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# Introduction

## EMPIRES AND THEIR SHADOWS

EMPIRES WERE THE WORLD'S largest and most durable polities. They dominated Eurasia and North Africa for more than two and a half millennia, only losing the last vestiges of that long hegemony in the early twentieth century. They appeared independently in a variety of cultural contexts worldwide and developed their own distinct imperial traditions. While the success of empires is often attributed to their military might, it is their ability to organize diversity that better explains their long duration and seemingly perpetual reinvention. More than any other type of polity, an empire was of a size and complexity that required tools of governance that set it above and beyond its component parts. Smaller and more parochial city-states and kingdoms, by contrast, maintained narrowly defined boundaries of exclusion between themselves and others that put limits on their size and administrative capacity. Empires too would have insider/outsider distinctions, but at an entirely different scale and flexibility of measurement. The former was like a local family-run business, the latter like a multinational corporation—your neighborhood coffeeshop versus Starbucks. And while empires might take the name of a founding people or dynastic line, they invariably transcended them.

Empires also left cultural and political templates that survived their demise. Successor states deliberately copied many of them, sometimes claiming to be their heirs. The use of the term *civilization* is often implicitly grounded in sets of high-culture attributes that these empires laid down as distinct and dominant templates in different parts of the world. They were Janus-faced entities simultaneously celebrated for their achievements and condemned for the violence they inflicted on others to sustain themselves.

FIGURE 1.1. *The Distribution of the Eagle Standards* (1810) by Jacques-Louis David.

A Victorian-era Great Britain that put down bloody rebellions against its own colonial rule in India and South Africa could simultaneously celebrate Boudica's equally bloody failed rebellion against imperial Rome in the first century A.D. and eventually erect a statue of her in a fighting chariot outside Parliament in London. In France, Jacques-Louis David's neoclassical painting *The Distribution of the Eagle Standards* celebrated Napoleon's 1804 reintroduction of Roman legionary eagles to inspire his Grande Armée in a style that would have also undoubtedly won praise from Emperor Nero (figure 1.1). Both Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping appear to long for the glories of empires that the respective revolutions in their countries earlier condemned to the ashcans of history. On the other hand, France's 1960 comic book resister of Rome, Asterix, proved so popular that his exploits were translated into forty different languages and French readers ranked *Asterix the Gaul* itself as number twenty-three in a list of the one hundred best books of the twentieth century in a 1999 *Le Monde* survey.[1]

## *Definitions: Endogenous and Exogenous (Shadow) Empires*

What is an empire, and how does it differ from other types of polities? For the purpose of this study, we will distinguish two basic types of empires: endogenous and exogenous. Endogenous empires emerged through a

process of internal development and outward expansion achieved by the forceful incorporation of subcontinental territories inhabited by millions and later tens of millions of people. They were socially cosmopolitan and employed unified administrative systems of governance to rule over their component parts. They extracted the fiscal resources they required internally through systems of direct taxation or tribute payments. Classic examples include ancient Persia, China, and Rome, which we will examine in more detail in chapter 1, but they extended well into the early modern periods with the Ottoman, Spanish, and Mughal Empires. (Endogenous empires were also founded by the Incas and Aztecs in the Americas.) Exogenous empires, by contrast, came into existence as products of their interactions (direct and indirect) with already-established empires, and their persistence depended on such relationships, a form of secondary imperial state formation. Their political and military structures were designed to extract the economic resources on which they depended from external sources rather than internal ones. Their methods for doing so included direct appropriation (raiding and piracy), the establishment of favorable terms of trade, extortion of subsidies in exchange for peace, the receipt of benefits for services rendered, and the scavenging of the ruins of collapsed endogenous empires. Although endogenous empires often dealt with exogenous empires as peer polities, the latter invariably lacked one or more of an endogenous empire's characteristics, such as a large population, high administrative complexity, or a large amount of territory over which it exercised direct sovereignty. Because the emergence and continued existence of exogenous empires were so closely tied to their interactions with endogenous empires, I call them shadow empires.[2]

Shadow empires were not inferior versions or poor, borrowed copies of endogenous empires. They had their own unique structures and can be divided into five different types. The first are maritime empires, which relied on naval power to extract outsize economic benefits from places they did not seek to rule directly. They focused on controlling the means of exchange rather than the means of production, deriving their wealth from the profits of trade rather than the production of the items traded. Maritime empires were significantly smaller in size than endogenous empires or other types of shadow empires. Examples include the Mediterranean-based city-states such as ancient Athens or Carthage and later the Venetian Republic, while Axum may have played a similar role in the Red Sea. Portuguese, English, and Dutch expansion out of the North Atlantic and into the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries created new maritime empires on a much larger scale.

