddes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 127.

Table 4.2: *War and Peace in the Song Dynasty*

Approx. Date	Dyad	BOP1	BOP2	Territorial Settlement	Thick Recognition	War or Peace?
976-1004	Song-Liao	N	N	N	N	W
1005-1119	Song-Liao	Y		Y	Y	<b>P (114 years)</b>
1038	Song-Xia	Y	Y	N	N	W
1081	Song-Xia	Y	N	N	N	W
1103; 1113	Song-Xia	Y	Y	N	N	W
1120s	Song-Liao	Y	N	N		W
1125-1141	Song-Jin	N	N	N	N	W
1142-1160	Song-Jin	Y		Y	N	<b>P (18 years)</b>
1161	Song-Jin	Y	Y	N	N	W
1165-1205	Song-Jin	Y		Y	Partial	<b>P (40 years)</b>
1206	Song-Jin	Y	N	N	Partial	W
1220s-1234	Song-Jin	N	N	N	Partial	W

BOP1 refers to a mutually perceived long-term balance of power. BOP2 refers to the stability of the short-term BOP (Y) or an opportunity to exploit this balance (N). Territorial Settlement indicates whether an agreement over the distribution of territory was negotiated through compromise and was *still considered legitimate* by both powers (Y), or never negotiated or negotiated but then rejected (N). Thick recognition indicates whether the relevant actors recognized each other as equals. A blank space indicates insufficient evidence to code the variable.

A few additional points, not extensively discussed in the preceding narrative and analysis, are suggested by Table 4.2. *Pace* Neorealists, neither BOP1 nor BOP2, or a combination of both, is sufficient to generate a lasting peace (see the wars of 1038; 1103; 1113; and 1161).<sup>615</sup> Territorial settlements, in particular, are

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<sup>615</sup> It is true that my BOP variables combine objective and subjective factors and so remain somewhat fuzzy. It is also true that optimism about the prospects of victory is usually associated with a decision to initiate conflict. See Daniel Altman, "The Strategist's Curse: A Theory of False Optimism as a Cause of War," *Security Studies* 24, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 284–315, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2015.1038186>. Even so, I have coded the existence of a long-term balance pragmatically: if both states had very large armies, if offense was more difficult than defense (as it was for this entire period), and if the

arrangements that emphasize how peace is both an event (the initial settlement) and a process (the continuing acceptance and legitimacy of what was previously decided). On multiple occasions, typically after a long period of peace, revanchism became more powerful than states' commitment to peace, restarting wars previously decided and resolved (e.g., 1120s, 1161, 1206, 1220s). Finally, as seen in the extended periods of Song-Jin peace, the Song were willing to accept a position of partial inequality; at this same time, the reality of partial equality seems to have decreased the Song court's commitment to peace, especially in interaction with BOP2 opportunities (1206; 1220s). If the ultimate underlying cause of war is states valuing the benefits of war more than those of peace, it is the interaction between the BOP, the quality of the territorial settlement, and the thickness of recognition that shapes the value of peace vs. that of war.

I will now bring this section to a close by briefly examining a counterfactual reconstruction of Song history offered by Robin Yates, a historian of ancient China.<sup>616</sup> He suggests that different decisions in the Song era could have aborted the rise of the Mongols, reestablished the unipolar supremacy of China, and changed the whole course of pre-modern history. All this, Yates contends, could have occurred had the Song only defeated the Xia in the 1080s, which would have positioned the Song to invade and defeat the Liao, which in turn would have enabled the Song to “preempt the Jin attack that lost North China in 1126-27.”<sup>617</sup> Yates thinks such a counterfactual reconstruction is plausible because if the Song had been able to hold on to North China, where the region's great iron and saltpeter resources were located, the dynasty would have been in a much stronger position to defend itself.

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respective states had previously fought and yet failed to achieve any remarkable territorial gains, then it stands to reason that there was an objective long-term BOP. I do not go into specific court debates regarding the decision to use force on various occasions, but the general histories and even the more specialized studies (such as Yuan-Kang Wang's) typically present one group (the doves) cautioning that victory was unlikely based on these metrics, while another group (the hawks) advise that—this time—somehow things are different. When perceptions seem basically split, I have given priority to the ‘objective’ side of the BOP1 variable.

<sup>616</sup> Robin D.S. Yates, “The Song Empire: The World's First Superpower?,” in *Unmaking the West: “What-If?” Scenarios That Rewrite World History*, ed. Philip E. Tetlock, Richard Ned Lebow, and Geoffrey Parker (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2006), 205–40.

<sup>617</sup> Yates, 215.

Yates' analysis is worth considering because it provokes clarification of a number of important points. His counterfactual is grounded on the traditional unipolar conception of the Chinese state. Yates' essay implies that Song-Liao relations in the Long Eleventh Century somehow contributed to Chinese weakness, that the dynasty's "serious financial problems" were the results of the payments to the Liao and Xia, that a bold siege of Xia cities could have realistically destroyed the Xia state, and that victories against the Liao at the end of the eleventh century would have positioned the Song to defeat the Jin in the 1120s.<sup>618</sup> But every one of these assumptions is false or dubious. Song-Liao relations, on the contrary, were actually quite proper and trade between the two states was highly lucrative. Song payments were minuscule compared to the costs of funding and deploying large armies. In an era of defensive dominance, sieges were always uncertain affairs and logistically prohibitively demanding for the attacker. And the best way for the Song to have avoided the loss of northern China to the Jin would have been not to destroy their own defensive elm and willow forests in 1122, a step then taken to enable irredentism against the Liao.<sup>619</sup> Furthermore, the real enemy to Song stability and prosperity in the Long Eleventh Century was the flooding of the Yellow River. The mismanagement of Song environmental policy was facilitated by the distractions and degradations generated by repeated wars in northern China.<sup>620</sup> These wars, in combination with the increased taxes they required, then resulted in internal rebellions, which undermined the Song State's ability to defend northern China against the Jin.

Yes, North China mattered, and perhaps if the Song had maintained a monopoly on iron and saltpeter, and therefore steel and gunpowder, the wars with

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<sup>618</sup> Yates, 219–23.

<sup>619</sup> Chen, "Frontier, Fortification, and Forestation," 3, 19, 22.

<sup>620</sup> Ling Zhang, "Changing with the Yellow River: An Environmental History of Hebei, 1048-1128," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 69, no. 1 (June 2009): 36; Ling Zhang, *The River, the Pain, and the State: An Environmental Drama in Northern Song China, 1048-1128* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Michael J. Storzum et al., "The Collapse of the North Song Dynasty and the AD 1048–1128 Yellow River Floods: Geoarchaeological Evidence from Northern Henan Province, China," *The Holocene* 28, no. 11 (November 2018): 1761, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959683618788682>.

the Mongols would have gone differently.<sup>621</sup> The way to do this, however, would not have been through repeated wars of expansion—that is not even a counterfactual, but what the Song actually attempted. Instead, keeping North China required carefully maintaining the Yellow River, keeping the peace with the Xia and Liao, strengthening China’s defensive ditches and forests, and seeking to coordinate a collective regional response to the rise of new expansionist powers (whether Jin or Mongol). In short, a successful Song response would not have rejected the lessons of Shanyuan but embraced them.

### 4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has 1) reconstructed the international history of the Song era, 2) compared phases of war with those of peace, while noting exceptions in the latter, and 3) investigated the relevance of this study’s variables (BOP, thick recognition, and a territorial settlement) for explaining the frequency and likelihood of war. One case cannot tell us anything definitive about international relations. But what constitutes a case is a matter of perspective. From a broad perspective, the whole Song era is just one case; from a narrow perspective, it is many cases. Table 4.2, above, which summarizes how my causal variables relate to different discrete events/phases in Song history, breaks down the era into a dozen discrete cases. Together these cases indicate that there are different paths to conflict, but that BOP1, a territorial settlement, and at least partial recognition are the sine qua nons of a lasting peace.

If the variables isolated by this broader project have informed my analysis of the cases discussed in this chapter, the cases also suggest a more varied specification of the variables. BOP2 seems inextricably connected with domestic/court political context, with short-term opportunities potentially functioning as the tipping factor in the divide between maintaining the Great Peace versus pursuing the Great Merit. The readjustment of Song-Liao relations, which occurred in the early 1040s, seems to illustrate some tension between the conception of peace as an event and peace as a process; both, it seems, need to be

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<sup>621</sup> Benjamin Avichai Katz Sinvany, “Notes on the Invention of the First Gun: Conflict and Innovation in the Song Warring States Period (960-1279),” *Journal of Chinese Military History* 8, no. 1 (May 17, 2019): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22127453-12341337>.

included within the broader category of a “territorial settlement.” In this case, Liao pressure actually violated their original agreement, which was that the territorial question had been forever settled. The Song response could have been one of virulent anti-appeasement. Instead, the Song agreed to marginally increase their subsidies, and the issue was not reopened for more than two generations. This is an instance where Song-Liao relations could have been derailed, moving the two states from wary coexistence (normal peace) to open hostility (hot or cold war). That relations stayed on the rails indicates not just the two states’ commitment to the Great Peace, but the proficiency of their diplomatic system in ensuring territorial issues remained settled. Finally, the cases studied in this chapter illustrate how Thick Recognition can vary. Song-Jin relations in the second half of the twelfth century were *not* those of a tributary and vassal, but neither were they on an equal ritual footing. The Song were committed enough to maintaining the benefits of peace that they were willing to make extensive ritual and limited material concessions in order to maintain stable relations between *de facto* equals. The implication is that thick recognition can tolerate some asymmetry, something also seen in the Amarna system, where the Egyptian Pharaoh refused to marry his daughter to his fellow kings.

