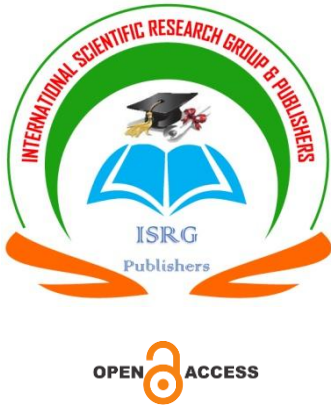


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## The Transformation of Parallel Power Networks from Empires to the Digital Age: State Authority, Strategic Communication and the Reconfiguration of International Power Relations

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### Abstract

*This study examines the historical transformation of parallel structures, that is, organizations operating alongside or within formal state institutions, from the imperial era to the digital age, and their shifting relationship with state authority. Drawing on a qualitative design, the research combines document analysis, comparative-historical analysis, and content and thematic analysis, situating the phenomenon within a pluralist theoretical framework that integrates realist, liberal, critical, world-systems, network, constructivist, postcolonial, and feminist approaches. It comparatively analyzes cases ranging from Rome, the Islamic states, and the Ottoman Empire to the Westphalian order, colonialism and Anglo-American hegemony, the Cold War, and the post-9/11 security order with the hybrid threats of the digital age. The findings show that parallel structures are not an anomaly peculiar to a single era but a structural and recurring component of the state form: they are instrumentalized when central authority is strong and turn into autonomous actors steering governance when it weakens. While their forms (court factions, bureaucratic strata, religious institutions, financial elites, intelligence networks, and communication apparatuses) remain largely constant across eras, only their instruments change. By placing the often-neglected communicative dimension of the phenomenon, namely information control from propaganda to soft power to network-based disinformation, at the center of the analysis, the study builds a bridge between communication studies and international relations. It concludes that parallel structures are a co-constitutive and dynamic phenomenon, capable of being simultaneously an extension and a rival of the state; the future of the global system will depend on states' capacity to understand, oversee, and manage these structures while safeguarding democratic values.*

**Keywords:** Parallel structures, state authority, strategic communication, disinformation, hybrid threats, network society, global governance, digitalization, sovereignty transformation, comparative historical analysis.

## 1. Introduction

The state is often imagined as the sum of its formal institutions—constitutions, ministries, armies, and courts. Yet the way political power actually operates has never, in any era, been confined to these visible institutions alone. Alongside the official structure, or in its shadow, there have always existed unrecorded networks of relationships, interest groups, secret services, financial circles, and informal organizations. The formations referred to in this study as parallel structures correspond precisely to this second layer: power centers whose legal legitimacy is often contested, which at times intertwine with the state's formal decision-making mechanisms and at other times operate in spite of them. These structures have sometimes been created by the state itself and at other times have grown against it, turning into rival centers that erode its authority. Encountered in nearly every period of history, this phenomenon has today—partly under the impact of digitalization—acquired a far broader sphere of influence than ever before.

The concept itself has not settled into a single definition in the literature. Some authors call this phenomenon the “deep state,” others the “shadow state,” and still others an “informal power network”; the common thread is that these formations are power centers with weak accountability that operate behind official institutions or in parallel with them. In this study, the parallel structure is used to mean power centers that are partly clandestine and mostly organized in network form, simultaneously conflicting and intersecting with the state's legitimate institutional order. This broad definition makes it possible to consider a military clique, a cross-border financial network, and an online disinformation network within the same frame. The decisive criterion here is not whether the structure is legal or illegal; what matters is the extent to which it can move beyond official oversight and the degree to which it can steer the will of the state.

The common language of these structures is provided by the concept of the network. The view that social power is distributed through horizontal networks as much as through hierarchical institutions has deep roots in sociology (Castells, 1996). The invisible maps of connection that elites weave through ties of kinship, partnership, and membership reveal a geography of power that official organizational charts do not capture (Scott, 2012). Ferguson (2019) shows that hierarchies and networks have throughout history stood in constant tension and exchange, and that lodges, religious orders, trade associations, and intelligence networks have built a distinctive sphere of influence alongside official power. The observation that the regulatory, judicial, and technical networks state officials build across borders form a kind of new world order in their own right (Slaughter, 2004) reminds us that parallel structures need not always be illegal; most of them sprout in the gray zones of the official system. To grasp the phenomenon, therefore, one must move beyond the conventional view that treats the state as a single, unified actor and instead trace the power networks that pass through and around it.

The origins of parallel structures reach back not to the modern period but as far as the state itself. Even the earliest states, while built on monopolies over record-keeping, taxation, and coercion, were constantly forced to bargain with the communities and intermediaries that lay outside this monopoly (Scott, 2017). Studies examining the rise and fall of great powers through their economic and military foundations have shown that empires often dissolved from within—that is, when financial circles, military ranks, and palace factions seized the central will (Kennedy, 1987). The birth

of the modern state in Europe was likewise the product of precisely this struggle to gather scattered power centers—lords, towns, churches—into a single center (Tilly, 1992; Spruyt, 1994). State-building and the suppression of parallel structures are therefore historically like two sides of the same process; as one grows stronger the other recedes, and as the center loosens the shadow structures revive.

The political history of the Islamic world contains perhaps the most striking examples of parallel military structures. The slave-soldier classes recruited to protect the central power of the caliphate turned in time into a power stratum in their own right; the rise of mounted slave armies into a force that determined politics was an early instance of this (Crone, 1980). In Egypt, the Mamluks experienced a process that went as far as a military caste directly seizing the state (Ayalon, 1994). The Janissary Corps in the Ottoman Empire followed a similar path; loyal instruments of the center at their founding, they later became an autonomous power center that shaped palace politics and even the succession to the throne (İnalçık, 1994). These examples clearly show how the instruments a state creates for its own security can, over time, escape its control and turn into a parallel power.

The Westphalian order, regarded as the founding narrative of the modern international system, envisions a world composed of sovereign and equal states. Yet the historical reality of this vision is contested. Analyses arguing that sovereignty has from the outset been an organized hypocrisy—that the principle operates by being continuously violated (Krasner, 1999)—together with studies showing that the narrative of 1648 inaugurating the modern interstate system is a myth (Osiander, 2001; Teschke, 2003), reveal that the tension between sovereignty and informal influence is inherent in the nature of the system. Seen in this light, parallel structures are not a deviation or malfunction but a structural complement of the order of sovereignty. However absolute sovereignty is declared to be, shadow structures that actually limit it, bend it, or harness it to their own interest have always remained on the stage.

The age of colonialism produced perhaps the most institutionalized form of parallel structures: the chartered companies that exercised sovereignty on behalf of the state yet were essentially commercial partnerships. The East India Company, governing an entire subcontinent with its own army, navy, currency, and diplomacy, turned into a vast private apparatus of power intertwined with the state and has been regarded as the ancestor of the modern multinational corporation (Robins, 2006). The British Empire established a hybrid order of sovereignty that operated through local intermediaries, indirect rule, and trade networks as much as through direct administration (Ferguson, 2004; Mamdani, 1996). That colonialism operated not only through territory and trade but also through representation, knowledge, and language—how colonized societies were constructed within Western discourse—has been a principal subject of critical scholarship (Said, 1978). The persistence of economic and cultural dependence even after formal independence, that is, neo-colonialism, shows that parallel structures survived the changing of flags (Nkrumah, 1965).

The dissolution of formal empires in the twentieth century did not mean the disappearance of influence; it merely changed its form. Direct territorial administration was gradually replaced by a more implicit hegemony operating through alliances, military bases, trade arrangements, and intelligence sharing. The special relationship between Britain and the United States is an example of

a durable network—extending beyond a formal alliance—in which the two countries' intelligence, defense, and foreign-policy apparatuses are interwoven (Dumbrell, 2001). On a broader scale, the post-Second World War Western order can also be read as a network-like hegemony in which the great power operates through institutions, rules, and consent rather than direct coercion (Ikenberry, 2011). Thus, in the postcolonial era, parallel structures often persisted as connections running beneath formal sovereignty without touching it at all.

The Cold War offers the clearest examples of how parallel structures are produced and used by states themselves. Bipolar rivalry, in an environment where direct conflict could not be risked, brought proxy wars, covert operations, and intelligence networks to the fore (Westad, 2007). The influence networks of Soviet intelligence in the third world (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 2005), together with the similar activities of Western services (Aldrich, 2010), created a second layer of diplomacy—tied to the state but invisible—operating in the shadow of official foreign policy. States' support of proxy actors and terrorist organizations to destabilize other states is a product of the same logic (Byman, 2007). This period was also one in which communication turned into a weapon; psychological warfare and propaganda techniques became an integral part of covert activity, and shaping public opinion was regarded as a front in its own right (Simpson, 1994; Cull, 2008).

The rise of non-state actors is not a new phenomenon; works that foregrounded the concept of interdependence argued as early as the 1970s that world politics could not be reduced to interstate relations alone (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Yet this tendency gained pace with the dissolution of the bipolar order; multinational corporations, international financial institutions, ideological movements, and transnational criminal organizations became increasingly decisive actors alongside the nation-state. Strange (1996) argues that this process resulted in the retreat of the state before markets, with a portion of authority transferred to corporations, financial actors, and networks of technical expertise. Rosenau (1990), for his part, explains this turbulence in world politics through the emergence of a non-state order alongside the state-centric one. Read together, these analyses show that the rise of parallel structures is not a coincidence but the outcome of a structural tendency of the international system.

