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Work in Progress  

Appropriating Nations  

Comparing Periphery-Metropole Relations in the German and Russian Empires  

Abstract  

In my dissertation I examine the transformation of a world of empires into a world of nation-states in the early 20th century in order to achieve one theoretical objective and one historical sociological goal. Firstly, I propose to complement existing understandings of nation-state formation based primarily on notions of "reflection" of struggles elsewhere with an approach that emphasizes refraction of political, cultural, and symbolic struggles through adjoining and networked fields of power. Secondly, this approach can help us extend developments in Bourdieusian field theory by considering how cultural appropriation and political legitimation work not only within a state, but across them and transnational fields associated with imperialism and socialism.  

I look at the cases of the German and Russian Empires following the formation of the German Empire through World War I. Within both I conduct an in-depth case study, respectively of German East Africa and Russia’s Grand Duchy of Finland. The two empires are variably associated with both imperialism and socialism, while the cases within them delimit transnational fields organized around periphery-metropole relations. The time period covers their transformation into national fields as political actors worldwide began to promote centralization of fields of power around national states while appropriating nationalism as symbolic and cultural capital. Various innovations in both history and sociology allow us now to escape the teleology typically animating the explanation of nation-state formation. I will build on these innovations with the following method.
By tracing the day-to-day struggles of political actors navigating the multiplicity of metropolitan and peripheral fields of power, especially around contests animating socialism and imperialism and their respective forms of symbolic and cultural capital, I elaborate the mechanisms that supported the appropriation of the national in the political field over the imperial and socialist alternatives. In my archival work I focus specifically on particular historical actors including colonial administrators, like Heinrich Schnee, and socialist organizers, like O.W. Kuusinen, who moved across fields and developed strategies to transfer their imperial and socialist symbolic and cultural capital into forms of national capital.

The paper presented here is a theoretical framing that focuses on explaining and exploring the interface between my historical approach, sociological theory and the specific subject matter of my research; A discussion on why and how the different pieces fit together. Depending on the final composition of the dissertation, mainly whether historical research and theoretical aspects are kept somewhat separate or very much intertwined, I envision transforming it into a transitionary chapter or breaking it apart into introductory pieces for different segments of the dissertation.

1. Approach and Interests

“The World of nation-states we take for granted is scarcely sixty years old.”

“The pathways taken by empires do not predict the future, but they help us understand the conditions, ideas, and actions that brought us to this uncertain present”

- Burbank and Cooper 2010

I explore how by the First World War a world of empires had begun to transform into a world of nation-states. I am specifically interested in understanding how the national and the nation-state were appropriated by political actors even as they stood in direct contradiction to the discourses and governance models that underscored the political imagination and organization of the era, namely imperialism and socialism. The eventful turn that this question boils down to is the moment when political actors stopped competing against each other with the national as one form of cultural and
symbolic capital amongst others (such as internationalist, monarchical, imperial, religious etc.) and began to compete against each other for the national. I believe it is useful to focus specifically on imperialism and socialism\(^1\) as the dominant competing symbolic and cultural capital that actors in fields of power employed, and that constituted their political imagination and worldviews.

I initially conceptualize this as a shift from a plurality of sources of symbolic and cultural capital in a unified global and transnational collection of overlapping fields of power into a unification of sources of capital in a plurality of analogic, atomized, nationally centered fields of power. Roughly, it would appear that a scarcity of methods and means for producing a multiplicity of forms of capital transformed into a plurality of competing means and ways for producing one dominant form of capital, national.\(^2\)

Commenting on recent research on the early 20\(^{th}\) century from a global perspective historian Geoff Eley has pointed out the importance of focusing on the transference and translation of complex and heterogeneous knowledge “whose availability for deployment in the domestic arenas of politics then became capable of producing active forms of political agency and active particular effects”. Such a focus brings to front the shift that I am interested in. Therefore I need to theorize how that transference and translation of knowledge led to the production of political agency in the form of and organized around the nation-state.

In this light I hypothesize that nation-states are in fact a contingent outcome of socialist and imperialist frameworks and worldviews fusing and clashing in global and transnational milieus. Therefore I will use a refraction model of worldviews and understandings to explore the emergence of governance models in Europe with two cases that shift our focus from the colonial context to the

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\(^1\) Multiple other forces offering cultural capital and political imagination for legitimising visions of administrative organizations existed, such as religious, pan-national, monarchical/dynastic and liberal political worldviews.

\(^2\) Pierre Bourdieu did not write significantly about the field(s) of power of a nation-state. But he briefly described it to be organized around a form of meta-capital into which is all other forms of capital are transferrable. By understanding the mechanism and conditions of the larger transformation I hope to be able to also evaluate whether this indeed is the case.
transnational interaction of the periphery and the metropoles; an interstitial space in which multiple
and potentially conflicting frameworks and worldviews fused. Missing from previous work on the
metropole-periphery interaction, however, if we want to understand the milieu from which nation-
states arose as the solution to organizing political fields, is the interaction of the peripheral fields with
what contested metropolitan imperialism, i.e. most importantly socialism as its own transnational
field.

To explore this transnational collision of ideas it is useful to employ a refraction model, which argues
that ideas and worldviews refract choices in the process of administration and thus create alternative
forms of governance. The state fields of power can then be analyzed as growing historically out of
such a processes and to be reproduced through them as well, with uncertainty and competition
dictating the possible extent of divergence in models of governance and the creation and maintenance
of certainty and predictability as determining the success of competing models. Work on metropole-
periphery power relations, on the other hand, borrows from Pierre Bourdieu the idea of fields that are
both a historical formation in their own right but can be used to explain strategies and actions of actors
within them and thus provide recognition of the variety and difference of contexts and milieus of the
actors choices described by the refraction model.

By understanding the set up and the developments leading up to that eventful turn, we may be able
to say something about the appropriation of cultural and symbolic national capital and thereby the
successful emergence of the nation-state centered fields of power. To understand better how fields of
power themselves change and re-orient I employ a theory of cultural appropriation that attempts to
understand why certain forms of culture get appropriated by political actors over others. These
approaches together form an analytical set for observing the changes that took place in the world of
empires leading up to the so-called “Wilsonian moment” (Manela 2007) of self-determination when
most political actors had started to actively promote centralization of fields of power around national
units and consequentially attempted to transfer their the symbolic and cultural capital into national symbolic and cultural capital for these fields.

In this manner I investigate the origin of the idea of nation-states with the help of the contemporary sociological theories of field analysis, refraction of ideas, and conditions of cultural appropriation as well as with a new perspective on historical sources stemming from global history. Instead of focusing on its eventual functions and the many victories that the idea of nation-states had, I look at the problems and struggles it faced, at times unresolved, and the coalitions and compromises it had to forge in order to prevail. To paraphrase Marion Fourcade (2006), I hope to move from studying the globalization of the particular political organization of nation-states to considering the global logic of its origins as such, that is, to include in our study the interactions between fields of power and their corresponding forms of capital, both local and global. In this sense it is the interaction of my two empires as transnational entities and their internal periphery-metropole arrangements, an encompassing comparison (Tilly 1984), which becomes essential in explaining the collapse of fields of power to nationally centered ones.

All in all then, while the theoretical and historical contexts of this research are varied and it brings together three different angles to connect worldviews, fields and actors, it nevertheless has a singular focus that cuts through the historiography, theory and empirics. It is to understand the mechanisms and processes with which the national and the nation-state were appropriated by political actors as symbolic and cultural capital in a global and transnational context. For this mechanism socialism and imperialism were the context, nation-state formation as a global and transnational phenomenon was the consequence and nationalism(s) an articulation.