The second type are mirror nomadic steppe empires, whose power was based on horse cavalry militaries and which emerged as an adaptation to the imperial unification of China. In an echo-like fashion, exogenous steppe empires rose and fell in tandem with the endogenous empires established by native Chinese dynasties that supplied them with the resources needed to finance their states. The ancient Xiongnu (second century B.C. to second century A.D.) and medieval Turks (sixth to ninth century) founded the most classic examples of these.

Periphery empires constitute a third exogenous category, which emerged when the power balance between an endogenous empire's margins and its center were reversed and its transfrontier enemies or former clients occupied part or all of its former territories. There were two different types: vulture empires, which sought to maintain the institutional remains of a collapsing empire, and vanquisher empires, whose leaders sought to conquer an intact empire and remake it in their own image. The best examples of vulture empires are those established by dynasties originating in China's northeastern frontier areas after the fall of the Han, Tang, and Ming dynasties in the third, tenth, and seventeenth centuries, respectively. Vanquisher empires, such as those established by Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. and the Arab Muslim armies in the seventh century, were much rarer. Unique to the Iranian world, here peoples from the frontier unexpectedly defeated the armies of Achaemenid and Sasanian empires on the battlefield and captured the old empire intact. Unlike the rulers of vulture empires, they sought to impose their own distinct cultural values and ideologies on the newly conquered lands rather than adopting those of the people they conquered.

Empires of nostalgia constitute a fourth exogenous type that was more aspirational than substantive, one reason why they are rarely included in comparative studies. They exploited the remembrance of extinct empires and their cultural legacies to foster an appearance of imperial power that barely existed in any practical terms. While Chinese history during periods of disunion is littered with regional states making outsize imperial claims with hope of growing into them, they either became new endogenous empires themselves or were swallowed up by those that did. In western Europe where no endogenous empire ever emerged after Rome's collapse, Charlemagne's Carolingian Empire in Europe during the ninth century constituted a "next best" option that proved remarkably durable. Although Charlemagne's grandsons divided the empire into kingdoms, its Holy Roman Empire successor based in Germany was more stable and remained intact for 850 years.

Vacuum empires that emerged in the sparsely settled forest zones of northeastern Europe during the medieval period constitute a fifth type of exogenous empire. Here state-level polities of any type were absent before new economic and political interactions with the steppe nomadic empires to their south produced the conditions that could support them. This began with the establishment of the vast nomadic Khazar Empire in the steppe zone north of the Caspian and Black Seas in the mid-seventh century. Khazar demands for tribute and their facilitation of international trade in furs and slaves exported to the caliphate generated a surge of silver into the region that laid the groundwork for the emergence of the Kievan Rus' Empire in the tenth century. It ruled the peoples of the forest zone unchallenged until it was destroyed by the Mongols in the mid-thirteenth century. Interactions in the same region with the Mongol Golden Horde for the next two centuries saw the rise of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (thirteenth to fifteenth century) in the western forest zone and Muscovy/Russia (fifteenth to eighteenth century) in the east.

If exogenous empires proved overly successful, they could find themselves transformed into endogenous ones. This occurred whenever exogenous empires that expanded beyond their shadow core areas began administering the territories, peoples, or states they had formerly dealt with indirectly. To consolidate their newfound power, they employed the administrative tools of an endogenous empire and, in so doing, became one. The structural DNA of their former shadow empire selves was, however, always reflected in their governing structures even after the transformation was complete. With the exception of empires of nostalgia, each variety of shadow empire produced at least one example of this process: British India (maritime), the Mongol Empire (steppe nomadic), China's Qing dynasty (vulture), the Abbasid Caliphate (vanquisher), and Tsarist Russia (vacuum). Because these five became the largest empires in world history, they are very well known to historians, but their origin as shadow empires has generally been overlooked.

