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STVM11
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Great Powers, Great Perils

A Neorealist Analysis of the Impact of Multipolarity on the
Risks of Confrontation, 1890-1911 and 2001-2009

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Abstract

This thesis departs from a neorealist theoretical perspective but adds a rational actor perspective based on game theory. It shares Waltz' assumption of deep anarchy and the need for states to ensure their security but also maintains that actor prospects may be able to cope with the structural incentives in a flexible manner. Two cases of international politics are studied; 1890-1911 and 2001-2009. It is then argued that the historical case can provide a basis for limited probabilistic generalization about the use of hard power in a modern multipolar setting using a methodological approach based on the concept of transferability. The underlying assumption is that the world may be headed for a multipolar world order and that some patterns related to the use of hard power from 1890-1911 were being repeated in 2001-2009. The use of hard power manifests itself in two major ways; warfare and power projection. Multipolarity increases the number of actors that can use these instruments without implicit or explicit approval from another state. The differing actor prospects mean that some great powers are more likely to resort to hard power than others.

Key words: neorealism, multipolarity, game theory, imperialism, power projection
Words: 19,619

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1 Introduction

Realism is characterised by a profound scepticism of Enlightenment liberalism's optimistic belief in progress, and has a more pessimistic view of human nature (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 10)

The thesis departs from the notion that the world is in a state of transition between a unipolar world order and a multipolar one. Polarity, in this context, is the neorealist concept of power centers in an anarchical global system. This assumption of a shift in polarity is based on statements by reputable publications such as *The Economist* ("Europe: A worrying new world order; Charlemagne") and *International Relations* (Scott 2007, p. 33). This represents a potential paradigm shift and thus requires a new understanding of the world. My most immediate concern is the implications this process may have on the security climate of the international system and if it has an impact on the risk of military confrontation.

I argue in this thesis that neorealism, augmented by a simple but effective game theory-based actor perspective, can provide a useful tool for analyzing the consequences of a potential shift towards multipolarity. This theoretical framework is tested on a historical empirical context and applied to a modern context.

1.1 Puzzle

How does multipolarity affect the risks of confrontation in the international security context?

I assume that there are timeless aspects shaping state behavior and that the constraints imposed on this behavior by the global world order can be similarly understood. Thus, I propose to analyze state behavior in a multipolar environment in a historical context in order to develop the theoretical tools required for an understanding of our contemporary situation.

1.2 Ontology and Epistemology

In writing this thesis, I have an ontological stance heavily influenced by "causal realism", as defined by Brante (2001). Brante (2001, p. 171) states that a meta-

theory should be "as *simple* [orig. italics] and straightforward as possible, without therefore being unsophisticated". His four postulates of causal realism serve this purpose well;

1. There is a reality existing independently of our representations or awareness of it (ontological postulate)
 - 1a. There is a social reality existing independently of social scientists' representations or awareness of it (ontological postulate for social science)
2. It is possible to achieve knowledge about this reality (epistemological postulate)
3. All knowledge is fallible – and correctable (methodological postulate)

1.2.1 The Ontology and Epistemology of Causality

Brante describes his view of causality as being more than mere regularities between observable phenomena (Brante 2001, p. 173). By this positioning, he distances himself from classical positivism. It should be pointed out, however, that classical positivism is not the same as the guiding principles used in natural science today, which Brante (2001, p. 173) explains by mentioning two examples; the law of gravity and the concept of natural selection. Both are examples of non-observable phenomena which generate observable effects.

Brante (2001, p. 174) also states that "causality should not be defined as law-like universal regularities between observables A and B". Instead, he argues that it could be "a causal relation that holds *sometimes* [orig. italics]" (Brante 2001, p. 174). In addition, Brante argues that causality occurs as "*tendencies* [orig. italics]" since causalities can counteract each other, thereby altering the expected empirical effect. Lastly, Brante argues that social science should acknowledge "causal capacity". In a human being this can, for example, be the ability to work even if unemployed. Brante (2001, p. 174) elaborates by stating that "[i]nner capacity plus external situation explains propensity".

1.2.2 Mechanisms

Brante adds the concept of "mechanisms" to the above described framework as a means of developing the concept of causality. According to Brante (2001, p. 175), a mechanism is "*a cause that has a (causal) relationship as its effect* [orig. italics]". I consider this a suitable way of conceptualizing causal relations and will thus use the term "mechanism", as defined by Brante, in this thesis.

