Apart from the imperial authority there were in the Latin Empire other bodies in existence, the sphere of action or influence of which was of a supra-regional nature. By this we allude to the (Latin) patriarchate of Constantinople and to a number of Western religious orders that were established in various parts of the empire. It is worth making the effort to examine the extent—if at all—to which these supra-regional bodies may have or may not have contributed to the unity of the empire.

The Patriarchal Church of Constantinople

The constitutional treaty of March 1204 determined the fundamental situation regarding the ecclesiastical organization of the Latin Empire. This was characterized principally by major challenges and potential sources of conflict. Indeed, the treaty determined that the patriarchal throne fell to that party—either to the Venetian or the non-Venetian component of the crusading army—that did not gain the emperorship. Firstly, this created the prospect of a confrontation between emperor and patriarch on the basis of national interests. Secondly, the Latinization of the patriarchate led inevitably to a conflict with the Byzantine clergy. Depending on the policy pursued, the manner in which this problem was dealt with by the Latin patriarch and clergy could either harm or, on the other hand, benefit the political stability of the empire. Thirdly, the Latin patriarchs were confronted with the feudalization of the Byzantine Empire. By pursuing a policy that was aimed at establishing a powerful patriarchal authority in the various feudal components of the entire empire, they could contribute to its unity. Conversely, the absence of such a policy would sooner serve the centrifugal forces.

In the pre-1204 Byzantine Empire, it was the idea of solidarity between emperor and patriarch that served as the model. With this, the patriarchate was to a certain extent under the guardianship of the emperor, who was the patron of the Church and whose duty it was to oversee the purity of the faith and the ecclesiastical organization and discipline. In the discussion of ideology we saw that from their Western background the Latin emperors did not claim such a position vis-à-vis the Church. The emperors restricted their authority to the secular domain, although on occasion they did call upon the ecclesiastical prerogatives of their Byzantine predecessors. The fact that the Latin emperor and patriarch were in a different relationship to one another than their Byzantine predecessors, did not however have to prevent their relationship from being determined by the principle of mutual solidarity.

In their correspondence with the Latin emperors and patriarchs of Constantinople the successive popes referred repeatedly to the desirability of a harmonious relationship between the two. It was in this way that Innocent III recommended the newly appointed Patriarch Thomas Morosini to Emperor Baldwin in early 1205. In 1208 the pope urged Emperor Henry to advise and assist the patriarch in his attempts to achieve the obedience of the Byzantine clergy and faithful to the Church of Rome. Honorius III in 1216 urged Patriarch Gervasius to enter into peaceful and harmonious relations with the imperial authority. In April 1217 the same pope ordered Gervasius to welcome the imperial couple Yolande and Peter favourably. In a letter later that year to Gervasius concerning the capture of Emperor Peter, Honorius once more emphasized the importance of the unity between the imperial and patriarchal authority. The concept of mutual solidarity between emperor and patriarch in the interests of the empire was

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3 Cf. Chapter II, p. 77, and Chapter IV, p. 194.
5 Ibidem, col. 1352 (XI, 21).
7 Ibidem, n° 497.
8 Ibidem, n° 720.