2. Puzzle

Nation-states are seen as the natural result of a selection of political, social and economic developments often assumed to stretch back centuries. Such perspectives, however, are counter-
intuitive when one considers how at the dawn of the age of empires following the Franco-Prussian War the idea of nation-states was a utopian vision, a novelty, and imperialist policies as well as socialist ideologies constituted political imaginations, legitimized symbolic capital and outright rejected nationalism (Rohr 1970, Hobsbawm 1990).

Yet, in four decades, by the end of the First World War leaders from Lenin to Friedrich Ebert and Woodrow Wilson; from the USA to Germany and Soviet Russia; from liberal capitalists to social democrats and communists were asserting their claims to appropriate the idea of the nation-state. By then states founded on national ideas and citizenries were not only emerging, they were being produced by the Soviet Union and by Western foreign policy alike.

As Eric Hobsbawm put it, this era was the “transformation of nationalism” during which it began to aspire “to form or capture states rather than the ‘nations’ of already existing states. The nation-state became the instrument of political organization and control sine qua non. Ronald Suny sums it up like this: “...Furthermore, not only nationalism, but also nationality itself has been conceived as a social and ‘imagined’ construction actively cobbled together from actual social and historical material. The intellectuals and activists who forge these constructions propose a new form of association with specific cultural and political claims, and with the participation of constituents who submerge other identities, localist or universalist, in order to accept paramount loyalty to the nation.” (Suny 1993).

But why were other identities submerging and the national emerged as the norm for political organization? Why not universalist empires or localist communes, or any other imaginable associations? What changed in four decades and enabled the triumph of the national over the two major political imaginations of the era, socialism and imperialism? Which mechanisms and milieus

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3 Since its beginning Soviet Union and Soviet Russia supported national self-determination in its foreign policy and proceeded to organize internally by creating national republics.
led to the appropriation of specifically national capital instead of any other by actors in these transnational and transforming fields of power?

2.1 Hypothesis

I hypothesize that the success of the national in organizing fields of power is in fact a contingent outcome of socialist and imperialist frameworks and worldviews fusing and clashing in global and transnational milieus. I therefore find inadequate arguments, such as Charles Tilly’s (1984, 1990), which attempt to explain social movements and ideas concerning the state, such as socialism and imperialism, through the general mechanisms of coercion and capital accumulation, as well as more recent approaches to state formation from the perspective of “contradictions abounded in the metropolitan space” (Saada 2013). The assumption of those theories is that the interplay of variables, coercion and capital or metropole and colony, i.e. domestic and international efficiency or governance, explains variation, alternatives and dead ends of state structures; these are what Wilson (2011) calls reflection models that see power holders reacting to domestic and international pressures, which leads eventually to unification on a national basis. These models are useful in illuminating retrospectively important motivations of state formation, but they give no accounts of agency and transformation; or they assume the existence and agency of entities that are in fact a historical abstraction (Saada 2013).

Therefore, such approaches have lately been proven inappropriate in the context of colonial state-building (Wilson 2011, Steinmetz 2007). Instead, as Wilson demonstrates with the case of administration in British India, ideas refract rather than reflect choices and anchor alternative forms of governance during uncertainty and competition. Administrators govern with multiple and potentially conflicting frameworks and worldviews that, like lenses, draw different aspects of complex societies into focus to situate administrators and subjects in meaningful relations. This, Wilson argues, is an important consideration because of the centrality of the difficulty of administrators to gain information about society, which, he continues, can be incorporated into
analyses with a refraction model. A refraction model proposes that “action stems from actor’s interpretations of the world around them” and “recognizes structures as durable patterns of behavior among actors:

This understanding of action recognizes structures as durable patterns of behavior among actors, rather than material, external facts unaffected by the concepts used to understand them (Sewell 1992).

- Wilson 2011

Though colonial contexts provide the intuitive cases for this perspective and for the struggle for information, we also know that they were not isolated, but on the contrary periphery – metropole relations shaped state- and nation-building of the European empires and struggles for information (not only for its availability but also its interpretation) characterized European state formation (Wilson 2011). In a similar vein, while critiquing the analytical concept of contradictions, Saada (2013) argues rather for problematization “in the sense that imperial rule poses a problem for political discourses and practices more than it contradicts them”. This, according to Saada, can direct our attention to the rootedness of problems, such as race and the articulation of civility and citizenship, in the periphery as well as in the metropole.

Therefore I will use a refraction model of worldviews and understandings to explore the emergence of governance models in Europe with two cases that shift our focus from the colonial context to their interaction with the periphery and the metropoles; an interstitial space in which multiple and potentially conflicting frameworks and worldviews fused. The refraction model sees state’s abstracting frameworks as especially powerful because they are easily wielded by outsiders and function as codifiable and calculable rules, as Bourdieu and Weber suggest, and enable interventions into social relations (Wilson 2011). In this way the refraction model can help us not only understand colonial variance but also the reasons for convergence of governance models around nationalism, which ties in with an understanding of states as fields of power.
From a different angle George Steinmetz too takes a step beyond the reflection model by proposing (2007) that struggles in the metropoles were transposed to the political field of the colonies so that competition between imperial elites shaped the field of colonial state administration. I further suggest that these were not merely transposition effects from one to the other, but that transnational and global entanglements produced new problems and new solutions throughout. Steinmetz argues that as the colonial field of power was settled by actors from the metropole they brought with them power conflicts that then reconfigured and became reconfigured themselves by the legitimate symbolic capital of the colonial field (2008). This led to a multiplicity of fields of power, such as the semi-autonomous colonial states that Steinmetz looks at. Missing from Steinmetz, however, if we want to understand the milieu from which nation-states arose as a solution to organizing political fields, is the interaction of the peripheral and metropolitan fields with what contested imperialism, i.e. most importantly socialism as its own transnational field. I argue that such interactions influenced the alternatives and pathways of the transformation of political fields of power. Steinmetz himself does note, but does not address, the discrepancy between what his research of turn-of-the-century colonialism suggests about the multiplicity of fields of power within European empires with the centrality of the state fields as Bourdieu describes them in mid-century (2008). This transformation, though central to field theory, has so far been unaccounted for.

Lastly, Baris Büyükokutan outlines a model that explains why specific symbolic and cultural resources get appropriated by political actors. This model suggests and demonstrates the complexities of the interaction of fields of power with the refraction of ideas and worldviews. It can therefore bring together the perspectives of Wilson and Steinmetz as well as point to evidence of the contingency and unpredictability of the national emerging from under socialism and imperialism.

4 In his own analysis Büyükokutan looks at the field of poetry in Vietnam era USA and its appropriation of Buddhist ideology.

5 Ronald Suny summarizes it like this: “The historical formation of classes and nationalities (one should try to avoid the use of terms like “the rise of” or the “emergence of”, which contain an immanentist sense of a pre-existing essence) is,
Most importantly, with this empirical case – of the transformation of state fields of power from a multiplicity in number, kind and constituency with complex overlapping relations into a world of centralized and atomized fields – Büyükokutan’s appropriation model can help me address the so far under-theorized matter of change of fields in Bourdieusian field theory.