1.2.3 Structure and Agency

My view of structure and agency forms an important basis for my argument. In my view, structure *enables* and *constrains* agency. This view of structure and

agency is described in detail by Sabatier (1999). Structure is in this context comprised of the international system. The actors are the nation-states.

1.3 Definitions

My definition of “hard power” comes from Nye (2003, p. 354-355). It describes “the ability to get others to do what they otherwise would not do through threat of punishment or promise of reward”, i.e. “the ability to coax and coerce” (Nye 2003, p. 354). Nye also states that military prowess is an important part of the concept of hard power, along with economic threats and sanctions. The opposing concept, “soft power”, is described as “the ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion, because others want what you want” (Nye 2003, p. 354).

1.4 Delimitations

This thesis is about international politics. It has a global scope but is primarily concerned with the most powerful states in the international system. In my theoretical framework, this definition covers no more than a handful of the world's countries. The theoretical framework can potentially be applied to smaller states as well but these are not covered in the empirical analyses in this thesis.

2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for the thesis is comprised of a structure/agency approach constructed using two different theories; one to account for structure and another to account for agency. The ambition is to create a combined theoretical approach in the neorealist tradition.

Structure is explained by neorealism, as developed by Waltz (1979). I have also included elements from Hyde-Price (2008) to get a contemporary perspective. These broad theoretical approaches are complemented by a more specific theory within the same tradition, being Christensen & Snyder's (1990) theory on alliances in a multipolar context. As indicated at the beginning of chapter 1, the choice of neorealism is primarily based on my ontological precomprehension of the international system.

Agency is explained by using a game theoretical approach based on the concept of “iterated games”, as described by Axelrod (1987).

The ambition is to create a comprehensive framework for analyzing the relationship between polarity and so-called “hard power”, more specifically how multipolarity affects the deployment or commitment of military assets in support of foreign policy. I argue that hard power is a factor in international politics and that in a multipolar environment, more actors can make use of it than in a unipolar or bipolar setting.

2.1 Neorealism

A government has no monopoly on the use of force, as is all too evident. An effective government, however, has a monopoly on the *legitimate* use of force[...]. A national system is not one of self-help. The international system is. (Waltz 1979, p. 103-104).

According to Buzan, Jones & Little (1993, p.1), the realist school in international relations was revived by Kenneth Waltz in 1979 in his *Theory of International Politics*. The term *neorealism* has since been used to describe Waltz' framework. Waltz (1979) introduced the concept that came to be known as neorealism in his 1979 book *Theory of International Politics*. Waltz argues that international politics can be interpreted as having a system level. This system level of positioning nation-states is independent of the behavior of states, being determined by arrangement rather than interaction (Waltz 1979, p. 80-81).

2.1.1 The International System of Self-Help

One of the characteristics of the system is that it is anarchical because there is no supreme authority governing the behavior of the states. A nation-state is on the domestic level hierarchical whereas the international system is anarchical. Waltz (1979, p. 88) states that in the domestic political structure, “[s]ome are entitled to command; others are required to obey” whereas in the international system “[n]one is entitled to command; none is required to obey”.

In the words of Waltz (1979, p. 91), “[i]nternational-political systems, like economic markets, are individualist in origin, spontaneously generated, and unintended”. Behavior is ruled by a “self-help” principle, like in a market economy, the main difference being that self-help actions in a market economy are generally restricted by legislation, whereas in the international system there is no such supreme authority (Waltz 1979, p. 91). The most important objective for a state in this self-help system is survival. Only by securing survival can other policies be pursued. Waltz also states that survival is a basic drive in a world where the security of states is not assured, rather than a description of explicit policy (Waltz 1979, p. 91). Some states may wish to conquer the world, others may only want to be left alone, yet others may wish to merge with other states. In the latter case, although rare, a state may actually prefer such an outcome to survival in its original form. This and various other forms of seemingly anomalous behavior can be attributed to the fact that no state is in possession of perfect information or wisdom (Waltz 1979, p. 92).

