

INNOVATION, WORK, SOCIETY

ASYMMETRY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD (16TH–18TH CENTURIES)

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Summary

The article explores the essence of asymmetry in international relations during the early modern period, emphasizing the impact of economic and military inequality on global politics. Asymmetry in international relations in a historical context encompasses various aspects in which certain states or groups possess significantly greater influence, resources, and power compared to others. It often arises from disparities in military, economic, political, or cultural strength between states. The early modern period is identified as a significant era in European history, marked by the emergence of nation-states, the development of diplomatic practices, and the rise and expansion of colonial empires. The emergence of absolutist monarchies in Europe led to the centralization of power and the strengthening of states, which created asymmetric relations between the more powerful absolutist monarchies and weaker states. Influential European powers, leveraging their economic, technological, and military advantages, established unequal conditions in international relations that had long-lasting consequences for world history. The cultural hegemony established during this period influenced global cultural norms, contributing to the dominance of Western civilization. Overall, asymmetry in international relations during the early modern period was the result of complex political, economic, military, and cultural processes that significantly influenced the further development of international interactions. It was defined by a complex network of political, economic, and military relations among influential states competing to expand their spheres of influence on the continent.

Key words: asymmetry, asymmetric relations, war, Great Britain, France, Spain, the Netherlands.

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1. Introduction

The historical evolution of asymmetric international relations is a complex and multifaceted process that encompasses the development of interactions between actors with varying levels of power from ancient times to the present. Throughout history, asymmetry in international relations has manifested in various forms, ranging from colonial dependence to modern economic and military alliances.

Analyzing the asymmetry of international relations through the lens of historical experience broadens the understanding and perspectives on asymmetric relations and can have a constructive impact on their formation. A historical approach to studying asymmetric relations can provide insight and analytical tools for addressing key issues and offer political prudence to state actors.

The early modern period offers important case studies for understanding the development of key concepts in international relations, such as sovereignty, the balance of power, and asymmetry. It also highlights the impact of economic and military inequality on global politics.

The aim of this study is to reveal the essence of asymmetry in international relations during the early modern era.

In studying asymmetry in international relations in the 16th–18th centuries, general scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction were used. In particular, the problem-chronological method made it possible to trace the evolution of asymmetry in international relations during the early modern period.

2. Literature Review

Asymmetry in international relations during the early modern period has been the subject of study by a considerable number of scholars, as this dynamic and complex era is characterized by the formation of the first nation-states and the beginning of colonial empires, which led to a shift in the balance of power on the international stage.

One of the key scholars who developed the concept of world-systems analysis, Immanuel Wallerstein, examined how the global capitalist economy began to take shape during the early modern period, in which nations were divided into the core, semi-periphery, and periphery. This model highlights the asymmetries in economic and political relations between countries (Wallerstein, 2004).

Jonathan Israel, a leading historian of international relations and geopolitics in the early modern period, in his work *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806*, analyzes the history of the Dutch Republic, focusing on its development, political system, and international relations. He pays special attention to the inequality in international relations that characterized the Republic during its rise and fall. In this context, asymmetry in international relations refers to the imbalance between the Dutch Republic and other major European powers such as Spain, France, and England. The Netherlands often had to maneuver between more powerful states, using diplomacy and economic tools to preserve its independence and influence (Israel, 1998).

British historian Paul Kennedy, who studied the rise and fall of great powers from the 14th to the 20th century, analyzed in his research how asymmetry in economic and military power among states affected their ability to dominate in international relations. In his work *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, he examines how different states in various eras used asymmetry in their international strategies (Kennedy, 1988).

American sociologist and historian Charles Tilly, who studied the process of state formation in Europe and its impact on international relations, emphasized in his book *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* how asymmetry in resources and military power among states contributed to their unequal positions on the international stage (Tilly, 1992).

The historical context and principles of international relations, including during the early modern period, are also addressed in Henry Kissinger's work *World Order* (Kissinger, 2014).

Although Kenneth Waltz's work is often associated with neorealism and structural realism, his analysis of power structures in international relations laid the foundation for

understanding the nature of asymmetry. Despite his broader focus, his seminal work *Theory of International Politics* can be applied to the early modern period through its insights into the distribution of power and how it affects state behavior (*Waltz, 1979*).

