Only in Europe?
The Economic and Military Foundations of European World Empires

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Introduction

There are many factors that shape political and military development, but, risking over-generalizing, it does appear that many nations, mostly those in the West, have dominated the history of the past three hundred years. Since the West achieved this dominance through military means, the military development of Europe seems a natural starting place for a description of how Europe achieved its modern ascendancy. But what made Europe ascendant? What was so special about the European experience?

The way Europe fought its wars changed as early as the 14^{th} century, as professional calvary and small units of ragtag foot-soldiers and archers gave way to conscripted battalions of professional soldiers supported by artillery and a financial-industrial complex that went beyond the battlefield. Over time, the military developed hospitals, supply lines, fortifications, and naval supremacy on the seas in order to secure victory on the land.

This new intrinsically European military system was incredibly effective when used elsewhere; the first section discusses the milestones and triumphs of European imperialism. Even though rapidly evolving military technology *per se* in Europe had failed to bring ascendency to any single nation, new military technologies and strategies created an "unequivocally overwhelming" force outside Europe ([30] 415). Small groups of Europeans with superior arms and tactics were able to defeat numerically superior forces at Kagoshima[1], Plassey[2], and Omdurman[3]; these victories led to European empires that spanned the globe.

Artillery, citizen armies (as opposed to professional soldiers in a military elite) armed with rifles, and new fortifications made Europeans nearly unbeatable. This

[1]The 1863 bombardment of the Satsuma capital weakened the Tokugawa Shogunate and helped set the stage for the Meiji restoration.

[2]The 1757 defeat of the Nawab of Bengal by Robert Clive ushered in British rule in India.

[3]In 1898 General "Chinese" Gordon defeated the Mahdi in Sudan.

change was not just a gradual evolution of the means of warfare but a shift in the very manner that war is waged. As Geoffrey Parker has shown, the new fortifications and equipment required previously impossible levels of spending. It was not just an annoying aspect of warfare that needed to be addressed, it was a factor that could make or break the war, as seen in Spain's campaign in the low countries ([27] 63).

In response, nations created capital markets to handle the vast sums of money needed to finance military campaigns. They learned how to cultivate merchant classes and play them against each other ([13] 69), and they created a system that encouraged capital accumulation and mobility and, in turn, encouraged ventures that would likely generate lucrative profits. One of these ventures was the establishment of extractive colonies that would necessitate an even larger military to sustain.

Along with this new economic pressure on nations, there was also an active trade in the development of ancillary technology. A nascent community of innovators developing new weapons, fortifications, and tactics was just as critical to the success of military campaigns as the number and quality of the soldiers involved. Indeed, even highly trained warriors could be defeated by cheap technology, which was demonstrated early in the 19^{th} century by Napoleon ([27] 128). This is a critical part of the military revolution that was unique to Europe.

Additionally, rulers had little incentive to use these new resources judiciously. Troops took less time to train, and were quickly replaced by new recruits. Even when wars went poorly it was very rare for a nation's leadership to suffer any dire consequences. Although the populace might suffer from pillaging armies (regardless of the flag they carried), it was not until the the Napoleonic wars that a major European monarch was deposed because of an external invasion. Thus, conflict was — in the eyes of Louis XIV — a not too risky means to "distinguish [kings] and to fulfill the great expectations ... inspired in the public" ([37] 124).

These forces were not dissimilar from those already in play in Asia; the second section discusses the parallel trends that were seen both inside and outside Europe. For example, Japan had effective rifles with staggered salvos — long before the Prussians — by 1575 at Nagashino ([27] 140), and China had naval artillery under the reign of Chu Yüan-chang in the 1350s. China also experienced, to a lesser degree, the same market of military advisors moving from state to state during the Three Kingdoms ([38] 18). In each case, these early advances were

abandoned because they were no longer needed after unity was restored ([27] 83).

Given that much of Asia's military evolution paralleled that of Europe, the obvious next step is to analyze what aspects of the two regions differ. One such factor discussed in the third section is the reaction to new military technology and techniques from the traditional military elite. In Japan, the samurai were only replaced after the bloody Satsuma rebellions, and Russia likewise had to use less than peaceful means to quell resistance from its Boyars. When nations in the East did manage to introduce new technology and import the "European Army," it was only after first crushing the existing military institutions. In Europe, however, the success of the independent city-states like Ghent and Genoa forced the nobility to use new military technologies alongside knights to great sucess, as at the battles of Crécy and Agincourt.

Even if the eastern powers had been able to strike some balance between the military elite and this new technology to resist the military might of the the European powers, the financial and industrial infrastructure was not in place to equip the troops. The greater autonomy of Chinese provinces meant that there was not the same centralized market as in Europe ([36] 45). Moreover, there was never a move beyond the nascent industrialization typically termed "cottage industry" because a stable agrarian society never allowed a mobile proletarian class to coalesce in urban areas ([36] 98).

Even assuming that Europe had some sort of divine gift for conquest, there is still a question of Europe's motivation for expanding its influence across the globe. Despite initial successes looting South America, Britain — the leading colonizer — spent more than it got from its colonies once the costs of defense and infrastructure were accounted for ([10] 29). Most of the infrastructure was deployed at great expense to the exchequer; although subsidized services like steam service to India eventually made money, most projects like the railroads crisscrossing Africa were mostly projects to secure prestige for the mother nation ([18]).

If these were not sensible projects for a nation to undertake from either *a priori* viewpoint of the actors or our own 20/20 *ex post* hindsight, then we are left with the question of why they were executed with such zeal by Europe. While the arguments of bringing the faith to unbelievers or embarking on opportunities for adventure were certainly common and delivered with fervor, most national leaders were essentially pragmatic and could only be swayed by sensible arguments.

In Europe, there is a preference for proactive action: the desire to create favorable conditions rather than waiting for them to develop. Given the perpetual stalemate in Europe, perhaps colonies seemed the only viable option for territorial expansion and military action once continental options had been exhausted. Richelieu considered monarchs "more easily spoilt by rest than heavy labor" ([13] 45), and this same desire for activity perhaps spilled over the continent and into the rest of the world.

In contrast, eschewing proactive measures was considered a virtue of many Eastern rulers, especially those in China. Many of the foremost scholars of the Ming dynasty advocated a philosophy of *wu-wei erh chih*, or taking no purposeful action ([8] 607) around the same time as the nations of Europe were emerging. The crux of the philosophy was that activity for the sake of activity necessarily brought change, and change disrupted the balance of society. More specifically, pacific qualities rather than martial qualities are enshrined in the ideal Chinese ruler ([29] 108). The actions of a ruler like Frederick the Great, Louis XVI, or Peter the Great would be considered unacceptably reckless by these standards.

During the 3^{rd} century BC, this philosophy was by Lord Shang, whose influence guided the unification under Ch'in. In addition to disfavoring a military focus for the government (despite offering voluminous advice on the subject should the need arise), he strongly disdains developing a tax structure based on merchants and affirms that the bread and butter of the state should be agriculture, which fosters stability ([32] 313). This was diametrically opposed to the direction eventually taken by England, for instance, which was dominated by a party devoted to securing the rights of commercial wheelers and dealers ([25] 818).