2.1.1 Refraction, Field Theory, Appropriation

George Steinmetz has used field analysis to move “beyond approaches that reduce state policy to extra-state determinations” to suggest a way of rethinking state autonomy as something different from the traditional approaches of Weber, Block (1988), Poulantzas (1978) and Tilly (1990). My focus on the emergence of the nation-state as dominant model for organizing such fields attempts to address what Steinmetz sees as shortcomings of Bourdieu in suggesting that the state is a “central bank of symbolic credit” that dominates all other fields and is constituted as the holder of a sort of meta-capital that underwrites the values of all other species of capital. I suggest that Steinmetz’ description of the fields formed under colony-metropole relations and Bourdieu’s late 20th century speculation of the nation-state as a dominating field must be bridged by an understanding of how the national was appropriated into a more central role in the early 20th century. And that this appropriation indeed arose from a situation described by Steinmetz, in which there was no clarity not to mention dominance amongst a plurality of state fields of power. If, as Steinmetz argues, semi-autonomous fields constituted metropole-colony relations (2008) and fields themselves are historical and subject to historical change as Steinmetz proposes elsewhere (2011) a clear question arises: What happened to the metropole-colony fields? The same shift is clearly present with socialist parties that unanimously rejected nationalist sentiments and policies at the turn of the century but unanimously operated within national frameworks by the late 30s. To find an explanation for this problem I look at change on the

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6 Steinmetz uses the term colony-metropole, whereas I prefer the more general periphery-metropole term.
societal level in a manner proposed by Steinmetz himself: "looking for accidental resonances among autonomous fields that produce unpredictable conjunctural social effects" (2011).

In a similar vein Marion Fourcade (2006) has proposed to use of field theory to understand the dynamics of diffusion of expertise and worldviews in “international arenas to settle disciplinary and ideological conflicts, and to assert their control over a particular geographical, intellectual, or practical turf” from other similar professionals with whom they are competing. Indeed, her motivation is to “move from studying the globalization of the particular professional domain of economics to considering the global logic of its professional development as such”, which is much like my own motivation for studying the nation-state. Let me use Fourcade to briefly explain why field theory is so particularly useful in describing organizational transformation from this perspective. Fourcade specifically wants to understand the mechanism and conditions of the reproducibility and selection of certain knowledge or organizational form over other options, because, importantly, “the very fact of diffusion participates in the construction of the diffused form itself – in other words that diffusability constitutes one of the defining elements in processes of institutional or organizational change, not simply the other way around”. In such a framework “understanding which forms diffuse and which do not – pinning down the substantive conditions that support “diffusability” – therefore, remains a questions of considerable theoretical importance.” This is a question that grows from my empirical interests too, and that I hope to address by employing cultural appropriation, which I believe helps us, as Fourcade encourages us to do, to move beyond the language of diffusion. It also suits my particular focus on political actors, political imagination, and the worldviews of socialism, imperialism and nationalism.

In this regard Büyükokutan (2011) has asked the same general question I am posing here: How does the cultural and symbolic turn into the political and, more importantly, how do actors choose which

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7 Though I am not, at the moment at least, engaging exactly the same literature as Fourcade, it is, however, interesting that Fourcade looks at the globalization of a profession closely knit with nation-state-building, i.e. economics.
cultural elements to try to convert to political assets? Büyükokutan argues that the political appropriation of cultural elements is a reciprocal process of scarce symbolic and material resources between two heterogeneous parties and takes place when appropriators strike a mutually beneficial bargain with the resource’s legitimate owners. Classical works on nation-building have traced these resources and the benefits of the bargain between political actors of early 20th century and national cultures. However, that does little to explain why this outcome (the nation-state) over possibilities of empire, community etc. and between these actors (national citizens and liberal and communist leaders) over possibilities of class, religion, polity and conservative, populist or socialist leaders. To understand the outcome Büyükokutan sets two important condition. “First, the legitimate owners of the resource to be appropriated must have some visibility in the appropriators’ social space. Second, the owners must depend on the appropriators for something they value highly.” I believe these conditions give important clues as to why the national emerge from under socialism and imperialism. Indeed, I suggest we should approach imperialism and socialism⁸ as enablers in this process.

First, the practical problems raised by imperialism and socialism as movements occupying a global space gives national organization enhanced visibility. As Büyükokutan puts it: “Without the support of credentialed experts, importation of cultural novelties smacks of dilettantism, and appropriators are often aware of this.” This is the situation we find in commentaries from the late 19th century. Ideas of national organization and culture lack credibility on the face of imperial politics or the class struggle. Only after increased competition between imperial policies highlighted the different solutions as German, French, British etc. solutions to colonial matters (Steinmetz has described this competition, 2008) and only after different socialist organizations began to differentiate between successes within particular national communities (The German SPD emerged as “the most successful” workers movement and for example Rosa Luxemburg dedicated plenty of thought to

⁸ Ronald Suny puts it like this: “One of the supreme ironies of the twentieth-century experience must be that nationalism’s principal opponent, namely Marxism, has been both empowered by its alliances with nationalism and responsible for creating the conditions for the development of nations in the Second and the Third Worlds.” (1993)
differences between the Russian, Polish and German movements in accounting for their successes) do we find that national level solutions are taken seriously.

Second, Büyükokutan writes that “if owners do not depend on would-be appropriators, they may deny them access.” Büyükokutan points out that this framework has both deterministic elements and a fundamental indeterminacy. Once the two parties have emerged, visibility and dependence determine the outcome. Once again, this has been the subject of much work on nationalism and state-building in the 21st century. However, whether two such parties will emerge, Büyükokutan writes, depends on how the milieus of the appropriation process are linked. The latter question has not been addressed in terms of the universal appropriation of the nation-state rather than of other possible forms of organization. And the milieu of that process was once dominated by empires, socialist movements and imperial expansion. As Büyükokutan suggests, actors of an appropriation process often have multiple and contradictory interests and actors prioritize and strategize based on contingent historical milieus and understandings, but once the conditions for appropriation were met each new step made it harder to reverse course. This was evident in the cul-de-sack that the incrementalist and reformist stance of the German SPD led them to, which indeed was the main critique leveled against them by other socialists. It was a literal entanglement of imperial and socialist movements that by 1914 led to a national solution. The simplification of a multiplicity of periphery-metropole considerations into a centralized, dichotomized decision; a solution that made it possible for the SPD to defend the working class while opposing the bourgeoisie and the imperialists, by making them both “German”.

As Steinmetz (2008) has shown, transformations in colonial governance were related to competition in the bureaucracy of the metropole. Steinmetz proposes that the colonial state constituted a semi-autonomous field, a microcosm, “a space of possibilities or options given to participants in the field at any given moment” as Steinmetz quotes Bourdieu. Pressures affecting this field, Steinmetz proposes were mediated by the colonial states’ internal competitive dynamics. Here we arrive theoretically to the crux of my empirical investigation. “Each episode of imperial annexation and
colonial warfare elicited protest in the metropolitan press and among the political parties.” Indeed, the largest political movement of the era, the socialist movement, took imperialism as its main opponent. One of the important aspects that took shape in this global space as response to the colony-metropole relations, was the idea of a rule of difference (Chatterjee 1993, Steinmetz 2008). This is an example of a solution to arise from metropole-periphery relations that later on had a significant impact on giving visibility to the nation as a cultural idea to be appropriated. This was clear and traceable, for example, in the case of the Grand Duchy of Finland, where early on the sentiment “We are not Swedish, we do not wish to become Russian, so let us be Finnish”⁹ was taken as a solution to practical problems of organizing governance and the links of the Finnish semi-autonomous field with the imperial state following Russian conquest, as well as to creating conformity between Finnish actors navigating those links. Wilson describes this type of use of worldviews in the following way:

Analytically, instead of viewing administrators’ ways of abstracting society as quasi-universal characteristics of the modern state, the refraction model understands them as social institutions, or sets of ideas used to stabilize “murky worlds where it is never clear which actions will have which consequences” (Fligstein 1996, p. 659). All of these ideas make claims about what society is like, but they come in different forms and influence administrative variation in different ways.