Globalization increased the borderless mobility of capital, goods, people, and information, which in turn weakened states' control over their own territory (Held et al., 1999; Sassen, 2006). In the financial sphere, offshore centers, tax havens, and cross-border capital flows created a parallel financial geography that directly targets states' powers of taxation and oversight (Palan, 2010). Studies analyzing the workings of the global political economy show that economic power is shifting increasingly from states to private actors and market networks (Gilpin, 2001). World-systems analysis, in turn, argues that these inequalities are no coincidence and that the relationship between core and periphery itself feeds parallel structures (Wallerstein, 2004; Cox, 1987). Shadow structures thus cease to be merely a problem of weak states and become part of the ordinary functioning of the global economy.

The attacks of 11 September 2001 fundamentally transformed the understanding of security. Once the source of threat was no longer primarily another state but borderless networks, the line between internal and external security blurred. This period saw the spread of hybrid forms of conflict—termed “new wars”—involving

militias, mercenaries, criminal organizations, and ethno-religious groups as much as regular armies (Kaldor, 1999). The very privatization of security—that is, private military and security companies coming to share the capacity for violence once monopolized by the state—is a clear indication that parallel structures had become institutionalized (Abrahamsen, 2010). It was also better understood in these years that determining which phenomena count as security threats is itself a process of political construction, and that the power to name a threat is itself a form of power (Balzacq, 2011; Buzan & Hansen, 2009). In the same period, the idea that power can be built not only through coercion but also through attraction and persuasion (Nye, 2004) made the weight of communication and perception management in international struggle even more visible.

In the current period, the domain in which parallel structures expand most rapidly is the digital world. Digital technologies have created a new environment of power in which a small number of actors can influence vast audiences (Brynolfsson & McAfee, 2014). In the network society, control over information has become a far more decisive source of power than classical control over territory (Castells, 2010). The algorithmic architecture of social media platforms allows disinformation and propaganda campaigns to be conducted cheaply, quickly, and with relative anonymity, which increases the vulnerability of states in many areas, from elections to social polarization (Benkler et al., 2018). Tools such as cyberattacks, encrypted communication channels, and decentralized finance (DeFi) networks based on cryptocurrencies, in turn, render states' traditional mechanisms of oversight largely ineffective (Strange, 1996).

Digital transformation makes the communicative dimension of parallel structures more visible than ever. The irregular and decentralized character of global cultural flows that transcend nation-state borders (Appadurai, 1996) turns who narrates what, and how, into a question of power in its own right. Even language is an unequal resource; the transformation of English into a global lingua franca has facilitated the flow of information in favor of particular centers (Crystal, 2003). It has long been argued that the values transmitted through educational and cultural institutions also serve as a kind of indirect instrument of influence (Carnoy, 1974). The digitalization of public diplomacy has made it easier for states and non-state actors to target cross-border publics directly (Manor, 2019), while the structure of international communication flows has become a power variable in its own right that determines in whose favor this struggle will operate (Thussu, 2018). The influence of parallel structures is thus built not only through arms, money, and intelligence but also through discourse, representation, and information.

All these historical and contemporary manifestations point to a common question: how and to what extent do these structures, operating outside or at the margins of official institutions, determine states' domestic and foreign policies? The difficulty of the question stems from the fact that parallel structures can be at once an instrument of the state and a rival of the state. This ambivalent position does not fit easily into the state-centric frame of classical international relations theories and requires rethinking the concept of sovereignty. This is also the point of departure of the study: to move beyond the conventional view that assumes the state to be a single, unified actor and to place at the center of analysis the power networks that pass through and around it.

Within this framework, the study seeks answers to three basic questions. First, through which channels and with which instruments do parallel structures infiltrate states' decision-making processes? Second, what strategies do states develop to limit the influence of these structures, and how successful are these strategies? Third, what direction will the future of parallel structures take in a world where digitalization and globalization are accelerating? The study's two basic propositions are also connected to these questions. According to the first, parallel structures can shape international political processes by penetrating states' decision-making mechanisms. According to the second, these structures add a new dimension to the global power struggle through instruments of economic pressure and techniques of hybrid warfare.

The study addresses parallel structures not through the lens of a single theory but at the intersection of several complementary approaches. The realist tradition reads these structures as instruments to which states resort in order to protect their interests of power and security (Morgenthau, 1985; Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). Liberal institutionalism examines how the same structures relate to international institutions and regimes and under what conditions cooperation becomes possible (Keohane, 1984; Keohane & Nye, 2011). World-systems theory treats parallel structures as an extension of global capital accumulation and core-periphery inequality (Wallerstein, 2004; Cox, 1987). Network theory offers a powerful framework for explaining the multilayered, flexible, and distributed organization of these formations (Castells, 1996; Ferguson, 2019). Critical security studies question how and by whom security is constructed (Buzan & Hansen, 2009; Balzacq, 2011), while the constructivist approach emphasizes that actors' identities and interests are socially constituted (Wendt, 1999). The postcolonial perspective, in turn, shows that parallel structures often perpetuate relations of inequality and dependence inherited from the colonial period (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Young, 2001). This polyphonic theoretical ground makes it easier to grasp the complex nature of parallel structures, which resist any one-dimensional reading.

The study's principal contribution is that it gathers this phenomenon—discussed in a scattered fashion—into a holistic framework that combines its historical depth with its contemporary manifestations. Although the security, economic, and political dimensions of parallel structures have been examined extensively and separately in the literature, the treatment of the uninterrupted transformation extending from empires to the digital age within a single analytical framework has remained relatively incomplete. In particular, the question of how the new forms of threat that emerged with digitalization can be reconciled with the classical understanding of sovereignty remains largely unanswered. This study attempts to fill that gap and to propose an integrated reading for understanding the changing role of parallel structures.

In terms of method, the study rests on a qualitative design; historical analysis, literature review, and document analysis are used together. Academic articles, reports of international organizations, historical sources, and reliable press material were evaluated comparatively, and the workings of parallel structures across different geographies and political systems were traced through examples. This approach seeks to render visible—only at the points where different sources intersect—a phenomenon that by its very nature operates in secrecy.

The scope of the study encompasses the historical development of parallel structures, the mechanisms through which they affect states, and their possible future orientations. Historical examples such as the Roman Empire, the Islamic states, and the Ottoman Empire provide a starting point for understanding the place of these structures within the order of the state; the colonial period, the Cold War, and the post-9/11 security paradigms reveal the changing forms of the phenomenon. In the sections that follow, the theoretical and conceptual framework of the subject is first discussed, then the historical examples are analyzed, and finally the contemporary manifestations of parallel structures and the counter-strategies developed by states are assessed.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature on parallel structures largely approaches these formations along two distinct lines. One body of work treats them as elements that threaten the stability and security of the state, while another sees them as an informal extension that the state uses for its own ends. This duality in fact stems from the nature of the phenomenon; the same structure may weaken the state in one context and serve as its instrument in another. Strange (1996), by analyzing the shift of authority from the state to markets and expert networks, laid the theoretical ground for this ambivalence, showing that power is no longer gathered in a single center. Works emphasizing that the state has, since its origins, been forced to bargain with actors and intermediaries outside the official monopoly (Scott, 2017) likewise reveal that parallel structures are not exceptional but a continuous phenomenon.

How these structures are to be named and defined is itself a field of debate. Some studies invoke the concept of state capture, which describes the seizure of the state apparatus from within by illicit networks (Naím, 2005); others focus on non-state forms of order within the governance literature, which argues that order can be established even without a central ruler (Rosenau, 1990). This conceptual diversity—whether the phenomenon is to be counted as a threat or a governing instrument, as illegal or as belonging to a gray zone—explains why a common definition has formed only with difficulty in the literature. In this study, the parallel structure is kept broad enough to encompass these debates, meaning network-based power centers capable of moving beyond official oversight and of steering the will of the state.

The approach that has recently marked the literature is to read parallel structures through the concept of the network. The view that social power is distributed in the form of overlapping networks fed by ideological, economic, military, and political sources (Mann, 1986) explains why these structures cannot be reduced to a single institution. Network analysis renders visible the informational advantage carried by weak ties (Granovetter, 1985), the role of intermediaries who derive power by filling the gaps between actors (Burt, 2005), and the hybrid forms of organization positioned between market and hierarchy (Powell, 1990). Castells (1996) carried this accumulation to the global scale with the concept of the network society, while Slaughter (2004) showed that the regulatory and judicial networks state officials build across borders form a layer of governance in their own right. Within this framework, the parallel structure is conceived as a distributed and flexible network.

The comparative-historical literature that reveals the historical depth of the phenomenon also forms a strong strand. Classic studies that systematically examined imperial administrations

showed that the tension between central bureaucracy and autonomous power centers was a shared feature of empires (Eisenstadt, 1963). Analyses explaining the rise and fall of great powers through fiscal and military overextension (Kennedy, 1987) reveal how a state's internal balance of power determines its external strength. A study showing that, in the Ottoman case, centralization advanced through bargains struck with rural bandits and local power-holders (Barkey, 1994) demonstrates that the state did not always crush parallel structures but often governed by coming to terms with them. The Islamic states in which slave-soldier classes seized power over time (Crone, 1980), the Ottoman Empire in which the Janissaries turned into an autonomous force (İnalçık, 1994), and city-states such as Venice governed by merchant elites (Lane, 1973) are different historical manifestations of the same phenomenon.