The ultimate irony of Song history is that the greatest wounds experienced by the Chinese of this period were self-inflicted. The collapse of the Song Dynasty can be directly tied to the Song Court’s unwillingness to integrate the Xia into the Shanyuan system. The result was that millions of soldiers and civilians died in wars fought to secure nominally valuable but actually worthless material and ritual objectives. These wars, in turn, required confiscatory taxes, which generated rebellions and undermined Chinese power during the Liao-Jin transition, resulting first in the loss of Northern China and then ultimate defeat by the Mongols, who destroyed the Xia, the Jin, and the Song one by one; there was no Metternich to unite the states in opposition to the conquering Napoleon.<sup>622</sup> Throughout the two phases of peace experienced by the Chinese, the belief that only the destruction of their neighbors would solve the nation’s problems persisted. Ideology could be subordinated to other goals and effectively suppressed. But only for a time, for

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<sup>622</sup> See Wolfram Siemann, *Metternich: Strategist and Visionary*, trans. Daniel Steuer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019), 192–98 and cp. 6.

peace seems to have bred complacency, tilting the domestic debate in favor of advocates of the peace of dominance. In the end, however, the peace of dominance became something imposed upon the Chinese rather than celebrated by them.

## 5 Conclusion

Why, my son, do you so long for Ambition, that worst of deities? Oh, do not; the goddess is unjust; many are the homes and cities once prosperous that she has entered and left, to the ruin of her worshippers. . . . It is better, my son, to honor Equality, who always joins friend to friend, city to city, allies to allies; for Equality is naturally lasting among men. . . .  
Euripides (c. 408 BC)<sup>623</sup>

Pride in its perversity apes God. It abhors equality with other men under Him; but instead of His rule, it seeks to impose a rule of its own upon its equals.  
St. Augustine (426 AD)<sup>624</sup>

Only a peace between equals can last.  
Woodrow Wilson (1917)<sup>625</sup>

War's unlikelihood, not merely its absence, is this dissertation's definition of peace. This is what Hobbes meant by saying that "the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE" (*Leviathan*, XIII.8). Peacetime requires an assurance that war, humanity's default condition, is unlikely.

Such an assurance is, of course, relatively rare: throughout history polities have sought to impose peace on others, or at least attempted to prevent others from imposing peace on them. In the grand sweep of history, the former has been more successful than the latter, leading to the establishment of increasingly large political units. These units—varying from states to confederations and empires—may establish internal peace, but the historical tendency has remained one of external enmity.

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<sup>623</sup> *The Phoenician Women*, 534-540, *The Complete Greek Drama*, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, trans. Edward Philip Coleridge (New York: Random House, 1938).

<sup>624</sup> *De civitate Dei*, XIX.12, trans Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1993).

<sup>625</sup> "Address to the Senate," (22 January 1917): [https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/President\\_Wilson%27s\\_Address\\_to\\_the\\_Senate,\\_January\\_22,\\_1917](https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/President_Wilson%27s_Address_to_the_Senate,_January_22,_1917).

While most are happy to grant this was true in Augustine's day,<sup>626</sup> some contemporary scholars today are more optimistic, contending that the long-term pattern of interstate violence has shown signs of decline—even obsolescence—since the conclusion of the Second World War.<sup>627</sup> The latest wave of scholarship in this debate, however, casts doubt on both the empirical and theoretical arguments of the decline-of-war thesis.<sup>628</sup> Broadly speaking, peace remains a puzzle. In an age of rising nationalism and nuclear weapons, this is a problem.<sup>629</sup> In the past, major-power war altered the constitutive, configurative, and positional equilibrium of states systems. Today, it threatens global carnage. That this was the case during the Cold War does not undermine the larger point. Accident Theory suggests there is a strong statistical likelihood that nuclear weapons will be used in the future. One scholar writing in this tradition has observed recently: “A traditional Realist conception of international politics that foresees an eternal series of great-power rivalries is a conception that also foresees an eventual nuclear war.”<sup>630</sup> Leaving the puzzle of peace unsolved allows the future to rest on an unbearably light foundation of luck.<sup>631</sup>

In this dissertation, I have sought an initial solution to the most difficult version of the peace puzzle: how major states of approximately equal power that share an international system might coexist in peace. Previous IR puzzle-solving in this tradition has generally restricted itself to easier problems. Liberal IR proposes various forms of the Democratic Peace thesis, a solution that is only available for

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<sup>626</sup> See *De civitate Dei*, XIX.7.

<sup>627</sup> John Mueller, “Accounting for the Waning of Major War,” in *The Waning of Major War: Theories and Debates*, ed. Raimo Väyrynen (New York: Routledge, 2006), 64–79; Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*; Goertz, Diehl, and Balas, *The Puzzle of Peace*.

<sup>628</sup> Mann, “Have Wars and Violence Declined?”; Chamberlin, *The Cold War's Killing Fields*; Braumoeller, *Only the Dead*.

<sup>629</sup> John Lukacs, *Democracy and Populism: Fear and Hatred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Pankaj Mishra, *Age of Anger: A History of the Present* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2018).

<sup>630</sup> Campbell Craig, “Testing Organisation Man: The Cuban Missile Crisis and *The Limits of Safety*,” *International Relations* 26, no. 3 (September 2012): 295, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117812451965>.

<sup>631</sup> Benoît Pelopidas, “The Unbearable Lightness of Luck: Three Sources of Overconfidence in the Manageability of Nuclear Crises,” *European Journal of International Security* 2, no. 2 (July 2017): 240–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2017.6>.

polities that share values and institutions which generally only result from a long idiographic process.<sup>632</sup> Realists explain peace where a balance of power is absent (hegemony) or within (but not between) coalitions when it is present, and offer some ideas on how crises might be mitigated. But marginally modifying the frequency of rain leaves the inclination to foul weather undisturbed, and first and second image war-inducing mechanisms are likely to win eventually. Stephen Walt has nicely summarized this position with respect to the prospects for future peace between the United States and China: yes, such peace is perfectly possible so long as the two nations are led by “prudent, enlightened, far-sighted, and peace-loving” leaders!<sup>633</sup> Constructivists, in contrast, have focused on the possibility of an “assurance to the contrary,” and therefore a more stable peace, but have not been interested in specifying a falsifiable widely applicable theory. From these separate but parallel lines of inquiry, I have proposed a synthesis theory of peace, which prioritized the interactive importance of three variables: an acknowledged balance of power, thick recognition, and the settlement of territorial disputes. My contention was not that the presence of these variables would fully explain any given period of peace—much too high a bar for any generalized social scientific theory—but that they were together *necessary conditions* in making peace “a matter of course” (Peirce’s standard for pragmatic theorizing). I further suggested that periods of peace would be preceded by a *prequel* stage that incentivized participants to reevaluate their calculations of the expected utility of war and peace, and succeeded by a *sequel* phase focused on the maintenance of peace as a process (rather than an event).

As part of my “pre-study,” I probed the probability of my synthesis theory by looking at the most relevant modern cases, the Long Nineteenth Century in particular. This peace followed an extended period of war, was “founded” in a Kantian sense at the Congress of Vienna and was succeeded by the development of a diplomatic system in which the settlement was extended and revised. The founding of the peace involved the acknowledgment of a BOP in the sense I have

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<sup>632</sup> For what happens when this progression is missing: Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

<sup>633</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “Rising Powers and the Risks of War: A Realist View of Sino-American Relations,” in *Will China’s Rise Be Peaceful? Security, Stability, and Legitimacy*, ed. Asle Toje (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 28.

defined the concept (seeing that eliminating other major actors was prohibitively costly), the creation of a horizontal Great Power honor-club (which is what I have called thick recognition), and the settlement of outstanding contentious territorial issues. This peace collapsed when expectations about the BOP changed, certain members (Austria-Hungary) deemed themselves excluded from the club, and territorial disputes (as a result of the reappearance of the Balkan question) reemerged. It is not possible to imagine the success (and later, the collapse) of this Long Peace absent these three variables. Methodologically, however, it would be problematic to substantiate any theory with only this case not only because it might be non-representative of a larger population of cases, but also because my synthesis theory has been significantly influenced by this specific historical period, meaning at best I might be summarizing certain variables rather than testing a theory.

Consequently, for my “main study,” I sought to develop three new cases—introducing them in varying degrees to the discipline of IR—and test my theoretical expectations. These were the Amarna System of the Late Bronze Age, Rome and Persia in late antiquity, and China’s Song dynasty. In these case studies, I used a narrative historical method to periodize the cases appropriately and inquire into the causes of war and peace. I then discussed the potential usefulness of my synthesis theory against the leading (or possible) alternative explanations. Rather than summarizing each case study—for which I refer the reader to the individual chapters—I will now look at my variables (and their effects) in a comparative manner.

Each lasting period of peace had a significant prequel stage characterized by either hot or cold war. The judgment that peace outweighs the benefits of war often is a long time in coming even in the face of contrary evidence. Probably the fewer states in a system, the more likely this underlying condition for peace will be met. For the Long Nineteenth Century AD, it took 28 years. In the LBA, at least a century of conflict preceded the settlements of 1417 BC; when peace had to be recreated between Hatti and Egypt, it required almost another century of hostility. Rome and Sassanian Persia fought off and on for a century and a half before they entered into a state of normal peace. The Song and Liao only fought for a generation before the settlement of 1005 AD, but the tempo and intensity of conflict was quite high; a similar generation of conflict was required to normalize relations with the Jin in the first half of the twelfth century AD. The lesson of all four cases is

that *sometimes* severe conflict can produce New Thinking: the realization that the pattern of the past is prohibitively costly and that a better future will require conciliation and cooperation.<sup>634</sup> Falling repeatedly—to put this in terms Augustine might have understood—can induce leaders to suppress their pride.