- Wilson 2011

Wilson continues that through these processes unconscious worldviews can take on a “rule-like status in social action and thought” and thereby imply actual organizational forms through conformity to shared social beliefs. As Steinmetz points out, participants of a field are “necessarily involved in dynamics of both recognition and competition, identification and dis-identification with other participants.” This is why field theory gives useful clarity to position and locate the actions described by Wilson’s refraction model. Then, if we look at socialist and imperialist organizations as constituting such fields across global political and social entities, we start to understand the ways in

⁹ Importantly this sentiment originally had nothing to do with the idea of independent statehood.
which they enabled the rise of the nation-state as cultural appropriation as described by Büyükokutan. Steinmetz continues, that in the beginning of 1880s it was still unclear whether colonial states would attain the properties of such fields but by the end of the 1880s relative autonomy of those fields began to emerge (Steinmetz 2008), as something balancing between the metropole and the colony or perhaps indeed constituted by the relation: “If colonial fields were partly autonomous in this sense, they were entwined with the metropole via the colonial field of power, which bridged the two spaces. The state fields of different German colonies were closely linked, and they were also connected to the state fields in the neighboring colonies of other European powers and to a global field of colonial strategies.” (Steinmetz 2008). This created a network of entangled fields of power, not yet centralized round the state, with a high amount of actors navigating multiple fields across nations and thereby creating and encountering multiple instances of refraction. To set the nation-states appearance in the early 20th century as the centerpiece of this analytical framework appears to me as an abundantly fruitful exercise.

2.2 How the Cases Serve Theory

Juxtaposing the cases of the Russian and German Empires enables me to compare and contrast transnational and global forces (not the national development of the two cases) and elaborate how these transpositions refracted ideas and affected the practice, definitions and understanding - what global historians call entanglements - of political organization and eventually led to the unexpected prevalence of nation-states. Within both cases I conduct an in-depth study that provides the best sources for my focus and creates the most useful contrast of periphery-metropole relations in the empire, i.e. Russia’s Grand Duchy of Finland and German East Africa. This should reveal ways in which (mis)perception and (mis)communication across fields of power and different political actors shaped formed and transformed the European states. The Grand Duchy of Finland and German East Africa speak to the dynamics of how national capital emerged from under transnational socialism and imperialism as an important resource for appropriation by political actors. Moreover, the formation
and capture of states by nationalism, as suggested by Hobsbawm, was negotiated for the first time in Eastern and Central Europe following the collapse of the German, Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires and at the time it was not at all sure that the national would become the currency for political capital\textsuperscript{10}.

This case selection plunges us into what from the perspective of non-transnational (i.e. methodologically national) approaches would appear as negative cases, namely the so-called German Sonderweg and Russian underdevelopment and orientalism, moreover within these cases the importance of German East Africa\textsuperscript{11} as playing a part in the national question is commonly overlooked especially since it was subsumed by imperialist continuity following the First World War while the Finnish case is dismissed as a small country exception (Moore, Alapuro) or as a Western peculiarity within the Russian Empire, neither of which account for the fact that both socialist and imperial Finnish political actors (unlike their counterparts in other peripheries of the empire) did their utmost not to become an independent nation-state and took independence only once all other options on the left and the right had failed and Lenin had all but forced the political actors to accept independence.

Of special concern in understanding this transformation is how fields of power transformed from a connected plurality, as described by Steinmetz, organized around periphery-metropole relations into an analogic multiplicity organized around disconnected national units, as described by Bourdieu.

When these considerations are put together, the use of archival evidence appears similar to that of Wilson’s, i.e. not to falsify previous explanations but to productively extend them. Wilson uses

\textsuperscript{10} As a recent conference call by Europa-Universität Viadrina puts it: As a result, different competing concepts of order emerged. Which states would emerge and what their borders would be was an open-ended military and diplomatic game. Nation states were without precedent in the region and by no means the only alternative. Visions for reshaping of Central and Eastern Europe after 1917 were legitimised on socio-corporative, internationalist, monarchic, imperial and religious levels. Memories of a past, supranational statehood influenced the negotiation process.

\textsuperscript{11} Importance not for East African nation-state creation, but for the dominance of the global logic, that Fourcade talks of, and the transnational and global collapse of fields of power into the national, despite the fact that German East Africa itself become subsumed by the imperial continuities, rather than discontinuities, of the Wilsonian moment, i.e. the British and Belgian Empires.
archival evidence of major episodes of administrative conflict in the Bengal and Madras precidencies over 70 years of British rule in order to, first, buttress the explanatory utility of his refraction model and, second, by considering each episode a single case Wilson can trace divergent interpretations of the same social structure with evidence from multiple levels of analysis and across time and space. I will apply the same strategy to my two cases with the one difference that where Wilson is concerned with comparing two models (reflection, refraction) simultaneously I am interested in how one model gives way to another over time, which renders my task easier, with just one caveat: Wilson uses comparative cases to prove the generalizability of his theory while I use comparative cases to disprove the particularity of my theory and thereby my cases. The difference is not only semantical but means that Wilson’s case selection is based on similarity within a shared context of imperial governance, while my case selection is based on dissimilarity or variance within a nevertheless shared context of imperial governance. Charles Tilly (1984) has called this variation-finding and encompassing comparisons, which, he suggests, could be a pathway to a deeper relational understanding of the historical comparative study of nation-states.

Archival research is in some sense detective work in which one cannot develop an apriori method for selecting records. A framework is usually crafted a posteriori to simply convey the understanding that the researcher developed over time. However, for those desiring indication as to what such a framework could be, George Steinmetz (2007, 2008) provides one example. Steinmetz seeks out rival interpretations, framings and political imaginations in debates over policy choices and colonial strategies as mediated through actors inhibiting different positions in fields of power: “an official’s position on native policy typically foregrounded his existing holdings of capital, translated into forms appropriate to the field. Colonial officials and civil servants refined and rationalized their ethnographic perceptions and actions in the course of ongoing struggles in the field.” I construct a similar “fishing net” for identifying relevant materials and relevant actors. The main difference for my research is just a thematic shift from ethnographic representation to political imagination.
especially regarding the national question, while I am similarly interested in how those political imaginations shaped imperial – and in my case also socialist – policies “through the mediation of symbolic competition, cross-boundary identification and patterns of resistance to demonstrate how” pre-national imaginations “generated tangible consequences.”

2.2.1 Case Interplay

The cases of the German and Russian Empires were connected to each other through transnational cooperation and competition of both imperial ambitions and socialist movements. This means that similar actors and worldviews in the two contexts encountered different types of uncertainties and conflicts and occupied or moved between a varied selection of fields of power. This should allow me to compare the instances of refraction that led to different paths though shared the same context, yet in both cases came to compete in appropriating the nation-state. These cases also represent the most prolific socialisms, nationalisms and imperialisms of the era and thus offer closeness coupled with divergence plus an abundance of source material.