It could be argued that these definitions, discounting size, could apply equally well to large states. This should not be surprising because it appears that empires were the templates for large states and not the reverse. Historically, empires were the crucibles in which the possibility of large states was realized. Indeed, it is difficult to find any examples of large states emerging in areas that were not previously united by some type of empire. It was the experience of empire that created the model, managerial capacity, and mentality needed to rule a large state successfully by employing modified imperial methods of government administration, military

organization, and ideology on a smaller scale. Looking at successful large states in the early modern period, we find that their systems of governance drew heavily on the tools first created by empires. It was only in the mid-twentieth century that large states rather than empires became normative, and that may have to do more with their development in the West, where this process was most pronounced, than with any changes in other parts of the world where indigenous and colonial empires ruled supreme, such as South Asia, China, and the Near East, until a century ago. It is also true that with the exponential growth of the world's population in the modern era, many states administered very large populations (forty million people or more) that had been previously found only in the biggest empires of the premodern period. For most of history, there was an order-of-magnitude difference or more between the population size of endogenous empires and that of any other type of state. One difference between large states and empires, however, was their degree of inclusion. Eighteenth-century France or nineteenth-century Germany and Italy attempted to get people within the state to think of themselves as part of a single nation with a common identity; the neighboring multiethnic Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires needed only to convince them they were part of a single polity that maintained order and stability among them.

How many such empires were there? Over a span of 2,500 years, Peter Turchin identified about seventy-five Eurasian and North African mega-empires that he has used in his quantitative research.[3] These include both our endogenous and exogenous types, but because size was his baseline criterion (territories greater than 1 million $km^2$), this benchmark excludes maritime empires that held relatively little territory and the Holy Roman Empire, which had no clear boundaries. As this is a qualitative study, we will be surveying only a relatively small number of cases in detail, but the appendix provides Turchin's list, with the addition of my characterization of each empire as endogenous or exogenous. If an empire is labeled exogenous, I have also indicated what variety and whether it later transformed itself into an endogenous empire.

## *Understanding the Significance of Empires from a Comparative Perspective*

Although empires have an immensely long history and were the most important polities of their eras, comparative study of them remains relatively underdeveloped. One problem is the absence of agreement on what

constitutes an empire and its structural characteristics. Narrow definitions exclude important examples, but adding fundamentally dissimilar polities to the ledger of empires reduces its utility as an analytical category. For example, the contemporaneous steppe nomadic Xiongnu Empire (9 million km$^2$) and Han China (6 million km$^2$) were easily peers in size, but the former had a population of less than a million while the latter ruled over fifty million people—not comparable at all. The solution to the problem does not lie in fighting over which empires to exclude from the club but rather in employing Max Weber's sociological concept of "ideal types" as a way to think about them. Weber's ideal type is an artificial construct whose validity is judged by how well it identifies empirical patterned actions. Examining Weber's major synthetic work, *Economy and Society*, Stephen Kalberg wrote that it "never attempts to capture fully any given empirical reality, for this would be an impossible task. Rather, as an analytic treatise it seeks to fulfill a different goal: to formulate ideal types—that is, conceptual tools, or models, for research that chart the patterned meaningful action of persons in diverse groupings."[4] For this reason, no specific case exactly matches an ideal type. Instead the ideal type is to be judged on how well it corresponds to reality or explains the patterns of reproduction in any particular social system. Weber's definition of his ideal types was never a priori (they emerged only after he immersed himself in the case study material) and were employed to build models that elucidated historical social relations and economic developments. This approach can be applied fruitfully to the comparative study of empires.

