

# Envisioning Systemic Transition Period Wars through the Thirty Years' War and the First and Second World Wars

## Otuz Yıl Savaşları ve Birinci ve İkinci Dünya Savaşları Üzerinden Sistemik Geçiş Dönemi Savaşlarını Tasavvur Etmek

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### Abstract

This article focuses on “systemic transition period wars” emerging during specific historical periods and bringing about transformative changes in the international power configuration, leading to a new systemic structure. It aims to elucidate the distinct characteristics and outcomes of systemic transition period wars by exploring two historical examples –the Thirty Years' War and the First and Second World Wars. The article's focus is to reveal under which circumstances these systemic transition period wars occur and how these systemic wars not only alter the distribution of power among international actors but also fundamentally reshape the global systemic structure.

**Keywords:** Systemic Wars, Systemic Transition, Great Powers, Thirty Years' War, First and Second World War

### Öz

Bu makale, belirli tarihsel dönemlerde ortaya çıkan ve uluslararası güç konfigürasyonunda dönüştürücü değişimlere yol açarak yeni bir sistemik yapının ortaya çıkmasına yol açan “sistemik geçiş dönemi savaşları”na odaklanmaktadır. Makale, Otuz Yıl Savaşları ve Birinci ve İkinci Dünya Savaşları olmak üzere iki tarihsel örneği inceleyerek sistemik geçiş dönemi savaşlarının farklı özelliklerini ve sonuçlarını aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu makalenin odak noktası, bu sistemik geçiş dönemi savaşlarının hangi koşullar altında ortaya çıktığını ve bu sistemik savaşların sadece uluslararası aktörler arasındaki güç dağılımını değiştirmekle kalmayıp aynı zamanda küresel sistemik yapıyı temelden nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sistemik Savaşlar, Sistemik Geçiş, Büyük Güçler, Otuz Yıl Savaşları, Birinci ve İkinci Dünya Savaşları

## Introduction

In the War Studies literature, studies examining war at the systemic level have a significant place. The systemic level of war addresses a systemic situation in which a large scale of major powers conflicts with the inter-constructing structural dynamics of the system. The pioneer thinkers analyzing the phenomenon of war at the system level discuss a macro-scale war with different concepts by focusing on the effects of global structures and dynamics of the world capitalist and international political systems.<sup>1</sup> Regarding this conceptual variety, these wars are called “hegemonic wars” by Robert Gilpin and Immanuel Wallerstein, “global wars” by the leadership long cycle program of George Modelski and William R. Thompson, “great wars” by A. F. Kenneth Organski and Jacek Kugler, “general wars” by Arnold Toynbee and Jack Levy, “major wars” by power cycle theory of Charles F. Doran, and “systemic wars” by Manus I. Midlarsky.<sup>2</sup> Although they have been defined in different terminological categories and their numbers vary from one thinker to another, there exists a consensus on some examples of systemic level wars in the modern period (between 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries): The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), the Wars of Louis XIV (1688-1713), the Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815), the World War I (1914-1918) and the World War II (1939-1945).<sup>3</sup>

As Midlarsky defines, “systemic war is a war entailing the breakdown of the international system as it existed prior to the outbreak of war”.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the breakdown of the international system leads to the onset of war, which, in turn, redesigns the system's structure.<sup>5</sup> These wars are characterized by their extensive geopolitical reach, long duration, and involvement of numerous states, often including both great powers and smaller states aligned through complex alliances.<sup>6</sup> Systemic wars are triggered by shifts in power dynamics and systemic instability, causing actors to recalibrate their strategies to maintain the status quo or pursue revisionist goals. The multiplicative effect of interdependence among participants escalates conflicts, leading to widespread polarization and the potential for miscalculation.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, systemic wars result in significant transformations in the international system,

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1 Terry Boswell and Mike Sweat, “Hegemony, Long Waves, and Major Wars: A Time Series Analysis of Systemic Dynamics, 1496-1967”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 35:2, 1991, p. 124.

2 Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. A. F. K. Organski, Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980. William R. Thompson, *On Global War*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 1988. George Modelski and William R. Thompson, “Long Cycles and Global War”, Manus I. Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies*, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989, pp. 23-54. Charles F. Doran, “Power Cycle Theory of Systems Structure and Stability: Commonalities and Complementarities”, Manus I. Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies II*, Michigan University Press, Ann Arbor, 1996, pp. 83-110. Manus I. Midlarsky, *The Onset of World War.*: Routledge, New York, 1988. For a comparative analysis, see Franz Kohout, “Cyclical, Hegemonic, and Pluralistic Theories of International Relations: Some Comparative Reflections on War Causation”, *International Political Science Review*, 24:1, 2003, pp. 51-66.

3 For an article discussing different conceptualizations and classifications of historical examples of general wars in detail, see Matthew Melko, “The Importance of General Wars in World History”, *Peace Research*, 33:1, 2001, pp. 83-100.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

5 Manus I. Midlarsky, “A Hierarchical Equilibrium Theory of Systemic War”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 30, 1986, p. 77.

6 Midlarsky, *The Onset of World War*, pp. 3-4.

7 Midlarsky, “A Hierarchical Equilibrium Theory”, p. 79. In addition, because of the multiplicative effect of interdependences among actors and allies on war contagion, this kind of war can transform into “umbrella wars”, which also become a scene for multiple dyadic conflicts where several minor states join the ongoing war in order to have their private wars and strategic calculations by falling under coalitional equations; Jack S. Levy, “The Contagion of Great Power War Behavior, 1495-1975”, *American Journal of Political Science*, 26:3, 1982, p. 566. Brandon Valeriano, John A. Vasquez, “Identifying and Classifying Complex Interstate Wars”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 54, 2010, p. 566.

including changes in power configurations, territorial boundaries, and international norms, leading to either a new systemic structure or the reinforcement of the existing one.

In this framework, systemic wars can be distinguished and categorized based on their impact on the system's structure, balance of power, and order. This categorization yields two primary types: systemic transition period wars and systemic crisis period wars. Systemic transition period wars lead to the creation of a new international structure, balance of power, and order, while systemic crisis period wars focus on restoring and preserving the existing framework.<sup>8</sup> This article analyzes systemic transition period wars, focusing on their systemic causality and outcomes and examining the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and the World Wars (1914-1918/1939-1945) as pivotal examples from the modern era. Thus, the article aims to illustrate the critical elements of systemic transition period wars, highlighting their transformative roles and patterns. The analysis will begin with a general framework for systemic transition period wars. The Thirty Years' War and the First and Second World Wars will then be examined as historical case studies, or "laboratories", of systemic transition.