In these cases imperialism and socialism were contested and disrupted, unlike in Western Europe where the Wilsonian moment actually the provided means to establish continuities for these empires. These cases then provide a specific window to understanding the contingency and alternatives of nation-state formation.

In the Russian case a conflict between nationalism and empire in the Russian metropole allowed socialists to appropriate the national despite opportunities given first to liberal leaders. While in the German Empire socialisms demonstrated a similarly problematic relation to nationalism. In its defense of the German worker against imperialist ambitions the German socialists were torn in their

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approach to nationalism. They turned on each other and after the First World War were unable to capitalize on the national despite ample opportunities given first to social democratic leaders.

Also, “nationalities east of the Rhine lacked the advantage of an early acquired statehood. Of necessity the real labour of constituting the ‘nation’ had to be conducted by private rather than public bodies, by individual intellectuals and voluntary associations rather than governments” (Eley 1982). As Geoff Eley suggests, east of the Rhine, amidst the ‘latecomer’ states, the struggles that nationalism faced are more recognizable.

The cases of the Grand Duchy of Finland and the German East Africa within these empires provide two opposite accounts of the interplay of the same forces. German East Africa represents German imperialism abroad with domestic implications for the political project of socialism, whereas the Grand Duchy of Finland represents socialism in the colonial state with political implications and connections to debates over the form and meaning of the political project of the imperial state domestically. Therefore, while my actual cases are the empires, I have chosen to focus them on two peripheries that provide the most contrasting examples of periphery-metropole relations within these two empires with already contrasting relations in terms socialism and imperialism. So, while my cases are the empires and their plurality of fields of power, I am also doing an internal case study of the most contrasting peripheries. Therefore the Grand Duchy of Finland and German East Africa are not directly compared, but only via the larger comparison of imperial power structures.

2.2.2 Imperial Peripheries

Finland, though geographically close, was considered a periphery within the Russian Empire. One of the General-Governors sent from St. Petersburg called it ‘his personal Siberia’. However, because of its proximity to St. Petersburg news travelled fast and Finland was often the example in debates over imperial politics. For the same reasons Finland became a hub for socialist activities. Figures like Lenin spent time there, close to but safe from St. Petersburg. German East Africa, though
geographically far, was considered a part of the German nation and national lands. Kilimanjaro was called the highest German mountain. German East Africa became a prime example of the imperialist imagination.

The case of German East Africa is almost a mirror image (Table 1) of Finland in terms of its position within the empire from the perspectives socialist, imperial and national political imagination. Far from the metropole, German East Africa was nevertheless a focal point for Germany’s imperial activities. Rather than an example of the problems of the empire, like Finland for St. Petersburg, German East Africa was a sign of success. Powerful figures serving in the military and administration became superstars at home, instead feeling condemned to oblivion. At the same time the colonial activities of Germany aroused the criticism of socialists domestically and indeed fed the creation of theories of imperial exploitation\textsuperscript{13}. Moreover, archives of the colonial administration in German East Africa remained intact through the First World War and were thereafter preserved by the British. Lastly, the so-called Russification period in Finland coincides with German rule in East Africa, and thus provides an excellent comparison of how these two empires approached the political problems of the time. Together these two examples lay out a grid within which dimensions of the imperialism and socialism can be observed in their relation to the plurality of state fields of power and their interactions within their respective empires all the way up to the Wilsonian moment (and if necessary a bit beyond it too). In the following table I summarize some of the contrasting characteristics between the positions that the Grand Duchy of Finland and German East Africa occupied within their empires.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Grand Duchy of Finland and the Russian Empire</th>
<th>East Africa and the German Empire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active in Periphery</td>
<td>Socialism</td>
<td>Imperialism</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{13} The internal socialist debate over the issue of German colonialism is a crucial aspect (see for example Hyrkkänen 1986)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active in metropole</th>
<th>Imperialism</th>
<th>Socialism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful appropriation of national capital</td>
<td>Socialist actors</td>
<td>Imperial actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed appropriation of national capital</td>
<td>Imperial actors</td>
<td>Socialist actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National imagination</td>
<td>Discontinuity</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique from metropole</td>
<td>Nationalist</td>
<td>Socialist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In brief, within the Russian Empire Finland’s socialist actors were able to navigate the imperial fields better, as Finland retained a strong autonomy while the navigational space of imperial actors remained restricted. There is more capacity for me then to research the way in which socialists tried to appropriate the nations. And the strongest case illustrates how it could have been done elsewhere. Whereas within the German Empire German East Africa was the strongest case of imperial imagination fusing with the national. German East Africa was seen as a continuation of Germany and Kilimanjaro was called the highest German mountain.

Far from the metropole German East Africa, unlike an example of the problems of the empire, like Finland for St. Petersburg, was a sign of imperial success. For those very reasons German East Africa was a specific target for socialist critics of empire. German East Africa then allows me to observe the transformation of imperialist to national cultural and symbolic capital within an empire in which socialist actors were unsuccessful in that appropriation.

Grand Duchy of Finland on the other hand served often as an example in debates over imperial politics in the metropole and was conceptualized as a discontinuity of Russia. The opposite. As a discontinuity yet a part of the imperial endeavor The Grand Duchy of Finland was a target for nationalist critics of empire. The Grand Duchy of Finland allows me to observe the transformation of socialist to national
cultural and symbolic capital within an empire in which imperial actors were unsuccessful in the appropriation

Following the Wilsonian moment Finland was forced to seek independence as its attempts to seek alternative forms of governance in connection to Russia and Germany were rejected. While German East Africa was divided amongst the western European empires that continued their existence after the Wilsonian moment.

3. Contributions – Darning the Picture Together

Three issues are central to my analytical framework, my painting, and it is from their perspective that I approach and address previous works, the canvas. On the level of the research problem I focus on the mechanisms 1) of the transformation of fields of power, 2) of the transformation of ideas and strategies, and 3) on the global and transnational origins of the mechanisms and process of appropriating national capital. In regards to the first problem I am interested in approaching it through empirical and historical research particularly as transformation through cultural appropriation in the face of struggles and problems. The second I hope to address analytically by bringing together historical formation and practical action especially regarding the refraction of ideas. And the third issue is my theoretical ambition, which I hope will help us revise the claim of the German and Russian Empires as exceptions as well as shed new light on what mechanisms drove political organization in the early 20th century.

I am interested specifically in the mechanism of appropriating the national and the nation-state model. Therefore it is useful to ask when the eventful turn took place that shifted the causalities of this appropriation from competition and uncertainty to solidifying the mechanism and its conditions. I will do an approximation here by looking at the most influential actors in Germany, Russia and the USA, the German SPD, the Bolsheviks and Woodrow Wilson, I will set them into larger context of developing theories and perspectives regarding the national question in order to trace change over
time. I believe that one of the most important characteristics of this shift is the moment and the mechanisms through which actors stopped competing against the national with other perspectives (internationalist, monarchic, imperial, religious etc.) and began to compete against each other for the national. A shift from plurality to a dichotomy.