The conditions under which these structures grow stronger constitute a separate heading of debate. The literature points to periods in which central authority and institutional capacity have weakened; since state-building is essentially an effort to bring scattered power centers under control (Tilly, 1992), informal structures fill the vacuum wherever this effort slackens. Naím (2005) argues that, as globalization loosened borders, illicit networks not only grew stronger but were also able to seize the state from within by penetrating public institutions, parties, courts, and the army. The analysis arguing that sovereignty has never been fully implemented and operates by being continuously violated (Krasner, 1999) also helps explain why these structures are durable.

On the economic dimension, the literature notes that parallel structures both expand the illicit economy and become embedded in the legitimate financial system. Naím (2005) shows that illicit trade—from drugs and arms to human trafficking and counterfeiting—is not an underworld separate from the global economy but a domain interwoven with it. Offshore centers and tax havens play a decisive role in laundering these revenues into the legitimate system; such structures directly erode states' powers of taxation and oversight (Palan, 2010). More generally, the shift of economic power from states to private actors and market networks (Gilpin, 2001; Strange, 1996) is seen to open a wide field of maneuver for parallel structures. International reports documenting the burden of transnational organized crime on governance (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022) reinforce this picture.

Studies that situate this economic impact within its structural context argue that the liberalization of capital flows under neoliberal globalization created an environment favorable to parallel structures (Harvey, 2005). It has been shown that financial liberalization frequently leads to crises (Eichengreen, 2008) and that the policies imposed by international financial institutions have produced heavy social costs in peripheral countries (Stiglitz, 2002; Peet, 2009). World-systems analysis, in turn, argues that parallel structures feed on core-periphery inequality and that the dependent position of peripheral countries in the global economy is exploited by these structures (Wallerstein, 2004; Arrighi, 1994). Economic parallel structures are thus treated not merely as a crime problem but as a structural feature of the global economy.

The dependency and postcolonial literature, which stresses the historical and cultural roots of this structural inequality, reads parallel structures as an extension of the relations of domination inherited from colonialism. Analyses arguing that the underdevelopment of peripheral countries stems from the

relationship of dependence established with core countries (Frank, 1967; Rodney, 1972) point to an order in which resource revenues flow not to local populations but outward and to local intermediary elites. The persistence of economic and political dependence after formal independence, that is, neo-colonialism (Nkrumah, 1965), explains why these intermediary structures became permanent. Works showing that colonialism produced not only economic but also psychological and cultural domination (Fanon, 1961), together with critiques analyzing how Western regimes of knowledge and representation naturalized this domination (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Young, 2001), reveal that parallel structures have a symbolic dimension as much as a material one.

In the security field, the literature largely agrees that parallel structures have transformed the traditional perception of threat. After the Cold War, hybrid forms of conflict in which militias, mercenaries, and criminal organizations joined state armies became widespread (Kaldor, 1999), and the capacity for violence expanded toward private military and security companies (Abrahamsen, 2010). States' acting through proxy actors and state-sponsored organizations instead of confronting their rivals directly renders conflict more complex and difficult to attribute (Byman, 2007). This transformation has foregrounded the fact that what counts as a security threat is also a problem of political construction, and that the power to name a threat is itself a form of power (Buzan & Hansen, 2009; Balzacq, 2011; Booth, 2007).

Intelligence studies constitute the field in which parallel structures fuse most tightly with the state. The operations services conduct in the shadow of official foreign policy (Aldrich, 2010; Andrew & Mitrokhin, 2005) create a layer of activity tied to the state yet invisible. Where the line between crime and politics blurs, a crime-terror nexus emerges in which smuggling networks supply resources to armed groups; this nexus is further strengthened as the illicit economy penetrates the state apparatus (Naím, 2005). The security threat is thus distributed not to a single actor but across the whole of interconnected networks, and classic instruments of deterrence begin to lose their function.

On the social and political plane, the principal impact of parallel structures is that they erode trust in institutions and steer decision-making processes invisibly. This influence deepens where the infrastructural power of the state remains limited—that is, where the state cannot extend its decisions to every segment of society (Mann, 1986); and the way globalization opens a sphere of power that exceeds national democratic oversight (Held, 1995) weakens accountability. Works showing that the norms determining which behaviors count as legitimate change over time (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998) reveal that the processes by which parallel structures gain or lose legitimacy also depend on this normative struggle. This process can corrode democratic institutions from within, producing such outcomes as the distortion of elections, the rise of corruption, and the loss of effectiveness in public administration.

On the legal plane, the debate revolves around the relationship of parallel structures to the rule of law. These structures often legitimize their activities by exploiting legal gaps and deficiencies of oversight; because they operate across borders, they also exceed the jurisdiction of any single state. The analysis arguing that sovereignty has from the outset operated as a flexible and violable principle (Krasner, 1999), together with studies showing that law historically arose from the conflict of different sources of authority (Berman, 1983), explains why the legal status of these structures

remains uncertain. Works examining how law was constructed as an instrument of domination in the colonial period (Merry, 1991; Chanock, 1985) point to the historical roots of today's legal inequalities, while the judicial and regulatory networks state officials build across borders (Slaughter, 2004) and the international legal frameworks developed to combat transnational crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022) constitute two distinct faces of the effort to close these gaps.

The communication and media dimension holds a special place for this article because of parallel structures' capacity to shape public opinion. How the media—under the concentration of ownership and commercial pressures—turns into an instrument of power has long been debated (Curran & Seaton, 2018). In the network society, control over information has itself become a source of power (Castells, 2010); the algorithmic architecture of digital platforms has prepared the ground for disinformation and propaganda campaigns to be conducted cheaply, quickly, and with relative anonymity (Benkler et al., 2018). These campaigns are seen to increase the vulnerability of states across a wide field, from elections to social polarization.

The use of communication as an instrument of power is not new. The psychological-warfare and propaganda programs conducted throughout the Cold War (Simpson, 1994; Cull, 2008) show that shaping public opinion was regarded as a front in its own right. The idea that power can be built through attraction and persuasion as much as through coercion (Nye, 2004) carried communication to the center of international struggle. Critical works showing that representation and discourse operate as a form of domination (Said, 1978), studies arguing that the values transmitted through educational and cultural institutions produce indirect influence (Carnoy, 1974), and approaches analyzing the decentralized, unequal structure of global cultural flows (Appadurai, 1996) explain how parallel structures derive power through communication. The digitalization of public diplomacy (Manor, 2019) and the unequal structure of international communication flows (Thussu, 2018) shape the contemporary form of this struggle, while the role of large foundations and private institutions in constructing cultural influence (Parmar, 2012) also forms part of the picture.

The newest layer of the phenomenon is digitalization. The emergence of a new technical environment in which a small number of actors can influence vast audiences (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014) has radically altered the scale and speed of parallel structures. Control over digital infrastructures and data flows has become a question of sovereignty in its own right; the way decentralized finance networks and encrypted value transfers bypass states' financial oversight has pushed international organizations toward new efforts at regulation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023; International Monetary Fund, 2022). This literature argues that the future of parallel structures depends largely on the struggle over regulation and its evasion in the digital domain.

From the perspective of international relations, parallel structures stand out as an instrument of great-power rivalry. The realist tradition regards them as nearly inevitable in an environment where states pursue their interests of power and security (Mearsheimer, 2001), while the interdependence approach examines the relationship of the same structures to institutions and regimes (Keohane & Nye, 2011; Keohane, 1984). Critical and neo-Gramscian analyses show how parallel structures are interwoven

with the dimension of consent and ideology in global hegemony (Cox, 1987); the reading of the postwar order as a network-like hegemony operating through institutions and rules is also assessed within this frame (Ikenberry, 2011). The tension between international financial institutions' efforts to monitor illicit flows and these structures' ability to evade oversight (World Bank, 2023) brings to light the global-governance dimension of the phenomenon.

Considered together, this body of work shows that the literature has examined parallel structures separately, and often in isolation from one another, under the headings of economics, security, law, politics, media, and international relations. Although the historical, theoretical, and contemporary literatures have each produced rich debates of their own, the combination of these dimensions within a single integrated framework and along a line of historical continuity has remained relatively incomplete. In particular, how digitalization transforms parallel structures and how these new forms are to be reconciled with the classical understanding of sovereignty and security has not yet been adequately answered. This study aims to fill that gap by uniting these scattered fields along a common line extending from empires to the digital age. The following section discusses in detail the theoretical framework that organizes this literature.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Parallel structures are a multilayered phenomenon that exceeds the explanatory power of any single theory. The study therefore chooses to use together a set of theoretical approaches that are not competing but complementary. This pluralist stance—combining concepts selected from different theoretical traditions in the solution of a single problem—rests on the idea that compressing complex phenomena into a single paradigm weakens explanatory power. Each theory illuminates a different face of the phenomenon: realism foregrounds power and interest; liberalism, institutions and cooperation; critical theory, hegemony and ideology; the world-systems approach, global inequality; network theory, the form of organization; the communication-centered approach, the power of information; constructivism, the construction of legitimacy; critical security studies, the construction of threat; and postcolonial and feminist approaches, historical and social inequalities. Each of these approaches is addressed below in terms of how it explains parallel structures.

The realist tradition sees the international system as anarchic and states as units obliged to provide for their own security; within this framework, parallel structures are one of the instruments to which states resort in pursuit of power and interest. For classical realism, politics proceeds along the axis of interest and power (Morgenthau, 1985); structural realism, for its part, holds that states' behavior is largely determined by the distribution of power in the system (Waltz, 1979). On this reading, states often find it less costly to use proxy actors, secret services, and illicit networks than to confront their rivals directly (Mearsheimer, 2001). Concepts such as the security dilemma and the balance of power also explain why states enter a race to build their own proxy networks against those of their rivals. Yet realist analysis also contains a warning: a parallel structure that escapes the state's control may in time turn into an independent actor that threatens its security. The concepts of balance of power, national interest, and survival thus explain both how these structures are used and why they can become dangerous.