Endogenous and exogenous empires constitute two ideal types. Both projected hegemony over the people they incorporated into them on an unprecedentedly large scale and maintained that hegemony without constant resort to violence, but they did so in very different ways. Endogenous empires mobilized internal resources to sustain themselves and grew by incorporating new territories. Exogenous empires relied on exploiting external resources of some kind to support themselves, and this could be done without necessarily incorporating new territories into them. While the internal structures of endogenous empires differed from each other in some important respects, they were fundamentally similar. The political structures and economic organization of exogenous empires, by contrast, were not as uniform. They differed sharply not only from endogenous empires but from each other as well. Leo Tolstoy famously wrote that all happy families were alike but that each unhappy family was unhappy in its own way. The same could be said of empires in that all endogenous empires were alike but each exogenous empire was exogenous in its own

way. For that reason, I identified five different subtypes of exogenous shadow empires and will explore what made them distinct. In a nice bit of symmetry, by the end of the early modern period all remaining exogenous empires had themselves become endogenous after they adopted territorial expansion models that left no room for shadow exogenous empires of any kind. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, all existing empires were endogenous and could be analyzed as such.

As a comparative study of empires, this book differs from similar works in three respects. First, it focuses on understudied shadow exogenous empires and their relationships with the outside world that sustained them. These are generally deemed worthy of study as empires only after they became endogenous and too large to ignore (the Mongol Empire or Qing dynasty China, for example). Second, it argues that because the templates of both endogenous and exogenous empires originated in ancient and medieval times, cases from those eras should be given analytical priority. In most comparative studies, the opposite is true. Ancient and medieval empires (if presented at all) constitute an introduction to more detailed studies of modern-era colonial empires (mostly European) and their postcolonial legacies. Here these colonial empires will barely be examined except to argue that the majority of them were created by former shadow empires and that their organization reflected that origin. And third, this study decenters Rome as the template for empires. When one lines up all the Eurasian and North African historical cases, it is clear that the most enduring traditions of empire building were not in the West but in China and Persia, where empires emerged earlier, lasted longer, and (most significantly) reemerged after periods of collapse, whereas Rome did not.

The case made in this book is that exogenous empires need to be taken seriously because they were powerful peer polities of endogenous empires and played an enormously significant role in world history. That they are so rarely considered together as a class is likely because they appear so different at first glance. For example, the ancient Athenian maritime empire and the Xiongnu steppe nomadic empire were in many respects polar opposites (navy versus cavalry, urban versus rural, minimal versus maximal territorial size, high versus low levels of literacy, etc.) but had in common the exploitation of other people's resources to finance their states. They also emerged as the direct products of conflicts with neighboring endogenous empires, Persia and China, respectively. The variation in duration of such polities was far wider than of endogenous empires, reflecting the importance of international relations that sustained them. The Athenian maritime empire lasted only a century (508–404 B.C.), but

the maritime Venetian Republic survived for more than a thousand years (697–1797). The Xiongnu Empire maintained itself in various forms for five hundred years (210 B.C.–A.D. 304), while the steppe empire created by Huns in Europe (430–469) collapsed soon after the death of Atilla in 453. Charlemagne's Carolingian Empire (800–888) was divided into kingdoms by his grandsons, but the successor Holy Roman Empire (961–1806) survived eight and a half centuries. Successful shadow empires succeeded in the long term either because they transformed their relations with neighboring states into symbiotic ones or because they left the shadows to become endogenous empires themselves. All had coherent political structures and sophisticated strategies that maximized their strengths and minimized their weaknesses. And it is these that deserve more attention from comparative historians and political scientists because their grand strategies, if we may label them that, had very different features from those employed by endogenous empires.

This book also argues that both ancient and medieval empires (endogenous and exogenous) should be given greater analytical prominence because they established the organizational templates employed by later empires. Current historical scholarship on empires focuses instead primarily on European colonial empires, a rather late and unusual type of empire that came into existence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and was extinct by the mid-twentieth. Even the best wide-ranging comparative books on empires devote only a quarter of their length to ancient and medieval empires (or none at all) before focusing on the colonial empires of the modern era.[5] The political and economic organization of these modern-era empires is often assumed to be characteristic of empires in general, particularly those that had imperial metropoles separate and distinct from the lands they ruled over. As George Steinmetz notes, while classical land-based empires "combined militarization with restless expansion and various mechanisms aimed at stabilizing and pacifying geopolitical relations," "many (although not all) modern colonies were acquired and discussed in terms of trade, investment, [and] economic exploitation" that entailed "the seizure of sovereignty from locals and the formation of a separate colonial state apparatus."[6] As I hope this book will make clear, these modern-era colonial empires, their modes of administration, and their emphasis on trade and resource extraction employed strategies of rule more similar to those of maritime exogenous empires than endogenous ones. The largest colonial empire of all time was Great Britain's, and it began as an exogenous maritime empire, as did the Dutch and Portuguese colonial empires. The enormous contiguous