This is important also because the ways in which we have attempted to understand the nation-state originate from the first attempts at appropriating the national, and this relationship should be taken into consideration when revisiting the nation-state and theories of it. It is, for example, to the ways in which the German and Russian cases have been considered to be exceptions. That literature began with theories of self-determination, definitions of different forms of states, and skepticism towards the whole unit of nation-state as a meaningful unit for analysis. Following the Second World War the idea of nation-states however consolidated itself as a ‘natural’ form of political organization for modern humans, socialist and capitalist alike. Such “essentialism” was then questioned starting the late 60s by thinkers like Miliband, Poulantzas, Moore and Wallerstein. Only recently however, have we begun to explore the national and nation-states as phenomena that political actors adopted from a host of possibilities, more or less consciously, as a solution to global and transnational processes of empire and socialism. Following the tour of theories I proceed to present my hypothesis about where to look to begin tackling this alternativelesness found in theories of nation-state formation. I want to escape teleology in my research design and explore the nation as a contingent strategy rather than a determined outcome.

3.1 Triumph of “Nation-Statism”

In Theses on the National Question written already in 1913 for lectures given in Geneva but published only in 1925 Lenin had already decisively sided with the idea of political organization on a national basis. He wrote that “The article of our programme (on the self-determination of nations) cannot be interpreted to mean anything but political self-determination, i.e., the right to secede and form a
separate state.”\textsuperscript{14} This was not yet a clear act of appropriation. Lenin did not define a national state and did not argue why some understandings of the state are wrong while others right, as he proceeded to do in similar lecture in 1919.

The revised 1918 edition of Woodrow Wilson’s book \textit{The State} already proclaims the essentialist and developmentalist characteristics of the modern nation-state: “It is the Whole which has emerged from the disintegration of feudalism and the specialization of absolute monarchy. The Whole, too, has become self-conscious, and by becoming self-directive has set out upon a new course of development.” This approach was then consolidated in the doctrine of self-determination, the Wilsonian moment. This was already a clearer act of appropriation because it linked national self-determination specifically with “governments organized on the common basis of popular representation and control”. The book proceeded to proclaim that such republics will spread throughout the world as “universal control of governments by their people” Naturally, United States in 1919 was not built on ‘popular representation and control’ in the way in which we understand it today, nor would popular representation and control come to take the same form in all states, even if all states would take the national form. This was just one attempt at controlling and defining, appropriating, the process of nation-state formation by one group of political actors. Wilson of course used his definition in order to achieve his goals in foreign policy as well as domestic issues. He had not intended national self-determination, indeed he appropriated the very language from the Bolsheviks, (Manela 2007) to be used and applied beyond South-Eastern Europe to the initial disappointment of Asian and African political actors for example\textsuperscript{15}.

I believe that by the time in 1919 when Lenin in his lecture asked “what is the state?” and also proceeded to appropriate it, quite like Wilson’s project, the nation-state had already claimed its position in very contingent ways, the mechanisms and conditions that led to its appropriation were in

\textsuperscript{15} Conrad and Sachsenmaier 2007
place. This is exemplified by the fact that Lenin’s argument was set against Bukharin’s complete denial of the meaningfulness of the state, similarly as that of the Spartacists against the SPD in Germany. The moment of struggle, refraction and articulation over and of ideas and definitions had passed and political actors across the spectrum had to take sides. The eventful turn had taken place and Lenin had taken his side, as I discussed above, at the latest by 1913, and now he proceeded to appropriate it by distinguishing the ways in which capitalists and socialists used the state: “So far we have deprived the capitalists of this machine and have taken it over. We shall use this machine [the state], or bludgeon, to destroy all exploitation.”

3.2 Historical Sociology of Nation-States

Resurgence of historical comparative sociology since the 1970s began with a critique of the close relation of our social scientific understandings and the state. This was manifest then most visibly in the rejection of functionalism in the US on the one hand and materialist and orthodox Marxism in Western Europe on the other.

This introspection, eventually branded as the cultural turn, opened new venues to describe the state and its social and economic roots. This led to a flourishing of work that traces the construction of the nation-state to warfare, historical imagination, revolution, popular sovereignty, democracy, colonialism and back to the social sciences too, to mention a few possible aspects. The paradox is that while the challenge to take the ‘national question’ seriously was delivered to these Western countries via their peripheries the answers provided simply an elaboration and multiplication of perspectives on the European nation-state. The situation was not the same in European countries east of the Rhine who had themselves already faced the national question as well as lost much of their global peripheries. This is one important reason for attempting to move theoretically beyond those

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17 French Algeria for example is a famous example
theories of nation-states that originate from this resurgence in Anglophone and Francophone experience. It is useful to build that attempt on an empirical foundation that looks away from them to metropole-periphery relations generally and to their European others specifically. We still tend to separate the origins of the European nation-state from the (post-)colonial or (post-)socialist ones as well as separate Russian communism and German ‘Sonderweg’ as supposed exceptions to the rule.

Tilly did propose a pathway that could lead to a deeper relational understanding of nation-states. He suggests that variation-finding and encompassing comparisons could help us address what he calls one of the greatest flaws of argument in historical comparative studies: “The argument does not say why the people who built different kinds of states undertook the effort in the first place.” I believe this point of Tilly’s can and should be extended from the state as universal category to the nation-state as historical occurrence of the 20th century.

By means of tracing the sites and mechanisms of reproduction and creation of nation-states, not through their results as the chosen solutions to problems those people encountered, but through their selection and eventual predominance as the chosen problems we can begin to understand “the why” that Tilly eluded to. However, Tilly himself took a narrow perspective on the matter by presupposing that “the state structures that actually took shape grew largely as unintended by-products of other activities” (1997, 1984). While this approach allowed him to expand our scope of analyzing the state and escape the idea that state development would be something natural and granted, it also meant that Tilly focused mainly on the reactions of power holders to large scale external and internal pressures; it was a reflection model. To me this is unsatisfactory.

Though Tilly does shift the focus to relations rather than essence he does not address the questions raised by the cultural turn, i.e. actors’ interpretative encounters with societies and structures emergence from shared patterns of meaningful action (Wilson 2011). Perhaps the greatest and clearest social construct of our times, the nation-state, when its connection to intentional social engineering in the form of the birth of social sciences is considered, cannot be taken purely as an
unintended by-product of war and capital, especially when looking at the time period from 1870 to 1914.

Historical sociologist Risto Alapuro (1988) summarises Tilly’s perspective neatly. Two main phases of state formation and creation are recognized. In the first phase attempts by the central power to consolidate its position and to respond to challenges both external and internal led to the creation of Western European states as well as the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. The main points to raise here are how this perspective is predicated on the end goal of nation-state formation that then requires the identification of those states that supposedly successfully underwent it. This forces us to create a taxonomy in which the German Empire is placed into the western group, but then always subsequently marked as an exception within it, as a sonderweg. Similarly the eastern empires are predestined to fail much because of their “multinational” character even though this multinationality was a product of the very Wilsonian moment that it is supposed to explain. A second phase of statemaking is then identified. Here statemaking transforms from a by-product of governance into an active process due to discrepancies between class structures and state structures. This argument runs into trouble in the cases of the polities east of the Rhein-river. It challenges the original classification of Germany as a Western case. It takes class relations as an inherently local phenomenon. And it is wholly based on the fact that we encounter discontinuity east of the Rhein and continuity of empire West of it. It therefore is unable to explain the sources of this distinction, i.e. the ways this discontinuity was an intentional and socially created outcome.

My research shares the same driving element that Tilly mention to have been his: “How can we improve our understanding of the large-scale structures and processes that were transforming the world of the nineteenth century and those that are transforming our world today?”