The last work of statecraft to achieve prominence in China is the 15^{th} Ming scholar Chi'iu Chun's *Ta-hsueh Yen-i Pu*. Governmental policy, he contends, should focus on the provision of harmony and peace. His dictum, "all governmental functions should begin with what is near at hand" ([7] 63), explains his aversion to handling military matters directly. A martial tradition is seen as a plight that stunts the growth of the core of society; while it is necessary to preserve the outer frontier, the government should act as a centrifuge to remove such distractions from the center of the state.

This policy survived encounters with foreigners; it continued to carry weight during the Qing dynasty after the Manchu invasion, and a new edition was prepared after the xenophobic Taiping Rebellion. Japan, always a heavy borrower

of Chinese culture, likewise strove to preserve a static society. It eventually managed to create an army that could defeat a European army, but this came only after the total repudiation of the very principles that made them Asian.

These conditions somehow fostered a strong social, economic, and military foundation for Europe's domination. The fourth section addresses the obvious question of why these conditions developed in Europe and not elsewhere. Our thesis is that the fractured political situation of Europe produced many opportunities for smaller states to find a unique niche within the European sphere. We consider the examples of Flemish cities that specialized in turning British wool into garments and Genoa, which established a reputation for turning out effective mercenaries who specialized in new (to Europe) technologies like the crossbow and siege warfare. It is only a matter of time, however, until we find a city that has become particularly good at both of these profitable enterprises.

Venice, which was known for both its pure gold and lucrative trade, also developed a navy that could challenge the much larger navies of "real" nation states. Venice could use its navy to leverage more profitable trading agreements and protect its merchants, and lucrative trade could help build the navy. This model of respecting trade in tandem with military buildup appeared on a larger scale in the Netherlands and Stuart England. Thanks to Europe's porous borders and market for advisors, these advances could then migrate to other nations. Moreover, thanks to the absence of risk to rulers, they were willing to adopt the winning strategies of neighbors.

The military specialization did not happen outside of Europe, however, because of entrenched classes of the military elite who opposed changes. Even when new advances did occur in Asia, groups like the samurai and the janissaries prevented permanent adoption. Likewise, an emphasis on internal stability and agriculture to the complete exclusion of foreign trade prevented nations from leveraging military superiority to build valuable trade networks. China, however, saw trade as an imperial prerogative and did its best to discourage trade by "pirates" operating outside the imperial mandate.

Europe fostered trade rather than squelching it, and this helped build its effective military machine. In many respects, our argument mirrors that of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, although we ignore the middle factor here. We certainly don't dispute the role of industry and arms in Europe's ascendancy, but our argument focuses on the social and economic factors that instigated and

supported the guns and steel that built empires. Europe's unique political and economic atmosphere served as the perefect incubator for the tools and methods necessary to establish multiple worldwide empires after subjugating regions less endowed with mercantile and martial prowess.

Chapter 1

Europe's Path to Supremacy

The claim that European influence has had an unparalleled impact on the development of the rest of the world needs little supporting evidence. The British controlled over a quarter of the world's land area, Spain's colonial legacy is the ubiquity of Spanish worldwide, and Russian colonization destroyed all trace of the native cultures of Siberia. This influence, however, is not the result of any particular cultural supremacy but rather a legacy imposed at the point of a gun.

Europe's willingness and ability to expand its empire, however, was not without cost. Vastly outnumbered during their exploration, the numerical disadvantage and distance from home had to be leveraged with new technology and methods. We outline here how Europe effectively used technology to win supremacy. Although there were multiple facets to European hegemony, it was achieved primarily through military means, so our focus will be on the martial realization of European military ambition.

The Opium War and the Zulu War show the massive imbalance between the Europe and native armies. Britain was the foremost colonial power, but their technology was roughly comparable to other European nations thanks to the market of technology, arms, and expertise. And while each part of the world is distinct, the overarching pattern was that of one bloody loss after another at the hands of the Europeans. We will begin with the Opium war, which shows Europe's advantage both on land and at sea; moreover, it shows how far Europe progressed compared to China, the world's erstwhile superpower.

Although colonization had been going on for quite a while before Opium Wars, China was an established civilization in possession of artillery, globetrotting

navies, and an organizational structure as developed as any European power. How is it that a handful of rough traders managed to overwhelm the combined resources of an entire empire?

1.1 China Buckles to European Powers

The existence of the conflict, necessarily expensive in terms of lives and money, itself begs the question, however, of why the British were in China in the first place. China was a major source of British tea, and Britain would be at a serious disadvantage in terms of the balance of trade were the opium traffic not siphoning out mountains of specie from China. Instead, it was China's concern for its economy, spurred by the insatiable demand for opium, that prompted action. While the rhetoric against the use of opium often took a moralistic stance (and perhaps justifiably so), the reasons for peddling opium and attempting to remove opium were business calculations.

A zealous Chinese official, Lin Tse-hsü, decided to put a stop to the sale of opium in China and thus simultaneously halt the hemorrhage of silver. He reasoned that "[England] lies twenty thousand leagues away; but for all that the Way of Heaven holds good for you as for us, and your instincts are not different from ours." He assumed that since the sensibilities of England were against the use of opium, Queen Victoria (to whom the letter was addressed) would understand his seizure of the opium stockpiles ([14], 143). Unfortunately, while the British did frown on the use of opium in the home islands, they hardly considered China comparable, and opium was not that hard to obtain in Britain.

The first embarrassment of the Chinese came on the sea, where the *Volage* and *Hyacinth* defeated dozens of junks. The Chinese ships were slower, less sturdy, and couldn't bring the same amount of concentrated fire on the British. Moreover, their tactics concentrated on hitting the sails of the British ships, a strategy would cause a junk to catch flames but not one that would render a ship of the line unable to fight.

Likewise, the disadvantages of the Chinese army were apparent even very early in the conflict on the ground. The range of the Chinese weaponry had a shorter range compared to that of the English, thus allowing the British to stand at a safe distance while bombarding their foes into submission. Once the British landed,

they faced either the aptly named "Green" army, consisting of ethnic Chinese, whose armament consisted of a hodgepodge of older weapons and armor, or the more professional but scarce and equally ineffective Manchu troops.

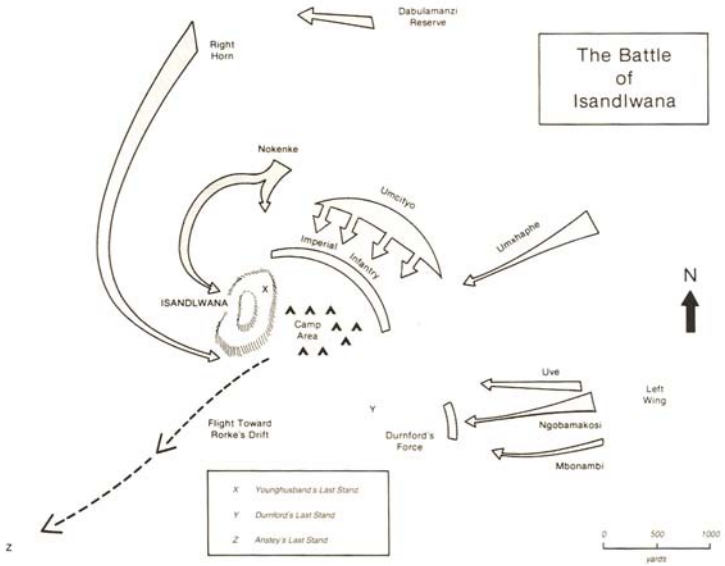
The arms of the Chinese military were quicker to load, but were ineffective. The gunpowder was of a less potent form than that used by European forces, and the guns were lit by a system using a burning wick. Moreover, firepower was not massed effectively, thus relegating rifles to a supporting role. The British managed to effectively mass their firepower to break the ranks of the opposing Chinese forces, who were unprepared for the radically different type of battle.

