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Mlada Bukovansky: Legitimacy and Power Politics

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Chapter One



Introduction: The Transformation of Legitimacy

As if anyone could forget that the sovereign power resides in my person only . . . that public order in its entirety emanates from me, and that the rights and interests of the nation, which some dare to regard as a separate body from the monarch, are necessarily united with my rights and interests, and repose only in my hands.¹

It was not the respite of a reign that would satisfy France, enlightened as she was then become. A casual discontinuance of the *practice* of despotism, is not a discontinuance of its *principles*; the former depends on the virtue of the individual who is in immediate possession of the power; the latter, on the virtue and fortitude of the nation.²

This book examines a major transformation in both domestic and international politics: the shift from dynastically legitimated monarchical sovereignty to popularly legitimated national sovereignty. In the 1770s, a loosely federated band of colonies succeeded in winning independence from one of the principal great powers in the European international system. In the 1790s, a new and inexperienced revolutionary regime in France was able to muster the resources for a major series of military campaigns—resources that had eluded the financially bankrupt “absolutist” monarch which that regime overthrew. A transformation of the terms of political legitimacy lay at the heart of both these events.

I seek to show how this transformation of political legitimacy came about and how it influenced the conduct of international politics. The best way to explain both the transformation and its consequences is to rigorously examine the complex interplay between elite discourses about political legitimacy and strategic struggles for power within and among

¹ Speech by Louis XV to the Paris Parlement, known as the “Session of the Scourging,” March 3, 1766, in John Rothney, ed., *The Brittany Affair and the Crisis of the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 175–76.

² Thomas Paine (1791), *Rights of Man, Being an Answer to Mr. Burke’s Attack on the French Revolution*, in Paine, *Collected Writings*, ed. Eric Foner (New York: Library of America, 1995), p. 444.

states. In other words, I show not only *that* culture, power, and interests matter, but precisely *how* they matter in a crucial case of international change. I draw on the insights of constructivist scholars who have shown that “anarchy is what states make of it” but go on to show how political actors can remake anarchy. My goal is not only to contribute to our growing understanding of the limitations of liberal and realist theories of international relations, but also to demonstrate how they can be integrated with insights derived from the constructivist approach to explain major change.

The key to this undertaking is to develop a better understanding of two major and often misunderstood or neglected concepts in international relations: political culture and legitimacy. Political legitimacy is conceptualized and contested through the medium of political culture. Insofar as legitimacy has international as well as domestic dimensions, the international system can be said to have a distinct, systemwide political culture. The political culture of the international system is that set of implicit or explicit propositions, shared by the major actors in the system, about the nature of legitimate political authority, state identity, and political power, and the rules and norms derived from these propositions that pertain to interstate relations within the system. In other words, we should use the term “culture” to refer to the shared knowledge of rules and norms that constructivist theorists argue is constitutive of the structure of the international system.³ Those rules and norms are grounded in political legitimacy conceptions.

Political legitimacy—or the terms by which people recognize, defend, and accept political authority—is important to international as well as to domestic politics. Political legitimacy is a critical component of political power, because a government perceived as illegitimate by its own subjects will have more difficulty mustering the resources for international competition than a legitimate one—as the troubled reign of Louis XVI demonstrates. The terms by which people define political legitimacy also constitute the polity. Monarchs and their supporters legitimated their rule by reference to blood and divine sanction; they saw the sovereign realm as the king’s patrimony, to be cared for and cultivated as such. Democratic

³ Alexander E. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989); Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

governments legitimate themselves by the consent of the governed and conceptualize the polity as the body of the people, or a nation, making laws and governing itself through its representatives. The mode of political legitimacy defines the identity of the polity.

Political legitimacy also requires external recognition. When other states recognize a sovereign state they lend it legitimacy, and hence the capacity to engage in external relations: making treaties, engaging in trade, making war. In short, sovereignty is conditioned by legitimacy, and this has international as well as domestic implications. How one form of legitimacy ceases to be dominant in an international system and another comes to take its place is a question little explored in international relations; it deserves more attention.⁴

Explaining the Transformation

From the mid-eighteenth century onward, the political struggles of European and American aristocrats against the perceived despotism of their monarchs yielded a profound shift in how both leaders and subjects came to view the sources and terms of legitimate political authority. Bloodlines and divine sanction began to lose their symbolic power as sources of legitimacy; popular will—however nebulously defined—began its ascent as the ultimate source of legitimate authority. In their power struggles, monarchists and those who challenged them deployed the material and cultural resources at their disposal. A central resource for all sides was the complex and diverse body of discourse known as Enlightenment thought.