3.2.1 Moving Forward

Nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalism but the other way around.
While increased importance has been given to the historically contingent interaction of nationalism with the social, economic and political, still relational analysis turns into a reflection model that imposes a type of teleology in the form of sequenced causality or iterative interaction and therefore overlooks both the refraction of ideas by actors as well as the appropriation of cultural capital by actors actively transforming fields of power. In these models change is still located within the object of analysis (A changes B) instead of within their relations that, as Steinmetz expresses it, produce for example “temporary harmony” or “accidental resonance”.

But more often than not these are conscious and strategic choices and part of the reason why transnational approaches claim to circumvent teleology is because the transnational has not yet been saturated as explanatory ontology, which is exactly what makes it topical.

Risto Alapuro’s *State and Revolution in Finland* was conceived of at the University of Michigan too and “in the intellectual milieu surrounding him [Charles Tilly]”18. Alapuro begins with a problem that is very close to mine. Alapuro’s basic question is one that according to him was dismissed by Barrington Moore19, “what are the decisive factors conditioning the twentieth-century politics in smaller countries that are economically and politically dependent on big ones”.

We find an interesting genealogy of the expansion of political ontologies in historical sociology here. The very reason that prompted Moore to dismiss the question of smaller polities and to focus on larger ones prompted Alapuro to look at smaller countries specifically in order to understand them from the perspective of interaction with larger countries. The same question again prompts me to travel that link back again and look these interactions as a transnational whole.

19 In Moore’s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* he explains that “the fact that the smaller countries are depend economically and politically on big and powerful ones means that the decisive causes of their politics lie outside their own boundaries.
In this manner, in understanding nation-state formation historical sociologists have moved from a national context to a regional and finally to a global context. Alapuro then argues, following Stein Rokkan, for a perspective that puts statemaking into a European framework.

Table 2 above provides a very stylized and rough description of the genealogy of changing ontologies of inquiry in historical sociology of political organization. The cells marked as “none” do not imply that the author would turn a completely blind eye to the importance of a specific structural level, but just that, for example, Barrington Moore made the conscious strategic choice of not considering transnational developments and focusing on national rather than international change so that he was better able to focus empirically on patterns of change in large nations and have his research speak more to the research interests in his time.

Table 2 then describes overarching shifts in focus in historical sociological logic that admittedly does have a tendency to emphasize one relational pair at a time. I have included Alexandr Bogdanov in the table as an example of a misplaced ontology of inquiry, which resulted not only in ostracizing his research at the time, but caused it to resurface only once it spoke to more general interests in the field. Even as such it is still an odd one out as it was written before and did not presume the formation of a
global system of nation-states, i.e. the international dimension; most research today is still focused on the relation of the national and the international. This has made it difficult for Bogdanov’s theory to bear relevance beyond the interests of historians of social sciences. Whereas Bogdanov’s contemporary Nikolai Bukharin, for example did presume the international and set it as his context for transnational change. Thereafter Bukharin served as major influence for actual theory and forms of inquiry.

The challenging part of navigating the changing ontologies of nation-state formation is that they are by no means a mere matter of inquiry and scholarly exercise, but, as William Sewell (2009) has demonstrated in terms of the historical change of causalities and Margaret Somers (1996, 1999) about the historical change and formation of concepts, our changing perceptions of the origins and sources of political organization are themselves tied to those units of analysis, as I hoped to show with my brief genealogy of theories of nation-state formation. And the current global and transnational turn is in a similar fashion indicative not only of scholarly advances but of a changing environment in which we study political organization.

Indeed, historical sociologists have always been interested in the genesis of modernity, and have explained and traced the rise of features related to it, such as states, democracy and revolution. However, of late the incipient field of global history has begun to question these approaches in favor of locating the ways in which these concepts are defined, understood and practiced out of their immediate effects into the sphere of transnational and global entanglements (Conrad 2010, 2013). This will allow me to compare the interstitial space of uncertainty and conflict – in contradiction to the space of predictability and control which formed (perhaps) as a response around the nation-states – and trace moments of refraction. My perspective is then one of entanglements, of equally important contributions to the appropriation of the nation-state model. The perspective of global history relocates “the way the nation is defined, understood and practiced” outside the nation-states and into the dynamics of transnational and global entanglements and by so doing allows me to import recent
historical comparative work on the sociology of state building in the colonial context to the global context. Therefore I see that we are not only on the cusp of significant historiographical, as Conrad (2006) sees it, but also theoretical reorientation of the concept of nation-states. The origins of the nation-state are long due revision and the rise of global history and increasing interaction with historical and social science inquiry now gives us the tools to do so.

4. Concluding Remarks

*Explaining changes at the societal level therefore involves looking for events or forces that simultaneously erode the autonomy of several fields or bring them into a temporary harmony, or looking for accidental resonances among autonomous fields that produce unpredictable conjunctural social effects.*

– Steinmetz 2011

Few have researched the origins of nation-state model with the hypothesis that its appearance was an unexpected process of cultural and political appropriation, as Steinmetz describes in the above quote, rather than a functional or path-dependent development; an opposite understanding would also reshape our understanding of nation-states today. However, more often the approach has been, in a reverse manner, to explain the process from the perspective of the outcome. This is a historical fallacy that most grapple with. As Philip Abrams sees it, explaining the state is displaced by reduction and taking the state for granted (1988). By contrast, my goal is to explore its emergence through the challenges it faced, the compromises that were made, the alternatives that failed and the decisions that were made against or in favor of it with varying levels of understanding about what is being chosen. To do this I employ fields and refractions to understand the strategies and conditions of existence of actors and I will use Büyükokutan’s theory of cultural appropriation to understand how those transformed to appropriate nationalism through accidental resonances or simultaneous harmony or erosion of fields of power.
As Paul James argues (1996), it is “crucial to hold together both the historically grounded and culturally invented conceptions of the nation.” He points out that this cannot happen in the fashion of, for example, political theorist Tom Nairn who retains both without “rewriting the terms of their synthesis”. Similarly Philip Abrams (1982) points to the problems that Poulantzas’ and Miliband’s attempts to bring together historical structure and practice of the state had. Overall, connecting theories of historical formation with theories of practical action continues to haunt our analyses. Of late three approaches have attempted to seriously solve this question of how to synthesize theories and analyses of historical structure and practical action. Two of those, Wilson and Steinmetz et al, in sociology and one, global history, in history. In my opinion, what brings these attempts together is what I would call a focus on the strategic. With that I mean, that all of the three approaches attempt to solve the question of connecting historical structure with practical action by taking the nexus of those two as the mechanism through which the creation and reproduction of the state is perceived. This is a flexible approach that instead of answering the problem head on asks whether we are approaching it from the wrong angle and then proceeds to shift the focus from theory to the unit of analysis, i.e. instead of seeing the interaction and tension between historical structures and practical action to be a theoretical question they see it as an ontological social space.

Thereby Wilson argues that ideas and worldviews, the symbolic and cultural side, refract choices in the process of administration and thus create alternative forms of governance. The state fields of power can then be seen as growing historically out of such a processes and to be reproduced through them as well, with uncertainty and competition dictating the possible extent of divergence in models of governance. Steinmetz and others, on the other hand, borrow from Bourdieu the idea of fields that are both a historical formation in their own right but can be used to explain strategies and actions of actors within them and thus provide recognition of the variety and difference of contexts and milieus of the actors described by Wilson. Lastly, global history has turned its focus on entanglements between actors that both intertwine as well as redefine simultaneous processes, i.e. larger scale trends
shared with a wide variety of actors without formal agreement. Conrad (2008) gives imperialist expansion as one example of such a trend. Even though it emerged from diverging colonial projects, in their interaction those projects created converging problems that they all had to face. I identify useful aspects in all of these three approaches and believe that they offer an integrative scale and breadth in their focuses from Wilson’s very temporally defined and more eventualistic refractions to fields as more spatially and procedurally defined with entanglements cutting across time and space. In addition I hope to bring a fourth approach to complement the historical and cultural analysis of the nation-state, which is cultural appropriation that, I argue, complements these three approaches by providing a mechanism and a birds-eye-view on how and why the strategic sites and spaces of action that each of them identify (fields, entanglements and refractions) themselves change over time.