The essence of the above line of reasoning is, in my interpretation, that states can never be completely assured of their security in an anarchical system. Survival becomes the most basic objective and one which all states regardless of government will have in common. The actions of states will to some extent be determined by this objective, expressed as a need to achieve security. Waltz (1979, p. 92) describes this in terms of a structural selection, i.e. that the structure will “reward” those who play by its rules and “penalize” those who disregard them. Thus, for a nation to prosper, it must tend to its security needs. The fact that all states face the same basic challenge has made them *functionally undifferentiated* (Waltz 1979, p. 97). Thus, since states cannot fully entrust their security to others, they must all maintain some ability to fend for themselves.

2.1.2 Causal Capacity & Balancing

Each state, to some degree, possess the ability to become a threat to another state. In Brante's terminology, this is a causal capacity inherent in the nation-state. Because of this, each state must be mindful of its relative position vis-à-vis other states. Thus, even if cooperation for mutual benefit can be achieved, each state must ask itself, “Who will gain more?” (Waltz 1979, p. 105). Extended mutual benefit which results in unequal distribution can thus alter the relative balance of two states to an extent where one becomes a threat to the other.

Shifts in power can occur when great powers attempt to alter the balance of power between them. Waltz (1979, p. 120-122) states that the concept of “balance of power” in the international system is surrounded by confusion and competing definitions. In broad terms, it deals with how states react to the growth of relative power in a single rivaling state. Waltz (1979, p. 126) states that great powers will tend to obstruct the concentration of power into a single state or alliance by aligning themselves with the weaker side. The logic behind this behavior is that too much power concentrated in a single state or alliance is a bigger threat to their security than maintaining the status quo through balancing. Waltz (1979, p. 128) concludes by stating that “[t]he expectation is not that a balance, once achieved, will be maintained, but that a balance, once disrupted, will be restored in one way or another”. He emphasizes that “balance of power” is to be understood as an outcome, not necessarily as an intention on behalf of the units of the system. Waltz describes two types of balancing; *external* and *internal*. Internal balancing involves mobilizing the state's own resources whereas external balancing involves the formation of coalitions and alliances with other states. Both types of balancing are, according to Hyde-Price (2008, p. 49) “risky and costly”. Risky, because they may draw the attention of the dominant state, which may decide to launch a preventive attack or take other punitive measures. Costly, because it requires considerable financial resources.

In this thesis, I use the “balancing” concept in a broader way than Waltz by applying it to a context in which a single great power is not rising towards hegemony but rather in a state of decline from that position. As such, the balancing efforts may not only be described as means to prevent a rising hegemon but also to overthrow a dominant state.

2.2 The Concept of Great Powers

Waltz (1979, p. 130-131) argues that the definition of a great power/superpower must be one of “combined capabilities”. According to Waltz, “economic, military and other capabilities of nations cannot be sectorized and separately weighed” since states will use their combined capabilities in pursuing their interests (Waltz 1979, p. 131). However, I argue that this dimension lacks an important ingredient; ambition. A powerful state can, at least hypothetically, choose to pursue isolationist policies and thereby have a minimal global impact. Hyde-Price's (2008, p. 38) definition of a great power corrects for this mistake by counting three features; 1. substantial power resources across a range of capabilities, most importantly, military and economic. 2. a disposition to define its interests in broad terms that go beyond the need to survive in a self-help system [...]. 3. a willingness to pursue its interests, both vital and non-vital, using whatever power resources are most appropriate, not excluding military force. Furthermore, he states that “[m]ilitary capabilities for both a credible national defense and for

power projection are thus a *sine qua non*¹ [orig. italics] for great power status, but not sufficient” (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 38).

A great power is thus a combination of assets and ambition. Just one of these two factors is not sufficient for great power status. Hyde-Price (2008, p. 38) mentions two examples of powers during the Cold War, being West Germany and Japan, with great power capabilities but which lacked sufficient ambition to act as great powers. Hyde-Price (2008, p. 38) states that these two powers refrained from using the ”hard power capabilities that give substance to diplomacy and demonstrate resolve”.

With the above in mind, I argue that features required for great power status can be summed up in two simple components; combined capability (economic, political, military) and ambition. The combined capability comprises the power's capacity for exercising and projecting hard power. The range of this capacity determines the great power's status; if it can only exercise hard power regionally, it can be a regional great power. If it can exercise power globally, it has the means required for a global great power. The second component, ambition, is closely linked to the previous one. A power with regional power projecting capacity will only be able to effectively support regional ambitions. A true global great power will require both global power projecting capacity and global ambitions.

