The End of Empires: Developing a Comparative Research Agenda for Imperial Dissolution in the Modern Era

Spruyt, H.

Rokkan, Stein (1970), *Citizens, Elections, Parties: Approaches to the Comparative Study of the Processes of Development.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Selinsky, Debbie (1994), "Fears About South Africa". *Duke University Dialogue* 9, 6, pp. 1, 12.

Taagepera, Rein (1972), "The Size of National Assemblies". *Social Science Research* 1, 4, pp. 385-401.

Taagepera, Rein (1973), "Seats and Votes: A Generalization of the Cube Law of Elections". *Social Science Research* 2, 3, pp. 257-75.

Taagepera, Rein, and Matthew Soberg Shugart (1989), *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wright, Jack F. H. (1986), "Australian Experience with Majority-Preferential and Quota-Preferential Systems". In: Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart (eds.), *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences.* New York: Agathon, pp. 124-38.

The End of Empires: Developing a Comparative Research Agenda for Imperial Dissolution in the Modern Era

Hendrik Spruyt

Columbia University

Abstract

For justifiable reasons scholars have paid considerable attention to the pursuit of empire. Far less work has been done in developing generalizable causal explanations for the dissolution of empires. This essay is a step in that direction. I suggest a working definition of the concept of empire and go on to develop a taxonomy to distinguish between various types of empire. The essay then presents some possible explanations for imperial dissolution. These causal explanations fall into three categories: they can focus on changes in the imperial metropole; they may highlight changes in the dyadic relation of centre and periphery; or they tend to emphasize changes in the overall international system. In order to start evaluating the relative salience of each explanation I conclude by discussing several research strategies and suggest, given the large number of independent variables and the relatively large number of potential cases, that the method of "structured focused comparison" might be particularly appropriate.

1 Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century vast tracts of the globe were controlled by great empires. The French and the British had largely carved Africa up between themselves, and possessed very significant holdings in Asia as well (India and Indo-China). Even the smaller European powers – the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal – had considerable possessions of their own. The eastern part of the great Eurasian landmass was part of the Russian and Chinese empires. Relative newcomers to the imperial game such as Germany and Japan hastened to catch up.

Less than a century later the great western empires have fragmented and have yielded dozens of new independent states. The Soviet Union, once perceived as a monolithic entity during the Cold War, has fractured in fifteen sovereign states, and shows signs of possible further dissolution. It is even possible that the 90 million strong minorities in China will pursue greater independence for particular regions such as Xin Jiang and Tibet (Gladney 1994).

During the process of imperial retrenchment and in the wake of such dissolutions have come wars and civil conflict, mass migrations and refugee streams, ethnic and racial strife. Yet, for all its obvious importance, few attempts have been made to systematically study such dissolutions. That is to say, while there have been excellent comparative studies of imperialism and the pursuit of empire (see, e.g., Doyle 1986; Kupchan 1994; Snyder 1991), less analytic effort has been devoted to the converse phenomenon: imperial retreat and dissolution.

There have been many excellent area studies and idiographic analyses of individual empires. But because they are case specific rather than comparative they necessarily can yield only modest theoretical insights. Even when area specialists are brought together with general theorists the disparity in theoretical approaches (among the generalists) or the emphasis on historical narrative over theory (among the area specialists) tends to diminish the generalizability of the findings.[1]

I suggest two reasons for developing a more comprehensive approach. First, methodologically speaking, a single or very limited set of cases, cannot control for specific independent variables. Given multiple possible explanations and one outcome, one cannot distinguish between the relative salience of specific independent variables. A limited set of cases also creates the risk of picking a dependent variable with no variation. Methods of agreement and methods of difference will not be available in case studies where the number of observations is very low (King 1994, 134,168; Lijphart 1971; Skocpol 1984, 378-379).

The second reason for taking a multi-case approach is to probe similarities and differences across cases which previously were not considered to be analogous. For example, one might at face value compare French to British dissolution given that they were both maritime, western empires which decolonized during the same period – and indeed that might yield very useful insights. But by expanding the universe of cases to cover different types of empires one sees connections that were previously obscured. For example, while the French case (a transoceanic empire with a democratic imperial core) differs from the Russian/Soviet Empire (contiguous and authoritarian) their subsequent post-imperial relations with their previous subject territories show considerable similarities. French intervention in West Africa and Russian pre-eminence in the "Near Abroad" might have similar causal dynamics but might be dissimilar from, say, the English case (Kahler 1997).

Naturally it is impossible to probe all the causal connections and hypotheses of imperial dissolution in this article format. The great variety among empires and the vastness of historical space (empires after all existed throughout human recorded history) prevents any comprehensive analysis or search for

causal regularities. Indeed, that is one reason why many scholars have eschewed attempts at generalization altogether, although some scholars have constructed impressive, wide-ranging taxonomic endeavours (Eisenstadt 1993). However, it is possible to create more limited taxonomies of empires and define the relevant set of cases that might be worthy of future analysis. Such a taxonomy and the generation of different levels of explanations for the dissolution of modern empires is the objective of this essay.

2 Types of empires

2.1 Premodern versus modern empires

Throughout much of human history the capacity of imperial cores was relatively low. They lacked large bureaucracies to administer and run the empire. Moreover, such bureaucracies were far from the rationalized structures of our era but were instead patrimonial and kinship based organizations. This presented problems of expertise and oversight (Eisenstadt 1993, chapter 10). Technological and communications constraints further prevented close oversight of the intermediate rules of the empire, and obstructed close control and supervision of the subject territories. Premodern empires ran wide but not deep (Crone 1989, 57; Mann 1986).

The societies of such empires consisted largely of localized intermediate polities and associations. Much of everyday economic and cultural interaction took place in the individual's immediate environment. Indeed subject populations might be completely unaware of other populations or other groups within the same empire. These empires were "capstone governments", united by an upper level stratum of aristocracy or theocratic elite superimposed over a vertically segmented society (Gellner 1983, 9; Hall 1985, chapter 1). Such compartmentalization, together with the limited demands imposed on the population, diminished the possibilities for collective action by the subject groups.