Liberal institutionalism draws attention to a dense web of interdependence formed, alongside states, by international institutions, regimes, and non-state actors (Keohane & Nye, 2011). On this approach, parallel structures are not merely the product of a power struggle but a natural by-product of globalization and cross-border connections. The view that institutions reduce uncertainty and make cooperation possible by producing shared rules and expectations (Keohane, 1984) explains why states resort to international regimes and multilateral mechanisms to oversee these structures. The governance literature, which argues that rules and order can be established even without a central world government (Rosenau, 1990), shows that non-state actors and informal networks can become part of this governance. The way the regulatory and judicial networks state officials build across borders form a layer of governance in their own right (Slaughter, 2004), and the way the postwar order can be read as a hegemony operating through institutions and consent (Ikenberry, 2011), show that parallel structures are not always opposed to order; they can sometimes be an informal extension lodged within it.

The critical and neo-Gramscian approach emphasizes that power relations are historically and ideologically constructed. Cox (1987), adapting Gramsci's concept of hegemony to international relations, argues that the dominant order is sustained not only through coercion but largely through the manufacture of consent. On this reading, parallel structures are part of the global capitalist order and its ideological superstructure; even some networks that appear illicit in fact reproduce the existing distribution of power. Critical theory therefore proposes to treat the phenomenon not merely as a security or economic problem but as a manifestation of global inequality and relations of domination.

World-systems theory concretizes this inequality through the core-periphery relationship. For Wallerstein (2004) and Arrighi (1994), the global economy is a single system that renders peripheral countries structurally dependent; parallel structures, too, feed on this relationship of dependence. The dependency literature, which argues that underdevelopment is a result of the relationship established with core countries (Frank, 1967), points to an order in which resource revenues in peripheral countries flow not to local populations but outward and to local intermediary elites. Within this framework, parallel structures function as intermediary networks that bind the resources of peripheral countries to global capital.

Network theory offers the most powerful framework for explaining the organizational form of parallel structures. Studies examining the strength of social ties and their capacity to carry information (Granovetter, 1985), approaches analyzing the role of intermediaries who derive power by filling the gaps between actors (Burt, 2005), and studies defining hybrid forms of organization positioned between market and hierarchy (Powell, 1990) show why these structures can function even without central command. Studies examining the historical tension between hierarchies and networks (Ferguson, 2019) and network analyses that map the invisible connections of elites (Scott, 2012) lay bare the fact that parallel structures build a geography of power lying outside official organizational charts. Castells (1996) carried this accumulation to the global scale with the concept of the network society, arguing that power is now concentrated at the nodes that establish and sever the flow of information. This modular and distributed structure renders parallel structures resilient against state intervention; even if one node collapses, the network reweaves

itself. With digitalization, these networks have entirely transcended the limits of physical space (Castells, 2010), and cybercrime and cross-border financial networks have come to render states' instruments of oversight ineffective. For this reason, combating parallel structures requires grasping the network as a whole, beyond targeting individual leaders.

From the standpoint of the field of communication studies in which the article seeks publication, a further theoretical lens stands out: the view that communication and information are a form of power in their own right. The argument that real power in the network society is gathered in the actors who establish, direct, and sever the flow of information (Castells, 2010) explains why parallel structures have increasingly shifted toward the media and communication field. The political-economy approach, which analyzes how the media—under the concentration of ownership and commercial logic—turns into an instrument of domination (Curran & Seaton, 2018), reveals the structural origins of these structures' capacity to shape public opinion. The concept of soft power, which holds that power can be built through attraction and persuasion as much as through coercion (Nye, 2004), makes communication a direct instrument of foreign policy and influence. Studies showing how disinformation and propaganda campaigns spread through network structures in the digital age (Benkler et al., 2018), the digitalization of public diplomacy (Manor, 2019), and the unequal architecture of international communication flows (Thussu, 2018) constitute the principal channels that feed the symbolic power of parallel structures. Communication thus becomes a field of struggle in its own right, in which these structures can build power not only materially but also at the perceptual, discursive, and cultural levels.

The constructivist approach argues that actors' interests and identities are not given in advance but are constituted within social interaction (Wendt, 1999). Within this framework, whether a formation counts as a parallel structure, a terrorist organization, a freedom movement, or a legitimate business partner is the product not of an objective fact but of processes of discourse and recognition. In naming a structure a threat, states also construct their own security discourses and identities. Works showing that the norms determining which behaviors count as legitimate change over time (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998) reveal that the processes by which parallel structures gain or lose legitimacy also depend on this normative struggle. The constructivist view thus reminds us that the phenomenon has a symbolic dimension as much as a material one.

Critical security studies argue that security is not an objective condition but a political construction, and they draw on several distinct schools. The Copenhagen School analyzes the process by which an issue is moved beyond ordinary politics and declared a security threat—that is, securitization (Buzan & Hansen, 2009; Balzacq, 2011); within this framework, how and by whom parallel structures are counted as threats is a question of power in its own right. The Welsh School, by relating security to emancipation, shifts its subject from the state to the individual and foregrounds the concept of human security (Booth, 2007; McDonald, 2012). The Paris School examines security through everyday bureaucratic practices and the securitization of phenomena such as migration (Huysmans, 2006). Together, these three strands reveal that the threat posed by parallel structures is social, cultural, and political as much as it is military.

Postcolonial theory reads today's power relations together with the history of colonialism. The analysis showing how Western regimes of knowledge and representation constructed the East and how this construction naturalized domination (Said, 1978), the critique questioning the inability of the oppressed to make their own voices heard (Spivak, 1988), and works examining the psychological and cultural effects of colonialism (Fanon, 1961; Young, 2001) argue that parallel structures often perpetuate inequalities inherited from the colonial period. The indirect persistence of economic and political dependence after formal independence, that is, neo-colonialism (Nkrumah, 1965), points to an order in which former colonial powers preserve their influence through local intermediary structures. This perspective stresses that parallel structures are not merely a problem of governance but an extension of a historical injustice.

Feminist theory shows that the ostensibly gender-neutral concepts of international relations and security in fact reflect a male-dominated perspective (Tickner, 1992). Within this framework, parallel structures, too, are read in terms of gender relations: human trafficking, forced labor, and the forms of labor in illicit economies are often built on the exploitation of women and disadvantaged groups. Works examining how states' military and security apparatuses shape everyday life and gender roles (Enloe, 2000) reveal that the struggle against these structures cannot be security-centered alone; it must also attend to social justice and the empowerment of victims.

None of these theories alone suffices to explain the whole of parallel structures; each illuminates a particular face of the phenomenon. Realism and liberalism render visible the dynamics of power and cooperation at the level of states and institutions; critical theory and the world-systems approach, the structural roots of global inequality; network theory, the form of organization; the communication-centered approach, the power of information and discourse; constructivism, the construction of legitimacy; critical security studies, the construction of threat; and postcolonial and feminist approaches, historical and gender-based inequalities. By using these approaches together, the study aims to grasp parallel structures in their dimensions of power and interest as well as structure, identity, communication, and inequality. The following section addresses the method and data sources guided by this theoretical framework.

#### 4. Methodology

This study rests on a qualitative research design in order to understand the impact of parallel structures on states. The qualitative approach, which allows phenomena to be examined in depth within their own context, is preferred especially for analyzing complex and multidimensional social phenomena that are difficult to quantify (Creswell, 2014). The epistemology behind the design is an interpretive-constructivist position that assumes social reality to be not given and fixed but constituted within actors' processes of meaning-making, and this position is consistent with the plural and context-sensitive nature of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Because parallel structures are a phenomenon that operates in secrecy and does not lend itself readily to quantitative measurement, this explanatory-interpretive line suits the nature of the subject.

The unit of analysis is the relationship parallel structures establish with state authority. In order to see how this relationship appears in different historical and geographical contexts, the cases were

selected not at random but with a purposive logic; this logic entails turning toward information-rich cases that best illuminate the research question (Patton, 2002). Cases such as the Roman Empire, the Islamic states, the Ottoman Empire, the colonial period, the Cold War, and the digital age were determined so as to encompass the maximally varied forms of the phenomenon; a sample of this kind facilitates the rendering visible of patterns that recur under different conditions (Flick, 2009).

The principal method of data collection is document analysis. Document analysis is a method common in qualitative research that rests on the systematic reading and interpretation of official documents, institutional reports, and academic texts (Bowen, 2009; Bryman, 2012). Within the scope of the study, peer-reviewed academic articles and books, reports published by international organizations, official documents, historical sources, and reliable press material were evaluated together. This diversity made it possible to examine the economic, security, legal, political, and communicative dimensions of parallel structures without depending on a single type of source.

The documentary sources were supported by a limited number of unstructured interviews. Because formal and structured interviews can be both impractical and inhibiting of candid sharing in a phenomenon that operates in secrecy, such as parallel structures, the study resorted to informal interviews conducted in natural conversational settings and not bound to a predetermined set of questions (Patton, 2002). In these interviews, field notes kept during and after the conversation were taken as the basis instead of audio recording, and the insights obtained were evaluated within the same thematic framework as the themes emerging from the documents (Flick, 2009). This informal data served a complementary function in grasping the everyday and tacit dimensions of the phenomenon that are not reflected in documents.