### **1. An introduction to the concept of systemic transition period wars**

The classification of wars facilitates the introduction of different causal processes and complicated causal structures through empirical distinctive variables. It also provides a methodological guide to analyze, describe, explain, and identify key dimensions of wars. Thus, typological categorization is used to improve both quantitative and theoretical analyses by facilitating the identification of different empirical patterns and similar symptoms.<sup>9</sup> At this point, the modest initiative in this article to classify systemic war by taking into consideration its consequences and historical transitive effects as a distinctive indicator seeks at first to discuss a mutually constructive linkage between the breakdown of the system and the onset of systemic war, and considerably to suggest a subcategorization based on the comparative appearance of the structure of the system in the post-war period. The article concentrates on the outcomes or the results that explain that systemic wars affect structural change or the structural restoration of the system: systemic crisis period wars and systemic transition period wars. In a similar framework, Matthew Melko pointed out remarkably a distinction regarding the consequences of war by categorizing general wars into two dimensions and applying them to historical war sets: turning points and status quo. Melko argues that turning points refer to a reconstitution of the state system under a new configuration of powers, a significant expansion of the system, or the construction of a new and different international system like a civilizational empire, while the status quo implies maintenance and continuation of the system, and its relationships even if a shift in power.<sup>10</sup>

Within this theoretical framework, the systemic transition period means a radical change-transformation process in the structure of the international system. The process in question includes a total and macro scale change-transformation, unlike situational changes in specific and limited areas in the systemic structure; it is a period in which the dynamics of change that appear in political, military/strategic, economic, industrial/technological, and socio-cultural fields are accelerated, concentrated, and spread all over the world. In the axis of a paradigm shift based on such a rapid change momentum, new searches increase because the established and traditional regulatory mechanisms and behavioral patterns cannot respond to this intense change, and a significant gap emerges in the institutional and normative fields.

<sup>8</sup> The War of the Spanish Succession and the Napoleonic Wars are historical examples of systemic crisis period wars that will be covered in another article.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 562-563.

<sup>10</sup> Melko, "The Importance of General Wars", p. 96.

While the throes of change bring insecurity, uncertainty, unpredictability, and anxiety for all actor levels in its wake, these also cause misperception, miscalculation, fear-driven hard politics, and social mass movements. The resulting shocking and irregular situation creates the quest for new power distribution and hegemonic and expansionist aspirations; a substantial shift occurs in center-periphery relations; the power politics are exacerbated; the identity boundaries thicken; and the state of exception and exclusion increases. In short, as Wallerstein pointed out, it is the end of the world as we know it, and the spirit of time transforms.<sup>11</sup> In summary, the source of all these changes and transformations in the interactions between actors is a deep, dramatic, and traumatic turbulence in the structure of the international system, and this is a historical transition period triggered by political, economic, and technological changes.

The transition periods are the product of a difficult, painful, critical, and lengthy process; these are the “quarter-century cycles” that last about 30 years in which the existing systemic structure loses its function, and a new systemic structure is constructed. In these repetitive cycles, the interstate power configuration, power hierarchy, balance of power, and international order are redesigned; the old gives its place to a new systemic structure; and the states' internal social and administrative structures are reconstructed. Briefly, the systemic transition periods are a cyclical, multi-dimensional, complex, and interpenetrating process with symptoms making themselves felt in every social field, in which the interstate and intra-state systems are determined. Based on William R. Thompson's argument that a global war is a dependent variable most attractive for systemic transition rather than being considered as a predictor of systemic transition, it is possible to summarize systemic transition periods' symptoms:

- i- relative decline of the global system leader,
- ii- rising opposition to the status quo,
- iii- coalition building,
- iv- interaction of global and regional concentration,
- v- first of two innovation spurts or peaks,
- vi- competitive frictions between technological pioneers and latecomers,
- vii- more authoritarian catch-up strategies,
- viii- multiple serial clashes,
- ix- bipolarization,
- x- central power transitions,
- xi- intensive global warfare.<sup>12</sup>

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11 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The End of the World as we Know It: Social Sciences for the Twenty First Century*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999; Daniel Nexon, “Zeitgeist? The New Idealism in the Study of International Change”, *Review of International Political Economy*, 12:4, 2005, p. 702.

12 William R. Thompson, “Structural Preludes to Systemic Transition since 1494”, William R. Thompson (ed.), *Systemic Transitions: Past, Present, and Future*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, pp. 68-69. They argue that the systemic war is also an outcome of relative decline and deconcentration in the global political economy, whose timing involves a considerable change of economic innovation and technological capabilities, which affects globally leading sector position, relative military position, and long wave dynamics. This transformative indicator considerably corresponds to historical patterns of the systemic transition wars; Karen Rasler and William R. Thompson, “Technological Innovation, Capability Positional Shifts, and Systemic War”, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 35:3, 1991, pp. 424-425.

All in all, all actors face symptomatically these outcomes:

- i- uncertainty, unpredictability, and disorder,
- ii- fear, anxiety, misunderstandings, and security dilemmas caused by the anxiety of change-transformation,
- iii- increasing demands and expectations, perceptual shocks, slippery ground of competition and alliances, bandwagoning and its impacts,
- iv- challenge of revisionist policies to status quo policies,
- v- escalation of structural violence and global warfare.

Systemic transition period war, which appears as the resultant of all these symptoms, is an alliance war between the major revisionist powers dissatisfied with the existing power hierarchy in the international system and the great powers trying to protect the systemic structure. Accordingly, while the requests seeking to redesign the systemic power distribution, the aggressive attitudes and behaviors, the coercion and power politics of the revisionist big states lead the international system to imbalance and disorder, the reactive and reflexive actions of the status quoist great powers deepen systemic turbulence and breakage. The ongoing polarization, characterized by escalating conflictual policies and aggressive military forces, makes global war seem inevitable. This situation arises from the alliance blocs of revisionist and status quo powers, which trap a system already plagued by uncertainty and unpredictability in a tangled and vicious circle of insecurity.<sup>13</sup> The systemic transition period of war, whether it results in the victory of the revisionist or status quo alliance, disrupts the existing distribution of power and leads to a new structure of the international system.