Enlightenment discourse gave meaning and content to domestic struggles for power within the state and to international struggles for power between states. That discourse facilitated a transformation in thinking about the terms of legitimate political authority. Because key late eighteenth-century political struggles—especially the American and French revolutions and the wars that accompanied them—were articulated in terms of Enlightenment discourse, one of the outcomes of those struggles was a new template for political legitimacy, grounded in the notion of popular sovereignty. That template was visible in both practical institutional changes and changes in political discourse in the wake of the revolutions and the accompanying wars. The challenge posed by the revolutions was not to specific monarchs, but to dynastic monarchy itself.

⁴ A notable exception is Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), which delineates the development of sovereignty as the dominant form of political organization.

Over time that challenge came to penetrate the entire Euro-Atlantic states system and beyond.

We live in an era accustomed to taking Enlightenment conceptions of political legitimacy for granted. Equality, individual rights, the power of reason to resolve political and administrative issues, the necessity of checking the powers of government to allow civil society to flourish, and the notion that political authority—or sovereignty—ultimately resides in the people of a nation: all these notions, however imperfectly realized in practice, have come to dominate global political discourse. They are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as standards toward which all member states should strive. But historically, these standards of legitimacy emerged within a context dominated by a distinctly different notion of legitimate authority: that of dynastic, monarchical sovereignty legitimated by blood and divine sanction. How did this transformation from dynastically legitimated monarchical sovereignty to popularly legitimated national sovereignty come about?

Outside the field of international relations, standard explanations for the emergence of democratic legitimacy focus, in varying degrees, on the rise of markets, industrialization, and the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie in Europe. All these macrosociological phenomena may have been important factors, viewed in retrospect from a broad historical perspective, but they are not the focus of this book. The American and French revolutions are also seminal events in the emergence of democratic legitimacy, and therein lie some interesting puzzles. These revolutions occurred prior to the age of industrialization, and their “bourgeois” character has been challenged or at least qualified by the current generation of historians.⁵ Further, the Enlightenment ideas that these revolutions attempted to put into practice predate the revolutions by several decades. How could these ideas simply be the reflection of changing material conditions or a newly empowered class interest when those new conditions were not yet apparent, when that class had not yet risen to power, and when the ideas themselves seemed to be far more popular with the nobility than with the bour-

⁵ The literature is vast, but some good places to begin are Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969); Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1993); Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Terence Ball and J.G.A. Pocock, eds., *Conceptual Change and the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967). On France, see François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). For a concise historiographical review, see T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?* 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).

geoisie? In my view, transformations of legitimacy are not fully explicable by reference to social transformations such as the rise of the bourgeoisie or material transformations such as the emergence of capitalist markets.

In addition, the American and French revolutions were strongly influenced by, and in turn influenced, international politics; if we analyze them only as discrete “domestic” phenomena while neglecting their international dimensions we will not find satisfactory answers to the question of how democratic legitimacy came to challenge monarchical legitimacy in the international system as a whole.⁶ In fact, if we take the international context into account, the assertion that democratic legitimacy was the strongest legacy of these revolutions becomes questionable. International relations theory ought to contribute something to our understanding of the transformation of legitimacy that was initiated by the late eighteenth-century revolutions.

International relations theory offers two broad perspectives to explain the late eighteenth-century emergence of democratic legitimacy or, more accurately, popular sovereignty. From a liberal perspective rooted in the Kantian tradition, the development of democratic legitimacy and the rule of law represents the progressive unfolding of human reason to create the political and legal conditions for greater and greater self-conscious human freedom. One by-product of this process is the progressive bureaucratization and rationalization of political life as described by Max Weber. Another is the spread of democratic peace. From a realist perspective, the innovations in late eighteenth-century political thought and practice—particularly the development of mass armies and the centralization and bureaucratic streamlining of the modern nation-state—yielded success in international competition, and were thus emulated in what amounts to a systemwide process of “natural” selection.