Modern empires, by contrast, present the opposite picture. Their imperial cores developed considerable bureaucracies which were increasingly based on merit and expertise – the instrumental rational bureaucracies that we know so well from Max Weber (Weber 1946).[2] Such rationalization of rule also permeated to cost-benefit calculations of holding empire. Take, for example, the Dutch cost/benefit policy toward 19th century Indonesia (van den Doel 1996, chapter 4), and contrast that with the motives that propelled Roman or Mongol expansion (Kratochwil 1986). Rationalized administration allowed greater supervision over intermediate rulers, administrators, and subject populations. This in turn facilitated greater demands on imperial peripheries

in terms of demands for commodities, taxes, and military personnel. Modern empires in other words ran wide and deep.

Recent empires have also unified their subject populations in manners previously unthinkable for pre-modern rulers. The imposition of legal codes and languages from the imperial core was far more extensive in the modern era than before.

Consequently, we should expect these two types of empires to have variant causes of imperial disintegration. Communications levels, technological barriers, principal-agent problems, and collective action abilities of the periphery, will all tend to differ between pre-modern and modern empires.

2.2 Universalist, frontier empires, and bordered empires

Many pre-modern empires were also universalist in scope. They tried to impose their political rule on the widest area possible, and they had relatively limited interactions with polities beyond those borders (Buzan 1993; Kratochwil 1986). Universalist empires of course have geographic or military constraints imposed upon them. Such constraints impart themselves as frontiers, not borders. There are no mutually recognized territorial limits to one's political authority. In principle the emperor rules the world (manifested symbolically in the orb that contains the soil of all four corners of the world) and is only de facto limited in the exercise of his power. Thus, underlying the Roman strategy, "was the assumption that the empire would continue to expand until it embraced the world." (Buzan 1993, 160).

The idea that polities are territorially defined (not just de facto limited in scale) and that the exercise of juridical power flows from the legitimate control of a fixed space only develops with the establishment of sovereign territoriality as a constitutive rule of the international system. The divine emperor (the late Roman Caesars) or the Vicar of God (the German Holy Roman Emperors), the son of Heaven (the Chinese emperor) can logically not recognize other political entities as equals, because it would jeopardize the legitimate exercise of one's own authority.

Universalist types of rule tend to clash with territorially defined authority. The one is logically antithetical to the other (Jackson 1990, Spruyt 1994). Both deny the very basis of the other's claims to rule. Thus one explanation for the demise of universalist types of empires is the increased competition from logics of organization that were not universalist in scope. This need not simply be restricted to premodern forms of rule. Arguably the Soviet claim that Marxist revolution, and thus Soviet influence, was to be spread worldwide (Sporzluk 1997) led to massive counteracting and balancing efforts (Snyder

1991). If Moscow had clearly delimited its territorial claims, such massive balancing against the USSR might not have occurred.

2.3 Contiguous versus non-contiguous empires

Throughout much of history empires have largely been contiguous, and often land based. The Mediterranean basin was something of an exception, with the Phoenicians, Greeks and others establishing daughter settlements across various coastal regions. But many empires, because they were based on the territorial movement of troops, were contiguous.[3]

With the Atlantic moment, the breakthrough of long distance navigational abilities, the European powers managed to utilize their new military capabilities across great distances. The relatively small maritime powers of Europe (the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, England) managed to carve out holdings vastly larger than the imperial centre itself. Other empires that emerged at the same time (the Ottoman, the Russian) relied on territorial expansion over neighbouring polities.

One critical difference between these two types of empires is that contiguous empires seem to be more likely to transform their control into a form of polity closer to that of a multinational state. For example, English domination over Wales and later Scotland laid the basis for the United Kingdom. Large parts of the Angevin empire of the late Middle Ages were transformed into the contemporary French state, even though it – like the United Kingdom – consisted of distinct juridical and ethnic entities. Far flung transoceanic territories are usually less easily integrated with the core.

This is of course not universally the case. The French after all argued that "Algeria had been united to France... on an equal footing with the île-de-France, Brittany, or Auvergne." (Lustick 1993, 107). Ireland was at least at one stage perceived as part of the English realm proper, unlike, say India or some other distant holding. But in general one can argue that territorial contiguity creates a different dynamic than one where the periphery is territorially distant, juridically not incorporated into the centre, and ethnically quite different.

2.4 Authoritarian and democratic imperial cores

Some scholars have attributed imperialism to authoritarian or non-democratic government in the imperial centre. Thus Joseph Schumpeter argued that the prevalence of an aristocratic (hence militaristic) form of rule would predispose a polity to expansionism (Schumpeter 1955). Jack Snyder similarly suggests

that, by and large, expansionism is more likely to occur in non-democratic governments where select interest groups benefit from empire, even though the country as a whole does not do so. Logrolling between such interest groups will not be checked by the opposition since the latter might not have equal representation (Snyder 1991).

Consequently, democratization of such polities might lead to re-evaluation of a state's imperial holdings. Some scholars have thus argued that the emergence of democratic rule in Portugal and the Soviet Union was at least a contributing factor to their break-up.

3 Empire as a contested concept

The concept empire is a contested concept (Connolly 1974, 10-11) on both analytic and normative grounds and thus clear specification of what types of phenomena I am trying to explain is critical. First, the classification of particular forms of rule as imperial or not imperial entails different theoretical perspectives. Is, for example, the extension of Russian influence over the Newly Independent States an example of imperialism or simply integration of sovereign states on military or functional economic grounds? If one depicts it as imperialism then theories of empire, focusing on differences of power and expansionist domestic elites, are the relevant ones. If one sees it as re-integration of the former Soviet space one will be inclined to point at the economic interdependence between the former Union Republics or focus on the division of labour in military security, somewhat like an alliance. Here again a different body of theories will be called for (Spruyt 1997).

Second, differences between imperial rule and other forms of political authority can be slight. As pointed out earlier, some examples of what are considered relatively homogeneous states (or even nation states) are with closer inspection in fact the result of the integration of various ethnic communities and distinct polities. Indeed, the number of ethnic associations is vastly larger than the number of contemporary states (Hobsbawn 1990). Thus one cannot simply define any composite polity as an empire. A clear definition will help distinguish between empires and other forms of polities.

Third, the concept empire also contains normatively laden and pejorative connotations in the modern era. The United Nations charter after all establishes the right of self determination. The post-war superpowers declared themselves in favour of decolonization and imperial retreat, although American and Soviet intervention across the globe might be described by critics of such behaviour as "imperial" in its own right.