land-based colonial empires established in Eurasia by Russia and China in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also employed strategies and governing structures they first developed as exogenous empires. For these reasons, historians of colonial empires would be well served by examining these earlier exogenous empires as the templates for those that emerged in the modern era. Ancient Athens in particular developed most of the tools later reinvented by European colonial empires and for that reason alone deserves closer examination.

Finally, this book differs from others by arguing that using the Roman Empire as a template for empires in general is more an obstacle than asset in understanding a type of polity that developed in a wide variety of cultural contexts and took distinctively different forms. Earlier Persian and Chinese models not only provide clearer examples of how empires emerged and were organized, but they also replicated themselves time after time, whereas no endogenous empire emerged to reunite the West after Rome collapsed in the late fifth century. Still, perhaps because it is most familiar to Western scholars and readers, the Roman Empire's evolution is generally presented as if it were universal. For example, in his classic work on empires, Michael Doyle posits an "Augustinian threshold," when a polity became big enough to see itself as an empire, and a "Caracallan threshold," when its parts became thoroughly homogenized.[7] Both of these were real transitions in the Roman Empire that occurred over the course of many centuries and the reigns of many emperors. But Rome's long evolution into an empire was not typical. The Achaemenid Persian Empire of almost 5 million $km^2$ was conquered by its founder, Cyrus the Great, in the twenty years before his death in 529 B.C. and fully integrated during the reign of Darius the Great (522–486 B.C.). Similarly, the Qin dynasty's founding emperor, Shi Huangdi, united all of China in 221 B.C. and had integrated it uniformly by the time he died in 210 B.C. The templates they created, though modified by their successors, continually reemerged after periods of political and economic collapse. It was the failure of a successor to the Roman Empire to ever emerge in the West that Walter Scheidel argues set its historical development along a different path from Persia, China, or India, where new empires continually replaced old ones.[8] But while Doyle's concept of a distinct Augustinian threshold is not characteristic of other endogenous empires, it *is* characteristic of exogenous empires that transformed themselves into endogenous ones. As will be illustrated in the case studies, this was a process in which rulers of transitioning shadow empires did indeed recognize they were creating something new.[9] Before a truly comparative study of empires worldwide can be said to exist, historians and

political scientists alike must endeavor to make themselves as familiar with their histories as they are with that of Rome.

## *On Structure and Causality*

The approach to the comparative study of empires here takes a social science perspective. Its focus on models and patterns of interaction may seem to some to deny the importance of human agency. But as empires were created, maintained, and lost by human beings, obviously their decisions, actions, and responses played a vital role in any historical process. Indeed, the details of each empire hinge on unusual sets of circumstances that differed profoundly from one another. The unification of China under the Qin dynasty was the product of methodical and well-thought-out policies that took a century to realize. The Persian Empire was established by swift conquests and consolidated its diverse territories into a stable empire within only a few decades. Rome's rise, by contrast, was long in coming and had a perpetual ad hoc quality about it. Shadow empires were even more particularistic since they adapted themselves to existing political organizations they had not created. Yet despite their very different origins and characteristics of founding and design, they all fall into the distinct categories of endogenous and exogenous empires I have already outlined. This is not because of some historical determinism, but because these polities had only a few possible pathways to success and many to failure. Since this is a study of empires that were and not empires that might have been, the larger number of failures lies outside our data set—acorns, not oak trees. For example, none of the exogenous empires that became endogenous empires (and only a minority did) anticipated such a transition, as their adaptations to this new status will show. The Mongol Empire's tremendous success, for example, was unexpected by its enemies and initially by the Mongols themselves. Because of these contingencies, the historical models presented here are probabilistic. Given similar structural characteristics, there were regular types of interactions, cycles, or other similarities that reoccurred and that could be expected to reoccur until those conditions changed. However, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, many of the structural features that had been relatively constant for more than two millennia (technology, transport, communications, energy sources, and agrarian economies) changed profoundly and old patterns of interactions ceased or were transformed. Human beings always did have agency in this process but, as Thucydides posited 2,400 years ago when probing the causes of the Peloponnesian War in the ancient Greek