Diplomatic and military strategies in Europe at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries are examined in Paul Schroeder's *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848*. His analysis of the political actions of leading powers such as Great Britain and France, and their influence over smaller states, sheds light on the asymmetry of power during this period (*Schroeder, 1994*).

While James Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* primarily focuses on Southeast Asia, his research on "state evasion" and the ways in which weaker actors resist domination by stronger states provides a framework that can also be applied to understanding asymmetry in early modern Europe (*Scott, 2009*).

The complex relationships among states, empires, and religious institutions in early modern Europe are explored by Daniel Nexon in his work *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change*, where he emphasizes how these entities often interacted asymmetrically during periods of religious and dynastic conflict (*Nexon, 2009*).

An important work for understanding the dynamics of asymmetry in the context of colonial expansion and international relations at the beginning of the modern era is M. Doyle's *Empires*. Doyle's analysis of imperialism helps explain how empires, as powerful entities, exert influence over weaker states and regions (*Doyle, 1986*).

The scholarly study by D. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, focuses on the power structures that lead to asymmetric relations between states. His concept is especially useful for understanding how powerful states establish and maintain dominance over weaker actors (*Lake, 2009*).

P. Wilson's in-depth study of the Holy Roman Empire provides insight into the complex, often asymmetric relationships between the various states and entities within the Empire. His work *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History* is significant for understanding internal dynamics and power imbalances in early modern Europe (*Wilson, 2016*).

American scholar of asymmetric international relations B. Womack points out that asymmetric international interactions have deep historical roots, and that understanding them is key to analyzing contemporary international politics. His research helps clarify how historical factors shape modern state relations and what opportunities and challenges they create for both small and great powers in today's world (*Womack, 2006; Womack, 2016*).

The academic contributions of these scholars offer various approaches to analyzing asymmetry in international relations during the early modern period—from power structures and hierarchies to specific historical contexts. These studies also shed light on the complex and multifaceted dynamics of asymmetric relations in the early modern era and contribute to understanding how asymmetries in economic, military, and political power shaped the development of international relations during this time

3. Dynamics of Asymmetry in International Relations in the 16th–17th Centuries

Asymmetry in international relations, in a historical context, encompasses various aspects in which certain states or groups possess significantly greater influence, resources, and power compared to others. This phenomenon can have political, economic, social, and military

dimensions. Asymmetry in international relations often arises from disparities in military, economic, political, or cultural power between states.

Asymmetric relations refer to situations in which two or more international actors possess unequal capabilities in terms of power and, consequently, influence. The gap in capabilities between two states is a common concept in unbalanced bilateral relations (*Lake, 2009; Waltz, 1979; Womack, 2016*).

Overall, asymmetry in international relations is a concept that describes the uneven distribution of power and influence among states on the global stage. It typically refers to inequalities between states in the economic, military, or political spheres, which affect their ability to negotiate and achieve their foreign policy goals (*Womack, 2006*).

The early modern period, usually considered from the late 15th to the late 18th century, marks a significant era in European history characterized by the emergence of nation-states, among which Spain, France, and England stood out in terms of power, as well as the development of diplomatic practices and the rise and expansion of colonial empires. For international relations, this was a period of profound social, economic, political, and cultural transformations (*Kennedy, 1988*).

Due to significant changes in political, economic, military, and cultural aspects, asymmetry in international relations became distinctly evident in the early modern period (16th–18th centuries).

The rise of absolutist monarchies in Europe led to the centralization of power and the strengthening of states, which created asymmetric relations between more powerful absolutist monarchies and weaker states (*Tilly, 1992*).

In the 16th–18th centuries, European powers – Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands – used power asymmetry to build vast colonial empires. They established control over extensive territories in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, creating asymmetrical relations between metropolises and colonies. Their superior military technology, naval power, and economic resources enabled them to dominate and subjugate these regions (*Doyle, 1986*).

European powers ignored the sovereignty and right to self-determination of the peoples in colonized regions, establishing asymmetrical relationships of dependency and exploitation. They governed their colonial possessions through local administrations subordinate to the metropolises, which created political asymmetry and led to a deep imbalance of power, as the local populations had no representation or influence over decision-making. Thus, during the colonial period, asymmetric relations became especially pronounced.