One should keep the following traits in mind to clearly delineate what types

of polity should be considered as empires. First of all imperial rule is coercive. Imperial core and periphery are not political equals and secession from the polity cannot be unilaterally determined by the periphery. The latter may, de facto, not exit the existing political arrangement even if it juridically has that right (the Union Republics, for example, had that right under the Soviet Constitution due to Articles 17 and 18, Churchward 1975, 159). Second, the centre maintains variegated relations across the different territories (Motyl forthcoming; Laitin 1991). For example, British control over Egypt was distinct from that of Kenya (Doyle 1986). The empire thus consists of sets of ad-hoc agreements, or imposed forms of rule, which differ from country to country. This leads then to the following typology.

	Relation between centre and distinct local units	
	Homogeneous	*Heterogeneous*
Equal/contractual	Nation state (France)	Multinational state (Canada)
Relation centre-periphery		
Unequal/Coercive	Authoritarian city-state (Renaissance Italy)	Empire (British)

Nation states of course have a capital city and a central government, but the various intermediary forms of government and distinct administrative units are treated in a homogeneous and uniform manner. Distinct provinces or parts of the realm are not, as a rule, treated inherently different from one another. The relations between these distinct administrative units and sovereign government are contractual and based on democratic bargaining.

Other forms of government, while also non-coercive, do allow for considerable variation between central government and distinct administrative units. Thus the Canadian federal government has tolerated considerable variation in its relations with the provinces. Ottawa has made substantial concessions to Quebec to keep it in the Union, a fact which has lead to the ire of other provinces. Ultimately, however, the continued presence of Quebec in the federal government remains voluntary rather than coercive.

In a third form of rule, the central government may treat a subject area in a coercive and unequal way. However, it does so in a relatively homogeneous manner. City-states might be examples of such forms of rule. Thus, Renaissance Florence distinguished between the mother city and the surrounding area, and that subject area as a whole was treated as inferior.

Finally, empires are coercive in that the central government dictates the form and substantive content of rule. They are heterogeneous in the sense that the imperial metropole devises a variegated strategy to maintain its control. The Roman adage, divide and rule, sums up the rationale of the strategy. More powerful, or more developed parts of the empire will tend to retain more autonomy, receive special favours, and so on.

These are of course ideal types. Some empires, the Austrian, for example, might be said to shade into a multinational form of rule, particularly in the last decades of its existence (Deak 1990). But the distinctions still make sense since they draw our attention to common features of rule which have certain empirical referents and analytic use value. In asking whether a particular polity is, or is not, an empire one inevitably highlights the salience of specific variables for analysis. I.e., if one comes to the conclusion that a particular polity is not based on coercion, then a variable focusing on the relative balance of power between central government and intermediate government will tend to be less appropriate.

4   Causes of the pursuit of empire

As I have already indicated, while there has been little analytic attention to imperial fragmentation and contraction, except in very small case studies, there has been vastly more written on the causes of imperialism. This should come as no surprise. The pursuit of empire has often lead the contending powers to the brink of war, or beyond, and contributed to the two great wars of this century.

The pursuit of empire is the result of a broad variety of causal factors, ranging from the individualistic (for example, German imperialism must at least partially be explained by Wilhelm the Second's preferences) to the systemic (for example, the multipolarity of the European state system). Nevertheless, these explanations can be grouped in three categories (Doyle 1986). First, there are explanations that focus on the differences in relative capabilities of centre and periphery. Without such differences the imposition of foreign rule, the imperial expansion, is impossible. In other words, such differences are the permissive cause. Variations in relative capabilities can be technological in nature, such as a comparative military advantage, economic in nature, or organizational.

But not all imbalances of power are acted upon. Belgium decided to capitalize on the western military advantage vis-à-vis African polities by pursuing holdings in Africa. The Netherlands similarly expanded its control over the East Indies. Other western states, however, while roughly equivalent in strength and capabilities, such as the Scandinavian countries, refrained from the imperial game.

A second category of explanations is thus necessary to explain imperialism. These explanations focus on the motivation of the imperial power to expand. Such accounts can either be unitary-rational in nature, or focus on specific interest groups. The unitary rational model focuses on the overall benefits of expansion for the entire state. Thus the positive balance sheet that motivated Dutch expansion was based on the perceived merits for the Netherlands as a whole (van den Doel 1996; van Doorn 1995).

Imperial pursuits, however, can also be attributed to the more particularistic interests of certain groups – economic, military, or ideological. Economic groups might benefit from access to new markets or new sources of commodities. The military might seek imperialism as a means of expanding its mission and share of revenue, as well as yielding new positions and even new territories for military personnel. Ideological agendas of groups endowed with missionary zeal likewise may contribute to aggressive foreign policies (Snyder 1991).

No doubt unitary state calculations will benefit specific interest groups. But the two explanations are not synonymous. When particularistic interests can subvert the political process, or when institutions grant them extraordinary power (as in Wilhelmine Germany or 1930s Japan), then the perceived benefits of empire need not be a collective good for the benefit of the entire imperial centre. Indeed, such pursuit of empire might be desirable exactly when benefits of empire can be distributed particularistically (i.e. when rents can be captured by small groups) but costs rolled over on the larger body politic.

These two sets of explanations – explanations focusing on relative imbalances of capabilities between periphery and centre, and motivations of the centre – must be complimented by a third category. Because even if imperialism is feasible due to imbalances of power, and even if it is desirable for the imperial centre as a whole or for particular groups, it is sometimes only pursued depending on the overall context of the imperial game. Thus states might pursue empire because they perceive a rivalry between themselves and other major powers. The Scramble for Africa heated up after 1882, not because the relative balance between Europe and Africa had changed all of a sudden, or because the interests in empire had increased dramatically, but because rivalry on the European continent had amplified (Doyle 1986, 232-233, 251-254).

In other words, explanations for empire must be sought at three levels: the relative capability of periphery and centre; the motivation of the centre for empire; and the overall strategic context in which imperial powers compete.

5   Causal explanations of imperial dissolution

I argue that the field needs a comparative research programme focusing on the causes of imperial retreat and dissolution in modern, non-universalist

empires. That is, the empirical problem before us is to seek generalizations for the fragmentation and dissolution of empires, since, roughly, the end of WWI. Admittedly, the sets of explanations that I discuss below pass over the causal arguments that pertain to the dissolution of earlier, premodern, empires, and of universalist empires which conflicted with territorial notions of sovereignty.[4] In other words, I submit that one can gain theoretical insights by including transoceanic and contiguous empires, as well as authoritarian and democratic ones, in the universe of cases, but I would exclude premodern and universalist cases to limit the number of independent variables.