4.1 German and Russian Empires in a Global Context

Patrick Manning (2003) has defined the task of global history as portraying “the crossing of boundaries and the linking of systems in the human past.” He continues that much of global history has formed from new ways of looking at established materials; “historian have found out that some historical patterns can be explained better through global linkages rather than through localized case studies”, while at the same time with the emergence of new information “the boundaries of historical studies have expanded.” This has often meant less focus on nation-centric and more on “world-centric” patterns.

Such investigation is intrinsically connected to social sciences as they have been the source of many of the tools\textsuperscript{20} with which historians have crossed boundaries of their own discipline. Yet, not much of the results of global history have poured back into the social sciences. These results can be groundbreaking in transferring perspectives and knowledge from global history to the transnational and global approaches in sociology.

\textsuperscript{20} See for example Manning (2003)
In this vein Bradley Naranch argues (2014) that the need to understand the period of German imperialism through its connections with various overlapping historical contexts is at once exceptionally high and also a considerably easier task today with the transnational turn than ever before. Naranch also points out, that German imperialism needs to be understood in terms of its continuities. There are no marginal players or places free of its impact, but all paths of research lead somewhere worthwhile. And as Geoff Eley points out in the same volume (2014) German imperialism was a key theme of German national imagination up until the latter part of the 20th century. Eley also argues, in line with my own approach outlined above, that it is “the bringing of the cultural and the political together that makes possible the most challenging recent work on the history of German Empire making before 1918”. Eley continues that one of the most important themes that this perspective has opened up is that on the formation of the national: “It illuminates the earlier nineteenth century settings in which the national itself was yet to be properly formed – before a “national” had arrived that could yet become “trans” and how the national affiliations, that were to form that “national” were “shaped from the margins and across distances markedly separated from the physical heartland of the nation itself, subtly complicating relations of inclusion and exclusion”(Eley 2014).

I am especially interested in what Eley calls the transference and translation of complex and heterogeneous knowledge “whose availability for deployment in the domestic arenas of politics then became capable of producing active forms of political agency and active particular effects”. This is the same crux that brings together the practice and history of nation-state formation so that I can give an adequate answer for the puzzle about the nation-state. I theorize how that transference and translation of knowledge led to the production of political agency in the form of the nation-state.

While Germany has served as the ripe case for the transnational turn to pick up, due to the large amount of scholars of German history and the small though rising amount of research done on German imperialism from an international perspective (compared to British, French or Spanish imperial and colonial projects), Russia before the Revolution has to a large extent been left outside of the
transnational turn. This is unfortunate not only because Russia offers a remarkable case for study from a transnational perspective, but also because Russia was Germany’s main reference point and rival in terms of modernization, imperial expansion and the socialist movements, while Britain and France represented competition. Eastern Europe was considered by both the German and the Russian Empires as their national heartland. German experts at the time often drew parallels between Russia and the stages that Prussia had undergone (Casteel 2013). Large German populations lived in the Russian Empire and up until the turn of the century, German nobility were the dominant administrators of the Russian Empire. Russia was Germany’s largest neighbor and was seen as a market and extension to German economy (Casteel 2013). The importance of Russia to the German imperialist and national imagination was of course exemplified later on in the two world wars. A contemporary commentator saw in 1918 that Russian and German interests, in their bids to become world powers, were complementary (Casteel 2013).

Why not compare Russia and the USA then as they were the most prominent actors of the so-called Wilsonian moment? As Erez Manela (2007) points out, historians have long been tempted “to conceptualize the moment of 1919 as a clash between these two antagonistic global forces.” Manela however continues to argue that this a false perception that was rather created afterwards through, importantly, the reaction of peripheries, colonies and anti-colonial movements to this idea of national self-determination that was originally intended to be a European policy. Moreover, from my perspective, that incorporates the metropole-periphery relations, it appears more as convergence over the appropriation of the national as capital for political organization rather than a clash between two antagonistic global forces of communists and capitalists. This convergence may have brought these two forces together, much more than they themselves would have driven each other to clash, while only once refracted in the context of metropole-periphery relations did it turn confrontational as Manela proposes. Therefore I believe that the forces perhaps most powerfully advancing and driving
the centralization of fields of power on a national basis after the eventful turn\textsuperscript{21} cannot be argued to have relevance in understanding the conditions which led to the phenomenon’s emergence. Thereafter it is important to take note that the United States and Western Europe were themselves politically least transformed and affected by the Wilsonian moment and contrary to universal self-determination the Paris Peace Conference provided these countries the means to continue their imperial policies, whereas empires east of the Rhein reorganized around centralized national fields of power, which naturally stirred competition over legitimate ownership of the new symbolic capital.

Debates, historiographies, and research programs aside then, the comparison between the Russian and German Empires is most fruitful because of its capability in illuminating the competing forces of imperialism and socialism in the context of the rise of the nation-state. As Wirtschafter (1997) has put it “rather than employ the concept of Russian nationality to integrate society with the state, it subordinated all forms of nationalism to the categories of dynasty and empire.” This led to a conflict of nationalism and empire in the Russian metropole and nationalism was fiercely embraced and rejected at once\textsuperscript{22}. The Tzar could not give nationalist sentiment and politicians the visibility and dependence that for example Büyükokutan (2011) sets as the conditions for successful appropriation. This allowed socialists to appropriate nationalism. While in the German Empire socialisms demonstrated a similarly problematic relation to nationalism. In its defense of the German worker against imperialist ambitions the German SPD as well as the Spartacists were torn in their approaches to nationalism to the extent that their turned on each other over this matter and following the first world war made it impossible for Friedrich Ebert and the social democrats to capitalize on nationalism. Despite such contestation and intentional activity, later literature took a stance described by Suny regarding the Russian Empire as follows: ”The nationalist representation of an essential if concealed national consciousness, ever present and ready to emerge when opportunity knocked,  

\textsuperscript{21} See introduction. The eventful turn of siding with or going against the national rather than having it as one option amongst many.  
\textsuperscript{22} Ronald Suny 1993
seemed borne out by subsequent events and was easily read back into an earlier age.” Gesturing towards the transformation under observation in my research, Suny proceeds to argue that in reality a much more “complex, if less melodramatic, story of nation-building … belongs more appropriately to the Soviet period than to the years before civil war”. (1993)

I investigate the origin of the idea of nation-states in this specific historical context with the help of contemporary sociological theories of field analysis, refraction of ideas and conditions cultural appropriation as well as with a new perspective on historical sources stemming from global history. By understanding the contingency and complexity of the emergence of a world of nation-states we can better understand the alternatives and problems that it encounters today. As Conrad and Sachsenmaier argue, in fact “the current situation makes a transcultural and historical perspectives critical” (2007). It also holds promise for a fresh interpretation of source materials and a reworking of theory. In the words of Sebastian Conrad: “What is at stake here, then, is a revision of common assumptions concerning the history of nationalism”.

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