This realization on its own, this suppression, however, is only the beginning of the story. Without mutual willingness to make serious concessions, it is merely cheap talk. Implementing the *mechanisms* of peace was ideologically costly in every case studied. In Egyptian, Assyrian, Roman, Persian, and Chinese history, dealing with states on grounds other than complete superiority was considered not only humiliating, but raised the question of regime legitimacy. Was not Pharaoh a king set apart? What of the Roman worship of *pax*—as victory? What of the Chinese dogma of the “Great Unity”? The *libido dominandi* (the lust for sovereignty) that Augustine believed “consumes the human race” (*De Civ. Dei*, III.14) has proven a powerful ideological force throughout history.

The recognition of the other as an equal is the move that unlocks the possibility of a lasting peace. A vignette from the modern era reveals the logic of this move. When journeymen, traveling on their obligatory *tour de France* in the early nineteenth century, met one another on the road, they would ritually greet one another and then enquire after each other’s trade. The journeyman who considered himself superior (blacksmiths over wheelwrights; farriers over harness-makers) would then demand that the other give way; if he did not, a fight would commonly ensue. But there was one exception: if the journeymen happened to be of the same trade, then they would jovially share a drink together as equals.<sup>635</sup> The best summary of the causes of war between states, I have suggested, is that of John Ruggie.<sup>636</sup> States fight constitutive wars for existence, configurative wars for territory, and positional wars for superiority. The latter is the sort of interaction illustrated by the tradesmen above. Solving the positional question through a horizontal status community mitigates one principal cause of war. But just as

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<sup>634</sup> For the reference to the ending of the Cold War, see: Richard Ned Lebow, “The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism,” *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 249–77; William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), chap. 10 ff.

<sup>635</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Pursuit of Power: Europe 1815-1914* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 161–62.

<sup>636</sup> Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond.”

importantly, it enables a diplomatic solution of the configurative question, which otherwise is likely to generate recurring conflict.

In the cases I studied, recognition of another as an equal took a wide variety of forms. In the LBA, recognition was signaled by acknowledging another as a “great king” and a “brother” and exchanging gifts and princesses. In late antiquity, it was indicated by the *mutual* exchange of hostages, the language of brotherhood, the act of adoption, and the encryption of scenes of victory (see p. 108); in the Song era, through the use of kinship language, dynastic titles, royal oath letters, and even by types of tea. The signs of thick recognition are culturally constituted, but mutuality, reciprocity, legitimacy, and shared-identity vis-à-vis other system actors are the driving themes.

Once relations were reset on thick recognition footing, the states negotiated comprehensive territorial agreements. This is seen explicitly in the Hittite-Egyptian and Hurrian-Egyptian treaties, the Roman-Persian partition of Armenia, and the Song-Liao and Song-Jin agreements over North China. Each of these agreements, in combination with thick recognition, ended the most persistent causes of quarrel between their signatories. As long as irritants could be resolved diplomatically (the sequel stage, discussed below), then there was indeed an “assurance to the contrary” that made war unlikely. The result was genuine periods of peace at least as significant as any comparable modern instance: in the LBA, two dyadic periods of peace each around 75 years; in late antiquity, an incredible century-and-a-half of peace; and in the Song era, two roughly century-long periods.

The success of such peace, paradoxically, sometimes generated new incentives for war, something seen especially in Roman-Persian relations. This insight led me to introduce a new minor variable (the short-term balance of power, BOP2) in the midst of my case studies because I realized I would be missing significant empirical realities without it. BOP2 is not an entirely independent variable, but it adds some additional mesh to the net of my theory.<sup>637</sup> In terms of pedigree, BOP2 is essentially a Realist variable, emphasizing the need to always keep security and deterrence in mind.

Suppiluliuma was the first great master of the short-term balance, exploiting it to destroy the Hurrian state, ending the first great period of peace in the LBA.

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<sup>637</sup> See Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 37–38.

Maintaining peace at this juncture in history would have required Egypt to deter Hittite aggression against Mitanni while the latter put down the Assyrian rebellion (and so restored the long-term balance). In late antiquity, the Persians became the masters of exploiting BOP2, though they did so not with the intent of destroying Rome, but of gaining subsidy payments from it (ostensibly to defend common interests against nomadic forces that threatened both empires). This was what occurred in 441, when the Persians forced Constantinople to hand over (apparently previously promised) subsidies and 502 as well, when the Persians were acting from desperation rather than greed. On this latter occasion, the Romans flatly refused to pay, leading to a five-year war that ended in stalemate. Unfortunately, this experience soured both sides on normal peace (which had persisted since 387), moving the two empires into a phase of cold peace. If better deterrence could have prevented war in 441, magnanimous concessions were needed in 502 to preserve the system's stability. It was—to the contrary—Rome's desire to exploit the BOP during a moment of difficulty for Persia that began the end of that era's Long Peace. But as if to illustrate the fragility of the short-term balance, Justinian upset the seesaw from the other end. His post-532 neglect resulted in a Persian razzia turning into a sack of Antioch, Rome's great Syrian metropolis. This unexpected Persian success forever ended peaceful relations between the empires. Finally, in the Song era, BOP2 opportunities served as excuses for the court's war-party, which never believed in the Great Peace anyway. This was seen in the 1120s in relation to the Liao and in 1206 and the 1220s in relation to the Jin. Each Song attempt to exploit opportunities in the short-term balance ended in disaster; collectively, they help explain the eventual collapse of the dynasty. All told, these cases suggest a stability-instability dynamic: the longer peace has been operative 1) the less attention is paid to the short-term balance even as 2) less value is assigned to stability, leading to 3) attempts to exploit the balance led by court factions who always doubted the value of peace, resulting in 4) war. This partially explains why every period of 'normal peace' eventually deforms. Like the brilliant blue of copper sulfate crystals, the brilliance of New Thinking eventually fades back into the dull brown monotony of history's norm.

The sequel stage of relations was significant in each period. In the LBA, diplomacy within the framework of normal peace allowed rulers to lob complaints back and forth, sublimating their otherwise violent inclinations. In late antiquity,

diplomacy coordinated opposition to nomadic threats and mediated religious disputes that otherwise could have escalated. And in the Song era, scholars have found a significant relationship between diplomatic missions to the north and support for the system of peace, indicating a socialization mechanism. There is *absolutely no indication* that diplomacy could only work between states with shared cultures or ideologies, an idea derived from the modern Concert of Europe, but one that should not be generalized as a necessary condition for either peace as an event or peace as a process.

In sum, my case studies have supported my initial expectations about the nature of peace between major powers. In every case, a long-term balance of power had to be demonstrated through a significant prequel stage. In every case, recognition and a territorial settlement were required to stabilize relations. And in every case, relations had to be renewed and extended diplomatically through peace as a process.

However, I did not initially recognize the importance of a fourth minor variable, the short-term balance of power (BOP2). The evidence from the case studies demonstrated that a failure to account for the short-term balance left a few cases insufficiently explained and the cause of peace and its breakdown indeterminate (see esp. pp. 90-95 and 111). However, BOP2 is a refinement rather than an overturning of my initial expectations. As a refinement within the “iterated process of empirical research,” including it within my general theory follows the logic of case study research.<sup>638</sup>

As the evidence currently stands, my synthesis theory of peace—a net “cast to catch what we call the ‘world’: to rationalize, explain, and to master it”<sup>639</sup>—performs better than any alternative theory. Among major powers there is a general pattern to lasting peace, and that this pattern has been independently invented and implemented in at least four different historical epochs. My interpretation of these four epochs rest on a wide range of evidence, much of it differing in quality, as well as assumptions about chronology that (for the LBA) may be challenged by future

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<sup>638</sup> Beach and Pedersen, *Causal Case Study Methods*, 23.

<sup>639</sup> Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 37–38.

scholarship. Following the example modern archaeology,<sup>640</sup> I summarize my findings here with a hierarchical quality ranking.

*Table 5.1: Case Study Evidentiary Quality Ranking*

Case	Quality of evidence	Extensiveness of investigation	Ordinal ranking (highest to lowest)
Late Antiquity	High	Extensive	1
Long 19 <sup>th</sup> Century	High	Modest	2
Song China	Modest	Extensive	3
Amarna Age	Low	Extensive	4

Four case studies, even if rigorously investigated and resting upon a strong evidentiary foundation, cannot definitively prove my argument (something not strictly possible anyway).<sup>641</sup> But by forbidding empirical realities—i.e., extended periods of peace between major powers—absent the presence of my variables, it directly engages the “world of experience” in a falsifiable manner.<sup>642</sup> It is, like Popper’s building erected on piles on top of a swamp, “firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being.”<sup>643</sup> I will be the first to admit additional cases need to be studied (other possible historical cases are suggested on p. 45 above) and that a number of less significant modern cases (including Latin America, the U.S.-Soviet ‘Long Peace,’ and ASEAN) could be more directly integrated and compared with the major case studies I focused on in this dissertation. The Roman historian Walter Scheidel has effectively used this method—major case studies where possible, in combination with numerous less extensive minor studies where the evidence is more doubtful<sup>644</sup>—and I see this as the logical (future) extension of the dissertation.