Although each of these perspectives provides a compelling explanatory schema, each is also limited in its capacity to shed light on the process and mechanisms by which the transformation of legitimacy came about. Nor do the liberal and realist approaches agree on what precisely emerged from the revolutionary period of the late eighteenth century. For liberals, democratization seems to be the main legacy; for realists, the outcome is better characterized in terms of mass mobilization, state centralization, and nationalism. Perhaps we are, in a very broad sense, approaching the “end of history” and the triumph of liberal democracy over other forms

⁶ Works that stress the importance of international politics include T.C.W. Blanning, “Introduction,” and William H. Sewell, Jr., “Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case,” both in *The Rise and Fall of the French Revolution*, ed. Blanning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

of governance, although this conclusion has provoked much debate.⁷ Perhaps the sporadic, circuitous, violent, and often apparently irrational character of the process by which we are approaching the end of history may be explained away by Immanuel Kant's thesis that strife among men and among nations over time teaches them the necessity of coming to live peacefully under the rule of law.⁸ But even for those who have faith in liberal progress, the Kantian perspective leaves many questions about the trajectory of the development of democracy unanswered.

Democratic legitimacy did not emerge victorious from the eighteenth-century revolutions, but neither was dynastic legitimacy reasserted in its traditional form. Rather, it was the idea of popular sovereignty—the notion that legitimacy must come from the will of the people—that proved the most potent, immediate legacy of the revolutionary wars and domestic struggles, though that legacy was strongly challenged by conservatives. Closely linked to this development was the idea that the people, rather than the monarch, constituted—and ought to constitute—the nation. Popular sovereignty and nationalism were not inextricably linked to the notions of democratic rule or even the rule of law. Although many revolutionary thinkers and actors did try to maintain those linkages, those in favor of dynastic legitimacy tempered by traditional noble rights could also justly claim to be on the side of the rule of law. Nor was monarchical rule, if checked by some version of representation and separation of powers, antithetical to Kantian notions of republicanism. Further and most important, the practical experiences of the domestic and international politics of the late eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century favored populist nationalism—often supporting authoritarian rule—as much as republican checks and balances and the rule of law. Whatever faith one might have in progressive liberalism, and however one might choose to define it, the specific contours of the changes in legitimacy that were born in the mid-eighteenth century and came to dominate the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are not adequately described, let alone fully explained, by the notion of liberal progress.

The realist view of a systemwide natural selection process working through international power struggles is difficult to discard in its broadest contours, yet this perspective also blurs rather than clarifies the process and mechanisms by which the transformation of legitimacy came about. In particular, the “natural” selection idea fails to to examine the origins

⁷ Frances Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

⁸ See Immanuel Kant (1784), “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent,” in Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), especially the Seventh Thesis, pp. 34–36.

and early survival of the new variation of legitimacy—popular sovereignty—in the midst of the apparently hostile environment of dynastic legitimacy. In the eighteenth century, absolutist monarchy appeared to most strategists as the most effective way to mobilize the state for war. Contemporaries initially thought that the American and French revolutions would weaken rather than strengthen the military power of each state. Further, the defeat of Napoleonic France yielded neither a restoration of traditional forms of legitimacy nor an unambiguous victory for popular sovereignty, so if there was a selection mechanism at work it was not very precise. Even granting that over time the appeal to popular sovereignty proved an effective tool of military mobilization, we are still left with the puzzle of how this new variation of legitimacy managed to appear and survive long enough to prove its efficacy in a world dominated by absolutist, dynastically legitimated regimes. Finally, as I will discuss further below, realists fail to give an adequate account of the character of the system in which the selection process takes place, neglecting its cultural or ideological dimensions. An incomplete picture of the international system necessarily yields an incomplete picture of the mechanisms by which “selection” may occur.⁹

Both liberalism and realism provide broad templates by which we may organize our knowledge about international politics; this book does not challenge the power and utility of these templates. What I do challenge is the ability of either approach to adequately describe and explain the transformation of legitimacy from dynasticism to popular sovereignty that took place in the mid-eighteenth century, and that triggered a process of systemic transformation toward democratic legitimacy that continued into the twentieth century. The remedy I propose is fairly simple: by paying close attention to the discourses about political legitimacy, on the one hand, and the strategic struggles for power within and among states, on the other, we can develop a fuller descriptive and explanatory scheme for the late eighteenth-century transformation of political legitimacy.

International Political Culture

International political culture is essentially a complex of rules about the conditions for legitimate rule and international behavior.¹⁰ It is also the culture of the rulers or governments that are perceived as the strong play-

⁹ For a more thorough account of systemic selection, see Hendrik Spruyt, “Institutional Selection in International Relations: State Anarchy as Order,” *International Organization* 48 (Autumn 1994): 527–57.