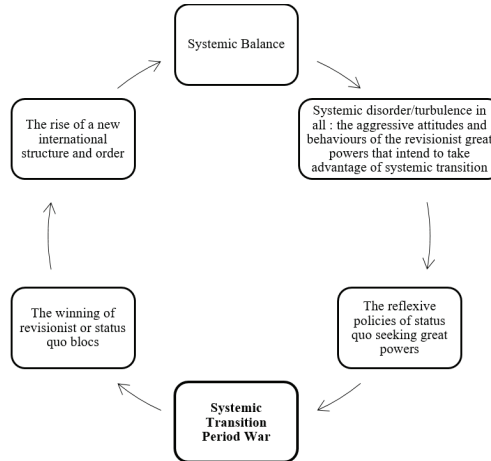
Three main factors play a significant role in the systemic transition period war's destructive impact on systemic structure: First, this kind of war occurs between two multi-actor alliance blocs, both of which consist of many great powers. In this perspective, the systemic transition period wars are literally "global wars between the alliances of great powers". Second, the sum of the power capacities of the actors in the revisionist and status quo blocs is relatively balanced or close to each other. Third, actors see war as the only political instrument for the interstate system and do not avoid mobilizing nearly all their military capacity and potential for becoming the absolute winner of the war based on the zero-sum game logic. This modifying-transforming role attributed to war and the qualitative and quantitative destructive outcomes indicates the end of the existing international structure. Moreover, every end brings an opportunity to start over; the peace treaties are signed at the end of the war, and the institutional and normative regulations mark a new period. As Ikenberry points out, the leading states in the post-war period focused on order-building strategies, maintaining their superiority and facilitating their political control, while on the other hand, they made institutional arrangements that would stabilize the structure of the international system in the long term.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, the newly emerging order should be evaluated not only in terms of the distribution of power but also in terms of the formation of institutional structures. As Barkawi highlights, these wars are creative and generative sets of social processes and interactions that enable particular social and political worlds while destroying others, and their impact on industrialization, capitalism, state capacity, science, and technology shapes the imperial and neo-imperial relations of organized violence between

13 Scott D. Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability", *International Security*, 11: 2, 1986, pp. 154.

14 G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, strategic restraint, and the rebuilding of order after major wars*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 4-5.

the powerful and the weak in world politics, which, in turn, facilitate specific political, social, and economic arrangements.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, as Table I summarizes the trajectory of war,<sup>16</sup> the international structure, balance, order, and stability are newly reconstructed at the end of this structural change-driven systemic war.

**Table I: The Cycle of the Systemic Transition Period War within the Framework of Actor, Process, and Structure**



## 2. The Thirty Years' War

The Thirty Years' War, which is considered a starting point for the classical narrative of modern international relations and the European states-system, represents a cumulative output of several transformation signs by the interpenetrated coexistence of old and new aspects in terms of actors, governmentality characteristics, modes of production, technological capability, its reasons, etc. Furthermore, these wars ensure and symbolize the crystallization of the ongoing systemic transition toward the modern international system. Within the frame of systemic transition symptoms, the main tendencies of the period can be resumed as follows:

i- Structural dynamics: systemic effects of discoveries, global economic mobility and expansion, spread of trade and urbanization, dissolution of the feudal system and structural change to feudalism to commercial capitalism, technological development in mode of production, revolution in military affairs.

ii- Sociopolitical dynamics: transformation of norms, breakage of medieval church doctrine and acceleration of state-building process by Reformation, acceleration of political diversity and existence of revisionist/challenger blocs in terms of social structure and political system, a series of clashes between emerging and established powers, rise of polarization dynamics in dynastic and religious conflicts.

iii- Actorial dynamics: relative decline of the global system leader (the Holy Roman Empire and Spain), great power rivalry dominated by both regional and global aspirations (France and Spain), simultaneous trends of integration and fragmentation across various levels of actors.

15 Tarak Barkawi, "States, Armies, and Wars in Global Context", Julian Go, George Lawson (ed.), *Global Historical Sociology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 72.

16 Table I was designed by the authors of this article.

In other terms, this period consolidating the Thirty Years' War is a total state of systemic transition far beyond the change in the relative power configuration among actors. Consequently, these long-standing system-level structural contradictions or these great upheaval signs brought together apparent causations of the Thirty Years' War.<sup>17</sup>

As a series of wars, the Thirty Years' War had a fragmented and complex structure regarding its causes and actor variety at the center of systemic turbulence and structural change. While the outbreak of war was based on a civil war motivated religiously between the Holy Roman Empire and its components, the trajectory of war by multiple issues, including sectarian divisions and struggles, dynasty problems, independence and hegemony quests, tended to an international war between France, Spain, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden. Even if the central zone of war was central Europe, especially German lands, the war expanded to Northern and Western Europe, and it also included the trans-oceanic struggle regarding sea dominance in the context of great powers rivalry. First, this article focuses on the causes at the actor level of this major war, which was the first global war in the modern international system, to reveal the relationship between actors' behaviors and symptomatic facts of the systemic transition period because actor-level causation lies on the energy accumulation of structural change' fault lines. The Holy Roman Empire, a major side of the war representing the characteristics of the older order and medieval era, was in a relative power decline and failed to adapt its domestic and foreign policies to the change dynamics. As a result of increasing political and social restrictions on protestant princes despite the Augsburg Peace (1555), which proclaimed that a prince could determine the religion of his subjects, the tension among protestant and catholic princes gave rise to the outbreak of civil war in the Empire with the maturation of coalition-building among Protestant Union and Catholic League.<sup>18</sup>

This internal rising opposition to the status quo also possessed a counterpart in the European power rivalry, when the complex dynastic relations and increasing trade and hegemony struggle in the expanding world economy were considered. At this point, Myron P. Gutmann highlights that while the real starting point was the imperial civil war, the continuation of the war was based on the opportunistic schemes of several European actors seeking regional dominance or global system leadership.<sup>19</sup> As such, the war originated through a confessional struggle between universal faith reflecting medieval authority and plurality adapting to a new transition period and then transformed into a multiple-case struggle dominated by political interests transcending religious fragmentation and tending to cross-confessional alliances such as that between Catholic France and Lutheran Sweden.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the Thirty Years' War is a complex umbrella war containing all interconnected questions of social, political, and economic changes in a transition period corresponding to the European modernization process.<sup>21</sup>

17 Charles F. Doran, "Economics, Philosophy of History, and the 'Single Dynamic' of Power Cycle Theory: Expectations, Competition, and Statecraft", *International Political Science Review*, 24:1, 2003, p. 32.