A comparative and historical perspective was adopted in order to trace the transformation of the phenomenon across time and space. The comparative method, which serves to see how similar structures function in different contexts and how states respond to them (Ragin, 2014), made it possible to treat examples ranging from Rome to the Ottoman Empire and from colonialism to the Cold War within the same framework. The multiple-case logic, in which each example is first examined holistically within its own context and then compared across cases (Yin, 2018), together with comparative-historical analysis, which traces the change of institutions and power relations over time through cause-and-effect links (Mahoney & Thelen, 2015), rendered visible the points of continuity and rupture in parallel structures.

Certain criteria were observed in the selection of sources. First, the academic credibility of the institution or journal in which the document was published was considered, then its currency, and finally its direct relevance to the subject. Among academic sources, priority was given to peer-reviewed publications recognized in their field; among institutional reports, the documents of international organizations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the OECD were taken as the basis. These criteria are consistent with the principle that, in qualitative research, the quality of data is the fundamental guarantee of validity (Silverman, 2016).

The collected data were processed through content and thematic analysis. Content analysis, which rests on the systematic coding of recurring concepts, themes, and patterns in texts and interview

notes (Krippendorff, 2013), made it possible to separate the manifestations of parallel structures in different fields into comparable categories. Coding proceeded on two levels: on the one hand, predetermined categories derived from the theoretical framework, and on the other, new themes emerging from the data itself, were used together. This form of thematic analysis, in which predetermined and emergent categories are used together, is an established way of systematically uncovering patterns of meaning in qualitative data (Silverman, 2016). The data were classified and interpreted under the determined categories, and an integrated reading connecting the dimensions of the phenomenon was drawn from scattered sources.

Several criteria were invoked to ensure the reliability of the findings. First, the principle of multi-source verification was followed; information on the same phenomenon was compared across independent sources and different types of data—that is, documentary sources and interview notes—conflicting data were examined separately, and dependence on a single source was reduced. This approach, which rests on different types of data and sources checking one another, is regarded as one of the principal guarantees of reliability in qualitative research (Flick, 2009). Another criterion of reliability in qualitative research is to make the steps of analysis transparent and traceable, acknowledging that interpretation is not independent of the researcher's position (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In the study, the process of source selection and coding was set out clearly in line with this principle, and reading historical sources together with contemporary reports also enabled the findings to acquire both historical depth and currency.

The method has certain limitations. Because parallel structures by their nature operate in secrecy, it is difficult to obtain large-scale and systematic primary data; the study therefore rests predominantly on documentary sources, while the unstructured interviews assume a limited and complementary role. The fact that these interviews rest on field notes rather than audio recording carries the risk that the data remain confined to the researcher's momentary records. Moreover, the comparative approach, in treating different countries and periods within a common framework, carries the risk of pushing somewhat into the background the dynamics peculiar to each case. The fact that historical sources reflect the perspective of their own period also requires caution in interpretation. These limitations were reduced as far as possible by using a broad and varied base of sources, by testing the findings against different perspectives, and by justifying interpretations explicitly.

The interviews conducted within the scope of field work are entirely unstructured, and the data rest on notes kept in natural conversational settings. In view of the sensitivity of the subject, the information shared was evaluated in confidence and solely for research purposes; the accurate representation of sources and not severing them from their context were observed as a fundamental ethical principle. No ethics-committee approval is required for this study, and no ethical violation is involved in it.

In conclusion, the study addresses the role of parallel structures within the global system in a multifaceted way by using together a qualitative design, document analysis, unstructured interviews, and comparative-historical analysis. Supporting future research with larger-scale primary data, systematic field studies, and quantitative network analyses will provide a more detailed understanding of how the phenomenon operates.

## 5. Findings

### Parallel Structures in the Age of Empires

Historical records show that parallel structures are an almost invariable feature of imperial orders. Classic studies that examined imperial administrations comparatively revealed that the tension between central bureaucracy and autonomous power centers was a shared problem of these orders (Eisenstadt, 1963). In periods when central authority was strong, these structures could be kept under control; in periods when authority weakened or oversight over vast territories thinned, they turned into independent power centers that penetrated the administration. Examples as distant from one another as the regional power-holders who drifted from the center in China or the merchant oligarchy that effectively governed Venice show that the same pattern recurred independently of geography (Huang, 2016; Lane, 1973). This continuity between hierarchies and networks (Ferguson, 2019) suggests that the phenomenon is not merely a symptom of dissolution but an ordinary dimension of power.

The comparative examination in this section brings to light several forms of parallel structure that recur across the ages: court and guard factions concentrated around the ruler's inner circle; bureaucratic strata that seize the administration; religious institutions that produce their own legitimacy; economic and financial elites that steer state policy; intelligence networks that move beyond official foreign policy; and communication apparatuses that control the flow of information. The historical cross-sections that follow show that these forms reappear in every age with new instruments.

The Roman Empire, despite its developed bureaucracy, contains striking examples of this pattern. The Praetorian Guard, established for the emperor's security, turned in time into a power center that enthroned or deposed emperors (Goldsworthy, 2009); elite cliques within the Senate shaped the administration from behind the scenes during the transition from republic to empire (Syme, 1939; Millar, 1993). Large landowners and merchants steered the tax system in their own favor, establishing a lasting pressure on the fiscal structure (Hopkins, 1980; Duncan-Jones, 1994); as the empire expanded, the weight of these economic elites increased.

Religious structures, too, formed a powerful parallel authority in Rome; first the pagan priestly class and then the Christian Church assumed decisive roles in state politics and, in the late period, turned into a source of legitimacy alternative to imperial authority (Brown, 1989; MacMullen, 1984). Military governors in the frontier provinces developed policies independent of the center (Luttwak, 1976; Southern, 2007); during the crisis of the third century, army factions proclaimed their own emperors and triggered civil wars (Potter, 2004). The slowness of communication across a vast geography weakened the center's control over the provinces and left local governors a wide field of maneuver; control over the flow of information had already, in that age, become a dimension of power (Mattingly, 1997). The spread of bureaucratic corruption and bribery (Kelly, 2004) eroded central authority from within; historians have counted this internal dissolution among the principal factors in Rome's collapse (Heather, 2005; Ward-Perkins, 2005; Mann, 1986).

The political history of the Islamic world offers perhaps the most striking examples of parallel structures. In the Umayyad and Abbasid courts, viziers—especially the Persian-origin Barmakids—seized the administrative mechanism and at times

reduced the caliph to a symbolic figure (Kennedy, 2004; Crone, 1980; Lambton, 1981). The slave-soldier classes recruited to protect the central power of the caliphate turned in time into a power stratum in their own right; in Egypt, the Mamluks evolved into a military caste that directly governed the state (Ayalon, 1994; Petry, 1993).

Religious orders and Sufi formations, with their broad social bases, established an indirect but lasting influence over rulers (Trimingham, 1998; Öz, 2013); in Iran, the Qizilbash tribes on which the Safavid order rested formed both a military and a political autonomous sphere (Floor, 2001; Savory, 1980). In al-Andalus, different religious communities assumed decisive roles in finance and diplomacy (Watt, 1996; Glick, 2005); merchant classes developed an autonomous economic sphere by drawing on the flexibility of Islamic commercial law (Rodinson, 1978). Within the palace, the harem turned into an informal channel of policymaking through queen mothers and influential officials (Peirce, 1993). All these examples confirm that the influence of parallel structures runs inversely to the strength of central authority (Hodgson, 1974; Lapidus, 2002).

The Ottoman Empire, although it long possessed a strong center, experienced similar dynamics. Grand viziers trained in the Enderun rose, especially during the Köprülü period, to a position of effectively governing the state (İnalçık, 1994; Shaw, 1976); the Janissary Corps, a loyal instrument of the center at its founding, later turned into an autonomous force capable of deposing sultans and could be eliminated only in 1826 with the Auspicious Incident (Lewis, 1961). The office of the şeyhülislam and the ulema formed a religious-legal counterweight that limited the sultan's decisions through the power to issue fatwas (Zilfi, 2010; Berkey, 2003).

There were parallel power centers in the Ottoman economic order as well; guilds and the bankers of Galata reached a weight capable of influencing the state's fiscal policies, especially in periods when trade with Europe and external borrowing increased (Pamuk, 2000; Quataert, 1994). As the classical order loosened, the notables (ayan) and local power-holders in the provinces became prominent; studies showing that centralization advanced through bargaining with these actors (Barkey, 1994) reveal that the state did not always crush parallel structures but often governed by coming to terms with them. The Ottoman case shows that parallel structures can be durable even in a strong state and that they change form according to the balance between center and periphery.

### **The Modern State, Colonialism, and the Anglo-American Order**

The rise of the ideal of the sovereign nation-state with the Westphalian order did not eliminate parallel structures but merely caused them to change form. Before Westphalia, the Catholic Church, a supranational parallel authority transcending kings and possessing its own law and judiciary, shaped European politics (Berman, 1983); the rise of the sovereign nation-state largely took the place of this supranational authority. Analyses showing that sovereignty has from the outset operated as a flexible and violable principle (Krasner, 1999; Osiander, 2001; Teschke, 2003) reveal that feudal lords and religious authorities were gradually replaced by economic and political elites (Spruyt, 1994). With industrialization and the rise of capitalism, banking systems, corporations, and pressure groups became principal actors that indirectly steered the nation-state's decision-making processes (Gilpin, 2001; Cox, 1987). This process deepened further with

digitalization and the rise of cross-border networks (Castells, 2010; Keohane & Nye, 2011; Held et al., 1999).