¹⁰ See especially Onuf, *World of Our Making*.

ers in the international system at any given time. Political culture legitimates the rule of those perceived as strong or efficacious; it also helps constitute the conditions for efficacy, because it is through cultural discourse that human beings register and interpret experiences regarding the exercise of authority, producing propositions about the reasons for success or failure that may then become lessons or norms for the future. Of course, an international system may display numerous forms of political legitimacy; it may be heterogeneous. But we will generally find some sort of common denominator whereby authority to rule and to conduct the external relations of the polity is recognized by other rulers. Mutual recognition is an essential feature of sovereignty. Even heterogeneous international systems have a political culture delimiting the conditions for being considered a legitimate “player” in the system. For example, even though a variety of regimes exists in the international system today, all are expected to have formal heads of state, embassies, armies, trade ministries, and so on. Nor, most important, does the fact of heterogeneity preclude the existence of a dominant regime type that is considered the most powerful and legitimate. Republics and monarchies coexisted in eighteenth-century Europe, but republics were generally thought of as weak and unstable, whereas monarchies were seen as better equipped to hold the place of “great power.”

The existence in the system of a form of rule considered to be the most powerful and legitimate involves not only material but also cultural conditions. I will argue that cultural conditions help facilitate the accumulation of material preponderance; legitimacy is not reducible to material power but is in fact a crucial aspect of power. The existence of a dominant form of legitimate authority in the international system is a feature of its culture, and that culture is a feature of its structure.¹¹ The existence of a dominant form of legitimate authority thus indicates the presence of hegemony in the system. In my use of the term, hegemony does not simply signify the presence of a preponderantly powerful state; rather, it signifies the existence of a dominant form of legitimate authority.

Not all international systems are hegemonic in this “thick” sense, but even if a dominant regime type cannot be identified, the system can still be said to have a culture centered on shared legitimacy conceptions. Discourses legitimating political authority constitute a set of parameters that may be broad enough to encompass a variety of regimes. For example, international political culture today converges on the idea of “the people” as the ultimate source of political authority. But this does not necessarily mean that only democratic regimes are part of this culture. Communist

¹¹ For another, more abstract discussion of how a system’s culture is its structure, see Wendt, *Social Theory*.

and even some authoritarian regimes have also claimed to derive their authority from the people. During the cold war, for example, the Soviet Union and the United States accepted certain common parameters in the discourse on legitimacy by competitively claiming that each respective political system best represented and provided for the interests of its people. Both regimes accepted and furthered the proposition that legitimacy ultimately derived from the people, while at the same time displaying very different—and in some cases deeply cynical—interpretations of how that proposition should be put into practice.

Although this example suggests that the parameters for what constitutes legitimacy may be quite broad, they are not so broad that “anything goes.” This idea is perhaps best illustrated if we consider modes of legitimating political authority that are no longer thinkable. What ruling authority during the cold war or today (especially an authority governing a major power) would be able to claim that succession should be determined by heredity? Did even the most authoritarian leader in the twentieth century dare to rely solely on heredity as the legitimating principle allowing him to put a son or grandson on the throne? What state today would use the mechanism of dynastic marriage to extend its territorial holdings? What ruling authority today dares to rely primarily on claims such as the right of the conqueror, or papal sanction, to legitimate its rule? All these were once considered legitimate claims. Although the parameters of legitimacy delimited by the notion of popular sovereignty may seem broad (and the breadth of any legitimacy parameters will vary across different types of international systems and regional subsystems), they are parameters nevertheless. The empirical chapters of this book will examine the process by which these parameters were transformed, and also the changes brought on by the transformation—changes that may be discerned by considering what became unacceptable as much as by considering what became legitimate.

Political culture is not simply a property of individual states, delimiting the structure of political authority within each; it also constitutes the terms of their external relationships. Monarchical rule was legitimated domestically but also internationally, and the same is true of democracy. In a system of monarchies, domestically the monarch was the absolute authority; among other monarchs he or she was an equal, a rival, a potential ally or adversary, and furthermore a mother or father, sister or brother, cousin, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew. The monarch’s absolute authority and his dynastic ties made others perceive him as a strong, viable participant in international relations. Absolute authority, honor, prestige, and dynastic ties were common currencies of power. But the monarch behaved, and was perceived, differently when interacting with his or her international “family” than when parading among his or her subjects. So

although domestic and international legitimacy may be rooted in the same conceptions of political authority, the rules and norms emanating from these legitimacy conceptions will differ in the international and domestic realms; the links between international and domestic legitimacy thus need to be investigated empirically.