The incredible disparity came as a surprise to both sides of the conflict. The British feared the innumerable hordes of men that the Chinese could potentially summon to the field, and the Chinese army's displays were enough to awe a 1819 official inspecting military training (found quoted in Fay, but would like to find the original). Nevertheless, the Chinese were unable to overcome the logistical hurdles to take advantage of their large population, and were industrially incapable of producing the advanced weapons of the time.

1.2 The British in Africa

At first glance, the the British experience in Africa might seem an uninteresting example because the deadly gap between colonizer and colonized is far wider than it ever was in Asia. On the other hand, Africa also shows the necessity of these developments, since the Zulu War of 1879 saw both sides of the coin: the stunning, unheard of destruction of a huge force of British regulars at the hands of savages followed by the eventual destruction of Zulu society. When the British forgot the lessons they learned during the last two hundred years in Europe, they were just as vulnerable as any other unlucky tribeto the fury and organization of the Zulus.

In January of 1879, after the British administration of South Africa began to see the Zulus as a threat, it marched a force under General Chelmsford toward Ulundi, the nominal Zulu capital. Chelmsford was afraid that the Zulus would be so frightened by the menacing redcoats — this was the last war they were used in combat — that they wouldn't engage the enemy at all. So Chelmsford split the invasion force into three smaller groups.



Blachcy, from *Like Lions They Fought*

Figure 1.1: Chelmsford divides his troops and leaves the rear of the camp exposed at Isandlwana. [12]

The center force, however, headed by Chelmsford himself, had its supply train mired in mud. The infantry marched ahead to Isandlwana, a rocky outcropping where they made camp. As the Zulu forces approached, Chelmsford took a division of calvary off to engage the Zulus. The men left at camp were given the conflicting commands of "support the calvary" and "defend the camp." Consequently, the men didn't form a laager, what the Afrikaners called a circling of the wagons, as the seasoned men from Natal suggested.

Instead, the forces at the camp spread out to form a wide defensive perimeter. This prevented the men from taking advantage of massed fire, which proved so effective against the Chinese. It also left the camp vulnerable to a flanking action from the West Zulu "horn." Because of the laggard supply train, the troops guarding the flank were denied a resupply of ammunition ([12] 87). Consequently, the West horn was able to overrun the camp when Durnford's forces were unable to hold back the advancing forces.

After the camp perimeter was penetrated, the scattered infantry on the lines was unable to use superior firepower to their advantage. Enough warriors with spears were able to get close to make the battle devolve into a contest of the

bayonet and assegai. Nearly a thousand British regulars and hundreds of native troops were killed; fifty-four officers were killed, more than were killed at Waterloo.

The British learned from their mistakes quickly, and played the rest of the campaign by the traditional rules. A few months later, the British regrouped and led a new assault against King Cetawayo at his capital at Ulundi. Chelmsford marched 5,000 men in a tight formation against the Zulu horn. Much to the distress of London and General Wolseley, who were growing impatient, he meticulously arranged heavy supply lines and ordered the trains to form laagers each night. Eventually, the trains pressed forward into the heart of the Zulu kingdom, where they met up with the main Zulu force on July 4, 1879.

After forty minutes and only fifteen British casualties, the Zulu forces were routed; artillery and machine guns were used to great effect. Over the course of the Zulu war, over 10,000 Zulus had been killed at a cost of five million pounds ([12] 160). It was the destruction of the Zulu culture, the last major resistance to British colonial efforts.

1.3 Recipe for Domination

The British experiences in China and Africa were typical of Europeans abroad. Technology allowed European powers to exert a force disproportionate to their numbers on natives. This influence was then used to gain an economic advantage over the locals, which in turn funded military expenditures. At the turn of the millennium, Europe could not assert its supremacy over the rest of the world. A series of developments, however, made such an outcome reality.

The first such development was gunpowder. It took a long time for men with rifles to be as dangerous as skilled bowmen, but gunmen could reach the front lines more quickly than bowmen, who might require months or years to train effectively. This made war a more industrial affair, for as the weapons took greater importance (as the soldiers themselves became interchangeable), winning the war became a question of supplying arms to the troops.

As warfare became more impersonal, the traditional elite who fought wars became less important. In Europe, the fractured political system allowed smaller powers to try different techniques. When new strategies or forces worked for one

group, they were quickly adopted by those wanting to emulate winning military powers. Citizen armies quickly grew in the Netherlands and challenged the aristocracy's monopoly on military power during the Hundred Year's War; although there was slight backlash against the growing power the middle class, it quickly became the pattern of military organization ([15] 236). An early example of a single town specializing in a particular form of combat appears in in 1127:

> On March 14 and 15, Monday and Tuesday, burghers from Ghent arrived to take part in the siege, together with a greedy band of plunderers ... Their castellan had sent word to them to assemble their communal forces and come, armed and girded for fighting, to make an attack of their own on the castle, by themselves, inasmuch as they were men with a name for conflict and battle who knew how to demolish defenses in sieges. ([16] 160)

Once one of these military techniques was shown to be effective, it quickly moved across Europe, replacing older, less effective systems. Their spread was helped by groups who followed the example of the men of Ghent, offering to ply their trade for a share of loot. Because there were few centralized nations in Europe, offense and defense were becoming the domain of individual cities. Those who mastered the art of artillery, rifle-making, fortifications, etc. published treatises on warfare which then became standard reading for military leaders. In the words of Vauban, "Of all the nations of Europe the French and Spanish have raised the art of war to its greatest value and skill — and others have only tried to imitate them" ([11] 22).

The nations of Europe made sure that these new developments made it to their armies. Peter the Great took the "German" town established by Ivan the terrible and expanded it to new heights; he also worked in a Danish shipyard to help them lay the foundation for a Russian navy ([24] 187). Until the Russian revolution, Russia would continue bringing in talented individuals to help lead and innovate in his nation, even at the risk of engendering internal dissent.

The events at Isandlwana demonstrates how necessary these lessons were. Without applying their organizational and technological advantages, the British **could not** defeat the Zulus. Chelmsford had allowed his men to spread out, making it impossible for his men to keep up sustained fire. He had also ignored the importance of logistics, which kept his forces from leveraging their superior

technology, and the technology for which the British had adequate supplies were ill-used, because the artillery and machine guns were left essentially unused. The advantages squandered, the British fell to a force of Zulus with a slight numerical advantage, offering proof that Europeans had neither a divine right of conquest nor some intrinsic indomitability.