18 This militarized religious polarization was clarified in 1608 by forming the Protestant Union of German princes and cities and countered by the Catholic League a year later. As Peter H. Wilson pointed out, both parties "stood armed and ready for the decisive battle". The religious polarization and concerns correspond to a mobilizing role among all other reasons underlying structural exigencies; see Peter H. Wilson, "Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession: The Role of Religion in the Thirty Years War", *The International History Review*, 30:3, 2008, pp. 478-479.

19 Myron P. Gutmann, "The Origins of the Thirty Years' War", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18:4, 1988, pp. 749-750.

20 Peter H. Wilson, "The Causes of the Thirty Years War 1618-48", *The English Historical Review*, 123:502, 2008, p. 576.

21 J. V. Polišíenský, "The Thirty Years' War", *Past & Present*, 6, 1954, pp. 41-42; Wilson, "Dynasty, Constitution, and Confession", pp. 478-479. Thompson, "Structural Preludes to", pp. 68-69.

In the context of the actors' positions in this systemic transition, even if Spanish-Austrian Habsburg was the dominant power in Europe for a long time, its systemic role capacity and relative power tended to decline. There was a rising opposition bloc composed of a range of powers of various sizes and with different motivations consolidating their power and state formation and demanding more roles and status, such as Sweden, Holland, France, Denmark, and England.<sup>22</sup> In other terms, Spain and, as its semi-peripheral extension, the Holy Roman Empire (Catholic German states) constitute the status quo-seeking part. In contrast, revisionist challengers were German Protestant princes, Low Countries demanding their independence from Spain, France as a rising continental power opposing Spanish-Habsburg universalism, and Sweden seeking its recognition as a legitimate actor in the power equation of this structural transition period.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding the conflicts between these components of the emerging European states-system, there were inevitably a lot of long-standing struggles born of the early modern structural impacts, such as hegemonic transition, role, power, and independence disputes. First, France was a primary representative and ideological pioneer of the coming European order by implementing a strategy of balance between competing actors, by giving priority to state centralization, by constructing its foreign policies according to *raison d'état* principle transcending religious standards and thus was the strongest rising power against Spanish-Habsburg hegemony.<sup>24</sup> Even though there were short-lived peace periods, these two major powers have been in an ongoing rivalry for pre-eminence in Western Europe and Italy since the last century, which was dominated by Wars of Religion and internal interventions. Second, there was an ongoing conflict between the Dutch and the Spanish since the middle of the 1500s due to the spread of Calvinism and the trade rivalry in the Dutch region. While Spain sought total territorial control and a strong authority, the local elites expected to maintain their liberties and demanded independence for the Netherlands.<sup>25</sup> Third, the Northern Germany zone and the Baltic region had an ongoing rivalry between Denmark and Sweden, as regional actors sought their recognition at a systemic level and competed with each other to obtain regional pre-eminence regarding their economic, commercial, and political interests.<sup>26</sup> As Ringmar asserts, under the leadership of Gustav Adolf, Sweden, as a peripheric country, articulated to this war series to secure its sovereignty and to proclaim its request for recognition and its national identity as a legitimate member of the community of European states.<sup>27</sup> To sum up, the religious and political conflicts in Habsburg lands, such as civil war, were extended outward of the empire by unifying several complicated and linked mutual problems and political ambitions of European powers. As a catalyzer of continental war by maturing conjuncture, this polarization of German princes was functionally similar to the metaphor of a "pressure cooker" most historians used.<sup>28</sup> In other terms, via the involvement

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22 Doran, "Power Cycle Theory", p. 91.

23 Albert J. Bergesen, Omar Lizardo, "International Terrorism and the World-System", *Sociological Theory*, 22:1, 2004, p. 48. Wilson, "The Causes of", pp. 567-568.

24 S. H. Steinberg, "The Thirty Years' War: A New Interpretation", *History, New Series*, 32:116, 1947, pp. 93-94.

25 Gutmann, "The Origins of", pp. 756-757.

26 Gutmann, "The Origins of", pp. 756-757.

27 Erik Ringmar, *Identity, interest and action: A cultural explanation of Sweden's intervention in the Thirty Years War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 9-10. The message to foreigners of Gustav Adolf was very clear in this sense: "Recognise me and my country as a legitimate actor on the world stage!"; "A prince and a country equal to all others and worthy of the same treatment and the same respect!"; Ringmar, *Identity, interest and*, p. 178.

28 Wilson, "The Causes of", p. 558.



of foreign powers in imperial politics, internal disputes and confessional division of the Empire resulted in a great struggle for the international balance of power.<sup>29</sup>

As for the process and spread of war, the Thirty Years' War is generally categorized into periods in terms of the articulation of main actors to war in different stages. Accordingly, the starting point of the war was the outbreak of a civil war in the empire and its semi-peripheral lands. The revolt of Protestant Bohemians against the Catholic Roman Empire's restrictive policies to local princes turned into a civil war in the heart of the empire through the event of the Second Defenestration of Prague in which two ambassadors of the empire were thrown out of a second-floor window in 1618; this incident was accepted the starting point of this war series.<sup>30</sup> At this point of cumulation of the causality leading to this outbreak of war, it is necessary to emphasize again that these conflicts arose from Europe's sectarian division, the Augsburg Peace's inefficiency, and the dynastic and hegemonic problems of the previous century.<sup>31</sup> This first period of war (1618-1625), which had intervals of conflicts and the characteristic of a civil war in the Habsburg empire between Bohemian rebels and imperial armies, was called the Bohemian War, spreading into central and northern Germany through the sectarian fault lines among German princes. This civil war in German lands was the worst civil war ever seen and sparked off an intense chosen trauma in the collective memory of Germany.<sup>32</sup> This period, which was dominated by religious issues and imperial authority struggles, was followed by the Danish Period (1625-1630) as the second phase and by the Swedish Period (1630-1635) as the third phase, in which European power conflictual fault lines were interpenetrated by latent support of France. Thus, the struggle became a geographically and intensively spreading systemic war in which many actors articulated their own interests in a manner transcending religious issues and fragmentations. While Austrian-Spanish Habsburgs had relative supremacy at intervals in these phases, reaching the war's end with a victory was naturally very difficult as the conflicts spread and became more complex. The last phase of the Thirty Years' War was the Swedish-French Period (1635-1648), in which France became a major visible power in the war against the Habsburgs.<sup>33</sup> This phase was indeed the turning point in terms of France's status as a major power, thanks to the strategic moves of Cardinal Richelieu before and during the war with the target of restraining the progress of Spain and Austria and reaching up to the natural frontiers of France.<sup>34</sup> In the meantime, the power struggle between France and Spain would not end until the Pyrenees Treaty in 1659, which strengthened French hegemony.