The British Empire produced the most institutionalized form of the parallel structure. The East India Company, governing an entire subcontinent with its own army, navy, and diplomacy, turned into a private apparatus of power that assumed the functions of the state (Robins, 2006; Dirks, 2006). The empire established a hybrid sovereignty operating through local intermediaries and indirect rule rather than direct administration (Ferguson, 2004; Mamdani, 1996), thus keeping vast geographies under control at low cost.

On the economic plane, London-based financial institutions managed a global flow of capital partly independent of state policy (Hobsbawm, 1987; Arrighi, 1994; Pamuk, 2000); in the field of intelligence, services such as MI6 conducted operations beyond official foreign policy (Jeffery, 2010; Aldrich, 2010). Closed networks resting on the aristocracy and elite educational institutions shaped many decisions, from changes of government to the financing of wars, from behind the scenes (Cannadine, 1990; Thompson, 1968).

The age of colonialism turned parallel structures into a deliberate instrument of governance for the great powers. European states established indirect control by incorporating local elites into the system rather than governing directly (Abernethy, 2000; Fieldhouse, 1986; Cooper, 2005); this strategy left lasting divisions in local societies (Mamdani, 1996). Economically, commercial monopolies and chartered companies rendered local economies unilaterally dependent (Frank, 1967; Vries, 2015); companies such as the Dutch VOC and the British East India Company constituted an early form of parallel sovereignty in which the state's powers of sovereignty were transferred to a private company. Military control was often secured through native soldiers and militias, both lowering costs and deepening social division (Bayly, 1989).

One of the most lasting dimensions of colonialism was control over knowledge and culture. Through the press, education, and cultural institutions, the flow of information was shaped in the interest of the metropole; by making it difficult for local peoples to learn their own history and identity, the internalization of metropolitan ideology was sought (Said, 1978; Carnoy, 1974). Works showing that national identities were themselves constructed in this very process (Anderson, 1983) reveal that colonial education, by incorporating local elites into metropolitan culture, produced a cultural dependence that continued after independence.

In most cases, formal independence did not end economic and political dependence; neo-colonialism, in which former colonial powers sustained their influence through local intermediaries and corporations, became the principal mechanism by which colonial-era parallel structures were carried over into the post-independence period (Nkrumah, 1965). Thus, although flag and anthem changed, the fact that the networks shaping resource flows and decision-making processes largely remained in place confined the sovereignty of many new states to a formal frame.

Britain's presence in Southeast Asia is a concrete example of this pattern. Regions such as Malaya, Burma, and Borneo were controlled through indirect rule and alliances with local elites (Tarling, 1999; Harper & Miller, 2003); an export economy based on raw materials such as rubber, tin, and spices rendered the region dependent on the metropole (Drabble, 2000). Port, railway, and telegraph networks were built primarily in the interest of the colonial administration; Western-style education, while training a

narrow governing elite, left the broad masses outside and bequeathed deep inequalities to the post-independence period (Rudner, 1994).

The dissolution of British hegemony meant not the disappearance of influence but its change of hands. Studies examining the rise and fall of great powers through their economic and military foundations (Kennedy, 1987) show that global primacy passed from Britain to the United States in the twentieth century; this transition was softened by a durable special relationship in which the two countries' intelligence, defense, and foreign-policy apparatuses were interwoven (Dumbrell, 2001). After the Second World War, NATO and the Western order established a network-like hegemony in which the great power operated through institutions and consent rather than direct coercion (Hennessy, 2006; Westad, 2007; Ikenberry, 2011).

On the economic plane, the Bretton Woods order made the international monetary system dollar-centered; the financial centers of London and New York turned into nodes that determined the direction of the global economy (Eichengreen, 2008; Strange, 1996). In the military field, Britain acted as a strategic partner in U.S. operations (Coker, 2009; Chalmers, 2005); in intelligence, the Five Eyes network led by the two countries constituted an example of a parallel structure that could move beyond member states' official foreign policies and that hampered democratic oversight (Aldrich, 2010; Rudner, 2004).

### **The Cold War and the Shadow Struggle**

The Cold War is the clearest period of how parallel structures are produced and used by states. The world was divided into the U.S.-led Western and the Soviet-led Eastern blocs; against NATO and the Marshall Plan, the Warsaw Pact and COMECON were established (Gaddis, 2005; Hogan, 1987; Westad, 2007). The rivalry between the two blocs proceeded not only militarily but also as a contest of legitimacy between different social and economic models.

In this environment, where direct conflict could not be risked, the struggle proceeded through proxy wars and covert operations. In conflicts ranging from Korea to Vietnam and from Afghanistan to the Middle East, the superpowers fought through local actors (Byman, 2007); services such as the CIA and the KGB formed a layer of shadow activity that steered changes of government, as in the cases of Iran in 1953 and Chile in 1973 (Andrew & Mitrokhin, 2005; Kinzer, 2006; Aldrich, 2010). Nuclear deterrence, based on the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, established a fragile balance that prevented direct war (Freedman, 2003).

The Cold War was also a period in which communication turned into a front. The United States sought to build a cultural ascendancy through Voice of America and Radio Free Europe broadcasts and through Hollywood; the Soviets spread their own ideology by similar means (Simpson, 1994; Cull, 2008). This practice of cultural diplomacy, which regarded the shaping of public opinion as a field of struggle in its own right, also prepared the ground for the later-theorized concept of soft power and for contemporary public diplomacy (Nye, 2004).

### **The Postmodern Era: Hybrid Threats and Digital Parallel Structures**

The end of the Cold War left, in place of the bipolar order, a more complex and multi-actor structure. In this period, in which grand narratives lost their force (Lyotard, 1984), international

organizations, corporations, civil society, and non-state actors became increasingly decisive in global politics, and a decentralized order emerged (Rosenau, 1990). Traditional military threats were replaced by new risks such as cyberattacks, economic pressure, environmental crisis, and pandemics (Beck, 1992); neoliberal globalization and digitalization accelerated this transformation (Harvey, 2005; Castells, 2010).

The attacks of 11 September 2001 fundamentally transformed the understanding of security. As the source of threat shifted from the state to borderless networks, the line between internal and external security blurred; counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and cybersecurity became the principal priorities of the period (Byman, 2007). In this period, in which what counts as a threat is a political construction (Buzan & Hansen, 2009; Balzacq, 2011), the restriction of individual freedoms and the expansion of surveillance capacity on security grounds gave rise to a debate over the normalization of the state of exception even in democracies.

In this period, the intelligence apparatus grew stronger; the Five Eyes network expanded, and the democratic oversight of intelligence became even more difficult (Aldrich, 2010). The transfer of security functions to private companies also gained pace; in fields ranging from intelligence to protection and from logistics to interrogation, private military and security companies formed a parallel security layer alongside the state (Abrahamsen, 2010). The expansion of mass-surveillance capacity, in turn, reopened to debate the balance between security and fundamental rights and freedoms (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

The threat environment of the postmodern era is hybrid in character. New forms of war involving militias, mercenaries, criminal organizations, and ethno-religious groups as much as regular armies became widespread (Kaldor, 1999); the expansion of the capacity for violence toward private military companies showed that parallel structures had become institutionalized (Abrahamsen, 2010). Because these threats aim to produce instability by exploiting the internal dynamics of the target state, they cannot be met by purely military responses.

The cyber domain has settled at the center of this hybrid struggle. Attacks on critical infrastructure, because they offer the possibility of concealing the perpetrator, give states the opportunity to conduct deniable operations; Stuxnet, which targeted Iran's nuclear facilities, is a clear example of how cyber weapons have become an instrument alternative to conventional military intervention (NATO, 2023; TÜBİTAK, 2023). Disinformation, in turn, is the most effective weapon of this front; the algorithmic architecture of social media allows propaganda campaigns to be conducted cheaply, quickly, and with relative anonymity, increasing the vulnerability of democracies especially during electoral processes (Benkler et al., 2018).

The economy, too, has increasingly turned into an instrument of struggle. Tools aimed at weakening rivals through sanctions, financial speculation, and trade wars have become widespread; the restriction of access to the global financial system has become a method of pressure in its own right (Strange, 1996; Gilpin, 2001). Although international organizations try to monitor these flows, parallel structures continue to establish alternative channels by exploiting the gaps (International Monetary Fund, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

Looking to the future, digital currencies and decentralized finance networks are among the developments that most strain states'

traditional economic oversight. Encrypted value transfer, by hampering financial tracking, opens alternative channels to sanctioned countries and carries the potential to erode central banks' instruments of monetary policy (Palan, 2010). This situation pushes international organizations toward new efforts at regulation (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023; International Monetary Fund, 2022).

The struggle in the digital domain has turned into a race of regulation and evasion between states and parallel structures. While the difficulty of attributing perpetrators in cyberattacks feeds deniability, cryptocurrencies facilitate the illicit transfer of funds, which in turn leads central banks to develop digital currencies (TÜBİTAK, 2023; Türkiye Cumhuriyet Merkez Bankası, 2021). Control over the flow of information has become a more decisive source of power in the network society than classical control over territory (Castells, 2010).