Our examples offer a starting point from which we can make a first attempt at enumerating what made European armies nearly unbeatable. First, we need a large number of men with reliable guns, but — as Isandlwana demonstrates — they must be used in effective, well-trained units using coordinated fire. On the seas, we need fast ships with strong cannons and armor to protect trade and swiftly transport troops; were China able to fight off British ships, its lackluster land units would have been irrelevant. Lastly, even though it was not discussed in the above examples, it should be obvious that if we want to hold any of the gains of military campaigns, we need strong fortifications that can withstand attacks by these aforementioned weapons.

Together, these factors made Europe's world conquest possible, but we'll soon see that the developments of Europe were not unique; it's just that Europe was the only place where they took hold.

Chapter 2

Scattered Tools of Empire

The previous section hopefully demonstrated some of the advantages that the European had when they entered into conflict with future colonies. The goal of this section is to demonstrate that the purely militaristic advantages were in no way unique to Europe, and that there must therefore be some other factor that made Europe's world domination possible. Although there are many places one could look for these examples, we choose to focus on the Korean invasion undertaken by Hideyoshi at the turn of the 17^{th} century because it showcases the mastery of firearms and new tactics begun by Oda Nobunaga counterbalanced by the the tactics and craft of the Korean "turtle ships" (see figure 2.2).

2.1 Guns in Japan

Firearms were introduced in Japan via a rather circuitous route. Although they were first developed in China, they did not become popular in China until Portuguese missionaries in Kyushu taught the art of rifle making to the locals in the 16^{th} century. Shortly thereafter, local schools, called *ryu*, fostered craftsmanship in the same way that schools of blacksmithing created unparalleled Japanese swords.

The potential of this new weapon was obvious to at least a few Japanese rulers at the time. In 1579, the protector of Kai provence ordered his men to make use of this new weapon:

> Hereafter guns will be the most important [weapons]. Therefore, de-

Figure 2.1: Nobunaga's forces under attack.

> crease the number of spears [in your armies] and have your most capable men carry guns. Furthermore, when you assemble your soldiers, test their marksmanship and order that the selection of [gunners] be in accordance with the results. ([4], 239)

About the same time, Oda Nobunaga was putting these new weapons to work in his attempt to unify all of Japan around an effective central government. Chase describes his capture of Muraki as an excercise in continuous fire ([6] 180), and the major victory at Nagashino was made possible by the effective use of massed riflemen using alternating lines of fire to rout the desperate Takeda forces.

After the eventual unification of Japan under Nobunaga's successor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Japan's prowess in firearms technology was made evident by the easy invasion of Korea. A 1592 armada of ships transported thousands of soldiers into Korea, and they quickly overran the peninsula. Energetic counterattacks by guerilla fighters and countless soldiers from China only slowed the Japanese.

Both sides seemed to be somewhat surprised by the new importance of guns. Yu Song-nyong, a Korean official, explained that the plight of Korea was partly

because of a century of peace and a general lack of preparedness, but

> it was really because the Japanese had the use of muskets that could reach beyond several hundered paces, that always pierced what they struck, that came like the wind and the hail, and with which bows and arrows could not compare. ([6] 186)

Likewise, the Japanese were desperate to get their hands on more guns. The head of the Japanese forces, Asano Yohinaga, wrote back to his quartermasters that he "killed a large number of enemy soldiers because I used the guns [...] When troups come from the province of Kai, have them bring as many guns as possible, for no other equipment is needed. Give strict orders that all men, even samurai, carry guns" ([4] 241).

The Japanese were able to pull of feats like we saw with the British at Ulundi, even after Chinese entered the fray to stave off an invasion of China, which was the eventual intention of Hideyoshi ([33] 48). In 1593, a Japanese force of 25,000 held off an attacking army of Chinese and Koreans that was at least double their number, and if many accounts are to be believed, ten times their number. These were not just spear wielding Zulu warriors, either. The Chinese army sent to relieve the Choson kingdom had a substantial artilery train and calvary in addition to its large numbers ([4] 241).

At least for a brief period of time, Asia was driven by the same competitive spirit that defined Europe. Japan's land advantage was balanced by Korean naval supremacy. As equilibrium was reached, both sides were able to hone their advantage. The Japanese invasion of Korea failed, however, because of the difficulty of subduing partisan fighters, the sudden death of Hideyoshi, and the unexpected resistance of the Korean navy. No one could match Hideyoshi's sheer force of personality, which had driven the war even after the initial momentum had been lost, and the continuing nuisance of the Korean turtle ships prevented Japan from adequately supplying soldiers on the peninsula.

2.2 Turtle Ships

The Korean turtle ships were small, light vessels that had no upper deck. Instead, they were covered with sloped panels (often of iron). Unlike their Japanese foes,

Figure 2.2: A Korean "turtle ship"

the Korean ships were not armed. They had six guns on each broadside and larger guns in front and behind. Sharp retractable iron spikes protruded from the top panels, making the primary Japanese tactic of grappling and boarding an opposing ship suicidal. The ships also had retractable sails supplemented by oars, making their profile in battle much smaller than comparable ships.

The Japanese ships, like the junks encountered by the British in the 19^{th} century, were merely commandeered commercial vessels, perhaps with a gun or two mounted on the deck. The revolutionary design was also matched by a impressive tactics. These tactics

> included the use of smoke screen (a sulfurous smoke which rolled "like a fog" out of the jaws of the tortoise head at the bow of the "tortoise ship"), and the line-ahead formation, which developed from a "stork's wing" formation (line abreast with the two wings slight in advance of the center). As the Korean fleet drew near the enemy, the left wing luffed before the wind, a tactic which permitted the right wing to pull ahead until what had been a broad arrow in reverse became a line-ahead formation. ([23] 25)

Yi Sun-sin, the brilliant admiral who developed these strategies (at about the same time Drake did) also used chains in the water to sink shallow-draft boats. Unable to supply its armies in the field because of their inferior naval position, the Japanese troops in Korea were forced to loot villages, which did little to endear them to the populace. Moreover, the Korean naval advantage helped equalize Japan's advantage on land, since it forced the starving invaders to venture out from their strongholds and risk attacks from the scattered guerilla resistance.

Unfortunately, the Korean government did not fully recognize how great an asset Yi Sun-sin was. At the start of the war, he was not in command of the navy, and a better-connected admiral, Won Kyun favored a defensive strategy and did not attack the armada bringing troops to the peninsula. Marder argues that a more proactive strategy at the onset would have prevented the war and the accompanying decimation of the Korean countryside ([23] 26).

Later, Yi Sun-sin was removed from command of the navy. A large portion of the fleet was burned at Tangdo, where the wily — if ill-equiped — Japanese navy started to turn the tide. Later, the incompetent Won Kyun, who replaced Yi Sun-sin, was killed at Zekkeito island, and Yi Sun-sin was recalled and was able to keep much of the rebuilt Japanese army from reaching Korea by blocking the Myongnyang Strait ([17] 286).

Their advantage at sea disappearing and Hideyoshi dead, the Japanese accepted peace terms and withdrew their troops despite making large advances while supplies were sent unhindered from Japan.