I also acknowledge that my variables could be more deeply theorized, moving in formation—as Max Weber explained a century ago—from mere definitions to clear conceptions “by means of a synthesis of . . . individual

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<sup>640</sup> This method was suggested to me by one of the dissertation’s anonymous reviewers.

<sup>641</sup> Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 22, 280.

<sup>642</sup> Popper, 103.

<sup>643</sup> Popper, 94.

<sup>644</sup> See Scheidel, *The Great Leveler; Escape from Rome: The Failure of Empire and the Road to Prosperity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

components such as the reality of history offers.”<sup>645</sup> In particular, the effects of ideological and domestic variables could be more rigorously investigated and theorized. Even as I accept this task for future research projects, I challenge other scholars to weave their own theoretical nets and attempt to catch within them the phenomenon of major power peace, including the cases drawn on and developed in this dissertation. We not only need better nets, but also to further develop our historical consciousness so as to identify and understand additional fish, to see if they can be caught by our nets, providing additional corroboration, or if they elude capture, indicating—if gathered in sufficient quantity—falsification or alternative hypotheses.<sup>646</sup> Hence, this dissertation should be read and understood not as the final word on periods of peace, but as an initial foray: one to be improved upon, and in time, perhaps, cast aside as a worn net that has served well, but that can keep up with its competitors no longer.

In that spirit, a word on how thick recognition might be better conceptualized. I began this project thinking of thick recognition as a discrete category. But my case studies have indicated that while it is this, it is also a continuous category, allowing differentiation within the status group. This was seen as early as Pharaoh’s insistence that others play by his rules and became most evident in the Song Great Peace. The original Song-Jin settlement was well balanced in terms of recognition. The Liao abandoned their territorial claims on rich agricultural lands in exchange for a subsidy derived from the tax revenues of those lands, the two sides agreed to a number of reciprocal clauses, and clever use of kinship language allowed the Liao (via its empress dowager) to hold one superior title while the Song (via its “elder” emperor) the other. Later on, in response to the Liao BOP2 pressure during the war with the Xia that began in 1038, the Song agreed to a formula for presenting their subsidies that decreased their relative status vis-à-vis the Liao. At the same time, the Song brought the war with the Xia to an end *not* by granting their maximum status claim—to be a great kingdom, alongside the Song and Liao—but by making annual subsidy payments in exchange for ritual Xia status submission. The Xia, in other words, had traded their claim to be part of

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<sup>645</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism and Other Writings*, ed. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 300.

<sup>646</sup> Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, 66.

the Great Power club for a more advantageous fiscal position in the Chinese hierarchy, while the Song lost relative status within the club to the Liao to secure this outcome. How much status can a state lose or trade and still remain within the thick recognition club? I have coded (p. 146) the Song as falling out of the club from 1142-1160 and only being partially within it thereafter. On the one hand, the Song were not treated as mere vassals, as they had been after earlier defeats by the Jin. On the other hand, the uncle (Jin)/nephew (Song) arrangement did indicate the Jin's superior position. The treaty of 1164-5 is not extant, so it is difficult to form a final judgment on this era at this point in time. The fact that the Song, led by ideological revanchists, was the state that broke the treaty in 1206 may indicate that relative status subordination was more of a domestic rallying point for war than an objective handicap in relations with the Jin. I will conclude this discussion simply by observing that status can be traded for other desirable things,<sup>647</sup> but that if too much is traded away, the result of what Max Weber has called "hard bargaining,"<sup>648</sup> it can become a problem for domestic politics (and, consequently, the overall stability of peace).

This dissertation so far has engaged in abduction (theorizing a possible explanation for peace) and induction (testing the theory against a diverse set of cases). I shall now take the final step and move to deduction (predicting the implications of my theory for a contemporary/future case). From the perspective of pragmatist social science, this step is necessary because ultimately the utility of the IR discipline "can be assessed by looking at how it enables orientation in the social world, including the tractability of relevant social problems."<sup>649</sup> The question of a prospective U.S.-China war, and how it might be avoided, was what originally motivated my inquiry into the causes of major power peace. I have sought the nomothetic in order to gain insight into the idiographic, insight that otherwise

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<sup>647</sup> For a sociological analogue: Julien Jourdan, Rodolphe Durand, and Patricia H. Thornton, "The Price of Admission: Organizational Deference as Strategic Behavior," *American Journal of Sociology* 123, no. 1 (July 2017): 232–75, <https://doi.org/10.1086/692248>.

<sup>648</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), vol. 2: 937.

<sup>649</sup> Friedrichs and Kratochwil, "On Acting and Knowing," 706.

would be unavailable to the area studies expert. So, it is to this task I now turn, by way of ASEAN's "Long Peace."

### 5.1 Long Peace and Prospects for the United States and China

One of the most interesting (because it defies the expectations of Realist and Liberal IR paradigms) and relevant cases of Long Peace is that which has characterized ASEAN since its founding in 1967.<sup>650</sup> I have saved the ASEAN Long Peace for discussion in this final chapter because scholars have linked ASEAN's initial phase of peace to a second phase of expansion, which covers all of East Asia beginning in 1979.<sup>651</sup> What do these periods of peace imply both for my synthesis theory and the developing U.S.-China rivalry in the region?

The proximate midwife of the ASEAN community was the period of 'Confrontation' between Indonesia and Malaysia (1963-1966). The Confrontation involved constitutive and configurative questions: would Malaysia be recognized (by Indonesia) as an independent state? And how precisely would it be configured (a point disputed by Indonesia and the Philippines)? The Confrontation ended when leadership in Indonesia changed. The most important element in the shift was the change from a revolutionary state to a developmentalist state in 1966. In the former, conflict was the pathway to legitimacy, while in the latter, peace was the pathway.<sup>652</sup> In terms of my theory, this would be the underlying cause of peace: the judgment that its benefits outweighed those of conflict.

The formation of ASEAN a year later—which Singapore's Foreign Minister S. Rajaratnam specifically associated with "a new way of thinking about our

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<sup>650</sup> Timo Kivimäki, "The Long Peace of ASEAN," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 1 (January 2001): 5–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343301038001001>.

<sup>651</sup> Stein Tønnesson, "What Is It That Best Explains the East Asian Peace Since 1979? A Call for a Research Agenda," *Asian Perspective* 33, no. 1 (November 2009): 111–36; Timo Kivimäki, "East Asian Relative Peace and the ASEAN Way," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11, no. 1 (January 2011): 57–85, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcq016>.

<sup>652</sup> Etel Solingen, "Pax Asiatica versus Bella Levantina: The Foundations of War and Peace in East Asia and the Middle East," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (November 2007): 757–80, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055407070487>; Timo Kivimäki, *The Long Peace of East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2016), chaps. 5, 8; Ang Cheng Guan, *Southeast Asia's Cold War: An Interpretive History*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019), 116, 137.

problems”<sup>653</sup>—can be seen as the creation of a peace-inducing mechanism, or Hobbes’ “assurance to the contrary.” Unlike the cases I have studied in this dissertation, this (and subsequent) agreements did not resolve the region’s territorial disputes. Instead, it formalized a diplomatic process that led to the management of the region’s disputes through methods of coping, face-saving, and de-escalation.<sup>654</sup> This process was (and remains) centered on the norms of sovereignty and non-inference, which are important to ASEAN countries as a result of the region’s colonial history. The recognition of these norms within the community constitutes a form of thick recognition. It is not coincidental that a former Indonesian Foreign Minister has explained that negotiations between ASEAN states are “not as between opponents but as between friends and brothers,”<sup>655</sup> demonstrating that the idea of fictive kinship in international politics has survived the transition to modernity.

ASEAN’s success suggests a more flexible understanding of the imperative of ‘settling’ territorial disputes. In my introduction, I postulated that there are two types of peace: the imposed peace of victory and the negotiated peace. ASEAN states have so far rejected the first conception, but not fully embraced the second.<sup>656</sup> This liminal position seems to be possible because of the “ASEAN Way,”<sup>657</sup> which has reduced the otherwise close association between territorial disputes and war, allowing states to efficiently major on the majors (which, for the states of SE Asia, are development and stability). Wang Anshi’s advice from almost a millennium ago

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<sup>653</sup> Quoted in Amitav Acharya, “Collective Identity and Conflict Management in Southeast Asia,” in *Security Communities*, ed. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 207.

<sup>654</sup> Isak Svensson, “East Asian Peacemaking: Exploring the Patterns of Conflict Management and Conflict Settlement in East Asia,” *Asian Perspective* 35, no. 2 (2011): 163–85, <https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2011.0010>; Aarie Glas, “Habits of Peace: Long-Term Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia,” *European Journal of International Relations* 23, no. 4 (December 2017): 833–56, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066116679878>.

<sup>655</sup> Quoted in Acharya, “Collective Identity and Conflict Management in Southeast Asia,” 212.

<sup>656</sup> That being said, the extant territorial disputes are minor since most boundaries were simply inherited from the European empires that had earlier constituted them. See Stein Tønnesson, “War and Peace Between Nations, 1945–2010,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian History*, ed. Norman Owen (London: Routledge, 2013), 101–2.