As with accounts of imperialism, the causal factors underlying imperial dissolution can be grouped in three categories. Explanations for imperial dissolution can focus on changes within the centre; they may accentuate the changes in the relative distribution of power of metropole and subject area; or they can focus on the international environment.

The first group of explanations emphasizes how the imperial centre might have changed its preferences for empire. Ruling coalitions, consisting of the military, business elites, and other influential groups, might have changed their calculations about the benefits of empire. Alternatively, such ruling coalitions might not have changed their views but institutional or regime transformations might have brought rival coalitions to power. In other words, this focus admits that imperial policy is not reducible to unitary rational calculations by the imperial state. Instead, imperialism follows from the influence of dominant ruling coalitions that pursue policies that might be detrimental to the overall welfare and security of the state. Expansionist policies, or policies that aim at maintaining the empire, might also result from misperceptions and ideological agendas that skew the evaluation of the environment.

The other two groups – dyadic level variables and systemic variables – take a more rational actor approach. The imperial government may recalculate the costs and benefits of empire by examining its position vis-à-vis the periphery and the broader strategic context. The structural environment in other words dictates certain behaviour. Regardless of particular domestic coalitions, or of the particular nature of institutions, or even of the regime of the metropole, one can explain policies by assuming a rational calculating actor in the midst of certain environmental conditions.[5] The latter do the real explaining. In this sense an account that focuses on changes in preferences of a unitary calculating actor collapse into accounts of either the relation and distribution of power between the imperial centre and subject territories, or into accounts that focus on the broader systemic level. The latter two levels, therefore, affect the "will to empire" but that is not what is analytically captured by the domestic analysis intended with the first group of theories.

The second set of explanations focuses, therefore, on the relation between centre and periphery. It is here that rational calculation of the environment clarifies the pursuit of imperialism and its converse: the retreat from empire. More specifically, we ask whether changes have occurred in the relative capabilities of centre or periphery.

And finally, at a third level, one must inquire into the larger systemic context, the international strategic environment, in which imperial metropole and subject periphery operate. What, for example, has changed in the nature of competition between the major powers to diminish the prevalence of empire? In the following section I fine-tune these three categories and develop sets of explanations within those categories that may lay the basis for further research, as well as order the current (disparate) literature on the subject.

5.1 The decline of the "will to empire"

Changes in the ruling coalitions favouring empire – As said, Joseph Schumpeter (1955) and other scholars have noted that expansionist foreign policies can often be attributed to a military aristocracy. The military after all derives its influence and power from engaging in conflict. In the pre-industrial era conquest would entail territorial holdings, new suzerainties, booty, slaves, serfs, or added troops.

While the dominance of a warrior aristocracy has largely diminished in modern polities, the military may exercise considerable influence on foreign policy making. Just as any other bureaucratic organization, the military might argue for policies to justify its share of revenue, defend its autonomy from other bureaucracies, or to diminish civilian oversight. In the case of the military its bureaucratic preference might lie with expansionism or offensive strategies (Posen 1984; Snyder 1984).

Groups with economic interests might likewise influence the decision-making process. Marxists believed, due to their historical evolutionary view, that capitalism would expand to those areas which were yet unaffected by modern capitalism. In the process, less developed areas would be driven forward in the march of history. Marx, thus, argued that "England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating" (McLellan 1977, 332). Lenin (1939) elaborated the Marxist model by focusing on the necessity of unloading surplus production at home, and on the dynamic of international capital to seek better returns in yet unexplored markets. Liberal economic views similarly saw great benefits in empire. Hobson predated Lenin in suggesting that capital would expand abroad because of the benefits to business groups. "Irrational from the standpoint of the whole nation, it is rational enough from the standpoint of certain classes in the nation." (Hobson 1961, 12.)

Naturally economic interests and military preferences could coincide. Greater military efforts overseas would entail the opening up of markets, investments in material to sustain those military efforts, and increased protection for merchants and traders who had preceded political expansion.

Additionally, groups with particular ideological preferences might favour the expansion of political rule as well. Spanish missionaries asked for support from the Crown. Dutch missions that had expanded beyond the confines of political rule in the East Indies similarly requested that the government extend its premises in the outer realm of the Islands (van den Doel 1996, chapter 3).

Consequently, the retreat from empire might be explained by either the changes in preferences among the particular groups who were previously instrumental in the creation of the empire, or by the changes in relative position of those groups. Thus the military might have found new means to justify their budgets, or economic groups might have found alternative means of profit. But even if their preferences had not changed their relative standing in the ruling coalition of the government might have changed. For example, new economic groups might have emerged which did not benefit from empire and which managed to displace the prominent position of the pro-imperial lobby.

Changes in formal institutions in the imperial centre – The prominent position of particular groups can sometimes be attributed to the particular institutional arrangements in the imperial core. Particularly the presence or absence of democratic institutions is critical in determining whether the decision-making process is unduly influenced by a specific group. If there is little public access to the highest rungs of power, then it will be easier for special interest groups to logroll their preferences for empire, and to distribute the costs over the larger and disenfranchised society.

One important causal explanation for imperial dissolution might, therefore, be the democratization of the political process. In the authoritarian Soviet Union, the cost of the empire for Russia (both of the external and internal empire) could easily be camouflaged. Moreover, in a political system where the bureaucratic constituencies and politburo dominated the political process (Roeder 1993), and catered to specific interest groups that favoured empire (the military, among others), public discussion about the desirability of the empire was out of the question. Glasnost and democratization changed all that.[6]

Ideological conversion – Empire is not merely an objective phenomenon. Like the nation state it exists in the hearts and minds of human beings. It is an ideological construct as well as a material one. Indeed, as I indicated above in the discussion of conceptualization, the very notion of empire entails particular analytic and normative contentions. What some see as empire others might very well see as a nation state, or part of the imperial core itself. That is, one important trait of empire – a coercively maintained relation between centre and periphery – is sometimes denied by the imperial core itself. Ireland is not part of the British Empire, it is Britain itself. Algeria, likewise is not a subject area, but part of France.