world, "human nature being what it is, history will be repeated at some time or other in much the same way."[10] The goal here is to explore empires as polities where interactions with other polities and their own people set the parameters for their decision making over long periods of time. It is a supplement to the study of individual empires and their histories, not a replacement for them.

Looking for broader comparative historical structures is far from a new endeavor. Anthropologists such as Eric Wolf and Marshall Sahlins did pioneering work that has greatly influenced this study, but I have also drawn inspiration from two other particular sources outside my own field.[11] The first is the thinking of the fourteenth-century Arab social historian ibn Khaldun, whose *Muqaddimah* produced models of societies and their interactions in Islamic North Africa and the Near East.[12] He focused on the relationships between tribal societies in economically marginal areas and class-based urban societies in surplus-producing regions that wielded regional political power. His model examined the dynamics of each and explained how it came to pass that so many of the region's ruling dynasties had their origins in marginal places where kinship and descent were the main organizing principles. Once such people conquered cities where power was based on money and institutional authority, they adopted city ways of ruling that they could not sustain for more than four generations before some new group displaced them. Ibn Khaldun himself noted that empires like the Abbasid Caliphate, with their larger financial base, were more stable, but he did not develop a model for them. In some of my earlier work, I also noted that his cogent model of tribal descent groups wielding power assumed they were structurally egalitarian like the Bedouin but that nomadic Turko-Mongolian descent groups were hierarchical, and that type of tribal organization proved far more adaptive to empire building on the Eurasian steppe.[13]

Jumping ahead many centuries, my second major influence is the French Annales school approach, which welcomed a combination of theories and methodologies into history from anthropology, geography, sociology, economics, and psychology. Fernand Braudel's concept of the *longue durée* was particularly valuable in this respect because of its focus on the very long-standing and slowly changing aspects of social life and economic production that framed the relationships between people and the world around them.[14] To an anthropologist such as myself who was interested in societies within their historical contexts, this seemed a productive way to proceed. Anthropologists who only nod in the direction of taking time depth seriously or historians who view comparative social science as

marginal for their own work may disagree, but my own ethnographic fieldwork in northern Afghanistan made me appreciate the value of both. In 1975 the unschooled nomads I lived with along the banks of the Oxus River still recounted the damage Chinggis Khan did to their region in 1221, and they worked up a temper while doing so. When I returned to their community in 2002, the son of the khan who had inherited the family's sheep told me he had doubled their number to 1,500. When I asked how this was possible during a period of brutal wars in which this region was often contested by rival factions, he explained that "people win wars, people lose wars, but the winners always buy sheep." While here I write at the "winners always buy sheep" macro-level, we should not lose sight that it was some particular person who brought sheep to market to sell and another who bought them, each with a tale that deserves telling in its own right. Although they are but sketches, the case studies illustrate the human complexity involved, along with the backstories of at least some of individual men and women who created, ruled, and lost empires.