2.2.1 Capability Synergy

Buzan, Jones & Little (1993, p. 59) argue that the aggregation of capabilities into a single factor, *power*, blurs the image and reduces the explanatory power of neorealist theory. I argue, however, that Hyde-Price and Waltz, by using the aggregate measure of power, can capture an essential factor which Buzan et al. are bound to miss; a factor I have chosen to call *capability synergy*. I argue that capabilities (which, for the sake of clarity, in this case can be said to be economic, political and military) in combination with hard power can have synergetic effects, i.e. the combined weight exceeds the sum of the parts. The synergy of power can achieve far more than the sum of its parts in the sense that deploying hard power on a global scale requires such synergy. The wars in Bosnia and Kosovo are good illustrations. Despite the considerable economic and political power at the disposal of the EU, it was unable to achieve anything until traditional hard power assets were deployed in support of the policy goals. The US had to step in to provide sufficient synergetic capability by deploying its own hard power assets and by coordinating the assisting states, using the NATO structures.

For example, a great power with sufficient aggregate power can initiate a war, pursue it and then exploit the outcome (provided that the outcome is favorable) by utilizing a combination of its capabilities. The political capability is necessary in order to justify the action and to pre-empt potential obstruction from other nations, which could otherwise cooperate in opposition, thus thwarting the plan. The economic capability is required to cope with both potential trade losses

¹ *Sine qua non* [Lat.]; a condition, can in this context be translated as ”without which [the state] is not [a great power]”

resulting from the termination of economic relations with the nation or territory under attack as well as bearing the cost of warfare. Finally, the military capability is required to attain victory. Any of these three capabilities separated from the other could not have been used separately to partially achieve what a combination of them can accomplish.

2.3 Definitions of Polarity

Since states are in possession of different degrees of capability, power is not equally distributed. Some will have more, some will have less. The most powerful nations tend to become key players in the international arena. The number of great powers define the *polarity* in the system (Waltz 1979, p. 129-131). The polar constellations have different implications for the international system. Hyde-Price (2008, p. 41-43) describes polarity by placing it in four different categories; **unipolarity**, **bipolarity**, **balanced multipolarity** and **unbalanced multipolarity**.

In a **unipolar** world order, a single state enjoys a significant position of power vis-à-vis the other great powers. Hyde-Price (2008, p. 42) argues that this state will be a “hyperpower” but not a hegemon. A true global hegemon, in the sense that a single state can suspend the state of anarchy in the international system, is a very unlikely phenomenon. The experiences with obstructive small states such as North Korea, Iran, Iraq and others seem to indicate that although a hyperpower has the potential to pacify such states, the costs involved will prohibit it from doing so simultaneously on a global scale. Although the US could pacify Serbia in 1999 as well as invade Iraq and Afghanistan, it could not simultaneously deal with Iran and North Korea. Thus, even in a context in which a single state has an extreme advantage in power, the role of global hegemon proved to be impossible to shoulder. On the basis of this argument, Hyde-Price’s “hyperpower” definition seems more accurate to describe unipolarity as we have experienced it. The hyperpower has significant room for maneuver and can to a large extent exercise power over the international arena, even if this power is not absolute (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 42).

In a **bipolar** world, two superpowers compete for power and influence. Hyde-Price (2008, p. 42-43) states that bipolarity “tends to be an inherently stable distribution of power”. The superpowers are not dependent on any single ally and can exercise a moderating power over states under their influence to prevent confrontations.

In a **balanced multipolar** world, three or more great powers are in possession of roughly equal power. Neither power can “make a feasible bid for regional hegemony” and thus states “tend to emphasize security maximization over power maximization” (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 43).

Under **unbalanced multipolarity**, one of the great powers is significantly stronger than the others and can make a bid for regional hegemony (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 43; Mearsheimer 2001, p. 44). This leads to a heightened sense of fear and suspicion, which prompts the great powers to pursue more relative gains. As

great powers pursue power maximization, the situation is “primed for conflict” (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 43).

2.4 The Critique Against Waltz

Buzan, Jones & Little (1993, p. 150-151) describes the critique against Waltz as being centered around his inability to cope with the phenomenon of rules established to govern the behavior of states. Buzan et al. (1993, p. 151), however, argue that Waltz' analysis can accommodate such phenomena by making a reference to game theory, under which both cooperation and conflict can be understood using the same theoretical model, being in this case the Prisoner's Dilemma. This is particularly interesting since Waltz (1979, p. 109) himself also makes references to the Prisoner's Dilemma as an example of how states pursuing their own interests end up worse than if they had pursued joint interests.