In such a mindset, which Lustick (1993, 42-43) likens to a Gramscian hegemony, the imperial core does not engage in cost-benefit calculations of maintenance or retreat. Just as London could not imagine letting Sussex secede, or Paris contemplate the costs and benefits of keeping Burgundy, so too could these imperial capitals at one point not imagine that Ireland or Algeria were not part of the core nation. Indeed, such secession might jeopardize the institutional stability of the centre itself, even in well established democracies. Lambert Giebels thus suggests that opponents of the Dutch retreat from Indonesia, including former Prime Minister Gerbrandy, entertained ideas of a Coup d'Etat (Giebels 1996, 225-229). Such calculations are difficult to conceive without taking account of the belief system prevalent in the metropole.

Imperial dissolution becomes possible when the imperial core recognizes the difference and the otherness of the party seeking independence. Indeed, once the very idea of independence becomes a matter of public debate the first step towards imperial retreat has been made.

5.2 Changes in relative capabilities

As I have already said, empire is ultimately a coercive relationship. Although there are degrees of oppressiveness of rule, indeed imperial rule might even be indirect, the terms of rule are set by the centre. Exit or defection are punished by economic or military retaliation.

Consequently, the decline of empire can at least partially be attributed to the ability of the periphery to resist the centre. Such ability might be due to the increased military capacity of the subject territories, or the periphery might have increased its capacity to act as a coherent political body, thus diminishing the ability of the imperial metropole to divide and segregate the various sources of potential opposition.

Shifts in the military balance –The balance of power between centre and periphery is of course a relative matter. The centre might have declined, the periphery risen, or both processes might have occurred simultaneously. One theory sees such a development as inevitable. Empire becomes imperial overstretch. As Paul Kennedy suggests the pursuit of empire in fact displaces

investments at home (Kennedy 1987). The demands for military expenditures to maintain the empire push out revenue for public goods which would in the long run contribute more to the welfare of the imperial metropole. The trade-off is not between guns or butter, but rather between guns and education and infrastructure. Because investments in the latter will lag in imperial powers, growth rates will diminish.

Robert Gilpin roughly has a similar argument but extends it to include a broader dynamic where other powers will try to check the imperial expansion (Gilpin 1981). Thus expansion leads to a countervailing reaction which will over time increase the marginal costs of empire and diminish its marginal benefits.

Other theorists focus more on the core. The initial process of successful empire building hinges on the imbalance of power and relative under-development of the subject periphery. But as imperial rule establishes itself in those territories, it raises the level of development and exposes the previously weaker area to new technologies, modes of warfare, and organizational routines, that were previously foreign. In other words, a process of gradual equalization sets in. Lenin, thus thought that imperialism would logically lead to its own demise. Capitalist economists attributed a somewhat similar dynamic to spread effects and product cycles.

Political entrepreneurship and collective action in the periphery – The Roman maxim "divide and rule" holds that the success of empire hinges on the coherence of the centre and the incoherence of political opposition. The unified metropole can subject far larger populations if the latter are disjointed and unorganized. Consequently, when the imperial possessions do manage to overcome their collective action problems and if political entrepreneurs emerge who are willing to create revolutionary organizations, then the imperial project becomes tenuous. There are three elements involved: the incentives for local elites to create oppositional movements; the homogenization of indigenous society by the imperial power; and the particular administrative units created by the imperial metropole.

Even if conditions for resistance to the metropole exist, there must be individuals who are willing to incur the costs of organizing such resistance, even to the point of risking life and limb.[7] Collective action is seldom spontaneous but needs a dominant actor or small group that can provide side-payments and punish non-cooperators (Olson 1965). Local elites, if they gain substantial power, might play such a role.

At the same time imperial rulers have incentives to co-opt local elites in the service of the core. Indeed, in order to control sometimes vastly larger populations than their own, some of the western imperial powers had no choice but to pay or cajole locals into supporting imperial rule. And even if

an imperial state has the means to install its own intermediate rulers and representatives of the core, it might still be far more effective and efficient to utilize and co-opt local rulers (Motyl 1993).

This creates a paradox. When local rulers are given too much power or gain access to resources of their own, they might be inclined to defect from the imperial overlord. This is part of a generalizable principal-agent problem (Spruyt 1996) in which the principal (the metropole) requires relatively powerful agents (intermediate rulers who are from the metropole or locals) in order to successfully control the subject areas. But, depending on the measure of oversight, remunerations, or career opportunities in the metropole, those agents might very well have incentives to establish their own autonomous political entities. Thus the Ottoman Empire was constantly in fear of rebellion by its own local governors (Barkey 1994).

Benedict Anderson suggests one important hypothesis for whether local elites will resist imperial rule (Anderson 1991). He argues that the access of local elites to the imperial core is crucial. For example, because Latin American-born elites were unable to gain access to the highest rungs of imperial rule – virtually all the vice-roys were Spanish born – they had a career incentive to resist the empire. We can generalize this insight by investigating how career opportunities and access to the centre played a similar role in other dissolutions.

As we have seen in pre-modern empires, the metropole imposed few demands on the periphery. Some tribute or some demands for corvee services or troops might be exercised but overall the empire affected few aspects of social life. Local religions, languages, and customs could all continue to exist provided they did not interfere with the continued exercise of imperial rule (Mann 1986). Indeed, even many western states remained relatively unintegrated until fairly recently. Modern nation states as France continued to be rife with feudal customs up to the Revolution. Even Napoleonic reforms did not quite dispense with such variation, and it was only in the latter part of the 19th century, with mass public education and mass mobilization of society (among other things through the now common draft army), that more uniformity was installed (Posen 1993).

The dynamic of state building in the imperial cores was paralleled by dynamics in the imperial periphery. If imperial centres before were content to exploit peripheries along relatively haphazard lines, using sometimes even semi-feudal methods as in the case of the Dutch East Indies (van den Doel 1996), that was no longer the case in the latter decades of the 19th century. Export production for the world market, taxation, and mobilization for war became the order of the day. For example, hundreds of thousands of imperial subjects were brought to bear on the western front during WWI. Moreover, successful use of the colonies as economic resources meant improving their

infrastructures, lines of communication, and legal codes. The paradox of empire is thus that modern empire, to be an efficient resource for the centre, requires mobilization and creation of latent capabilities in the periphery. But in so doing it creates the very political organizations that can resist imperial encroachment.