The Thirty Years' War was a highly complex series of wars due to the multitude of belligerents (including the usage of *Condottieri*), the overlapping reasons accompanied by old and new dynamics inside and outside, and also the inability of any participant to achieve a decisive military victory in the phases of the war. Thus, the duration of the war extended, and its destructiveness dramatically increased.<sup>35</sup> In addition, in terms of great power rivalry leading to multiple serial clashes and intensive global warfare and as a consequence of the fact that rising opposition motivated by various robust aspirations consolidated its military power on many geographic fronts, it was not easy to bring an end to the war by victory

29 Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 17.

30 Bergesen, Lizardo, "International Terrorism and the World-System", p. 50.

31 N. M. Sutherland, "The Origins of the Thirty Years War and the Structure of European Politics", *The English Historical Review*, 107:424, 1992, pp. 588-589.

32 Stephen J. Lee, *Aspects of European History (1494-1789)*, Routledge, London, 1984, p. 78.

33 Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975*, The University Press of Kentucky, Kentucky, 1983, pp. 67-68.

34 Lee, *Aspects of European*, p. 79.

35 Wilson, "Dynasty, Constitution, and", pp. 474.

and to restrain or prevent its relative decline for the global system leader. Austrian-Spanish Habsburgs, burdened by overextension, faced multiple adversaries on several fronts. They fought against France, which held a geographical advantage, and contended with German princes, Denmark, and Sweden, pressing imperial armies in the North. At the same time, they struggled with the Portuguese revolt and the Dutch quest for independence, extending the conflict to overseas territories such as Brazil, Angola, and Ceylon. The cumulative destructiveness of these conflicts resulted in the deaths of at least eight million people. The intensity and geographical scope of the war allowed the Thirty Years' War to be described as "the first global war", encompassing a complex array of reasons, actors, and outcomes across a vast geopolitical area.<sup>36</sup>

As for the consequences of the Thirty Years' War corresponding to the systemic transition period, which deepened and broadened the conflict spiral reflecting the exigencies of the time, a new international system, a new nation-state reality for participating actors, a new diplomatic structuration, and hegemonic power relationships were revealed.<sup>37</sup> In fact, all these results already maturing were the facts that henceforth showed that the systemic transition, which was gradually ongoing from the medieval to the modern era,<sup>38</sup> was crystallizing under this rising military, economic, and political structural configuration based on the "birth" of absolutism dissolving feudal structure, of the regular armies, and of a multipolar international order composed by sovereign states constructed on the principles of autonomy and territory of the Peace of Westphalia 1648.<sup>39</sup> After a seven-year conflict resolution process among the participants seeking the maximum gain and recognition, the Peace of Westphalia reinforcing state sovereignty overcame the forces of the Church, underpinned the secular character of the international system being born, revealed a reality of fragmented German states at the heart of European states-system, and lastly pointed out that Holland and France crystallized their rising position in the face to the falling Spanish systemic leadership.<sup>40</sup> The state authority was

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36 Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1988, p. 40. Thompson highlights the remarkable role of global wars, the pioneering radical economic innovations in the systemic transition, and the change of political-economic and military leadership in the global political system. The Thirty Years' Wars -and remarkably ongoing global warfare process since the Hundred Years' War, which had revealed strongly European regional dynamics- and the rise of the capitalist world economic system in the era mentioned proved this argument by facilitating systemic reconcentration in global reach capabilities; William R. Thompson, "Systemic Leadership, Evolutionary Processes, and International Relations Theory: The Unipolarity Question", *International Studies Review*, 8:1, 2006, p. 4, 9.

37 Gutmann, "The Origins of", p. 751.

38 As a significant fact of epochal change, the Thirty Years' Wars simultaneously contained double aspects of old and new age, such as the regional integration and disintegration of states, violent non-state actors (especially mercenaries), and regular state armies -as the characteristics of complex type war-, old armaments and new technological innovations in military industry and other sectors, old institutional dynamics and new norms erasing religious and dynastic beliefs and exigencies; see Robert J. Bunker, Pamela Ligouri Bunker, "The modern state in epochal transition: The significance of irregular warfare, state deconstruction, and the rise of new warfighting entities beyond neo-medievalism", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27:2, 2016, pp. 336-337. In this context, for instance, correspondingly to the technological communication revolution of the era mentioned, the widespread use of propaganda by presses and the flood of pamphlets and newsletters mobilizing public opinion and manipulating the rival camps was a sign of new characteristic of the policy-making process during war period as a practice of reason of state; see Noel Malcolm, *Reason of State, Propaganda, and the Thirty Years' War*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 30-31. In addition, unlike being a cause of war, the trajectory of war demonstrated that religion as an older dominant element became a modern instrument of propaganda as Gustav Adolf used the defense of Protestantism to unite his country and consolidate the public force, and those religious differences had no more a significance in the context of decisions taken behalf to reason of state as Richelieu's strategic moves demonstrated; see Ringmar, *Identity, interest and*, pp. 21-22.

39 Wilson, "The Causes of", p. 554. Stephen D. Krasner, "Compromising Westphalia", *International Security*, 20:3, 1995-1996, pp. 115-116; Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 110.

40 Ronald G. Asch, *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe, 1618-48*, Macmillan, New

reinforced by the larger bureaucracies, more efficient systems of taxation, and more direct control of subjects, while the old domestic structural dynamics were being erased under the strong transformative influence of this catalyzer war.<sup>41</sup> One of the most important outputs of the war is the embodiment of the fact that the Papacy's militant religious policy, the dynastic interests, and the hegemonic dominance of the Habsburgs -especially after 1659- were no longer a part of the European balance of power system.<sup>42</sup> The Thirty Years' War marked a pivotal transition to a new multipolar European order, where shifts in warfare and economic relations played a crucial role in shaping the modern system of sovereign-territorial and nation-states, rather than religious changes alone.<sup>43</sup> As a result, it is accepted as a benchmark date of modern international order or quite the transition symbol of the new era by consolidating three hundred years of change dynamics.<sup>44</sup>

### 3. The First and Second World Wars

Regarding systemic transition period wars, the First and Second World Wars needed to be eclectically analyzed because of the continuity of structural change and transformation symptoms and the triggering relationality between them in terms of causality. In this sense, Eric Hobsbawm uses the conceptualization of "the thirty-one years of world conflict" between 28 July 1914 (the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia) and 14 August 1945 (the unconditional surrender of Japan).<sup>45</sup> Because there is a set of constitutive elements for the continuity and causality relationship between the two World Wars in the economic, political, and social structural trajectory of world history, this unity corresponds to the systemic transition that took place in the end. With an emphasis on the idea that the Second World War was, in large part, a repeat performance of the First World War, A. J. P. Taylor pointed out that the First World War was about "how Europe should be remade", while the Second World War was about "whether this remade Europe should continue".<sup>46</sup> Thus, these interconnected wars are viewed together within a broader systemic transition, as the determination of Europe's future role in the global power distribution was a harbinger of the new bipolar order accompanied by new institutional structures and international norms. Additionally, the interwar period also witnessed the growing influence of globalization in world politics. Consequently, the Second World War brought both a hegemonic leadership shift and a structural transformation of the international system.