<sup>657</sup> Amitav Acharya, “Culture, Security, Multilateralism: The ‘ASEAN Way’ and Regional Order,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 19, no. 1 (April 1998): 55–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523269808404179>.

embodies this attitude: “assess the overall situation and disregard ‘trivial matters.’”<sup>658</sup>

Since 1979, East Asia has also developed a similar development-first consensus, which (like in SE Asia in the previous generation, Indonesia in particular) involved “a shift in national priorities from ideological nation-building to economic growth.”<sup>659</sup> China’s transformation from a revolutionary to a developmental state was the most important factor in East Asia’s entry into the wider zone of peace. Since Mao’s death, China’s government has followed an “output legitimacy” model, which is centered on providing a progressively better life for the nation’s people.<sup>660</sup> This requires solving the practical issues China’s people care about—individual income, corruption, environmental pollution, social insurance, land management, and job creation<sup>661</sup>—not costly foreign ventures.

East Asia did not develop anything culturally or institutionally equivalent to ASEAN to ensure territorial disputes were transcended or managed. However, Robert Ross has argued that since the 1970s, China secured its geopolitical position in such a manner that security and continental territorial issues (i.e., the U.S. in Vietnam, the Soviet threat to the North, and the persistent border dispute with India) were removed as pressing causes of conflict.<sup>662</sup> At the same time, China’s leaders agreed to marginalize the importance of maritime territorial disputes<sup>663</sup> in the interest of regional harmony and development. The result was two generations of peace.

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<sup>658</sup> Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, 70.

<sup>659</sup> Stein Tønnesson, “Peace by Development,” in *Debating the East Asian Peace: What It Is. How It Came About. Will It Last?*, ed. Elin Bjarnegård and Joakim Kreutz (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2017), 55.

<sup>660</sup> Thomas Heberer, “The Chinese ‘Developmental State 3.0’ and the Resilience of Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Chinese Governance* 1, no. 4 (2016): 611–32; Bruce J. Dickson, Mingming Shen, and Jie Yan, “Generating Regime Support in Contemporary China: Legitimation and the Local Legitimacy Deficit,” *Modern China* 43, no. 2 (2017): 123–55.

<sup>661</sup> Tony Saich, “How China’s Citizens View the Quality of Governance Under Xi Jinping,” *Journal of Chinese Governance* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–20; Yun-Han Chu, “Sources of Regime Legitimacy in Confucian Societies,” *Journal of Chinese Governance* 1, no. 2 (2016): 195–213.

<sup>662</sup> Robert S. Ross, “The Geography of Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-First Century,” *International Security* 23, no. 4 (1999): 81–118.

<sup>663</sup> There were three exceptions, 1974, 1988, and 1994–5, but after the last of these the situation stabilized, culminating in the signing of a Declaration of Conduct between China and ASEAN in 2002.

This arrangement—the development-first mindset and the marginalization of territorial disputes—is today in the process of ending, casting doubt on the durability of the East Asian Long Peace. China’s increasing naval power has enabled it to challenge the United States’ de facto maritime supremacy,<sup>664</sup> provoking an American “pivot” to the region that further exacerbates China’s sense of insecurity.<sup>665</sup> At the same time, other regional actors (in particular Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam) have in the last decade acted in ways (such as oil exploration, the fortification of disputed islands, or the arrest of Chinese nationals) that have provoked vigorous responses from the Chinese state.<sup>666</sup> Perceived closing windows of opportunity,<sup>667</sup> an increasing sensitivity to nationalist sentiments,<sup>668</sup> and

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<sup>664</sup> James Samuel Johnson, “China’s ‘Guam Express’ and ‘Carrier Killers’: The Anti-Ship Asymmetric Challenge to the U.S. in the Western Pacific,” *Comparative Strategy* 36, no. 4 (2017): 319–32; Robert S. Ross, “The Great Power Challenge to the East Asian Peace,” in *Debating the East Asian Peace*, ed. Elin Bjarnegård and Joakim Kreutz (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2017), 260–80.

<sup>665</sup> Jonathan Kirshner, “The Tragedy of Offensive Realism and the Rise of China,” *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 1 (2010): 53–75; Robert S. Ross, “The Problem with the Pivot: Obama’s Asia Policy Is Unnecessary and Counterproductive,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (December 2012): 70–82; Matteo Dian, “The Pivot to Asia, Air-Sea Battle and Contested Commons in the Asia Pacific Region,” *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 2 (2015): 237–57; Jared Morgan McKinney, “The Problem With the Pivot, Part 2,” *The Diplomat*, December 17, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/the-problem-with-the-pivot-part-2/>.

<sup>666</sup> Ketian Zhang, “Cautious Bully: Reputation, Resolve, and Beijing’s Use of Coercion in the South China Sea,” *International Security* 44, no. 1 (July 2019): 117–59, [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00354](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00354); Chan, *China’s Troubled Waters*, chap. 6; Jared Morgan McKinney and Nicholas Butts, “Bringing Balance to the Strategic Discourse on China’s Rise,” *Air Force Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 2, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 78–79.

<sup>667</sup> Ji You, “Xi Jinping and PLA Centrality in Beijing’s South China Sea Dispute Management,” *China: An International Journal* 15, no. 2 (May 2017): 1–21; Feng Zhang, “China’s Long March at Sea: Explaining Beijing’s South China Sea Strategy, 2009–2016,” *The Pacific Review*, March 19, 2019, 1–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2019.1587497>.

<sup>668</sup> Suisheng Zhao, “Foreign Policy Implications of Chinese Nationalism Revisited: The Strident Turn,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 22, no. 82 (2013): 535–53; Andrew Scobell and Scott W. Harold, “An ‘Assertive’ China? Insights from Interviews,” *Asian Security* 9, no. 2 (2013): 111–31; Peter Hays Gries, Derek Steiger, and Tao Wang, “Popular Nationalism and China’s Japan Policy: The Diaoyu Islands Protests, 2012–2013,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 98 (2016): 264–76; Jessica Chen Weiss, “How Hawkish Is the Chinese Public? Another Look at ‘Rising Nationalism’ and Chinese Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, March 7, 2019, 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1580427>.

a hardening of positions on issues it regards as ‘core,’<sup>669</sup> have permanently ended China’s “low profile” foreign policy.

The states within East Asia have *not* responded with extreme alarm to these dynamics. Cheap talk aside, defense budgets relative to GDP remain stagnant across the region.<sup>670</sup> This probably reflects a regional understanding that extremely limited maritime territorial disputes are not valuable enough to risk the developmentalist model that has been successful so far.<sup>671</sup> In contrast, a “fog of moral clarity” saturates America’s foreign policy elite,<sup>672</sup> who equate China’s current policies with the historical expansionism of Imperial Japan or the Soviet Union.<sup>673</sup> The solution, leading members of this elite aver, is for the U.S. to become highly risk-acceptant, challenging China to trials of strength, and forcing it to back down.<sup>674</sup> U.S. discourse has abandoned serious attempts to limit ends, avoid subjective commitments, gauge intentions, calculate costs and benefits, and comprehend the likely consequences of war. Strategy, in short, has become an illusion.<sup>675</sup> The situation is increasingly becoming one of zero-sum rivalry between a rising China and an extra-regional hegemon unwilling to see its role reduced.<sup>676</sup> Regardless of

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<sup>669</sup> Hoo Tiang Boon, “Hardening the Hard, Softening the Soft: Assertiveness and China’s Regional Strategy,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 5 (2017): 639–62.

<sup>670</sup> Kang, *American Grand Strategy*.

<sup>671</sup> Schultz and Goemans, “Aims, Claims, and the Bargaining Model of War”; M. Taylor Fravel, “International Relations Theory and China’s Rise: Assessing China’s Potential for Territorial Expansion,” *International Studies Review*, no. 12 (2010): 505–32; Solingen, “Pax Asiatica versus Bella Levantina.”

<sup>672</sup> John Stone, “So Many Butterflies: Isaiah Berlin and the Challenge of Strategy,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, May 16, 2019, 17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2019.1612376>.

<sup>673</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, “Competing with China,” *Survival* 60, no. 3 (2018): 7–64; Denny Roy, “Assertive China: Irredentism or Expansionism?,” *Survival* 61, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 51–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2019.1568044>.

<sup>674</sup> Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, “Responding to China’s Rising Sea Power,” *Orbis* 61, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 91–100; Oriana Skylar Mastro, “Why Chinese Assertiveness Is Here to Stay,” *The Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2015): 151–70.

<sup>675</sup> Richard K. Betts, “Is Strategy an Illusion?,” *International Security* 25, no. 2 (October 2000): 5–50, <https://doi.org/10.1162/016228800560444>.

<sup>676</sup> Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

shifts in America's domestic politics, this framing of 'the China challenge' reflects a robust elite consensus and is unlikely to change.<sup>677</sup>

The era of 'normal peace' in East Asia, consequently, is over, at least between China and the U.S. Instead, we are in the midst of a transition, probably to somewhere in between Cold War (where war is conceivable in the short-term) to Cold Peace (where it is conceivable in the long-term), a 2.5 on the peace continuum (see Section 1.5 in my Introduction). In the history of the world, negative peace of this kind has *never* lasted indefinitely between major power rivals. Deterrence eventually fails. First and second image war-inducing mechanisms eventually overcome forces of restraint. Chance intervenes, allies push and pull, and history reverts to the mean of violent conflict. This is not the prognostication of a Cassandra, but simply the unbroken pattern of the past. Contests for supremacy<sup>678</sup> are for the winning—this is Hobbes' whole point: pride, which leads people to seek superiority, the "garland" of "being foremost" (*Elements of Law*, I, ix), generates fear of losing the race, which perpetuates conflict. In an age of industrial killing and nuclear holocaust, however, the race—in which the very act of competing risks everyone losing—has become irrational.