2.3 Disappearing Innovations

The scene we've set here is strikingly different from what we saw in the Opium war. Although we are not arguing that Korean turtle ships and Nobunaga's matchlocks would have been a match for a proper European military undertaking, they certainly would have fared better than the junks and pikemen faced by Britain in the 19^{th} century. The Japanese navy splintered by Yi Sun-sin was about as advanced as what China arrayed against the *Hyacinth*, and the only relevant difference between the Chinese armies was that in the 19^{th} century Manchu-led army was much smaller.

Japan decided that the best way to avoid challenges to the Tokugawa Shogunate was to cut off all ties from the turbulent outside world. As a result, the only conflict the army saw was with dissatisfied peasants or the occasional disgruntled samurai. In any event, it was hardly the pitched battles seen earlier. By the early 19^{th} century, the respect for firearms evidenced by the proceeding quotes had vanished. Instead, a publisher of an outdated (even for the time of Hideyoshi) Chinese firearms manual said that "some will become involved in [the use of firearms], but from observing their performance, for the most part, if it is

not bottomless empty boasting then it is like a child's game" ([6] 195). Consequently, the thriving community of gun manufacturers and buyers that fueled the military exploits of the 16^{th} century had stagnated and evaporated by the time the Europeans came on the scene.

Ironically, the Korean navy that made the Japanese invasion of Korea so difficult developed to prevent the incursions of Japanese pirates. After 1636, however, Japan closed itself off to the world. No ships were allowed to arrive from or travel to foreign lands save for the Portuguese at Nagasaki. Moreover, all ships large enough to be ocean-worthy were banned ([23] 31). Without the external pressure from Japan, Korea and its navy followed the example of China and abandoned the use of specialized warships.

While Europe is rife with examples of militaries becoming complacent and losing their technological edge, the situation in Asia is much different. Instead, the situation in Asia is a willful abandonment of military technology; to return to older modes of combat. While Japan kept riflemen around, they were no longer the focus of the army. While the proportion of riflemen rose leading up to the Japanese invasion of Korea, they fell sharply thereafter. Likewise, turtle ships disappeared from the Seas of Korea and Japan.

In many ways, this conflict marks the turning point in Asian history. China, Japan, and Korea turned away from the massive wars that pitted one nation's technological prowess against another's. Instead, they became static, focused on maintaining internal unity, and were happy to maintain a territorial status quo. Meanwhile, the wars of Europe pitted nation against nation, further enhancing Europe's military acumen.

The reason for Japan and China's retrograde motion remains unclear; what was the impetus for the decision to abandon such technology? The next section discusses the ideological differences between Europe and China that caused each new military technology advance in Europe to be treasured and kept until something better came along while the East chose to focus on traditional arts of war once the usefulness of new weapons had apparently run their course.

Chapter 3

What the Rest Lacked

In our last chapter, we saw that the technological leaps that defined the European military revolution were not unique to Europe. Yet the lasting effect was unique. In Asia, the costs of bringing in a new military structure were higher because of the resistance by the entrenched military elite, and military supremacy was not as aggressively pursued because of an ideological mindset that eschewed martial ambition. And even if the East were interested in pursuing these military ends, they lacked the fiscal infrastructure that made the transformation of Europe possible.

3.1 Resistance in the Ranks

In many nations, the military leadership was rooted in the highest levels of government. Understandably, those in control were reluctant to repudiate the technology and strategies comprising their bread and butter. When governments tried to modernize their armies, the military elite often resisted, usually violently, against anything that would disturb the status quo. This resistance was all the more dangerous because the would-be reformers must fight the very people whose role in society was to maintain a monopoly on force.

In Japan, the monopoly on force was held by the samurai, and their oft-romanticized decline shows how difficult bringing modernization to a nation with a proud warrior class can be. Saigo Takamori, a samurai who organized military schools in Satsuma after leaving his high position the Meiji government in 1878, was not against new technology *per se*. He himself used rifles (when he had

Figure 3.1: Saigo Takamori Playing Go Before His Last Battle, Utagawa Kunimasa IV, 1878

ammunition for them). He was also not against foreign influence; English and French were taught in his schools ([5] 428). Instead, he was opposed to the idea of a centralized army composed of conscripted soldiers, and he promulgated this philosophy in his private military schools.

In 1877, Tokyo decided to preemptively take away the resources Kagoshima provence could muster, and so they attempted to seize the ammunition dumps. The effort failed, and Saigo took the helm of the rebellion. Nor was he the only one who thought this way; the movement also sparked sympathetic uprisings in Fukuoka and Nakatsu that resulted in deaths of local representatives of the Meiji governments ([5] 443). Because of poor handling of logistics, the Satsuma rebellion never really had a chance to challenge the central government. Nevertheless, the uprising was exceedingly costly; the entire Japanese army was sent to quell the rebellion ([29] 164), and nearly 50,000 were killed in the conflict ([5] 427).

Yet without this battle, Japan would have been unable to impose the reforms needed to form a modern army. The Samurai were well respected and were able to rally support from the general populace even when it was clear that Japan's new modern army was going to win. Until the Samurai were removed from their positions of power and respect, there was no chance of a modern army supplanting their position in the Japanese power structure. The Meiji reform efforts were

ultimately successful, however, and Japan quickly became a power that could challenge European nations. While the Satsuma rebellion was certainly bloody, unsuccessful attempts at reform were far more disastrous.

In the Ottoman empire, the attempts at military reorganization were deadly for the would-be reformer. Selim III, who successfully fought off Napoleon at Acre, created the *Nizam-i Cedid*, a new nucleus for a military organized on European lines supervised by German and Russian officers ([29] 51). Ironically, the Janissaries, who were opposed these reforms, were initially quite similar to the *Nizam-i Cedid*. They were originally composed of Christians converted to Islam and then raised to be gruesome, effective soldiers undistracted by money or families. By the end of the 18^{th} century, the Janissaries were entrenched in their business concerns and tied to families; instead of fighting in wars themselves, they sent proxies. Thus, they were willing to use all of their influence and what little force they still had to prevent this precocious Emperor from disrupting their now cushy lifestyle. Selim III chose not to fight, and stepped down after a fatwa was issued, calling his reforms against tradition. He was executed just before army units loyal to him came to oust Mustafa IV, his short-lived successor [2].

The European experience, however, was different. As we noted earlier, small city states specialized in supplying mercenaries. The men of Genoa were known for their skilled use of the crossbow, several states in the low country were excellent in laying siege, and Venice's entire navy was rented out for the fourth crusade. Consequently, military reforms could be carried out by importing the new technology and thoroughly intimidating or crushing reactionaries, thus minimizing the cost of transition. Most of the time, the transition was invisible, since much of the military elite was wiped out during wars that proved the ascendency of new military technology. For example, after large numbers of French knights were killed at Crecy and Agincourt, there were few left to hinder the adoption of new military techniques and technology such as the crossbow.