All the facts and events related to the global hegemonic rivalry among the European powers stimulated polarization and the struggle for commercial and economic superiority. The fall of two empires within the imbalance of role and power and the securitization of geopolitical expansion by great powers further intensified these dynamics. Additionally, increasing uncertainty, alliance politics, and the accumulation of global warfare trends in the

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York, 1997, p. 148. At this point, Ikenberry highlights the role of Westphalia in strengthening state sovereignty by decentralizing power and reducing the influence of religious and imperial authorities. The codification of the legal independence of states in international law, granting them equal sovereign status, marked a shift towards a political order in Europe where territorial states, rather than hierarchical entities like the Holy Roman Empire or the Pope, held primacy; see Ikenberry, *After Victory*, pp. 37-38.

41 Geoffrey Treasure, *The Making of Modern Europe, 1648–1780*, Routledge, New York, 2003, pp. 145-146.

42 Gutmann, 'The Origins of', p. 767. Steinberg, 'The Thirty Years' War', pp. 89-90.

43 Jens Bartelson, "War and the Turn to History in International Relations", Benjamin de Carvalho, Julia Costa Lopez and Halvard Leira (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations*, Routledge, New York, 2021, p. 131.

44 Barry Buzan, George Lawson, "Rethinking benchmark dates in International Relations", *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:2, 2014, p. 438.

45 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991*, Abacus Book, London, 1995, p. 22.

46 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2005, pp. 18-19.

19th century accelerated changes in the balance of power system.<sup>47</sup> These factors collectively shaped the path to the two world wars by exacerbating the aspirational reflexivity and confusion among actors, regardless of their status and relative power in the international system. As the First World War did not fully ensure the structural break on both actor and system levels, the Second World War recurred. In other words, the question of how to eliminate the structural problems of the system after the war could not be solved, and the old systemic imbalance continued because the power-role difference of the leading actors could not be closed; thus, the world war was renewed as a catalyzer of the structural transition of system.<sup>48</sup>

The First World War erupted at a turning point for the system's structure, where the dominant actors competed to share the systemic power, and their claims and false perceptions were increasing. For this reason, they began to produce offensive and revisionist policies, increase their armaments, and pursue aggressive alliance strategies.<sup>49</sup> The rise of relative power outside the European system (like Russia, Japan, and the United States) and the emerging power of Germany as the primary challenger to the European balance of power system constituted the rising actors of new systemic relative power repartition against France and Great Britain as status quo-seeking actors.<sup>50</sup> In the actor-driven narrative, the fact that Germany's expansionist ambitions and Austria-Hungary's defensive approach seeking to regain great power status via coercion, threats, and violence against smaller neighbors clashed with a resistant Europe, leading to the war.<sup>51</sup> Meanwhile, the two empires (the Ottoman Empire and the Empire of Austria-Hungary) were in decline in the context of dyadic rivalries,<sup>52</sup> so the system's balance of power was fundamentally disrupted. Consequently, colonial rivalries, fears, stakeholders' security concerns, and dilemmas became more dominant and visible. Thus, in this fragile systemic conjuncture majorly influenced by economic imperialism,

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47 For the path that led to the war in detail in the 19th century, see Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe went to the war*, Penguin Group, London, 2012, pp. 61-366.

48 Doran, "Economics, Philosophy of History", pp. 16-17.

49 Alliance politics and armament, which are critical elements in systemic wars, can be preferred interchangeably due to their costs or, when effectively combined, can enhance an actor's position in battle; see James D. Morrow, "Arms Versus Allies: Trade-Offs in the Search for Security", *International Organization*, 47:2, 1993, pp. 223-224.

50 In the period of pre-World War I, Europe saw Germany as a rising state against the declining powers of France and Britain. Meanwhile, Russia was also rising against Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empires, which were declining actors. In Asia, Japan, which was in decline, faced Russia as a rising state. Britain was a declining power in the Americas compared to the rapidly growing power of the United States. In global geopolitical rivalry, this emphasizes dyadic power transition struggles stimulating the outbreak of war; see Dong Sun Lee, *Power Shifts, Strategy, and War: Declining states and international conflict*, Routledge, New York, 2008, p. 10. For a detailed exploration of the linkage of the balance of power theory and the outbreak of the First World War; see Peter Gellman, "The Elusive Explanation: Balance of Power 'Theory' and the Origins of World War I", *Review of International Studies*, 15:2, 1989, pp. 155-182.

51 Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War", *International Security*, 9:1, 1984, p. 66. Paul W. Schroeder, "The nineteenth century system: balance of power or political equilibrium?", *Review of International Studies*, 15, 1989, p. 146.

52 Midlarsky accentuates that the European balance of power system had been shaken by the conflicting interests of great powers in the Balkans, Mediterranean, and Middle East geopolitics and had generated the concretization of the alliance system, leading to war between the Dual Alliance and the Triple Entente. The Austria-Hungarian Empire, supported by Germany, has been challenged by Serbia and Russia since 1908. On the other side, the declining power of the Ottoman Empire was at the heart of expansionist tendencies of European power struggle; in this sense, the Italian-Turkish War and the Balkan Wars were milestone conflicts reflecting these ambitions and the instability of that period and immediately preceding the onset of the First World War. The collapse of two empires and the resulting gap in the European relative power distribution constituted one of the major areas of conflict in the hegemonic struggle during the First World War; see Midlarsky, "A Hierarchical Equilibrium", p. 83; Manus I. Midlarsky, "Preventing Systemic War: Crisis Decision-Making amidst a Structure of Conflict Relationships", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 28:4, 1984, p. 566.