The Cold War is not a reassuring counterexample. Recently declassified documents show that in the 1980s U.S. counterforce innovations undermined mutually assured destruction (MAD), the theorem that is supposed to ensure deterrence holds.<sup>679</sup> There is evidence that China may—at least for the time being—be in a similar situation today, but that the Chinese may not yet perceive this

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<sup>677</sup> Jared Morgan McKinney, "How the GOP Stopped Loving China," *National Interest*, July 24, 2016, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/how-the-gop-stopped-loving-china-17088>; Christopher Layne, "The US Foreign Policy Establishment and Grand Strategy: How American Elites Obstruct Strategic Adjustment," *International Politics* 54, no. 3 (2017): 260–75; Patrick Porter, "Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed: Power, Habit, and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment," *International Security* 42, no. 4 (Spring 2018): 9–46.

<sup>678</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011); Simms, *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy, from 1453 to the Present*.

<sup>679</sup> Brendan R. Green and Austin Long, "The MAD Who Wasn't There: Soviet Reactions to the Late Cold War Nuclear Balance," *Security Studies* 26, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 606–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1331639>.

reality,<sup>680</sup> in part because they do not recognize that “the United States [has] never fully accepted the consequences of the nuclear revolution.”<sup>681</sup> A state of Cold War or Cold Peace does not make war or total war certain. But it does make it *possible*, and the longer such a state persists, *likely*. Humankind got off lucky in the Cold War, with ‘only’ some 14 million deaths in conflicts fueled by the superpower rivalry.<sup>682</sup> The game of Russian roulette that culminated in the Cuban Missile Crisis, played with (at best) a three-round chamber according to President Kennedy, did not end in war,<sup>683</sup> but only a madman would willingly advocate repeating this experiment.

Such a repetition is a logical inference from rivals in the state of nature: it would be more surprising if it did not occur than if it did. As in Hobbes’ philosophical system, “The precondition of the deliverance is the recognition of the predicament.”<sup>684</sup> Once the predicament is recognized, the imperative follows logically: to get out of the state of nature and into a state of normal peace. The way to do this is for the participants to modify the terms of the race. In civil society, this can be done by establishing a Leviathan as the common authority,<sup>685</sup> a solution unavailable in most international systems. This dissertation has provided an initial framework for how states with no acknowledged superior can nonetheless modify the race to mitigate the pernicious effects of contests for supremacy: establishing an acceptable balance of power and resolving configurative and positional conflicts. In this final section, I shall apply my theory deductively to the emerging geopolitical

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<sup>680</sup> Caitlin Talmadge, “Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States,” *International Security* 41, no. 4 (April 2017): 50–92, [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00274](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00274); Fiona S. Cunningham and M. Taylor Fravel, “Dangerous Confidence? Chinese Views on Nuclear Escalation,” *International Security* 44, no. 2 (October 2019): 61–109, [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00359](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00359).

<sup>681</sup> Francis J. Gavin, “Rethinking the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons and American Grand Strategy,” *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018): 97.

<sup>682</sup> Chamberlin, *The Cold War’s Killing Fields*.

<sup>683</sup> Rudolf Avenhaus et al., “The Probability of Nuclear War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 26, no. 1 (February 1989): 91–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343389026001009>.

<sup>684</sup> Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2000), 38.

<sup>685</sup> Oakeshott, 92–93.

situation between the United States and China, presenting a pathway to extend the Long Peace that has heretofore characterized East Asia.

## 5.2 Towards Normal Peace with China

If normal peace requires a shared judgment that the benefits of peace outweigh those of war (the underlying cause) as well as the implementation of three mechanisms—an acknowledged and stable balance of power, thick recognition, and a territorial settlement—what would it practically require to interrupt and reverse the increasingly cooling trajectory of U.S.-China relations? Let us for the sake of argument postulate the presence of peace’s underlying cause, though it might be argued that the absence of existential crises in the last two generations has lulled political leaders into a rather anemic assessment of peace’s value relative to other objectives. What then of the mechanisms of peace?

### *An Acknowledged Balance of Power*

The contemporary American conception of peace is akin to that of traditional Rome or China: unipolar and hierarchical. The *pax* is based on a preponderance of power within the states system. The unipole maintains an imbalance of power and imposes its will on the recalcitrant. This construction may sound too stark: naturally American preponderance has varied in style from previous imperial powers (being, on the whole, more benign), and often the nation has found itself far from dominant.<sup>686</sup> But America’s own official defense documents have, nonetheless, set military supremacy as an overriding goal for more than a generation. This can be seen across multiple Administrations: from the leaked 1994 Defense Planning Guidance, which called for “convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role,”<sup>687</sup> to George W. Bush’s

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<sup>686</sup> David Wilkinson, “Unipolarity without Hegemony,” *International Studies Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 141–72; Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 4: Globalizations, 1945–2011 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chaps. 5 & 10; Simon Reich and Richard Ned Lebow, *Good-Bye Hegemony!: Power and Influence in the Global System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>687</sup> “Excerpts From Pentagon’s Plan: ‘Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival,’” *New York Times*, March 8, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/excerpts-from-pentagon-s-plan-prevent-the-re-emergence-of-a-new-rival.html?pagewanted=all>.

2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, which declared that the U.S. would “dissuade” any other state from “surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States,”<sup>688</sup> and now Donald Trump’s 2018 National Defense Strategy, which calls for a reinvigorated effort to maintain a “favorable regional balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>689</sup> A “favorable” balance of power, as commentators have long noted, is Newspeak for an imbalance of power—in the present circumstances, America’s extra-regional hegemony.<sup>690</sup> American “preeminence,” this last defense document explains, is the only acceptable alternative to Chinese “regional hegemony” or “global preeminence.” This either/or construction is treated as respectable both by defenders *and* critics of American grand strategy.<sup>691</sup>

As long the United States seeks to maintain a position of unquestioned supremacy, the security dilemma will lead inexorably to an arms race, which in turn will exacerbate various other war-inducing mechanisms.<sup>692</sup> China’s investment in A2/AD assets, which might enable it to protect regional interests from the threat of

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<sup>688</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Quadrennial Defense Review Report,” February 6, 2006, 30.

<sup>689</sup> Jim Mattis, “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge,” 2018, 2, 4.

<sup>690</sup> Ernst B. Haas, “The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda,” *World Politics* 5, no. 4 (July 1953): 442–77; Butterfield, “The Balance of Power”; I examine recent rhetoric on the topic in: Jared Morgan McKinney, “How to Avoid a Contest for Supremacy in East Asia,” *Comparative Strategy* 38, no. 4 (August 2019): 316–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01495933.2019.1633183>.

<sup>691</sup> Oriana Skylar Mastro, “Testimony of Dr. Oriana Skylar Mastro,” § Senate Foreign Relations Committee (2019), [https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/031319\\_Mastro\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/031319_Mastro_Testimony.pdf); Hal Brands and Zach Cooper, “After the Responsible Stakeholder, What? Debating America’s China Strategy,” *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 2 (February 2019), <https://tnsr.org/2019/02/after-the-responsible-stakeholder-what-debating-americas-china-strategy-2/>; Christopher Layne, “The US–Chinese Power Shift and the End of the Pax Americana,” *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 89–111, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix249>; Yuen Foong Khong, “Power as Prestige in World Politics,” *International Affairs* 95, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 119–42, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iyy245>.

<sup>692</sup> Thomas G. Mahnken, Joseph Maiolo, and David Stevenson, eds., *Arms Races in International Politics: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); John A. Vasquez, “Whether and How Global Leadership Transitions Will Result in War: Some Long-Term Predictions from the Steps-to-War Explanation,” in *Systemic Transitions: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. William R. Thompson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 131–60.

U.S. maritime power projection, has resulted in a significant hullabaloo in America's defense community, which has designed plans and technologies to walk-back China's advances.<sup>693</sup> American anxiety and record-breaking defense budgets are being driven by the fear that China might not be highly vulnerable to American power. While the threat of "Chinese hegemony" is bandied about like a red flag to the bull, careful defense analysts understand that a Chinese self-defense capability is nowhere near equivalent to achieving regional hegemony.<sup>694</sup> In other words, the either/or proposition is wrong. Conceptually, there is no reason the United States and China cannot develop and acknowledge a mutual balance of power in which neither state is 'supreme,' 'preponderant,' or 'hegemonic.'

Practically, this would require 1) the U.S. to explicitly *abandon* its doctrine of, and budgets for, military supremacy, 2) China to *retain* (but not increase relative to GDP growth) its currently modest military budget, 3) the negotiation of a *formula* for strategic stability, and 4) the *limitation* of arms racing dynamics in particularly acute domains, such as space and cyberspace. The outcome of such an arrangement would ensure that the cost of eliminating the other as a unit is prohibitively high (BOP1) and that the short-term balance is not susceptible to violent exploitation (BOP2).<sup>695</sup> Much more could be said about such a prospective balance, and I hope to develop it further in future projects. But it will be obvious to knowledgeable observers that apart from a broader settlement, such an acknowledged balance is probably close to fantasy. This is the case because 1) the United States has not yet been willing to recognize China as an equal and 2) territorial disputes poison the chalice, justifying the contest for supremacy, and

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<sup>693</sup> Jan van Tol et al., "AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept" (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, May 2010).

<sup>694</sup> Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48; Michael Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia: How China's Neighbors Can Check Chinese Naval Expansion," *International Security* 42, no. 2 (November 2017): 78–119, [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00294](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00294); Patrick Porter, *The Global Village Myth: Distance, War and the Limits of Power* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015), chap. 4; Sam J. Tangredi, "Anti-Access Strategies in the Pacific: The United States and China," *Parameters* 49, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2019): 5–20.