In insulated Russia, however, the military elite still were around to hamper the efforts of the reform minded Peter the Great. The Streltsy, who had been the Czar's personal bodyguards for centuries, were forced to leave their families and business interests to actually fight in the Crimea and Poland. Eventually, the Streltsy got fed up and marched on Moscow, claiming that Peter was the son of the devil, as evidenced by his occasional seizures ([24] 255). As we mentioned earlier, the young Czar had been bringing foreigners to the "German" suburb

of Moscow to drive his Westernizing reforms. Likewise, he had been importing armaments during his trips abroad (which hadn't done much to secure the loyalty of the xenophobic Streltsy).

When then Strelsy marched on Moscow, Peter sent the Scottish General Patrick Gordon and Austrian artillery officer Colonel de Grage to stop the rebels from entering Moscow. The Czar's forces took up a strong position on the banks of a small stream near the New Jerusalem monastery, where the Streltsy were quickly defeated in battle. The Streltsy were tired after a long march, had older guns, and were completely defenseless against the artillery. The few surviving rebels returned to Moscow in shackles.

Unlike Peter, the Ottomans and Japanese had to fight the entrenched military elite on their own. While they had access to foreign resources and expertise, they could not simply import a modern army. Moreover, the actions that engendered respect and veneration in Europe were met with suspicion elsewhere, and there were fewer knowledgeable advisors who could help bring reform. Instead, the buildup of the army must be done fast enough to create a force that can defeat the existing military institutions in open warfare. Japan only had four years to build its army, and even then the threat posed by the Satsuma rebellion was not easily brushed aside. This increased the cost of building a modern military, and strongly discouraged the halfway experiments of reformers like Selim III.

In China, moreover, there is a bias against the type of itinerant advisors such as Gordon and de Grage who made the transfer of technology and technique possible. That is, even if the resources employed in European transformations were available, the cultural stigma would have discouraged — if not precluded — their use. The warring states period of China's history, 403 to 221 BC, is a source of many enduring stories that are still a part of the Chinese tradition. One of these stories depicts Wu Ch'i, an effective military man named who travels from state to state, in an unflattering light. He is described as a brutal man, perhaps because an effective general can only have an unkind soul. When the duke of Lu is concerned that Wu Ch'i would be a poor choice to win the battle, Wu Ch'i murders his wife to prove his loyalty. Later, when Wu Ch'i was serving with Wei, he personally drains a soldier's boil; instead of being grateful, the soldier mother fears that her son will now sacrifice his life because Wu Ch'i has shown his kindness. "On which battlefield will he sacrifice his life?" his mother explains, "this is why I weep bitterly" ([38] 18). With such a strong bias against

Figure 3.2: A painting attributed to Hong Zongdau accompanied by 14^{th} century colophons laminting the senselessness of violence. By the 12^{th} century, such displays of were treated "as an allegory of violence and greed" [1].

effective military men who could spread new ideas, new innovations were not transmitted. The state of Asian armies remained static while new European ideas spread rapidly.

3.2 Reluctance at the Top

The higher costs of building a modern army explains why the Ottoman empire's later forays into the Balkans, the Mahdi's efforts to free Sudan from the rule of British Egypt, and India's attempts to mimic the European model were less than successful, but it doesn't explain the complacency in East Asia. The Manchu dynasty in China never made a serious attempt to adopt the European model, and Japan, although changing course abruptly in 1868, was content to go through two hundred years of stagnation and retrogression during the Tokugawa period.

We argue that this complacency stems from the prevailing notions of statecraft that influenced the philosophy of the rulers of Japan and China. At the very foundation of this philosophy is the *I Ching*, which warns against too much power being placed in the hands of military-minded men ([9] 119). While sometimes war was necessary, the counselors who waged these wars were strikingly different from their European counterparts. Unlike in Europe, violence and valor on the battlefield were not synonymous with respect (figure 3.2).

Wei Yang, an advisor to the court of Ch'in from 359 to 388 BCE, left the court of Wei and led a successful campaign against his former homeland. He compiled his philosophy into a set of dictums to serve as a manual for future military leaders. While successful at war, much of his advice runs counter to the

formulas for military success discovered in Europe that we discussed in Chapter 1.

Lord Shang argues that the focus of statecraft should be encouraging agriculture and not trade. "When farmers are poor and merchants are rich," he argues,

> when clever people gain profit and itinerant office-seekers are numerous. So the farmers, in spite of their extremely hard labor, gain little profit, and are worse off than merchants and shopkeepers and all manner of clever people. If one succeeds in restricting the number of these latter, then, even if one wished to, one could not a state from becoming rich. ([32] 313)

In contrast, the philosophy espoused by Lord Shang's counterparts in Europe was the opposite. The Dutch had reinvented themselves as a world power by leveraging military might with trade. In turn, statesmen like Richelieu and Olivares sought to emulate their example and formed state sponsored trading cartels like the Almirantazgo and the du Fargis system, respectively ([13] 81).

Lord Shang also offered the following advice about who should profit from the labors of individuals. The ruler "who organizes a state should let his soldiers have the full benefit of the profits on the frontiers and let the farmers have the full benefit from the profits of the market" ([32] 313). This contrasts with the perspective found in the European experience. From the Clausewitz's Prussian perspective, a nation should epitomize

> the political ideal of a strong, self-reliant, and honorable state, which was justified in placing heavy demands on its citizens since it served cultural and national ends and thus enabled both the individual and society to achieve their innate potentials. ([26] 128)

These same ideas are found in the *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-i Pu*, a book written for the emperor Hsiao-tsung (1487-1505) by an aspiring scholar named Ch'iu Chun who rose from humble origins. While the work of Lord Shang is surprisingly dismissive of military affairs for someone who is a military ruler, Ch'iu Chun's work clearly feels that the place of the military is not central to the governance of a state. He sees good government as a series of spheres; the force of a government

is centered in the seat of government, the work of a state should be focused at the core, and "while he is subscribing the Confucian vision of attributing relatively more importance to civil aspects than to military ones, he sees governmental activities as being conducted in an outward-reaching manner" ([7] 63). Because the military is needed for defense of a nation's borders and the borders — by definition — not in the heart of a state, the military should not be a primary focus of good government.

We have been contrasting these comparatively older ideas with the actions and thoughts of much later leaders and statesmen in Europe, but this is appropriate given the backward looking nature of Chinese statecraft. Chinese political thought is generally regarded as fairly uniform from the Chou to the Manchu Dynasty. "Only the beginnings of change are to be observed during the Ming and the early part of the Ch'ing [Manchu]" ([8] 17). The ideas that we are discussing here are general, and not confined to a single period. It is only during the era of increasing Western influence that there is divergence from the Ming principle of *wu-wei erh chih*, or taking no purposeful action.

Until then, the ideas of Lord Shang and Chi'iu Chun exerted a lasting influence on Chinese political thought. The work of Lord Shang influenced the legal system of the Han ([32] 127), and the *Yen-i Pu* was recommended by those in the highest echelons of government ([7] 27) and formed the basis of examinations for aspiring bureaucrats ([7] 30). Its philosophy had a resurgence during the Taipeng rebellion, offering an alternative to the distressing Western ideas that had made their way into the Chinese state ([7] 40).