Democratic legitimacy today, like monarchical legitimacy in the past, is thought to constitute strong, wealthy, and viable polities in the international system. Despite the fact that the notion of popular sovereignty has not eliminated contests about which regime type best serves the interests of the people (witness the unwillingness of China to democratize or to recognize democracy as the most viable and legitimate form of government), democratic legitimacy today contends for hegemony in the international system within a broader shared framework centered on popular sovereignty. The international political culture of popularly legitimated regimes is not so prestige or dynasty oriented as that of the eighteenth century; it embodies different purposes and rules.¹² This culture is hardly democratic; it remains elite driven despite the fact that the underlying legitimacy conceptions supporting the positions of the relevant elites remain “popular”—whether democratic, populist, or communist. Thus the linkage between democratic legitimacy as a domestic phenomenon and the international dimensions of this form of legitimacy requires empirical investigation.

The linkages between domestic and international legitimacy are deep, but complex and variable. The two domains are clearly co-constituted, but at the same time one cannot logically deduce the international rules from the domestic form of legitimacy or vice versa. For example, the Kantian tendency to reason deductively that, because of the nature of republican legitimacy at home, international relations among republics will inevitably reflect the logic of such legitimacy and be peaceful, does not do justice to the real-world complexities of the issue.¹³ Each domain of interaction, domestic and international, exercises influence on conceptions of legitimate authority in a semiautonomous way, thus challenging the sort of reasoning engaged in by Kant when he argued that republican constitutions would yield peaceful, legally constrained relationships between re-

¹² For an extended analysis of varying purposes of the state, see Reus-Smit, *Moral Purpose of the State*.

¹³ According to Dan Deudney, the writings of Publius, particularly in the *Federalist Papers*, do a much better job than liberal theory in dealing with the real-world complexities of sustaining democracy. See Daniel Deudney, “Publius vs. Kant: Federal Republican Security vs. Democratic Peace” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Chicago, February 21–24, 2001).

publics.¹⁴ Much as empirical cases might challenge the purity of Kantian logic, however, the core insight that domestic and international legitimacy are co-constituted remains compelling, and worth investigating further.

International political culture shapes strategic interaction because the terms of political legitimacy define who the dominant players are and what the stakes of their interactions will be. The terms of legitimacy are parameters by which certain means of acquiring and exercising authority—by heredity, dynastic marriage, and conquest, for example—are not accepted by domestic constituencies and other actors in the international system. To understand how political culture shapes strategic relationships in the international system, we need a way of conceptualizing the systemic dimensions and patterns of that culture. Much of the work involved must be empirical; the analyst must investigate the dominant rules and institutions of the period she chooses to study—in my case the mid- to late eighteenth century. But we need to gain some sort of analytical purchase on this complex phenomenon, a sense of what sorts of patterns to look for. Following a line of thinking opened up by the sociologist Margaret Archer, I argue that the political culture of the international system should be understood in terms of relationships of contradiction or complementarity between its key elements, which are legitimacy conceptions and the rules that political actors derive from them.¹⁵

In the cases presented here, I show how through the eighteenth-century revolutions and the responses to them, Enlightenment culture began to penetrate and transform international politics. At this time, Europeans in some regions began to experience and engage in a struggle that ultimately led to a shift in the terms of political authority: absolute monarchical sovereignty became less legitimate, and popular sovereignty became more legitimate. The initial challenge was not brought forth primarily by bourgeois advocates of popular sovereignty, however, but rather by advocates of constitutional checks on monarchical authority; these were usually the nobility or members of the upper strata of highly stratified societies. These challengers exploited contradictions between Enlightenment thought, particularly its republican aspects, and more traditional modes of legitimating monarchy.

At the same time, some absolutist monarchs cultivated complementarities between their absolutism and Enlightenment rationality. Thus changes in international political culture—the spread of Enlightenment ideas—led to changes in strategic relationships between key political

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant (1795), “To Perpetual Peace, a Philosophical Sketch,” in Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).

¹⁵ Margaret S. Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

actors—between king and nobles, king and bourgeoisie, bourgeoisie and nobles, and finally bourgeoisie and “lower orders.” These changed relationships produced new alliances, new rivalries, and new discourses and legitimating ideas. Those new strategic relationships and alignments would not have been possible were it not for the cultural medium and, in particular, the “discovery” of potent contradictions and complementarities in European political culture. To analyze international political culture, then, we should first study the relationships of either contradiction or complementarity between its various elements, especially when new elements penetrate that system. Second, we must identify the political actors who mobilize around the contradictions and complementarities of the cultural system in pursuit of their strategic interests. The theoretical focus of this book is thus the interplay of political culture and strategic interaction.