At the same time, the establishment of European rule in the colonies was also accompanied by cultural and religious expansion. Missionary activities and colonial administrations promoted the spread of European standards and worldviews. Subjugated peoples were often forcibly converted to Christianity and compelled to adopt European cultural norms and values, resulting in prolonged processes of cultural assimilation or the destruction of local cultures and religions – an illustration of cultural and religious asymmetry. Colonial empires imposed their economic, political, and cultural values and traditions on colonized peoples, depriving them of any alternatives (*Kennedy, 1988; Tilly, 1992; Wallerstein, 2004*).

One of the most powerful states in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries (these centuries are sometimes referred to as the «Golden Age of Spain») was Spain, whose relations with less powerful countries were distinctly asymmetric. These asymmetries were driven by key factors such as colonial possessions, military strength, political ties, and economic influence.

Vast colonial holdings provided Spain with immense wealth, enabling it to finance military campaigns and pursue an influential foreign policy. This created asymmetry in relations with weaker European states (*Doyle, 1986; Nexon, 2009*).

A classic example of asymmetry was the relationship between Spain and Portugal. Due to the disparity in capacities, the relationship between Spain and Portugal, which became the first major colonial powers, was largely shaped in the 16th and 17th centuries by the asymmetry that resulted from the political unification of the two kingdoms under the Spanish crown (the Iberian Union lasted from early 1580 to early 1640). This asymmetry manifested in economic, military, and political spheres and affected both countries.

After the dissolution of the union and the restoration of Portuguese independence, the asymmetry that had existed during the Iberian Union left a deep imprint on the national consciousness of both nations and influenced their subsequent relations.

Thus, in cases of geographic proximity between unequal political entities, a high level of asymmetry was observed, particularly in military-political, economic, and cultural spheres. This led to serious social problems and tensions, which primarily had a negative impact on the weaker actor in the asymmetric relationship.

In the 16th–17th centuries, the relationship between Spain and the Netherlands was also marked by significant asymmetry, which manifested in political, religious, and economic pressure from Spain. The central event of this period was the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), as a result of which the Netherlands gained independence and became one of the world's leading trading and maritime powers. For Spain, however, the loss of the Netherlands, which had been one of the most profitable parts of the Spanish Empire, signified a weakening of its economic and military power (*Tilly, 1992*).

In the 17th century, the asymmetry in international relations reflected the dominance of European colonial empires (Spain, Portugal, France, England), which had significant influence on global politics and the development of global trade networks.

Leading European powers had a significant advantage in technology (possessing advanced navigation and shipbuilding technologies) and in military affairs, which allowed them to expand their colonies, strengthen their influence on the international stage, and succeed in military conflicts. Key elements of their military power included firearms, artillery, naval vessels, and organized armies, which enabled them to gain an advantage over weaker states. This technological advantage was crucial in establishing asymmetric relations (*Kennedy, 1988; Kissinger, 2014*).

One of the key characteristics of international relations in the early modern period was economic asymmetry, as Europe became a dominant force in the global economy through its colonial empires, trade development, and industrialization.

The establishment of trade routes by Europeans between Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia created global trade networks, where the leading European powers dominated thanks to their military and naval strength. Important trade centers in the 16th century remained Venice and Genoa, but their significance diminished due to the rising dominance of northern European states.

A key role in shaping economic asymmetry in international trade in the 16th–18th centuries was played by the East India and West India companies, which controlled a significant portion of international trade and had their own armed forces.

The English East India Company, which was granted a monopoly on trade between England and Asia, established control over Indian production and trade, contributing to India's economic dependence on England. Eventually, the company became the de facto ruler of much of India (*Scott, 2009*).

One of the most powerful trading companies in the world was the Dutch East India Company, which actively intervened in the internal affairs of the colonies, establishing control over

the production and trade of local goods (*Israel, 1998*). The activities of such companies greatly enriched European states through colonial exploitation and led to vast economic inequality between Europe and the colonies (*Tilly, 1992*).

The general economic decline of Spain in the 17th century and its subsequent loss of economic and political hegemony on the global stage to England, France, and the Netherlands – which became the new economic leaders of Europe – created asymmetry in relations between Spain and these emerging centers of power. As a result, Spain lost the ability to compete on equal terms with the leading European powers.

Thanks to relatively stable political institutions that facilitated economic development, England and the Netherlands achieved significant economic growth (*Israel, 1998*). At the same time, periodic political crises in France hindered its socio-economic development.