militarism, nationalism, and dyadic rivalry dynamics, these expansionist demands combined with the security dilemmas of great powers within the highly polarized alliance system and briefly, these changing distributions of power within the changing structure of the international system led to the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>53</sup>

The causality of the outbreak of the First World War does not contain only agency-oriented reasons such as challenging opposition of Germany to the status quo, rigid polarization in the alliance system, intensification of strategic rivalries, confusion, and misperception in the political decision-making process. It also includes the following structure-oriented reasons or systemic pressure impacts:

- i- military, technological, economic, and political global transformations,<sup>54</sup>
- ii- dynamics of the global capitalist system, state-building and imperialism,
- iii- fall of empires, the rise of nationalism,<sup>55</sup>
- iv- worldwide extension of colonialism and Eurocentric power equation,
- v- global shifts in power distribution,
- vi- need to establish a global norm order.<sup>56</sup>

In this sense, Levy and Vasquez remarkably use the “powder keg” metaphor in which structure and agency incorporate both windows of opportunity and catalysts to create the

53 Charles F. Doran, “War and Power Dynamics: Economic Underpinnings”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 27, 1983, p. 430. Keir A. Lieber, “The New History of World War I and What It Means for International Relations Theory”, *International Security*, 32:2, 2007, pp. 155-191. Jack S. Levy, John A. Vasquez, *The Outbreak of the First World War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 15-16. Levy and Vasquez briefly reveal the predominant causal factors relating to structure, politics, and decision-making by “extraordinary causal complexity involving an intricate interplay of variables from all levels of analysis: structural pressures, dyadic rivalries, social upheaval, insecure regimes, bureaucratic intrigue, long-standing strategic cultures, idiosyncratic leaders, and decision-making under enormous uncertainty”; *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

54 The underlying causes of the World Wars can be traced back to the global transformation of the long nineteenth century, particularly the interlinked processes of industrialization, rational state-building, and ideologies of progress, which collectively set the stage for the conflict; see Barry Buzan, George Lawson, *Global Transformation: History Modernity and the Making of International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 6-8, 36-42. Regarding global military transformations, the First World War marked the onset of modern warfare, characterized by multi-dimensional attacks, intelligence-driven targeting, and integrated arms coordination. These innovations foreshadowed the more advanced military strategies in later conflicts; see David Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 170.

55 Nationalism, a mixture of chauvinism and racism prevalent in both Europe and North America, can be considered a long-term cause of the First World War. In other words, in Germany, Britain, Russia, and France, nationalism often served as a centripetal force driving toward war; see Samuel R. Williamson, Jr. “The Origins of World War I”, Robert I. Rotberg, Theodore K. Rabb (ed.), *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 233. Chauvinist nationalism fosters false optimism about the balance of will by glorifying one’s own people while demeaning the opponent, as the period before the First World War shows that propaganda exaggerated national virtues and foreign vices, creating illusions about both self and enemy strength; see Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1999, p. 27.

56 Holsti indicates that the breakdown of some of the norms and assumptions of the nineteenth-century states-system was one of the primary reasons for the systemic instability between 1914 and 1941 because the classical norms of the Concert system and status quo-seeking actors were inadequate to resolve in new global war conjuncture. So, the new structural composition of the international system sought a new institutionalization of international regulatory norms; see Kalevi J. Holsti, *Peace And War: Armed Conflicts And International Order 1648-1989*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1998, p. 221. As a part of global conflict, the decision-makers can be strongly motivated to an advantageous determiner role while new international norms and rules are being shaped for systemic transition; see Raimo Vayrynen, “Economic Cycles, Power Transitions, Political Management and Wars between Major Powers”, *International Studies Quarterly*, 27:4, 1983, p. 391.

maximum causal effect. The structural transition dynamics constitute the “powder keg”, and the July 1914 Crisis provides agency reactions with a strong diffusion effect for the outbreak of war.<sup>57</sup> In the light of this structural timing coincidence of systemic transition preparing the conjuncture to a global conflict spiral, the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 and the Italian conquest of Libya in 1911-1912 were precursor conflicts that reflected the instability of the period and introduced the intensification of expansionist tendencies, the moves of coalition building and the axes of geopolitical conflict zones before the onset of First World War. Indeed, the Balkan Wars and the Bosnian Crisis played a key role in the breakdown of the equilibrium in the East, increasing systemic instability and polarized composition of Europe between the Dual Alliance and Triple Entente in terms of dyadic rivalries between Germany and the other great powers (Russia, France, and Great Britain).<sup>58</sup> Briefly, in this balance of power's disequilibrium urging the status quoist actors to consolidate common interests with preventive motivation face to Germany's rise and strong expectations of a larger international political role, the severe structural politic-economic strains, including all the symptoms of systemic transition, the actor-driven shifting tides based on misperceptions, emotions of anxiety and insecurity, and the complex uncertainty of alliances made this systemic war unavoidable.<sup>59</sup> So, the experience of the First World War unveils when interstate rivalry becomes harmful to political equilibrium. Then, that balance is lost when a minimal balance of rights, status, security, and satisfaction among the participants in the system is no longer maintained.<sup>60</sup>

Contrarily to the existence of great expectations to avoid a war and construct a better world, the tragedy of the First World War produced structural continuities, causing eclectically the repetition of history under the mask of a new world order, whose scene and actors were similar to the old one in the era of twenty years' crisis. Between 1919 and 1930, particularly during the Locarno Treaty period (1925-1930), the League of Nations and peace treaties aimed to establish international standards to prevent conflicts and ensure global peace. However, several key factors laid the groundwork for the Second World War. These factors included the persistence of alliance trends, geopolitical colonial rivalries, expansionist ambitions, and systemic instability. Additionally, the political challenges posed by Italy, Japan, and Germany against the status quo, the relative decline of Great Britain, and the failure of the hegemonic power transition contributed to rising tensions.<sup>61</sup> The lack of effective political leadership, the intensification of ideological polarization, the spread of aggressive behavior among dictatorial leaders, and the imitation of such actions by political entities exacerbated the situation.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the unresolved grievances from the First World War, rapid shifts in industrial and economic power, and the transformative effects of the Great Depression, which first shook international stability and intensified global

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57 Levy, Vasquez, *The Outbreak of*, pp. 19-20.

58 Midlarsky, “A Hierarchical Equilibrium”, p. 80. David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 112-164.

59 Doran, “Economics, Philosophy of History”, p. 33; Steve Chan and Brock F. Tessman, “Relative Decline: Why Does It Induce War or Sustain Peace?”, William R. Thompson (ed.), *Systemic Transitions: Past, Present, and Future*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, pp. 13-14.