This multidimensional threat environment is steering states toward integrated and cooperation-based security policies. Multilayered strategies that use intelligence, diplomacy, and economic instruments together with military power are coming to the fore (NATO, 2023); transnational organized crime and proxy wars make international cooperation imperative (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022). At the same time, the fact that international organizations themselves remain under the influence of the great powers is a factor that limits the effectiveness of this struggle.

All these findings point to a single pattern: parallel structures have persisted from empires to the digital age by changing form; they could be controlled in periods when central authority was strong and turned into independent power centers steering the administration when it weakened. The recurring forms, too, have remained largely constant: court and guard factions, bureaucratic strata, religious institutions, financial elites, intelligence networks, and communication apparatuses. The instrumental character of the phenomenon—that is, its capacity to be at once an extension and a rival of the state—has been preserved in every period. What changes is the instruments the structure uses: from the court faction to the chartered company, from the intelligence network to the disinformation network. The future of the global system appears to depend largely on states' capacity to adapt to these structures and to develop international cooperation.

## 6. Discussion

The picture set out by the preceding section points to two basic facts: continuity and transformation. Parallel structures have existed without interruption from empires to the digital age; yet in each era they have been reconstituted with different instruments and different appearances. The aim of this section is not to retell those findings but to make sense of them—that is, to discuss where the continuity stems from, through which mechanisms it operates, and what it means in terms of the theoretical framework and the literature.

The first and most fundamental meaning of this continuity is that parallel structures are not a deviation but a structural feature of the state form. The tension between the hierarchical state apparatus and autonomous power centers organized in network form (Ferguson, 2019) belongs not to a particular moment of history but to the very logic of power's organization. Analyses showing that the state has never been a single and indivisible authority—that social power is distributed across economic, military, political, and

ideological sources (Mann, 1986)—together with approaches that explain the formation of the state through bargains struck with the holders of capital and coercion (Tilly, 1992), reveal that centralization advances less by destroying parallel structures than by incorporating them or coming to terms with them.

These findings also help dispel the conceptual ambiguity in the field. The parallel structure is often confused with concepts such as the deep state, which denotes a clandestine faction; state capture (Naím, 2005), which denotes the seizure of the state by illicit interests; and informal governance, which operates alongside official institutions. The findings clarify both the common denominator and the point of divergence of these concepts: at the center of each lies a second layer of power operating alongside or within official authority; yet this layer is sometimes an instrument the state creates itself, sometimes a rival that seizes it, and sometimes a partner that bargains with it. The concept of the parallel structure is broad enough to encompass precisely this variable relationship.

Comparative examination makes it possible to classify these structures along three axes. In terms of their origin, some structures were created by the state itself (the Praetorian Guard, chartered companies, intelligence services), while others arose independently of the state (religious orders, criminal networks, financial elites). In terms of their relationship to the state, they may be complementary, rival, or captor. In terms of their field of activity, coercive, bureaucratic, religious, economic, intelligence, and communicative forms can be distinguished. This classification shows that the phenomenon does not fit into a single mold and that each example must be assessed according to its position on these axes.

The findings also offer a consistent pattern as to the conditions under which these structures emerge. Parallel structures arise mostly in the capacity gaps of central authority—that is, in the geographies the state cannot reach, the functions it cannot oversee, or the demands it cannot meet. Network theory, which analyzes the role of intermediaries who derive power by filling the gaps between actors (Granovetter, 1985; Burt, 2005), explains that these structures grow stronger precisely by positioning themselves at the connection points that the official hierarchy cannot see. The delegation of authority by states under cost pressure—as in the examples of indirect rule under colonialism, the proxy actor in the Cold War, and the private security company today—are concrete manifestations of these gaps being deliberately opened to parallel structures.

Persistence and transformation, in turn, are closely related to technology. While the forms have remained largely constant, the instruments have changed; the structures of the classical age, resting on physical proximity and personal ties, evolved into bureaucratic and corporate networks in the modern age and into information networks in the digital age. In the network society, in which power is concentrated at the nodes that establish the flow of information (Castells, 2010), parallel structures have detached from place and, thanks to encryption and anonymity, have largely slipped free of state oversight. The real novelty of the digital age is that it changes not the nature of the phenomenon but its scale and speed.

The inverse relationship recurring in all the examples determines the boundary conditions of the phenomenon: in cases where central authority is strong, parallel structures could be controlled and instrumentalized in the state's interest; in cases where authority

weakened, they turned into independent power centers that seized the administration. For this reason, the same phenomenon can mean an extension of capacity in a strong state and a threat to sovereignty in a fragile one. The role played by the army in the late period of Rome, by the Janissaries in the Ottoman decline, and by militias and networks in weak states today shows the moments at which this threshold was crossed.

The findings show that the legitimacy strategies of these structures have also transformed. Parallel structures that once legitimized themselves through religious, dynastic, or ethnic references today lean on discourses of economic efficiency, technological innovation, and individual freedom. When one considers that legitimacy is not an objective quality but something constituted within social interaction and norms (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Wendt, 1999), it becomes clear that whether a formation is counted as a threat or a legitimate partner is itself a matter of power and discourse (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). That the same structure can be named a criminal network in one context and a strategic partner in another confirms that the phenomenon has a symbolic dimension as much as a material one.

This multilayered phenomenon confirms that each of the approaches addressed in the theoretical framework illuminates a distinct face of it. The realist lens explains how parallel structures are used as an instrument in states' calculations of power and interest (Mearsheimer, 2001); liberal institutionalism points to the institutional and multilateral mechanisms needed to oversee them (Keohane & Nye, 2011). Critical and world-systems approaches, in turn, read the phenomenon as a product of global inequality; the carrying over of colonial-era structures into the post-independence period through neo-colonialism (Cox, 1987; Wallerstein, 2004; Frank, 1967; Nkrumah, 1965) shows that parallel structures reproduce the core-periphery relationship.

While network theory explains the organizational form of these structures and constructivism the construction of their legitimacy, postcolonial and feminist approaches make visible how they reproduce historical inequalities and gender-based exploitation (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Tickner, 1992). These lenses do not compete with one another; each opens a different layer of the phenomenon and provides an integrated understanding only when used together. The study's pluralist theoretical stance is, for precisely this reason, not a preference but a requirement of the nature of the phenomenon.

Perhaps the least studied dimension of the phenomenon, but the one this study foregrounds, is the communicative. The findings show that the struggle of parallel structures has shifted increasingly into the field of information and discourse across the ages. The control of communications in Rome, the shaping of information flows through the press and education under colonialism, propaganda and cultural diplomacy in the Cold War, and disinformation in the digital age are the reproduction of the same function with different technologies. When one considers that communication and information are a form of power in their own right (Castells, 2010; Curran & Seaton, 2018), the turn of parallel structures increasingly toward the media and communication field is unsurprising.

The digital age has qualitatively transformed this dimension. The concept of soft power, which holds that power can be built through attraction and persuasion as much as through coercion (Nye, 2004), makes communication a direct instrument of influence; studies

showing how network-based disinformation renders democracies fragile during electoral processes (Benkler et al., 2018), together with the unequal architecture of international communication flows (Thussu, 2018) and the digitalization of public diplomacy (Manor, 2019), reveal that symbolic power now operates through platforms and algorithms. The contemporary front of parallel structures is thus over attention and information as much as over territory or capital; this places the phenomenon directly within the field of interest of communication studies.

The point at which all these dimensions intersect is that parallel structures can be at once an extension and a rival of the state. These structures, on the one hand, erode state authority; on the other, they can contribute to institutional evolution by forcing the state to be more transparent, accountable, and effective. Analyses arguing that the state has not retreated but changed form (Strange, 1996) suggest that the relationship between the state and the parallel structure is less a zero-sum conflict than a co-constitutive and dynamic balance. Framing the phenomenon as a mere security threat therefore overlooks its governance-related and transformative dimension.

The democratic consequences of this dual character are grave. Layers of power operating alongside official authority—unelected and often unaccountable—weakens the principles of accountability and representation and reduce the concept of sovereignty to a formal frame (Krasner, 1999). The deniability fed by the difficulty of attributing perpetrators in the digital domain renders responsibility wholly indeterminate. The tension between fundamental rights and the surveillance that expands on security grounds, in turn, shows that the struggle against parallel structures carries the risk of eroding democracy's own values.

States' response is constrained by a fundamental organizational mismatch: the hierarchical and bureaucratic state apparatus often remains cumbersome in the face of flexible, network-based parallel structures (Ferguson, 2019). Responses resting solely on hard power and oversight remain limited, because they cannot meet these structures' search for legitimacy. The strategy of internalization—that is, drawing parallel structures into the system—preferred by some states may work in the short term, but absent strong institutional oversight it carries the risk that the state will in time be captured by these structures. Effective adaptation requires a more horizontal and agile institutional design, cyber capacity, updated legal frameworks, and international cooperation together (Slaughter, 2004; NATO, 2023).

On a broader scale, the findings indicate that state-centric governance is giving way to multi-actor and multi-level governance. In the light of approaches arguing that order can be established even without a central world government (Rosenau, 1990; Slaughter, 2004), a portion of parallel structures becomes legitimized and integrated into this governance, while another remains outside and forms alternative power centers. Although the post-war liberal order, which operates through institutions and consent (Ikenberry, 2011), provides a basis for this integration, the fact that international organizations themselves remain under the influence of the great powers and experience problems of legitimacy (International Monetary Fund, 2022; World Bank, 2023; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022) limits this capacity.