Plan of the Book

Chapter Two develops in some detail the theoretical framework introduced here. I refine the concept of international political culture, discuss how we identify such culture, and defend the analytic utility of the concept. I argue that culture is not an epiphenomenal residue of more “basic” material structures. We should not attempt to reduce culture to some specific configuration or power or class interest. But we should also avoid idealist reductionism: power configurations and power struggles can and do reshape culture. Ideas and power politics interpenetrate each other, but neither should be reduced to the other. Chapter Two both develops a conceptual “tool kit” to analyze the interplay between culture and strategy and defends the general theoretical viability and utility of this tool kit. The chapter generates propositions about the conditions under which we might expect the interplay between culture and strategy to produce either systemic continuity or systemic change, and ends with a discussion of the interpretive methodology deployed herein.

I then turn to the empirical application of my analytical approach. Chapter Three analyzes the political culture of old regime Europe, as it was penetrated by the Enlightenment. The culture of European monarchies was distinctive and Europe-wide; international relations in this period was more a “domestic” matter between dynasts than “external” relations between “foreigners.” Just because it was domestic hardly means it was peaceful. Domestic disputes have their own brutality. After sketching out the contours of this system, I argue that several absolutist monarchs managed to co-opt Enlightenment thought to expand their administrative capacity, and allow the state to penetrate more deeply into society than it

had before. But social groups marginalized by this process also found fodder in Enlightenment thought, and used Enlightenment ideas to launch counterattacks on the legitimacy of the expansion of absolutist power. The chapter maps out key contradictions and complementarities between Enlightenment thought and traditional notions of monarchical rule, and identifies the political groups that mobilized around these contradictions and complementarities. This map of old regime European political culture highlights the seeds of transformation which were present even prior to the revolutions that shook the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Chapter Four examines the American Revolution in the context of a broader European political culture and international strategic struggles, especially between Britain and France. The Americans took up and reconfigured European political culture to suit their colonial context. In the struggle to gain and maintain independence, several possible models of how the United States should relate to Europe competed; how some came to be dominant and others marginal is a key focus. The Americans reconstituted European political culture through their domestic political struggles and their ambivalent, politically charged efforts to simultaneously gain access to European economic resources and disentangle themselves from Europe politically. Domestic and international political struggles of the early United States polarized along the fault lines of key cultural contradictions and complementarities regarding the nature of legitimate authority and the proper relationship between state and society. Those struggles facilitated the resolution of the question of how the United States should relate to Europe; they tipped the balance toward one form of resolution—nationalism and exceptionalism—rather than another—cosmopolitan universalism. The Americans developed innovative resolutions to contradictions present in a broader, Europe-wide political culture. News of such resolutions filtered back to Europe, though the effects were muted by distance. Nevertheless, the impact of the American Revolution on European political culture is undeniable, and the long-term consequences significant.

Chapter Five turns to the French Revolution. I review how that revolution was an outgrowth of the stresses and strains in prerevolutionary political culture, and how those stresses and strains were felt across Europe and not just in the French state. But the loss of old regime legitimacy was most glaring in France. I outline the specific cultural contradictions and complementarities that fueled the legitimacy struggle as the French *ancien régime* stumbled toward revolution. I then analyze the interactions of revolutionary France and Europe, assessing the nature and impact of the revolutionary wars and Napoleon. Because a number of competing explanations of the role of ideology in the revolutionary wars may be found in the historical literature, I address these and reassert the central

significance of political culture, even though liberal revolutionary ideology clearly gave way to a more militarized, nationalistic discourse. But the latter was ideology too, and it is important to show how, among the competing ideas of revolutionary political legitimacy, militarized nationalism came to win out over the more liberal cosmopolitan perspectives also present in the Revolution.

The concluding chapter builds on the theoretical perspective developed in Chapter Two and sketches out the longer-term international legacies of the eighteenth-century revolutions in legitimacy. I analyze the Concert of Europe, and argue that it cannot simply be understood as a reaction or restoration in the face of revolutionary challenges; rather, the statesmen of the Concert system drew important lessons about legitimacy from the revolutionary era and to some extent attempted to apply them. This holds true even as the forces unleashed by the eighteenth-century revolutions in legitimacy came to undermine the Concert system over time. I suggest how the complex view of political culture, developed here, can account for both apparently distinct outcomes. The chapter then reviews the way in which my approach relates to and extends current debates in international relations theory. I end with a discussion, derived from my analytical framework, of some potential sources of transformation in today's international system.