The active use of the economic theory of mercantilism by European states – aimed at increasing national wealth through trade and colonial expansion – further intensified economic inequality and tensions between countries.

In the early modern period, asymmetry in power between states often led to military conflicts. Weaker states became victims of aggression from stronger ones, contributing to the constant redrawing of borders and shifts in spheres of influence (*Kennedy, 1988*).

Asymmetric power dynamics also influenced diplomatic practices, with weaker states often forced into alliances or vassal relationships with stronger powers. Smaller European states sometimes had to unite with major powers for protection, even at the expense of their own autonomy.

Numerous manifestations of asymmetry were revealed during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which had far-reaching political and socio-economic consequences for Europe. It began as a religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants within the Holy Roman Empire but soon escalated into a pan-European war between a Catholic alliance and a coalition of Protestant states.

This war involved a complex network of political, religious, and military factors. Key aspects of asymmetric relations during the Thirty Years' War included political, economic, and military asymmetry.

A large number of European states participated in the war, each with varying levels of economic development, power, influence, and objectives. France, Spain, and Sweden, possessing significant resources for waging war, had considerable influence on its course. In contrast, smaller principalities, limited in resources and dependent on loans and subsidies from larger powers, were forced to choose allies and act in their interests (*Nexon, 2009*).

The Holy Roman Empire and Spain had strong dynastic ties and allies, which strengthened their political positions. Meanwhile, Protestant principalities were in a less advantageous position due to internal fragmentation and political instability.

Asymmetry in the Thirty Years' War also appeared in the resources, goals, and methods of warfare employed by the opposing sides, making the conflict dynamic, protracted, and unpredictable.

Asymmetry in resources played a key role in the course and outcome of the war. The Holy Roman Empire and Spain had significant economic resources due to their control over vast territories and colonies. The Protestant forces lacked sufficient resources to sustain prolonged warfare and thus largely relied on foreign support. Unlike the Habsburg monarchy, they also suffered from a shortage of manpower, placing them at a disadvantage and increasing the asymmetry of the conflict.

Asymmetry was also evident in political and religious goals. For the Catholic forces, the war was a means of preserving the Habsburg dynasty's power and maintaining the traditional

Catholic order, whereas the Protestant states sought decentralization and the preservation of the autonomy of principalities – in other words, the war was a path to greater independence and influence. Furthermore, the Catholic coalition aimed to preserve and expand Catholic influence, while Protestants fought for the right to religious freedom and freedom of belief.

Notably, the Catholic alliance employed traditional methods of warfare, including large armies, heavy cavalry, and fortifications, while the Protestant coalition used innovative tactics such as mobile artillery units, rapid maneuvers, and the use of light cavalry (*Wilson, 2016*).

In the war that devastated large parts of Central Europe, smaller states and regions suffered disproportionately high economic losses compared to the larger powers, which were able to sustain their economies despite the prolonged conflict. France and Sweden, intervening in the war to weaken the Habsburgs, often manipulated the smaller states to achieve their strategic goals. This external interference influenced the course and outcome of the war and highlighted the asymmetric influence of powerful states on the internal dynamics of the Holy Roman Empire.

Manifestations of asymmetry were also evident in the diplomatic sphere. During negotiations, the great powers dictated the terms of alliances and treaties, limiting the rights of smaller states. The Peace of Westphalia (1648), which marked the end of the war, was largely shaped by the interests of the leading powers, although it introduced:

- the principle of state sovereignty (each state was granted the right to determine its internal affairs without external interference);
- the balance of power, which became a key principle aimed at preventing similar future conflicts (the treaty initiated a system striving to maintain equilibrium among Europe's major powers);
- religious tolerance (religious rights of both Protestants and Catholics within the Holy Roman Empire were guaranteed, which helped reduce religious conflicts) (*Kennedy, 1988; Nexon, 2009*).

Overall, the Thirty Years' War serves as an illustration of how asymmetric relations affect complex international conflicts, where great powers use their superior economic resources, military strength, and diplomatic influence to pursue their goals, often at the expense of weaker states.