These findings also respond to a particular gap in the literature. Most studies in the field have treated the phenomenon from within

a single era, a single region, or a single theory; they have not seen historical depth together with the contemporary digital transformation and the communicative dimension. The contribution of this study is that it examines parallel structures within a long historical arc extending from empires to the digital age, with a multi-theoretical framework and with the communication dimension at its center, thereby bringing a scattered literature onto a common analytical ground.

The continuity thesis must be handled with caution, since it carries the risk of disregarding the real ruptures between periods. The principle of sovereignty introduced by Westphalia, the bureaucratic capacity of the nation-state, and the scale of digital networks are ruptures that qualitatively altered the workings of parallel structures; in reading different ages within a common framework, the singularity of each context must not be overlooked. Likewise, it must not be forgotten that parallel structures are not always dysfunctional or destructive and can, in some cases, provide stability by filling vacuums. For this reason, the study advances not an identity but a family resemblance: the forms and functions recur, but each age rewrites them according to its own conditions.

All this discussion arrives at a single assessment: parallel structures are not a malfunction of the global system but a structural component of it, and they will persist into the foreseeable future. An approach that aims to eliminate them entirely is unrealistic; what is decisive is states' capacity to understand, oversee, and, where necessary, channel these structures into legitimate avenues. How this capacity can be strengthened, and which policy priorities come to the fore, are addressed in the following section.

## 7. Conclusion And Recommendations

This study set out to examine the historical transformation of parallel structures from empires to the digital age and the variable relationship they establish with state authority. The questions posed at the outset of the research centered on how these structures are to be defined and distinguished from neighboring concepts, in what forms they have emerged throughout history, what kind of relationship they establish with state power, how the digital age transforms this relationship, and how states can respond to them. The conclusions below summarize the answers the study gives to each of these questions.

The first and most fundamental conclusion is that parallel structures are not a malfunction peculiar to a particular era or political system but an almost structural and recurring component of the state form. A second layer of power operating alongside or within official authority has found a place in every order throughout history; it was controlled and instrumentalized in periods when central authority was strong and turned into an independent actor steering the administration when it weakened. This also yields the boundary condition of the relationship between the state and autonomous power centers: the phenomenon means an extension of capacity in a strong state and a threat to sovereignty in a fragile one.

The historical arc traced by the study confirms this conclusion. Examples ranging from Rome's guard and senatorial factions to the vizier, military, and ulema power centers of the Islamic and Ottoman courts; from the chartered companies of colonialism to the Anglo-American intelligence networks; and from the proxy actors of the Cold War to the cyber and disinformation networks of the digital age show that the same function is reproduced with different instruments. What changes is not the existence of parallel

structures but their forms of organization, their discourses of legitimacy, and the technology they employ. The difference brought by the digital age, too, is less a qualitative break than a radical increase in the scale, speed, and placelessness of the phenomenon.

Three theoretical propositions can be derived from these findings. First, parallel structures are not an exception to the state but a constitutive and recurring dimension of it. Second, because these structures can be at once an extension and a rival of the state, their relationship with the state is not a zero-sum conflict but a co-constitutive and dynamic balance. Third, while their forms—court and guard factions, bureaucratic strata, religious institutions, financial elites, intelligence networks, and communication apparatuses—remain largely constant across the ages, only their instruments change. These three propositions make it possible to move beyond approaches that see the phenomenon as a mere problem of security or dissolution.

The study's contribution to the literature can be assessed on several levels. First, instead of confining the phenomenon to a single era or region, as most studies do, it has treated it within a long historical comparison extending from empires to the digital age. Second, rather than contenting itself with the explanatory power of a single theory, it has developed a pluralist framework that uses the realist, liberal, critical, world-systems, network, constructivist, postcolonial, and feminist approaches together. Third, and most important for this article, it has carried to the center of analysis the often-neglected communicative dimension of the phenomenon—that is, the centuries-long power function of the control of information and discourse. Finally, by distinguishing the concept of the parallel structure from neighboring concepts such as the deep state and state capture, and by proposing a classification along the axes of origin, relationship, and field of activity, it has sought to provide conceptual clarity.

These contributions hold a special importance for communication studies. The phenomenon has traditionally been addressed in the fields of international relations, security, and political science, while its communicative dimension has mostly been overlooked. Yet the contemporary front of parallel structures is increasingly over attention, information, and perception as much as over territory and capital. This study, by bringing the phenomenon together with the conceptual vocabulary of communication studies—the power of information, the political economy of the media, soft power, network-based disinformation, and platform power—attempts to build a productive bridge between the two fields.

These conclusions offer a number of practical implications for states and the international community. Given the structural and durable character of parallel structures, the realistic goal is not to eliminate these structures entirely but to understand and oversee them and, as far as possible, to channel them into legitimate and accountable avenues. The recommendations below are ordered according to different actors.

For states, the first priority is to remedy the organizational mismatch. Hierarchical and cumbersome bureaucratic structures are often slow in the face of flexible, network-based parallel structures; more horizontal, agile, and inter-institutionally cooperative models of governance should therefore be developed. In connection with this, cyber capacity should be strengthened, and legal and regulatory frameworks—especially in the fields of

finance, data, crypto-assets, and digital platforms—should be continuously updated so as to keep pace with the speed of technology.

Responses resting solely on hard power and oversight, however, remain inadequate. Because parallel structures grow stronger mostly in the spaces opened by needs the state cannot meet and by gaps in legitimacy, the most effective long-term strategy is for the state to strengthen its own legitimacy. Raising the quality of public services, institutionalizing transparency and accountability, and reinforcing citizens' trust in the state are the measures that most hinder these structures from finding a social base. The internalization preferred by some states—that is, drawing parallel structures into the system—works only where there is strong institutional oversight and democratic supervision; otherwise it may result in the state's being captured by these structures.

At this point, fragile states and those with limited capacity hold a separate importance. The findings have shown that parallel structures most often seize the administration in contexts where state authority is weak; in these countries, therefore, strengthening state capacity, institutional trust, and the delivery of public services is more decisive than security measures alone. International development and state-building efforts should treat the struggle against parallel structures as a problem of governance and legitimacy as much as one of security.

The communicative dimension of the phenomenon stands out as a distinct and priority field of policy. Because disinformation and information manipulation have become among the most effective instruments of contemporary parallel structures, states and societies need to develop resilience against them. Within this framework, the spread of media literacy as a democratic infrastructure; the strengthening of digital platforms' obligations of transparency, algorithmic accountability, and content governance; support for independent and high-quality public broadcasting and investigative journalism; and the design of the struggle against disinformation in a way that does not harm freedom of expression, relying on transparency rather than censorship, are of great importance. Because control over the flow of information has become a source of power, policies in this field must be treated not merely as a matter of security but also as a matter of democracy and the right to communication.

The cross-border character of parallel structures shows that no state can cope with them alone. International cooperation is therefore indispensable—the harmonization of financial regulations, the joint oversight of crypto-assets and cross-border capital flows, cybersecurity and intelligence sharing, and the combating of transnational organized crime. For this cooperation to be effective, international organizations themselves must be transformed into more inclusive, transparent, and legitimate structures, overcoming the problems of legitimacy that stem from their remaining under the influence of the great powers. Otherwise, these organizations will remain ineffective in the face of parallel structures' search for alternative governance.

The struggle cannot be left to states and international organizations alone. Independent media, civil-society organizations, and academia assume a complementary role in rendering parallel structures visible, in informing the public, and in overseeing official institutions. Investigative journalism and transparency initiatives can often be more effective than state institutions in exposing these structures, which mostly operate in secrecy; for this

reason, protecting the independence and security of these actors is an integral part of a holistic strategy.

The fundamental criterion to be observed in taking all these measures is the balance between security and fundamental rights and freedoms. The surveillance and exceptional practices that expand on the grounds of combating parallel structures carry the risk of eroding the very values democracy aims to protect. For this reason, subjecting intelligence and security activities to democratic oversight is one of the conditions determining the legitimacy and long-term success of the struggle.

The study also has certain limitations. Because the research rests on a qualitative design and document analysis, it was conducted largely with secondary sources; the fact that parallel structures by their nature operate in secrecy made access to primary and direct data difficult. Moreover, comparing very different ages and contexts within a common framework carries the risk of pushing somewhat into the background the dynamics peculiar to each example. For this reason, the continuity the study advances should be understood not as an identity but as a family resemblance rewritten from age to age.

These limitations also point to fruitful directions for future research. Studies resting on primary data, fieldwork, and interviews could show more closely how the phenomenon operates today. Quantitative network analyses could complement the qualitative findings of this study by rendering visible the connection maps and nodes of parallel structures. Comparative case studies that examine particular regions or individual cases in depth, in turn, would allow the testing of the theoretical framework and the proposed classification.

In particular, the digital and communicative dimension of the phenomenon constitutes a distinct and priority research agenda. The relationship of disinformation networks, platform power, crypto-based financial flows, and algorithmic manipulation to parallel structures offers a new and fruitful field of study at the intersection of communication studies and international relations. Empirical research in this field will both enrich the conceptual framework and contribute directly to policy-development processes.

In conclusion, parallel structures are not a temporary malfunction of the global system but a structural phenomenon that has persisted throughout history by changing form and has entered a new phase in the digital age. This transformation, extending from empires to the digital age, shows that the dynamic relationship between state authority and parallel power networks is one of the fundamental dynamics shaping the governance, security, and communication agenda of the twenty-first century. Rather than ignoring this phenomenon or merely seeking to suppress it, a holistic approach focused on understanding, overseeing, and managing it while safeguarding democratic values is the most realistic response that both states and the international community can give to this challenge.

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