<sup>695</sup> Regional actors (such as Japan, the ASEAN states, and Australia) would also have a particular responsibility in this regard.

therefore Hobbes' state of war, on *both* sides. Consequently, it is to the latter two mechanisms of peace that I now turn.

*Thick Recognition and a Territorial Settlement*

“The Chinese will want to share this century as co-equals with the US. . . . China wants to be China and accepted as such, not as an honorary member of the West,” Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore’s founding statesman, remarked a few years ago.<sup>696</sup> In contrast, a recent open letter, signed by a large number of individuals closely associated with America’s military-industrial complex, proclaimed that the PRC “is not and never has been a peaceful regime” and that “The CCP corrupts everything it touches.”<sup>697</sup> Contrary to recent scholarship, the brewing clash between the U.S and China is not being generated by a ‘status dilemma’ in which information problems lead to uncertainty and reflexive assertiveness.<sup>698</sup> The issue is not “illusory incompatibility”; it is “real incompatibility.”<sup>699</sup> At the heart of the modern doctrine of American exceptionalism is the thesis, as summarized by Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. in 1937, that “We think we are better than other people. Anyone who does things in different fashion from us is either comic or stupid.”<sup>700</sup> The doctrine of exceptionalism, transmuted from a call to *be* different to one to

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<sup>696</sup> Kuan Yew Lee et al., *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master’s Insights on China, the United States, and the World*, Belfer Center Studies in International Security (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>697</sup> James E. Fanell, “Stay the Course on China: An Open Letter to President Trump,” *Journal of Political Risk*, July 18, 2019, <https://www.jpolrisk.com/stay-the-course-on-china-an-open-letter-to-president-trump/>.

<sup>698</sup> William C. Wohlforth, “Status Dilemmas and Interstate Conflict,” in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 115–40, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107444409.008>; William Ziyuan Wang, “Destined for Misperception? Status Dilemma and the Early Origin of US-China Antagonism,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 24, no. 1 (March 2019): 49–65, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-018-09596-6>; Xiaoyu Pu, “One Mountain, Two Tigers: China, the United States, and the Status Dilemma in the Indo-Pacific,” *Asia Policy* 14, no. 3 (July 2019): 25–40.

<sup>699</sup> K. E. Boulding, “National Images and International Systems,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3, no. 2 (June 1959): 130.

<sup>700</sup> Quoted in A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History*, America in the World (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 728.

*make others* different,<sup>701</sup> justifies America's persona as the global sheriff.<sup>702</sup> This enforcer position can be shared with a posse (subordinate democratic allies), but it is always directed against 'outlaws.'

Who is the priority outlaw depends on the idiosyncrasies of Washington's politics, but a sure guide is the current 'standard of civilization,' a concept present in any international society that specifies the rule of membership. In modern history, it has evolved from so-called Westphalian norms to include nationalism and self-determination after the Second World War, to a Liberal version today in which democracy has become "the highest stage of 'civilized' statehood."<sup>703</sup> This last stage recognizes states as legitimate based on who they are rather than what they do.<sup>704</sup> It took China around a century-and-a-half to gain recognition as a Westphalian state in control of its borders, holding a monopoly on violence, and in diplomatic relations with its neighbors and the world. It met the standard only to find the goalposts for full recognition had changed.<sup>705</sup>

Because China does not fully meet the current standard of civilization, the U.S. is increasingly treating it as an illegitimate actor. This is most clearly seen in a report from the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, which has called for U.S. officials to cease referring to Xi Jinping as China's 'President':

If there were glimmers of political opening in China, they have been firmly extinguished. It is for this reason that this year the Commission made the decision to start referring to Xi Jinping using the title by which he derives

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<sup>701</sup> Richard M. Gamble, *In Search of the City on a Hill: The Making and Unmaking of an American Myth* (London: Continuum, 2012); David C. Hendrickson, *Republic in Peril: American Empire and the Liberal Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>702</sup> Colin S. Gray, *The Sheriff: America's Defense of the New World Order* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004).

<sup>703</sup> Yannis A Stivachtis, "Democracy, the Highest Stage of 'Civilised' Statehood," *Global Dialogue* 3, no. 4 (Summer 2006): 101–12.

<sup>704</sup> Yongjin Zhang, "The Standard of 'Civilisation' Redux: Towards the Expansion of International Society 3.0?," *Millennium* 42, no. 3 (2014): 674–96.

<sup>705</sup> Barry Buzan, "The 'Standard of Civilisation' as an English School Concept," *Millennium* 42, no. 3 (2014): 580; Erik Ringmar, "China's Place in Four Recognition Regimes," in *Recognition in International Relations: Rethinking a Political Concept in a Global Context*, ed. Christopher Daase et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 49–67; the best overall discussion is: Lanxin Xiang, *The Quest for Legitimacy in Chinese Politics: A New Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 2020).

his authority: General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. . . .

Giving General Secretary Xi the unearned title of ‘President’ lends a veneer of democracy legitimacy to the CCP and Xi’s authoritarian rule.<sup>706</sup>

China, the illegitimate communist authoritarian state, according to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, is “truly hostile to the United States and our values” because “The Chinese Communist Party is a Marxist-Leninist Party focused on struggle and international domination.”<sup>707</sup> Such a state must, Pompeo had explained a few days prior, be kept “in its proper place” something the U.S. was “ensuring” by reconvening ‘the Quad’ grouping of Japan, Australia, India, and the U.S.<sup>708</sup>

In terms of rhetorical signaling, it is perfectly clear the U.S. is unwilling to recognize China’s ambition to be a legitimate, Chinese, co-equal with the U.S.<sup>709</sup> China is excluded from the horizontal honor club—‘outcasted’ from it<sup>710</sup>—because it does not meet the rule of membership. There is irony here, or perhaps tragedy: once upon a time, it was the U.S. that insisted upon including China as a Great Power within international society. The original formula was not for a sheriff, but for ‘Policemen,’ to include the U.S., Great Britain, Russia, and China.<sup>711</sup> Against

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<sup>706</sup> “2019 Report to Congress of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission,” November 2019, 32, <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/2019%20Annual%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf>.

<sup>707</sup> Mike Pompeo, “The China Challenge” (Hudson Institute, October 30, 2019), <https://www.state.gov/the-china-challenge/>.

<sup>708</sup> “Secretary Michael R. Pompeo At the Heritage Foundation President’s Club Meeting: ‘Trump Administration Diplomacy: The Untold Story,’” <https://translations.state.gov/2019/10/22/secretary-michael-r-pompeo-at-the-heritage-foundation-presidents-club-meeting-trump-administration-diplomacy-the-untold-story/>.

<sup>709</sup> For confirmation this is indeed China’s ambition: Yong Deng, *China’s Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Mingjiang Li, “International Status: China’s Pursuit of a Comprehensive Superpower Status,” in *Ashgate Research Companion on Chinese Foreign Policy*, ed. Emilian Kavalski (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 33–45.

<sup>710</sup> Oona Anne Hathaway and Scott Shapiro, *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017); for a trenchant critique: David C. Hendrickson, “How Many Cheers for the Peace Pact?,” *American Political Thought* 9, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 144–69, <https://doi.org/10.1086/706990>.

<sup>711</sup> Justin Morris, “From ‘Peace by Dictation’ to International Organisation: Great Power Responsibility and the Creation of the United Nations,” *The*

the preference of the Soviet Union, throughout World War Two the United States pushed for China's inclusion because American policymakers realized that "if there was ever to be stability in the Far East, it had to be assured with China at the center of any arrangement that was made."<sup>712</sup> After Mao's victory, America's commitment waned, leading to a proposal that India replace China on the Security Council. Jawaharlal Nehru rejected this as foolish, asking: "Can anyone deny China at the present moment the right of a Great Power, from the point of view of strength and power, to mould events. . . and shape her destiny or round about her?"<sup>713</sup>

Today, by attempting to keep China "in its proper place," the American elite answers Nehru's rhetorical question with a resounding yes. This can be seen across a wide variety of metrics. In institutions of global governance, the U.S. has worked tirelessly to ensure China cannot advance beyond its current 'middle power' position.<sup>714</sup> In response to the Belt and Road Initiative, a Chinese attempt to further develop its own economic system and to gain status through social creativity in the process,<sup>715</sup> the U.S. has launched a rancorous propaganda campaign based on the "debt-trap diplomacy" meme invented by an Indian strategic analyst. The fact that the meme is not only unsupported but undermined by actual empirical evidence is apparently irrelevant.<sup>716</sup> Finally, increasing presidential and congressional support

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*International History Review* 35, no. 3 (June 2013): 511–33,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2013.795497>.

<sup>712</sup> Cordell Hull quoted in Beverley Loke, "Conceptualising the Role and Responsibility of Great Powers: China's Participation in Negotiations toward a Post-Second World War Order," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 24, no. 2 (2013): 209–26.

<sup>713</sup> Nabarun Roy, "In the Shadow of Great Power Politics: Why Nehru Supported PRC's Admission to the Security Council," *The International History Review* 40, no. 2 (March 15, 2018): 5,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2017.1329156>.

<sup>714</sup> Jared Morgan McKinney, "How Stalled Global Reform Is Fueling Regionalism: China's Engagement with the G20," *Third World Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2018): 709–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1374838> and the literature cited therein.

<sup>715</sup> Veysel Tekdal, "China's Belt and Road Initiative: At the Crossroads of Challenges and Ambitions," *The Pacific Review* 31, no. 3 (2018): 373–90,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2017.1391864>; Weifeng Zhou and Mario Esteban, "Beyond Balancing: China's Approach towards the Belt and Road Initiative," *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 112 (2018): 487–501,  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1433476>.