## *Book Organization*

A comparative study must have categories of comparison, and so I begin chapter 1 by defining in more detail the common structural characteristics of endogenous empires that first emerged sui generis in temperate Eurasia and North Africa during the second half of the first millennium B.C. The largest came to govern territories of 5 million $km^2$ with populations of more than forty million people. In a world that had previously experienced nothing like them, empires were both acclaimed and condemned but could never be ignored. Even when long gone, the ruins they left behind continued to amaze the living. With newer endogenous empires periodically replacing those that were destroyed, they remained the world's dominant polities until the twentieth century. To understand how they became so dominant, I survey the origin and structural characteristics of the three most significant ancient endogenous empires: the Achaemenid Persian Empire in southwest Asia, the Qin and Han dynasties in China, and the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean Basin. Each created the default model for imperial rule in its respective region using different political structures and styles of administration that were copied by successor endogenous empires. One could easily expand this limited comparison to other endogenous empires, but the primary focus of this book is on the exogenous or shadow empires that emerged in response to them, which are analyzed in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 examines exogenous maritime empires using the case of the world's first, ancient Athens, as its primary example. Maritime empires used navies to exert power and preserve their independence, extracting the resources needed to finance them externally from trade profits, transit taxes, tribute payments, and occasionally raiding and piracy. Most, including Athens, emerged in the context of conflict. Its rise to empire began when the Greek city-states in the western Aegean united to fend off two Persian invasions in the fifth century B.C. Athens turned that voluntary alliance into a maritime empire that left its member city-states free to run their own affairs under Athenian supervision as long as they paid their required tribute since they sought economic rather than territorial hegemony. Athens itself ran a democratic political system whose leaders condemned the autocracies found universally in endogenous empires like Persia, a feature it shared with later maritime empires that generally governed themselves through some kind of collective representative body. Although it lasted less than a century, the Athenian maritime empire model was replicated by ancient Carthage and medieval Venice in the Mediterranean and in the sixteenth century by a set of early modern North Atlantic maritime empires: Portugal, Holland, and England. In the late eighteenth century the British would transform their maritime exogenous empire in South Asia into an endogenous one by mounting a series of military campaigns that would eventually bring all of the Indian subcontinent under their rule by the mid-nineteenth century.

Chapter 3 examines the exogenous steppe empires in Mongolia that relied on horse cavalry to exert military power and extract resources from China to finance them. They first emerged at the end of the third century B.C. after the Qin dynasty unified China, drove the nomads out of many of their traditional pasturelands, and built the Great Wall to keep them out. The Xiongnu nomads of the Ordos region responded to this challenge by conquering the other neighboring steppe nomadic groups to create a unified "mirror empire" that then dealt with China as a peer polity. The Xiongnu financed their empire by extracting tribute payments and trading rights from China in times of peace and by raiding China in times of war. Since the nomads avoided occupying Chinese agricultural land that they would have to administer, Chinese policies of appeasement worked rather well to buy peace. Indeed, after periods of initial hostility, the relationship between nomadic empires and China became symbiotic, with the nomads defending weakening Chinese dynasties that paid them from domestic rebels and rival frontier peoples. The two became so closely linked that when the imperial Han and Tang dynasties in China collapsed, so did their

mirror images on the steppe. In the thirteenth century Chinggis Khan unified Mongolia but could not strike an appeasement deal with the foreign dynasties then ruling North China and so ended up conquering them—beginning a process that saw his successors transform an exogenous Mongol Empire seeking subsidies into an endogenous empire that would come to rule most of Eurasia.

Chapter 4 explores the exogenous empires that emerged from the periphery of endogenous empires when they lost control over frontier territories where they had previously exerted some kind of hegemony. During periods of imperial state collapse, vulture shadow empires established viable states by expanding into the leftover parts of the old empire. Their rulers combined the old empire's surviving administrative personnel and governing institutions with a military force drawn from their own frontier tribal people. The conquest of North China by the Khitan Liao dynasty from Manchuria in the tenth century after the fall of the Tang dynasty and the expansion of that state by a new Jurchen Jin dynasty in the twelfth provide the clearest examples, but there were many others. As rulers drawn from foreign minority groups, they found it hard to retain power within China after restoring stability there unless they transformed themselves into an endogenous empire by conquering all of China as the Manchu Qing dynasty succeeded in doing in the seventeenth century.

A different type of exogenous vanquisher empire could also emerge from the periphery by conquering a fully intact endogenous empire and reorganizing it with new and innovative political structures. Unlike a vulture empire that developed after an endogenous empire and the order it provided had collapsed, a vanquisher empire took command of a functioning administrative structure and a working economy. They were rare and appeared only in southwest Asia where Alexander the Great toppled the Persian Empire in the fourth century B.C. and the Muslim Arab armies defeated both the Byzantines and Sasanians to establish the Umayyad Caliphate in the mid-seventh century. The caliphate reached the zenith of its power when it became an endogenous empire under new Abbasid rulers in the mid-eighth century and moved its capital to Baghdad. The Abbasid Caliphate adopted many of the governing institutions of the old Sasanian Empire and filled its ranks with a Persian Muslim elite rather than Arabs.