4. Asymmetry of International Relations in the 18th Century

Asymmetry in international relations in the 18th century – an era marked by political struggles for hegemony, frequent wars, and various forms of inequality – also played a significant role and manifested in different aspects. This period, characterized by transformations in political, military, economic, and social spheres, saw asymmetry expressed through imbalances in military, economic, and political power between states. It was a key factor shaping the foreign policy behavior of states and influencing the development of global events at the time.

With the establishment of powerful absolute monarchies in Europe, asymmetry in relations between these powers and smaller states grew accordingly. A major European conflict that arose from the struggle for the Spanish throne was the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), which was notably marked by a complex asymmetry of relations among the main participants. The asymmetry between the main belligerents – on one side France and Spain, and on the other Great Britain, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Netherlands – was evident in differences in military strength, economic resources, and diplomatic support (*Tilly, 1992*).

Asymmetric relations among the participants in the War of the Spanish Succession were driven by the varying economic, military, and political capacities of the states involved. Under Louis XIV, France had one of the most powerful armies in Europe but was forced to fight on multiple fronts, whereas the coalition consisted of armies from different countries that did not always act in a coordinated manner. However, Great Britain and the Netherlands controlled the seas, allowing them to restrict supplies to France and Spain, while Austria had a strong army but was limited in action due to involvement in other conflicts in Europe.

France and Spain possessed substantial financial resources thanks to their colonies. France's revenues significantly exceeded those of its rivals, whereas the coalition comprised countries with varying economic capacities. Only Great Britain, due to its financial strength, was able to operate on all fronts against France. Moreover, Spain was weakened by economic and internal problems at the start of the war, limiting its capacity for active military engagement.

France also had an advantage in diplomatic support due to its dynastic ties with Spain, while the coalition had to balance the interests of multiple states (*Kennedy, 1988*).

There was also clear asymmetry in strategic objectives: France sought to strengthen its dynastic union and dominate Europe, while the anti-French alliance aimed to contain French expansion and maintain the European balance of power. Great Britain and the Netherlands, in particular, were interested in preserving this balance to protect their commercial and political interests (*Israel, 1998*).

Thus, the asymmetry in relations among the participants in the War of the Spanish Succession reflected differences in military power, economic resources, strategic objectives, and political maneuvering, ultimately influencing the outcome of the conflict and the subsequent political order in Europe. The war reshaped the European political landscape, strengthening the positions of Great Britain and Austria and ending France's hegemony in Europe.

Another example of asymmetric relations across multiple dimensions – from military strength and economic resources to political alliances and geopolitical ambitions – was the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–1748). Understanding this asymmetry helps to grasp the complex dynamics of asymmetric interactions among states, which led to intense conflict and a new distribution of power on the international stage. The asymmetry in relations among the war's participants had a significant impact on its course and outcome, demonstrating the importance of coordination, resources, and strategic goals (*Kennedy, 1988*).

Ultimately, the War of the Austrian Succession led to the intensification of destabilizing trends and a change in the structure of international relations, which saw a steady increase in conflict potential, threatening the outbreak of a new armed confrontation. As tensions between the leading powers escalated, they culminated in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), which highlighted the significance of asymmetry in the capabilities of the war's participants.

The balance of power before the war was defined by the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756 (a realignment of alliances in which Austria joined France and Russia against Prussia, which was supported by Great Britain), altering traditional alliances: Great Britain and Prussia allied against France, Austria, and Russia. This created asymmetric alliances and demonstrated asymmetry in their military-political goals, which revolved around political, territorial ambitions and colonial interests.

Great Britain possessed a powerful navy that enabled it to control sea routes and colonies and block French supplies, although it had a smaller army on the continent.

Prussia, for its part, had one of the most effective armies in Europe, but its resources were limited compared to those of France and Austria. Surrounded by enemies, it was forced to fight on multiple fronts, putting significant pressure on its military and economic resources.

However, Prussia managed to resist the superior forces of Austria, France, and Russia through mobility and strategic ingenuity, demonstrating asymmetric effectiveness in military tactics. Meanwhile, the large Austrian and Russian armies faced difficulties in coordinating their actions and logistics (*Tilly, 1992*).

Thanks to its advanced economy and financial resources, Great Britain was able to subsidize its allies, creating economic asymmetry. In contrast, France and Austria faced financial difficulties that affected their ability to sustain prolonged military campaigns.