<sup>716</sup> John Hurley, Scott Morris, and Gailyn Portelance, "Examining the Debt Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative from a Policy Perspective," *Journal of*

for Taiwan not only calls into question the modern foundation for U.S.-China rapprochement, the Three Communiqués, but also signals non-recognition of what the Chinese believe is the final step in ending their Century of Humiliation and realizing their identity.<sup>717</sup>

The Taiwan question shows how status and territorial issues intersect. It is a flashpoint that drags in Japanese imperialism, the Chinese Civil War, the Cold War, Chinese nationalism, contemporary military rivalry, democracy vs. authoritarianism, America's role as the global sheriff, and the fate of millions of people. The Realist attitude promoted by the reality of global warfare, which in the 1940s allowed the U.S. to dismiss Russian atrocities in Poland as a "piddling little thing" in comparison to the "main issue" of great-power peace and cooperation, has long been terminated.<sup>718</sup> Chinese analysts are incorrect in claiming that the U.S. and China do not have territorial disputes.<sup>719</sup> On the contrary, the U.S. has adopted not only Taiwan's claim, but *de jure* Japan's claims over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea and *de facto* the Philippines and Vietnam's claims in the South China Sea. The result is that a series of tinderboxes have been created that at any time could be sparked into a full-on conflagration.<sup>720</sup>

In sum, there is a robust positional conflict currently underway as the U.S. seeks to maintain its exceptional position and China seeks entry to the Great Power club (which, problematically, does not exist). At the same time, a series of maritime

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*Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 3, no. 1 (June 28, 2019): 139, <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v3i1.1123>; Deborah Brautigam, "A Critical Look at Chinese 'Debt-Trap Diplomacy': The Rise of a Meme," *Area Development and Policy*, December 6, 2019, 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23792949.2019.1689828>.

<sup>717</sup> Joshua Freedman, "Status Insecurity and Temporality in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 4 (2016): 797–822; Zuo Xiyang, "Unbalanced Deterrence: Coercive Threat, Reassurance and the US-China Rivalry in Taiwan Strait," *The Pacific Review*, December 3, 2019, 1–30, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2019.1697353>.

<sup>718</sup> Quoted in Morris, "From 'Peace by Dictation' to International Organisation," 519.

<sup>719</sup> Minghao Zhao, "Is a New Cold War Inevitable? Chinese Perspectives on US–China Strategic Competition," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 12, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poz010>.

<sup>720</sup> Christopher Coker, *The Improbable War: China, the United States and the Logic of Great Power Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Jared Morgan McKinney, "Four Questions for the 'Improbable War,'" *Asian Security* 12, no. 1 (2016): 53–61; Brendan Taylor, *The Four Flashpoints: How Asia Goes to War* (Carlton, VIC, Australia: La Trobe University Press, 2018).

territorial disputes create conditions in which configurative conflict could occur accidentally or intentionally at any given moment. What would be required to end, or at least mitigate, this increasingly risky situation?

As with the balance of power question above, I can only give a sketch of an answer. Even so, the outline should be implicit from the discussion above. Euripides and Augustine tell us that ambition and pride drive leaders to abjure equality and seek the power to impose peace rather than negotiate it. To get out of the state of nature, the United States and China will both have to reject the paradigm of dominance. For now, the burden lies more directly on the United States because it has been the predominant power for the last two generations. It will have to take initiative, though this does not mean reciprocity is excluded from the process.<sup>721</sup> Most fundamentally, recognizing China will require the older Westphalian standard of civilization. The U.S. will have to accept China as a legitimate member of the moral community of states. Philosophers make an important distinction here between *respect* and *esteem*. The U.S. can respect China's status as a Great Power equal, and grant it the rights that come along with that status, without esteeming China's authoritarian domestic system as morally good relative to a hierarchy of alternative systems in the same way that individuals can recognize the rights of those with different religious beliefs without having to believe them true or right.<sup>722</sup>

Part of thick recognition is acknowledging that status is "for something," i.e. that it does promise certain scarce rights.<sup>723</sup> The rights Great Powers claim may vary in certain respects across contexts, but would seem to today include 1) respect for domestic sovereignty, 2) a sphere of influence in which some states are vertically subordinated in a dialectic of asymmetric equilibrium<sup>724</sup> 3) a presumption

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<sup>721</sup> For practical steps in this regard, see: Lyle Goldstein, *Meeting China Halfway: How to Defuse the Emerging US-China Rivalry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015).

<sup>722</sup> Cillian McBride, "Demanding Recognition: Equality, Respect, and Esteem," *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, no. 1 (January 2009): 96–108, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885108096962>.

<sup>723</sup> Ian Brodie, "The Market for Political Status," *Comparative Politics* 28, no. 2 (April 1996): 253–71.

<sup>724</sup> In the ritualized interaction, the strong state assures the weaker of its independence and in exchange the weaker offers deference. See Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

against humiliation and ‘outcasting,’ and 4) an expectation that differences will be negotiated, but with limits on ‘hard bargaining.’<sup>725</sup> Practically realizing these rights in U.S.-China relations, to say nothing of achieving a territorial settlement, would require New Thinking as epic as that which enabled the Shanyuan Covenant, the Vienna Settlement, the ASEAN Community, or the end of the Cold War. Official U.S. discourse on human rights in China would have to be carefully calibrated to appeal to China’s interests *rightly understood* rather than self-righteous moral shaming.<sup>726</sup> U.S. activities within China’s direct neighborhood (such as the recent THAAD deployment in South Korea) would have to be either circumscribed or carried out in concert with China. The Taiwan issue (and the secondary territorial issues in the East and South China Seas) would have to be taken off the table in a

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<sup>725</sup> Erik Ringmar, “The Recognition Game: Soviet Russia Against the West,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 37, no. 2 (2002): 115–36; Jack Donnelly, “Sovereign Inequalities and Hierarchy in Anarchy: American Power and International Society,” *European Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 2 (2006): 139–70; Iver B. Neumann, “Status Is Cultural: Durkheimian Poles and Weberian Russians Seek Great-Power Status,” in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 85–112; Shunji Cui and Barry Buzan, “Great Power Management in International Society,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 2 (June 2016): 181–210; Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), chap. 7; Schroeder, *Austria, Great Britain, and the Crimean War*, 405; Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 2: 937. The Amarna system, for peculiar cultural reasons, is an exception to Weber’s insight that those within an honor club avoid hard bargaining. A good modern example of hard bargaining backfiring is seen in how the Washington Naval Conference fueled Japanese resentment. See Sadao Asada, *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006).

<sup>726</sup> See Jack Snyder, “Backlash Against Human Rights Shaming: Emotions in Groups,” *International Theory*, December 11, 2019, 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971919000216>. This is indeed the classical conception of diplomacy, which Montesquieu long ago expressed in language Thucydides would have accepted: “It is useless to attack politics directly by showing how much its practices are in conflict with morality and reason. . . . It is better to follow a roundabout road and to try to convey to the great a distaste for certain political practices by showing how little they yield. . . .” (quoted in Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, Revised Edition [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013], 77).

grand settlement<sup>727</sup> or allowed to fizzle in the manner of disputes within the ASEAN community. And China would need to be welcomed as America's equal—in rights, but also duties—within international institutions.

Notice, nothing has been said about the U.S. surrendering its status as a Great Power, abandoning its belief in the inherent goodness of democracy and human rights, withdrawing from East Asia, or kowtowing to China. None of these things are necessary in order to overcome existing configurative and positional questions between the U.S. and China. Getting out of the state of nature requires creating an “assurance to the contrary” to the leading causes of war. By working towards the formation of a true balance of military forces, recognizing China thickly, and working to eliminate or transcend relevant maritime territorial disputes, the U.S., with China's cooperation, could create such an assurance. Insofar as the two powers care about peace, their goal should be nothing less.

### 5.3 A Final Word

In this dissertation, I have used abduction to form a synthesis theory of major power peace (Chapter 1), induction to test the theory (Chapters 2-4), and deduction to apply the theory to the future (Chapter 5). The theory, which combined insights from various IR traditions, sought to form a more holistic explanation for periods of peace in world history, a task that IR scholars have heretofore neglected. To test the theory, I developed three historical case studies unknown (with a few obscure exceptions) to the IR community. My hope is that IR scholars will continue to engage with these cases—the Amarna System of the Late Bronze Age, Rome and Persia in late antiquity, and the states system of China's Song Dynasty—as well as introduce other relevant cases that have been otherwise little studied by the discipline. New cases will allow additional opportunities to falsify (as well as better specify) my thesis that an acknowledged balance of power, thick recognition, and a territorial settlement are necessary conditions for any lasting period of peace between major powers that share a states system.

But even as history matters, so does the future. Currently, the United States and China, the two greatest powers of our contemporary international system, are

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<sup>727</sup> E.g.: Charles L. Glaser, “A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation,” *International Security* 39, no. 4 (Spring 2015): 49–90.

entering a period of at best Cold Peace, and otherwise Cold War, or worse. If the pattern of the past is anything to go by, and if exceptionalism continues to forbid a BOP along with positional and configurative settlements, then things will have to get much worse before they have much prospect of improving. Eventually Pharaoh set aside Egyptian exceptionalism, eventually Constantinople set aside Roman exceptionalism, and eventually the Song set aside Chinese exceptionalism. The question for now is how long today's superpowers will attempt to impose peace before, perceiving the cost, they instead agree to make it.

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