Finally, the ability of the subject populations to act collectively against the core might hinge on the mode of imperial administration. Given that all forms of imperial rule require some form of intermediate local organization it needs to utilize particular modes of political association. Does the empire mobilize society along clan lines, kinship groups, ethnic categories, or territorial units? The choice of organizational types might not be insignificant. The more the metropole will favour one form of organization over the other, the more it will empower that group vis-à-vis indigenous rivals. Thus, by favouring one ethnic group over another it might create incentives for the disempowered ethnic group to rebel. If, by contrast, the metropole opts to utilize territorially defined polities as the primary intermediate organizations, it might create an incentive for the subject territories – particularly within a system of sovereign states as we have today – to break away as independent states in their own right. For example, the creation of Union Republics based on territorial criteria also solved the collective action problem for Union Republic leaders once the empire fell apart (Solnick 1996). Those same, previously intermediate layers of government, could now become sovereign states without too many changes.

5.3 The international environment

Developments within the imperial metropole and changes in the relative balance of power between centre and periphery do not occur in a vacuum. Other actors intervene to affect the continuation or dissolution of empire. Four causal factors in particular are worth highlighting: support for the subject territories by third parties; the overall relevance of empire for the defense of the homeland; pressure by other states and international organizations; and finally the overall economic context.

Intervention by outside actors – Rivalry between major powers or outright war between them is likely to lead to support for nationalist movements within the rival's imperial holdings. This can take the form of mobilization of anti-imperial ethnic groups or support for indigenous groups that oppose the imperial overlord. Rivals to the imperial power might also capitalize on anti-imperial sentiments by defending their own expansion as a means of giving independence to the subject territories. Thus Japan presented itself to East Asia as a liberator from western domination (Goto 1996).

Support for anti-imperial groups could either be material or logistical. One of the most dramatic forms of outside support would be the actual mobilization of the indigenous population as a military force to fight the imperial centre. Indeed, locals might become allies to the third party that challenges the regional supremacy of the imperial power. Germany, for example, enlisted the support of more than 200,000 Ukrainians against the Russians in WWII (Dawisha and Parrott 1994, 37). Japan mobilized military associations in Indonesia (van den Doel 1996, 260f.; Goto 1996). Outside intervention thus affects the relative balance of power beyond the means of the periphery itself, and raises the cost of empire by putting the core itself under pressure.

Finally, the outside intervention could simply dictate imperial dissolution if the metropole had suffered defeat in war. While it is true that the Ottoman and Austrian empires had started to disintegrate before WWI, the pace and finality of their dissolution can hardly be explained without reference to the imposed peace after WWI.[8]

International norms and international organization – Some scholars have argued that the dissolution of colonial holding needs to be explained by the normative shift in the legitimacy of empire (Jackson 1993). Just as broad normative shifts in cultural milieu had led to the demise of slavery, normative changes in the 20th century have delegitimized imperial holding. The U.S. so declared the State Department had not won the war to build a a world "half slave and half free" (van den Doel 1996, 278). International organizations such as the United Nations gave expression to such ideals and exerted pressure on the imperial powers to surrender their holdings. Were such normative concerns indeed as prevalent as Jackson (1993) makes them out to be, or were they rather marginal, and secondary to utilitarian calculations?

The modern security environment – Some empires, as the British, engaged in elaborate calculations about the grand strategic benefits of empire (Friedberg 1988). In WWI the resources of the empire and the manpower of their subject territories made critical contributions to the defense of the motherland. Hundreds of thousands of Indians and Africans served with the British and French armies in WWI and WWII. Affiliated states, such as Australia and Canada, more loosely under English rule, similarly contributed greatly to the overall Allied effort. Indeed, England's reliance on its empire allowed it to devise a strategy where it initially would pass the buck to France should WWII come to pass (Posen 1984). It could then gradually bring its imperial reserves to bear and defeat any continental component.

The modern era of bipolarity and nuclear weapons might have made such calculations obsolete. Security might depend more on a stable and extended

nuclear deterrence than on vast reserves of manpower and resources (Gaddis 1986; Mearsheimer 1990; Waltz 1990). If this is so then calculations of self-defence through such extended deterrence should have influenced the calculations of imperial holdings in this post-war era. Was this so?

The overall economic context – The final causal explanation for imperial dissolution lies in the liberal economic environment that the western powers, particularly the U.S., have constructed since WWII. Imperialism makes sense in a world where one can create special preferences for the products of the homeland and protect the trade of its imperial holdings. Indeed, England saw this fall back option as one solution to the economic crisis of the 1930s. (Kindleberger 1973: 77-78).

However, once one agrees to a true open door policy where one cannot favour one's own producers and manufacturing sectors, the benefits of empire decline. It also works the other way. If the other imperial centres now diminish their preferential tariffs and protectionist measures then this opens new markets, thus making the reliance on internal, imperial markets less critical (Kahler 1997).

6   Suggestions for a research agenda

It is evident then that there are multiple explanations for imperial dissolution. And indeed one may question whether a comprehensive theory of imperial retreat is likely to emerge. Nevertheless, this essay has served several purposes.

First of all it has enumerated and categorized some of the leading explanations in a more systematic fashion. I argue that these explanations can be subsumed under three broad categories. A category of explanations that focuses primarily on changes in the metropole; a second category that focuses largely on developments within the centre and periphery that affect their relative position; and finally a third category that draws attention to the larger environment in which both centre and subject territories are placed. The listing is not meant to be a complete enumeration of all possible explanations but rather a compilation of some of the leading perspectives.

Second, this categorization can help answer an even larger question. Why have not only individual empires dissolved, but why has this very form of political domination become obsolete? A multiple case study using the proposed categories of analysis should find that domestic level variables in the metropole matter little, if the hypothesis is that imperialism as a general policy is no longer rational. That is, if one wishes to argue for the general obsolescence of empire then the overall structural environment and generalizable changes in the relative power of centre and periphery should matter more than the

particular idiosyncrasies of a specific metropole's domestic politics. Unitary rational states will recognize broad environmental changes and overall shifts in power that have neutralized previous discrepancies in relative capabilities; or they will understand that in the current international environment imperial holdings are neither necessary or profitable.