In the colonies, the conflict unfolded mainly between Great Britain and France, where asymmetry was reflected in differences in governance approaches and available resources. Great Britain had a considerable advantage over France in organizing colonial administration and in naval power, which allowed it to effectively blockade French fortifications.

French colonies, by contrast, had fewer resources, which limited their capacity to resist Britain. They were less populated, less organized, and relied heavily on alliances with local Indigenous tribes.

In particular, in India, the British East India Company actively leveraged local alliances and superior naval support to dislodge the French from their strongholds (*Kennedy, 1988*).

Thus, the asymmetric relations of the Seven Years' War were characterized by differing military capabilities, economic power, colonial ambitions, and diplomatic strategies, which played a decisive role in the development and outcome of the conflict. As a result, the war ended in victory for the Anglo-Prussian coalition. Great Britain significantly strengthened its position in North America and India, while Prussia emerged as a powerful European state.

Asymmetry in international relations was clearly evident during the three partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1772, 1793, 1795), when stronger powers – Austria, Prussia, and Russia – took advantage of the weakness of a neighboring country to expand their territorial holdings and influence. These events demonstrated how significant asymmetry in capabilities, combined with aggressive intentions, led to the destruction of what was once a major European power.

Internal political and economic crises, along with weak central governance, made Poland vulnerable to external intervention. The Russian and Austrian Empires and Prussia possessed far greater resources than Poland and were thus able to exert pressure on the Polish government. Additionally, they skillfully used diplomacy to coordinate their actions. The partitions of the Commonwealth occurred in stages and were formalized through international treaties, legitimizing their actions on the global stage and creating significant political asymmetry.

European powers with vast resources actively interfered in the political affairs of other countries (such as the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and China), further contributing to asymmetry in international relations.

In the second half of the 18th century, radical political and social changes took place – the American Revolution (1775–1783) and the French Revolution (1789–1799) – which altered the balance of power and challenged existing power structures. These revolutions introduced new governance ideas, laying the groundwork for political asymmetry (*Schroeder, 1994*).

The Industrial Revolution, which began in England at the end of the 18th century, had a significant impact on the configuration of Europe's socio-economic environment. Thanks to this industrial transformation, Great Britain became the world's leading industrial power, clearly outlining the contours of economic asymmetry. Technological innovations, factory-based production, trade liberalization, financial resources, and a developed transport infrastructure enabled Britain to dominate global markets and exert significant influence on the global economy.

Overall, the onset of industrialization in Europe laid the foundation for further economic and technological asymmetry and increased the uneven development among countries. The Industrial Revolution greatly enhanced the economic and military power of European states, which began actively expanding their empires, further deepening asymmetry in international relations, especially in Africa and Asia.

The industrial transformation and asymmetry in international relations stimulated military innovations, as states developed new technologies and tactics to overcome their disadvantages. The use of advanced weaponry and regular armies altered the nature of warfare, leading to the growing importance of military power (Tilly, 1992).

By the end of the 18th century, asymmetry continued to shape relations between states, reflecting significant differences in political, economic, and military power between large and small nations.

5. Conclusions

Thus, the early modern period was marked by significant asymmetry in international relations, caused by colonialism, economic and political transformations, and military advancements. Asymmetry between states was further reinforced by international agreements and alliances that primarily served the interests of powerful states, strengthening their dominance and creating dependency among smaller states.

Influential European powers, leveraging their economic, technological, and military advantages, created unequal conditions in international relations, which had long-term consequences for world history. The cultural hegemony established during this period shaped global cultural norms, contributing to the dominance of Western powers.

Asymmetry in international relations during the early modern era had a profound and lasting impact on the formation of the geopolitical landscape, the global economy, and cultural and social standards. A clear advantage in power served as a persuasive tool for establishing unequal relations with conquered or weaker states.

In general, asymmetry in international relations during the early modern period was the result of disparities in capabilities, where the stronger party acted solely from a position of power, imposing its terms and its vision of future relations on the weaker side.

Asymmetry clearly highlighted the complexity of relations not only between stronger and weaker states but also among influential powers engaged in an uncompromising struggle to expand their spheres of influence across the continent.

Asymmetry in international relations did not provide a foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation. On the contrary, this phenomenon of asymmetry often led to a form of forced coexistence – and frequently to friction – between states whose interests, value systems, and ways of representation were markedly unequal.

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