60 Schroeder, “The Nineteenth Century System”, p. 148.

61 Doran remarked accurately on the dilemma of peaceful change in the conjecture of the global crisis in the 1930s. Because the First World War did not lead to a hegemonic transition between Great Britain and the United States, there was a lack of leadership in international disorder; thus, the burden of this crisis period, coupled with the old and deep anxieties of the great powers, made the solution of underlying structural problem much more difficult; that is “*how to reconcile changing power with legitimate interests*”; see Doran, “Economics, Philosophy of History”, pp. 16-17.

62 Midlarsky, “Preventing Systemic War”, pp. 565-566.

socio-economic anxieties, played critical roles.<sup>63</sup> In a nutshell, the systemic unresolved issues of the First World War significantly contributed to the processes leading to the Second World War, unveiling the interconnectedness of these two global conflicts.<sup>64</sup>

A sequence of major political events preparing for the repetition of the World War occurred in this turbulent socio-political global scene: the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, the Italian and German intervention in the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1939, the German aggression and subsequent invasion of Austria in 1938, the German occupation of Czechoslovakia and the Italian occupation of Albania in 1939, the German claims concerning Poland, the appeasement policy of Britain and France towards Germany, the condonation of the Nazi threat in the face of Soviet threat, the total failure or non-interventionist attitude of the League of Nations in the face of all these events on the world stage, rise of fascism glorifying war and the warlike virtues.<sup>65</sup> All these events reflect the tension between status quoist powers (especially Great Britain and France) and challenger/revisionist powers seeking the breakdown of power distribution (Germany, Italy, and Japan). Indeed, this power struggle does not precisely reflect the power distribution and power-role dynamics because it does not include the power-role impact of the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, this political vacuum in the pre-war period, the failure of the policy of appeasement, and the delay in preventive steps caused international political leadership to shift from the defenders of the old order to the Soviet Union and the United States after the war.<sup>66</sup>

Structural constraints and systemic power shifts, which forced multiple actors to have a new vital trajectory, eventually made the Second World War inevitable as one of the worst wars that was responsible for the systemic transition, dragging vortically major and minor powers into the conflict spiral.<sup>67</sup> Expansionist policies and state of global aggression reached their peak with the German invasion of Poland in 1939, triggering the conflict spiral, and France and the United Kingdom declared war on Germany. After the rapid fall of Poland, Germany started its invasion of the Soviet territories from the East. Japanese expansion in the Pacific, including the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, further intensified the conflict and expanded the fronts of the war on a global scale in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. The involvement of the United States after the attack on Pearl Harbor brought additional resources and workforce to the Allies. Key turning points, such as the Battle of Stalingrad and the Normandy Invasion, shifted momentum in favor of the Allies, which, in turn, conducted offensives to reclaim territories occupied by the Axis Powers. The Allied victories in Europe and the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki took their place in history as the turning points, declaring the end of the war in 1945. During the war, the Allies were in the quest to reshape the post-war world order, as the primary cause of war was the construction of a new global order. Consequently, the European-centric international system collapsed by spreading to the globe; a bipolar structural system based on the Soviet-American hegemonic power struggle emerged; the new sub-regional systems were concretized instead of the colonial system, which came to an end, by superpowers seeking to exert politic, economic, and military influence in this strictly polarized world order. In this systemic structuration, the new international rules and norms were established in UN institutions as spokespersons

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63 Vayrynen, "Economic Cycles, Power", p. 405. Taylor, *The Origins of*, p. 61.

64 Boswell, Sweat, "Hegemony, Long Waves", p. 145.

65 Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 37. Taylor, *The Origins of*, p. 108.

66 Doran, "Economics, Philosophy of", pp. 33-35.

67 Kohout, "Cyclical, Hegemonic, and", p. 62.

of the winners' club.<sup>68</sup> In summary, the 1945 order marked a pivotal systemic transition in the post-war world, characterized by the establishment of a comprehensive institutional framework—spanning global, regional, economic, security, and political domains—which facilitated a more structured and binding international system, mainly through the security arrangements between the United States and its post-war allies.<sup>69</sup>

## Conclusion

By analyzing the Thirty Years' War and the First and Second World Wars, the article aims to elucidate the distinct characteristics and outcomes of systemic transition period wars in terms of reshaping the global systemic structure. The systemic transition period is defined as a time of radical change and transformation on a macro scale, affecting political, military, economic, technological, and socio-cultural dimensions. It represents a period during which established regulatory mechanisms struggle to respond to the accelerated and widespread changes, leading to a profound restructuring of international relations. The analysis of systemic transition period wars revealed them as the result of symptoms such as the relative decline of global system leaders, rising opposition to the status quo, coalition building, ideological or religious polarizations, technological innovation peaks, and intensive global warfare. These global wars, characterized by the alliance of major revisionist powers against great powers seeking to protect the existing systemic structure, play a crucial role in determining the new power distribution in the international system. When examining the cases of the Thirty Years' War and the First and Second World Wars within the framework of systemic transition period wars, it becomes evident that these conflicts were pivotal in reshaping the global order and the structure of the system. The alliances formed during these wars, the challenges to existing power structures, and the subsequent peace treaties marked significant shifts in the balance of power and the structure of the international system. The transformative nature of these wars is further highlighted by the total reconstruction of international structures, norms, and institutions in the post-war period. In other terms, systemic orders may experience fluctuations when the relative distribution of power and roles among different political entities shifts; however, more profound transformations signifying systemic transition are likely to emerge when constitutional values, core institutions, and the principle of unit differentiation undergo concurrent changes. Therefore, examining systemic transition period wars through historical examples gives us several insights into how these conflicts occur and play a crucial role in shaping the global order and bringing about enduring changes in the international system. Given that the persistent challenges of balancing great powers' security, curbing hegemony, and managing peripheral conflicts remain relevant today, and when considering we are in a systemic transition period where the old order has died, but the new has not yet been born—resulting in normlessness in international politics—the main patterns and processual analysis of systemic transition wars will contribute to making sense of current global conflicts.

### ***Conflict of Interest Statement:***

*The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.*

### ***Author Contribution Statements:***

*The authors contributed to the study equally.*

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68 Charles F. Doran, "Modes, Mechanisms, and Turning Points: Perspectives on the Transformation of the International System", *International Political Science Review*, 1:1, 1980, p. 56.

69 Ikenberry, *After Victory*, p. 48.



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