If one finds, however, that domestic explanations remain indispensable then it will be more difficult to argue that empire as a general phenomenon has passed from history. That is, the current dissolution of empires might simply be a fortuitous occurrence of particular domestic developments rather than indicate the general obsolescence of empire. In order to still argue that empire in general has become obsolete one would have to demonstrate that similar domestic processes occurred throughout the major imperial powers. Several research strategies are possible ranging from the single case study to the attempt to come up with a general theory of imperial dissolution.[9] At the least comprehensive level, but one that might nevertheless yield valuable insights, one might take one particular case and see if a given model might explain that specific puzzle. For example, Philip Roeder's work on the Soviet Union proposes a rational choice model focusing on the method of delegation of power and he analyzes how this affected the dissolution of the USSR (Roeder 1993). By his own admission this is neither an attempt to develop a full-blown theory or even an attempt to rigorously test rival theories.

A single case approach might also be used to evaluate different theoretical perspectives against each other. Does theory A or theory B better explain the dissolution of a given empire? This too might yield valuable insights and might suggest which theory has greater explanatory power. The danger, however, is that one does not have any variation on the dependent variable. This introduces selection bias (see King 1994, 129).

Alternatively, one can take one theory and multiple cases. The latter move can give us some variation on the dependent variable, cases of dissolution and non-dissolution, and together with variation on the independent variable generated by a specific theoretical approach, one can suggest why particular outcomes occurred. Thus David Laitin's analysis of the USSR looks at the total set of Union Republics and argues that the variation in their relations with Russia is due to the particular status that republic had with Russia prior to the break-up (Laitin 1991).

A fourth approach could take two or more theories and try to test them using multiple cases. This would allow for the most rigorous form of testing of theories, using methods of agreement and methods of difference. To my knowledge this has yet to be done in the area of imperial dissolution. The one drawback to this approach, for this particular situation, is that one must select which theories to evaluate given the large number of possible contenders and the large number of cases. There is always a danger of finding particular

relations simply because of the cases chosen or because of bias in theory selection.

A final research strategy might be "structured focused comparison". Here one engages less in formal testing of particular theories, because one recognizes the large amount of possible explanations. Instead one asks the same set of theoretical questions across each case to see if particular variables are more salient than others (Eckstein 1975; George 1979; Jentleson 1993; King 1994, 45). Alexander George's work thus takes a given set of questions and applies these to several events in American foreign policy making, trying to discern which variables mattered most at particular historical junctures and why this was so (George and Smoke 1974). Given the number of independent variables that I have flagged in this essay, this would seem to be particularly appropriate for the study of the end of empires in our era.

Notes

1. For recent attempts to generate broader theoretical insights, see Dawisha and Parrott (1977); Barkey and von Hagen (forthcoming).

2. The literature uses a variety of concepts to denote the imperial power (metropole, core, centre) and the subject territories (periphery, colony). When I use different terms for centre or periphery I do not mean to denote a particular substantive gradation.

3. On the technological reasons why this was so, see in particular McNeill (1982).

4. I do not suggest, however, that my set of explanations would have no bearing on the breakup of the USSR, even though some of its features might resemble that of universalist forms of rule.

5. For one approach that suggests a rational actor view of empire, see Lake 1996.

6. For discussions of recent events in Russia and the Newly Independent States, see Bremmer and Taras 1993; Dawisha and Parrott 1994.

7. The rational choice literature that discusses the concept of entrepreneurship is vast. For good introductions to some of this literature, see, a.o., Eggertson 1990; Moe 1984; McCubbins and Sullivan 1987.

8. For a general overview of these dissolutions and the rise of nationalism in the Austrian and Ottoman empires, see, a.o., Deak 1990; Khalidi 1991; Hourani 1991.

9. For the following methodological discussion I refer the reader particularly to Eckstein 1975; Lijphart 1971; Skocpol 1984.

Bibliography

Anderson, Benedict (1991), *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso.

Barkey, Karen (1994), *Bandits and Bureaucrats*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Barkey, Karen and Mark von Hagen (forthcoming), *Imperial Collapse: Causes and Consequences*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Bremmer, Ian and Ray Taras, eds. (1993), *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Buzan, Barry, Charles Jones and Richard Little (1993), *The Logic of Anarchy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Churchward, L.G. (1975), *Contemporary Soviet Government*. Second Edition. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Connolly, William (1974), *The Terms of Political Discourse*. Lexington (Mass.): D.C. Heath.

Crone, Patricia (1989), *Pre-Industrial Societies*. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Dawisha, Karen and Bruce Parrott (1994), *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Deak, Istvan (1990), *Beyond Nationalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Doel, H.W. van den (1996), *Het Rijk van Insulinde*. Amsterdam: Prometheus.

Van Doorn, J.A. (1995), *Indische Lessen: Nederland en de Koloniale Ervaring*. Amsterdam: Uitgever Bert Bakker.

Doyle, Michael (1986), *Empires*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Eckstein, Harry (1975), 'Case Study and Theory in Political Science'. In: Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (eds.), *Handbook of Political Science*. Volume 7. Reading (Mass.): Addison-Wesley.

Eggertson, Thrain (1990), *Economic Behavior and Institutions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Eisenstadt, S.N. (1993), *The Political Systems of Empires*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Friedberg, Aaron (1988), *The Weary Titan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gaddis, John (1986), 'The Long Peace'. *International Security* 10 (Spring), pp. 99-142.

Gellner, Ernest (1983), Nations and Nationalism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

George, Alexander and Richard Smoke (1974), *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*. New York: Columbia University Press.

George, Alexander (1979), 'Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison'. In: Paul Lauren (ed.), *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*. New York: The Free Press.

Giebels, Lambert (1995), *Beel: Van Vazal tot Onderkoning*. Den Haag: SDU Uitgevers.

Gilpin, Robert (1981), *War and Change in World Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gladney, Dru (1994), 'Ethnic Identity in China: The New Politics of Difference'. In: William Joseph (ed.), *China Briefing*, 1994. Boulder (Col.): Westview Press.

Goto, Ken'ichi (1996), 'Cooperation, Submission, and Resistance of Indigenous Elites of Southeast Asia in the Wartime Empires'. In: Peter Duus, Ramon Myers and

Mark Peattie (eds.), *The Japanese Wartime Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hall, John (1985), *Powers and Liberties*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hobsbawn, E.J. (1990), *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hobson, J.A. [1902] (1961), 'Imperialism: A Study'. In: Harrison Wright (ed.), *The New Imperialism*. Lexington (Mass.): D.C. Heath.