These ideas also serve as the foundation of Japanese political philosophy. Cleary argues that the militaristic elements of Japanese culture come more from Chinese confucianism than from Buddhism ([9] 118), and much of the Japanese state's functional apparatus was modeled on the Tang dynasty during the 645 Taiku emulation Tang dynasty law. The *Yen-i Pu* also made its way to Japan via the Sasayama lords in 1792 ([7] 19), where it joined a philosophy that ran contrary to the principles of Western-style warfare.

The Bushido code emphasized individual combat. While it was flexible enough to allow Nobunaga and his successors to subordinate the individual spirit to the that of the collective rifle line, the course of history indicates that the mystique of individual combat won out over blocks of men firing in unison, despite how effective the latter technique was proved. Even at the time of Japan's most

modern pre-Meiji thinking, one of Oda Nobunaga's swordsmanship instructors offers an interesting philosophy. Yagyu's *The Art of War* (not to be confused with the Chinese *The Art of War* by Lao Tzu) argues that someone in a position of military inferiority should not seek to equalize the disparity.

Yagyu's philosophy of "swordlessness," doesn't mean

> you have to take your opponent's sword. It also doesn't mean that you make a show of sword-snatching ... Someone who is intent on not having [advantage] taken away forgets what he's opposed to and tried to avoid having [advantage] taken away, so he can't manage to kill anyone ... If you are to take another's sword when you are unarmed, and make it your own, then what will not be useful in your hands? ([9] 77)

Such a philosophy shows how the 30,000 men who fought with Saigo in the Satsuma rebellion could have thought that swords, bravery, and individual spirit could have challenged a modern military machine.

3.3 Rigidity in Finances

But these modern military machines did not come cheap. Wars often became contests of financial resources rather than might. "War," according to a political theorist quoted by Parker, "is dragged out for as long as possible, and the object is not to smash but to tire; not to defeat but to wear down" ([27] 61). Consequently, those who could raise money quickly and in large amounts had the resources to win wars ([25] 823). Both sides of a conflict had to turn to borrowing just to survive, since expenses rise during war, and those that did so more effectively were better off. Even had Asia's political philosophy allowed states to desire war, their economic systems might have prevented them from conducting the same massive, protracted wars that became standard in 17^{th} century Europe.

In Europe, the Dutch first perfected a system that offered security to lenders. In turn, the lenders became more trusting and built a system that could support their leaders. The leaders, however, were forced to become more accountable, because "having surrendered to those who controlled the private economy, the monarchy could no longer capriciously make, and break promises" ([3] 80). Rather than hopping from one group to another until each source of funding was

exhausted. Instead, leaders had to "nurture, rather than despoil" possible sources of income ([3] 58).

Olivares, the finance advisor to Phillip IV, started out by playing one group against the other to finance the wars of Spain. He used the promise of protection to get the Crypto-Jews of Portugal to refinance his loans from the Genovese. But eventually, there was nobody left to whom the crown could turn. Eventually, Olivares came to the realization that he must look within Spain, and that he must "turn Spaniards into merchants" ([13] 70) and emulate the course of England and the Netherlands.

China focused the energy of government on promoting agriculture; it wanted to turn merchants into farmers. While commerce played an important role in 10^{th} and 11^{th} century China, the insitution of Mongol traditions — which slighted hard-to-assess commerce in favor of easily visible trade — forever changed the course of Chinese economic policy. Starting with the Ming founder Ming Taizu, China became "an agrarian social order with little place for commerce" ([36] 131). Unlike European rulers like Louis XIV or Frederick II, the focus of Asian states was not pursuing warfare but agriculture; the Tao te Ching, a central text of Chinese philosophy, says that famine is caused by "the excessive taxes of their rulers" ([34] 75:1). Likewise, weapons are considered "implements of famine" that undo the work of the noble farmers ([21] 65).

We saw the anti-commercial bias at the top levels of government, and it extended all they way down to the ethos of the common man, creating a stigma that discouraged individuals from becoming merchants. "When people live together in the countryside," the 17^{th} century scholar Gu Yanwu contends, "they are orderly. When people live in the cities, they cause trouble" ([22] 97). Unlike the French physiocrats, the idea that the only productive people were farmers was never discredited. This idea continued to be expressed even into the 20^{th} century; Yi Jiayue, Gu's intellectual descendent asserted that "Almost all the beautiful virtues of the human race can be found in the countryside: honesty, trustworthiness, affability, modesty, frugality, contentment" ([22] 97).

Conversely, the direction of Europe has been toward greater and greater cities. While China was overwhelming agrarian even while sustaining a higher standard of living, peasants where being packed into London without means of survival. Nevertheless, this accumulation of labor is essential to the creation of commercial and industrial pursuits ([31] 88). China's desire to maintain social order,

however, limited the pools of surplus capital that could develop because "social order in China also meant political coercion" ([36] 99). While Europe extracted the resources it needed to exert control from populace itself, China focused on maintaining order in the first place.

China also focused on spatial transfers of wealth rather than temporal ones. Because it was such a large nation with a well developed tax system, it could use resources from the center of the state, untroubled by barbarian invasions, to handle hotspots on the borders ([36] 132). Consequently, there was never the need to borrow money, and also no need to cultivate the monied classes who formed the foundation of the European money market.

Despite its age, it is perhaps also appropriate to mention Weber's assertion that the social norms of Europe encouraged the production of wealth, and thus the requisite urbanization and industrialization that went along with it.

> Wealth is thus bad ethically only in so far as it is a temptation to idleness and sinful enjoyment of life, and its acquisition is bad only when it is with the purpose of later living merrily and without care. But as a performance of duty in a calling it is not only morally permissible, but actually enjoined. The parable of the servant who was rejected because he did not increase the talent which was entrusted to him seemed to say so directly. To wish to be poor was, it was often argued, the same thing as wishing to be unhealthy. [35]

The implication is then that China wished itself to be unhealthy; to maintain the status quo in order to preserve social harmony.

Asia was without the will — the European drive for military victory — and without the means — the taxable merchant class — could not overcome the the resistance from the entrenched military elite who often opposed modernization. Although Asia had the necessary military technology, it was a question of desire and finances to achieve the military revolution we saw in Europe, a broad confluence of economic and military ambitions.

Chapter 4

The Weapons of Trade

European nations built their military empires through encouraging and taxing trade. Venice, a striking example of how a nation specializing in trade can wield inordinate military power, is the first real example of such a power, but the model was again used by the Dutch, who established a dominant world trade position using the same methods. From there, the model spread to Britain and to Germany before becoming the rules of the game for all European warfare.

These foundations provided the means for building world empires. The money extracted through taxes supplied the armies, and the demands of merchants guided these armies to build larger and larger empires to secure markets.

4.1 Venice: A Powerful Model

Venice, a city formed when the collapse of Rome caused refugees fleeing barbarians to make their way toward a group of islands in the northern end of the Adriatic. Venice, for obvious reasons, was ill suited for agriculture and most of the usual endeavors of medieval cities, and thus focused on what they could do well: fishing and trade.

Because Venice was forced into this narrow range of pursuits, it took its trading position very seriously. The ascendant Venice was quick to wield mercantile influence and military power together. Pietro II Candiano conquered Capodistria, a rival city in the northern arm of the Adriatic that had begun a concerted campaign of piracy against Venetian shipping, "by forbidding any trade with those cities and thus cutting off their supply of salt and other necessities" ([20] 24).