Chapter 5 examines exogenous empires of nostalgia that displayed the outward trappings of an empire without its substance by employing an invented remembrance of an extinct imperial polity. This demanded a suspension of disbelief by rulers and elite subordinate subjects alike for

whom a revived fiction of empire created a framework for cooperation that buttressed the state's political legitimacy in a world where they were never entirely sovereign. Rare as vanquisher empires but at the opposite end of a power spectrum, empires of nostalgia emerged only in western Europe where the memory of the Roman Empire was still strong but no polity was powerful enough to re-create it as occurred regularly in China. Charlemagne's ninth-century empire, which was over 1 million $km^2$ in size with a population of between ten and twenty million, fell into this category before it was dissolved by his heirs a generation later. A successor Holy Roman Empire established in the tenth century proved even more ephemeral as a territorial unit, but its political structure created such a durable framework for cooperation among its component sovereign states that it survived until 1806.

Chapter 6 examines the emergence of exogenous vacuum empires in northern Europe's forest zone, a region that produced no state-level polities until the late eighth century when interactions with the Khazar steppe nomadic empire, the Byzantines, and the caliphate to their south monetized the regional economy. The revenue from trade in furs, slaves, and raw materials enabled warlike outsiders such as the Kievan Rus' to create a large if sparsely populated empire that lasted for 350 years until it was destroyed by the Mongols in 1240. As the power of the Mongols declined, successor states based in Lithuania and Russia vied for dominance in the forest zone, a struggle that eventually led to the emergence of a Russian tsardom in the sixteenth century. Under Peter the Great, Russia transformed itself into an endogenous empire in the eighteenth century, one that became the world's largest by landmass.

Chapter 7 examines the question of why, after a successful run of almost two and a half millennia, all the world's shadow empires either disappeared or transformed themselves into endogenous empires by the mid-eighteenth century. As the previous chapters illustrated, shadow empires were part of a world system in which they wielded independent power that endogenous empires found easier to accommodate than destroy. That balance changed when newly empowered endogenous empires, many former shadow empires themselves, sought to eliminate them. Steppe nomadic empires ceased to exist entirely after their peoples and lands were incorporated by China's Qing dynasty in the east and Russia's Romanov dynasty in the west. Both were former shadow empires that became two of the world's largest endogenous empires by ensuring that none of the territories on their peripheries would ever again wield significant military power. The Atlantic maritime empires (Portugal, Holland, and Britain) all became endogenous

empires too after they began ruling colonial territories directly rather than depending on the profits of trade alone. Venice, the only remaining Mediterranean maritime shadow empire that survived from medieval times into the early modern era, was conquered by Napoleon in 1797. Napoleon was also indirectly responsible for the demise of the Holy Roman Empire, an equally long-lived empire of nostalgia, which was dissolved by its last emperor to prevent it from falling into his hands.

The endogenous empires that emerged or expanded in this process, however, all collapsed during the twentieth century. The hypothesis presented here suggests that while endogenous empires were well designed to run large, steady state agrarian economic systems, they proved ill-equipped to cope with the rapid technological changes produced by the Industrial Revolution during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The capitalist economic system privileged industrial production over agriculture, thrived on constant technological change, and generated serial economic disruptions. While empires might have been able to cope with any one of these elements singly, they proved incapable of coping with all of them simultaneously. Moreover, these new features were incompatible with the values endogenous empires sought to defend: stability over innovation, agriculture over industry, cosmopolitan worldviews over nationalist ones, and sets of conservative social values resistant to change. They all (Ottoman, Hapsburg, Russian, Qing China) fell like dominoes in the first decades of the twentieth century, a process that came to a climax during the First World War. The overseas colonial empires that survived that bloodbath, based on maritime empire templates, proved better adapted to a capitalist economic system but shared the fate of their predecessors after the Second World War when they too dissolved. Nevertheless, the tools that empires used to wield their power did not die with them, and in a final section I discuss their twenty-first-century legacy in world power politics.

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