Hourani, Albert (1991), *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Jackson, Robert (1990), *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Jackson, Robert (1993), 'The Weight of Ideas in Decolonization: Normative Change in International Relations'. In: Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane (eds.), *Ideas and Foreign Policy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jentleson, Bruce, Ariel Levite and Larry Berman (1993), 'Protracted Foreign Military Intervention: A Structured Focused Comparative Analysis'. In: Dan Caldwell and Timothy McKeown (eds.), *Diplomacy, Force and Leadership*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Kahler, Miles (1984), *Decolonization in Britain and France*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kahler, Miles (1997), 'Empires, Neo-Empires, and Political Change: The British and French Experience'. In: Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *The End of Empire?* Armonk (N.Y.): M.E. Sharpe.

Kennedy, Paul (1987), *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. New York: Random House.

Khalidi, Rashid, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Simon Reeva (eds.) (1991), *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kindleberger, Charles (1973), *The World in Depression 1929-1939*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

King, Gary, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba (1994), *Designing Social Inquiry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kratochwil, Friedrich (1986), 'Of Systems, Boundaries and Territoriality: An Inquiry into the Formation of the State System'. *World Politics* 39 (October), pp. 27-52.

Kupchan, Charles (1994), *The Vulnerability of Empire*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Laitin, David (1991), 'The National Uprisings in the Soviet Union'. *World Politics* 44 (October), pp.139-177.

Lake, David (1996), 'Anarchy, Hierarchy, and the Variety of International Relations'. *International Organization* 50 (Winter), pp. 1-34.

Lenin, V.I. [1916] (1939), *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. New York: International Publishers.

Lewis, Geoffrey (1974), *Modern Turkey*. New York: Praeger.

Lijphart, Arend (1971), 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method'. *American Political Science Review* 65 (3), pp. 682-693.

Lustick, Ian (1993), *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Mann, Michael (1986), *The Sources of Social Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCubbins, Mathew and Terry Sullivan (eds.) (1987), *Congress: Structure and Policy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McLellan, David (1977), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McNeill, William (1982), *The Pursuit of Power*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.

Mearsheimer, John (1990), 'Back to the Future'. *International Security* 15 (Summer), pp. 5-56.

Moe, Terry (1984), 'The New Economics of Organization'. *American Journal of Political Science* 28 (November), pp. 739-777.

Motyl, Alexander (ed.) (1992), *The Post-Soviet Nations*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Motyl, Alexander (1993), 'Imperial Collapse and Revolutionary Change: Austria-Hungary, Tsarist Russia, and the Soviet Empire in Theoretical Perspective'. In: Jurgen Nautz and Richard Vahrenkamp (eds.), *Die Wiener Jahrhundertwende*. Koln: Böhlau Verlag.

Motyl, Alexander (forthcoming), 'Thinking About Empire: A Conceptual Inquiry with Some Implications for Theory'. In: Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (eds.), *Imperial Collapse: Causes and Consequences*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Olson, Mancur (1965), *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press.

Posen, Barry (1984), *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Posen, Barry (1993), 'Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power'. *International Security* 18 (Fall), pp. 80-124.

Roeder, Philip (1993), *Red Sunset*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Schumpeter, Joseph (1955), *Imperialism and Social Classes: Two Essays*. New York: Meridian Press.

Skocpol, Theda (ed.) (1984), *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Snyder, Jack (1984), *The Cult of the Offensive*. Ithaca (N.Y.): Cornell University Press.

Snyder, Jack (1991). *Myths of Empire*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Solnick, Steven (1996), 'The Breakdown of Hierarchies in the Soviet Union and China: A Neoinstitutional Perspective'. *World Politics* 48 (January), pp. 209-238.

Sporzluk, Roman (1997), 'The Fall of the Tsarist Empire and the USSR: The Russian Question and Imperial Overextension'. In: Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *The End of Empire?* Armonk (N.Y.): M.E. Sharpe.

Spruyt, Hendrik (1994), *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Spruyt, Hendrik (1996), *Oversight and Control in Translocal Organizations*. Paper Presented at the International Studies Association, San Diego, April.

Spruyt, Hendrik (1997), 'The Prospects for Neo-Imperial and Non-Imperial Outcomes in the Former Soviet Space.' In: Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *The*

End of Empire? Armonk (N.Y.): M.E. Sharpe.

Waltz, Kenneth (1979), *Theory of International Politics.* New York: Addison Wesley.

Waltz, Kenneth (1990), 'Nuclear Myths and Political Realities'. *American Political Science Review* 84 (September), pp. 731-745.

Weber, Max (1946), 'Bureaucracy'. In: Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Neo-corporatism and Macroeconomic Performance in Eight Small West European Countries (1970–1990)

Jaap Woldendorp

Netherlands Centre for Social Policy (Bunnik)

Abstract

The apparently positive connection between neo-corporatism as a form of public policy formation, and macroeconomic performance is evaluated for eight small West European countries between 1970 and 1990. The eight countries under review – Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland – are all classified as neo-corporatist by reseachers of neo-corporatism. On the basis of a country-by-country case study it is shown that there is a large variance between these countries. They differ with respect to indicators of neo-corporatism, actual government policies, and macroeconomic performance, both in comparison with each other and within a country over time. These differences, however, do not coincide with the level of neo-corporatism, as expressed by the country's score on various scales of neo-corporatism. Government policy is not necessarily 'more' neo-corporatist in the more neo-corporatist countries. Macroeconomic performance does not increase with the level of neo-corporatism. The conclusion is that neo-corporatism may, under certain circumstances, explain policy formation (and implementation) but does not explain the macroeconomic performance of a country.

1 Introduction

An important research question, and sometimes highly contested issue, for most students of neo-corporatism is whether or not neo-corporatism (defined in various ways) contributed to a better macroeconomic performance of countries during the 1970s and the 1980s (see for instance Therborn 1987, Schmitter 1989, Alvarez et al. 1991 and Crepaz 1992). In general, empirical research supports the notion that neo-corporatism both in the 1970s and in the 1980s indeed contributes positively to the macroeconomic performance of countries in terms of higher economic growth, lower inflation, and less unemployment, especially when compared to non-neo-corporatist countries (Alvarez et al. 1991, Kurzer 1991, Western 1991 and Crepaz 1992).

It is this, apparently positive, connection between neo-corporatism as a form of public policy formation and macroeconomic performance, that will be evaluated in this article. In this context the term neo-corporatism is used