Figure 4.1: Venice's Adriatic [20]

Venice, although without a large population and an impressive standing army, was still able to achieve military ends using mercantile means (and with a small amount of martial leverage).

Venice assumed its role with the support of the Byzantine empire; since it was a protectorate of Constantinople, it could build its trade network and navy while still being able to invoke the might of Byzantine Empire's traditional military strengths. The Golden Bull of 1082 issued by the Emperor Alexis granted Venice trading privileges and toll-free access to the empire in return for Venice becoming the *pro forma* navy of the Byzantine empire ([20] 29).

Once established as a naval powerhouse in the Mediterranean, Venice was able to use its position to secure military ends without having a powerful army of its own. During the fourth crusade in 1202, the count of Champagne ordered Villehardouin to commission the Venetian fleet for the transport of 35,000 knights to the holy land. The French, however, were unable to pay for their transport up front, since the cost of the journey was double the income of the French and English states ([28] 723).

Instead, the Venetians took their charges to conquer Zara, a rival city on the Adriatic that was backed by Hungary. There, the French knights sacked the city

and devoted the booty to paying their way. The Venetian fleet then cajoled their passengers to sack Constantinople, to install a claimant to the throne who would be more inclined to favor Venice's interests. In a testament to the prowess of the engineering skill of the Venetian navy and the bravery of the French knights in managing to compel the city to accept Alexis "the young" IV Comnenus as emperor; it would be a quarter of a millennium before the defenses of the city would be breached again.

Venice, a city of at most a hundred thousand souls, was able to exert a disproportionate influence in world affairs thanks to its commanding position on the Mediterranean. The city's profits from trade went to the construction of the navy, and that navy helped secure the interests the city by protecting trade and keeping other nations from encroaching on trade routes. Venice was not interested in establishing a traditional empire and only desired to maintain and further its trading position. After the new emperor was in place,

> the pact concluded between the Venetians and the crusaders concerning the division of the spoils, if they should conquer Constantinople ... stipulates only that anyone at war with Venice is to be excluded from the empire until peace has been made. This clause is an example of the use of commercial leverage for political and military ends. ([28] 735)

4.2 The Dutch Further the Model

Venice would remain a strong player in Mediterranean trade until the 19^{th} century, but the 16^{th} century conflict between Catholic Spain and the Protestant states of England and the Netherlands was a crucible that formed a state of similar priorities on a much larger scale. The cities of the low countries had always been magnets that attracted and then disbursed the products of Europe, but the aggression of Spain forced the adoption of new methods to preserve the survival of the Dutch way of life.

The Dutch turned to their strengths and used the merchants that had been the most powerful individuals in the state to help defend the state. In doing so, they created offered the state an unprecedented ability to transfer funds temporally, a factor that we saw earlier as a central ingredient of the European military

Figure 4.2: Resources flow into the Netherlands [19]

revolution. But the merchants offered their support only in return for real temporal power so that they could make sure their money was returned once the war was over.

Moreover, the Dutch system was critical in the development of agriculture that would create the surplus workers needed for industrialization and the bodies that would fill the ranks of the new types of armies that would one day stretch across Europe. As the Dutch began to transport goods more effectively from across Europe, it no longer was economically feasible to grow their own staples, since other regions could produce it much more efficiently. Thus, as cheap Baltic grain came in, the diary farming and the production of fodder crops supplanted the labor intensive production of grain ([19] 25).

The Dutch were not that different from the Venitians, just larger. Like the Venetians, they used their navy to secure mercantile ends. "It was only by maintaining a strict blockade of the Flemish sea-cost," argues Israel, "that Holland and Zeeland could profit" ([19] 41), just as Venice used its position in the Adriatic

ensure that all vessels were authorized to carry their cargos ([20] 59). Likewise, both the Venetians and the Dutch were governed by assemblies that represented the interests of the merchant class. The merchant class, in securing its own interest, built the sorts of nations that could win wars and achieve dominance.

The other nations of Europe followed the same pattern. After the Glorious Revolution, the British parliament began respecting the rights of the merchant class, who were protected by the Whigs. Instead of turning one group of merchants against another, as we saw in the Olivares' Spain, the British began actually repaying the money they owed on fair terms. The government was seen as a safe investment, and much of the reticence to give the government money — justifiable after the schemes of Charles I — vanished. The government got more money, but the effect was not just seen in the willingness to lend. The interest accrued was then reinvested in the country, and the product of this new wealth could then be taxed.

This strong pattern of respecting and cultivating merchants and capital institutions, entrenched in representative bodies, helped Britain finance its wars and, in the opinion of North and Weingast, allowed the future British domination of the globe ([25] 830) that prompted our investigation of European supremacy in the first place.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: The Primacy of the European Model

European supremacy was not a matter of some divinely granted white man's burden; British soldiers were just as likely to fall to the onslaught of brave Zulu warriors when they forgot the lessons they learned on the battlefields of Europe. But when correctly applied, western armies were unstoppable. Europe's world dominance was introduced at the point of a gun, but Europe was not alone in possessing advanced military technology and tactics.

Asia had, and then promptly lost, many of the same advances that made Europe ascendant. Asia simply did not have the same culture that encouraged the acquisition of new weapons and skills. Even if Asia had maintained its military technology that emerged from the heated conflict of the Japanese invasion of the continent at the start of the 17^{th} century, Asia lacked the financial infrastructure to properly finance the military machines that became essential for successful European armies.

This model emerged in part because of the fractured, competitive political environment of Europe, something the monolithic states of Asia only experienced in rare bouts such as the warring states period or the unification of Japan. Smaller states meant that there were more leaders and more possible permutations that could be tried. Like a genetic pool, a larger population allows for greater variation. While many experiments in Europe would fail, those that didn't were transmitted to the whole of Europe.

Asia, however, did not value the same military-mercantile complex that made

Venice and the Netherlands word powers despite their small size. The pastoral was emphasized above all else, and warriors and merchants were necessary evils that had to be tolerated in society. While men like Zheng He show that China was capable of conducting far-flung trading missions even while locals put up stiff resistance, there were too few such missions and no societal pressure to establish lasting mercantile hubs.

Even though it had the resources, the skill, and the potential to build the same lasting empires that Europe did, the rest of the world simply lacked the desire and the socio-economic foundations to do so. These structures had to be acquired and grafted into the society, supplanting the traditional aspects of the native culture, in order to rival European powers. Only with a total reversal and repudiation of the traditional static, agrarian social order could the nations of the world withstand the onslaught of European imperial ambition.

This brings us to the answer to the question we posed at the start of our paper. The quintessential component of European history was the confluence of trade and war. Asia excelled at the later, but lacked the motivation to maintain and extend their military prowess. Europe's shifting alliances and constant spread of military innovations kept the face of war static, and when the scope of Europe was no longer enough of imperial ambitions, the rest of the world had fallen too far behind. The relevant exegesis of European empires is not the military differences, however, but the incompatible value systems that fostered two very different paths of development: one of continual confrontation and internal economic development and one of internal and external equilibrium.

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