Buzan et al.'s use of the Prisoner's Dilemma is explicitly based on the concept of the “Shadow of the Future”. They state that:

Because states know that they are in a relationship, the threat of cheating is diminished because a potential cheat knows that other states will reciprocate and any benefit gained by cheating will be short-run. Under these circumstances, cooperation can enhance the chances of a state surviving in the anarchic arena (Buzan et al. 1993, p. 151)

Buzan et al. are correct in arguing that this illustrates how cooperation is not necessarily impossible in an anarchic environment. However, they also neglect to discuss just how fragile this “Shadow of the Future” can be. Axelrod (1987, p. 145) explains that an element of predictability is required for the “Shadow of the Future” to appear. Considering the anarchic nature of the international system with the addition of asymmetrical gains, the suspicion of defection from cooperation is never far away. This suspicion in itself can be enough to trigger defection and, by the same logic, if one party suspects that the other suspects (even on false grounds), then this prompts defection.

2.4.1 Functionally Differentiated Units

Buzan & Little (2000) have criticized Waltz by arguing that the units in the international system are not functionally undifferentiated. I argue that their argument for functionally differentiated units is unsubstantiated when their examples are subjected to empirical scrutiny. Simply stating that some nations adopted what Buzan et al. consider to be “specialized roles” does not imply that they should be considered functionally differentiated units. The empirical examples of Japan, Italy and Germany are drawn from a context in which they were vital parts of the US-led alliance and were guaranteed substantial direct

military support from the US in case of conflict. They could thus adjust their position accordingly. In addition, Buzan et al. seem to conveniently forget that Japan has a large and very expensive military force at its disposal, in relative terms Japanese defense spending is comparable to that of China, the UK and France (Stålenheim, Perdomo & Sköns 2008, p. 178). Italy and Germany also have significant military forces at their disposal. If they are to be considered functionally differentiated, then why keep military forces at such levels? I argue that Italy, Germany and Japan from 1945 and onward fit better into the functionally undifferentiated unit mold than Buzan et al. would like to admit.

2.5 The Structure-Agency Problem

In Waltz' original concept of neorealism, he argued that agency was not the sole explanation in international politics and that structure had considerable impact on situations in which outcomes diverged strongly from actor expectations (Waltz 1979, p. 61-78). According to Waltz, the structure constrains the actors, disposes them towards certain actions and affects the outcome of interaction.

Problems arise when agency seems to collide with the structural incentives in certain empirical cases. One example of such actions is that of the Axis minor powers during the 1930s/1940s, which chose to ally themselves with Germany rather than unite with the Allies to balance against it. Waltz (1979, p. 126) dismisses this type of "bandwagoning" outright, instead he argues that the system encourages balancing. Hyde-Price explains this anomaly by simply stating that it was a rational option for minor powers looking to increase their influence (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 50). But why didn't more minor powers in the same situation side with Nazi Germany as well if it was such a rational way to acquire influence and a secure position in the future? A conceptualization of agency is clearly required.

Offensive and defensive realism have attempted to provide some answers to the problem of agency in neorealism. According to Mearsheimer and offensive realism, there are no status quo-pursuing great powers, except for the "occasional hegemon" (Mearsheimer 2001, p. 2). Rendall (2006) criticizes Mearsheimer for arbitrarily selecting belligerent states to empirically back his argument and to counter this presents four empirical cases from 1814 to 1848 to demonstrate restraint among great powers. According to Rendall, defensive realism should be considered a synthesis of realist and non-realist theories. He states that "[r]ealism predicts that states will respond as security maximisers to structural incentives; other theories explain when they do not" (Rendall 2006, p. 524).

This does not sound like synthesis to me but rather an attempt to mix realist theories with non-realist theories in a tautological fashion; either a case can be explained by neorealism or it can be explained by something else. However, I do acknowledge that Rendall's demand for agency perspectives is sound and that the criticism against Mearsheimer is warranted. Thus, I propose an approach to structure and agency in realism based on an actual synthesis as opposed to a tautology.

2.5.1 The Interface of International Politics

I argue that the structure-agency problem inherent in neorealism can be approached by a single model (see figure 1). Structure exercises pressure on the agents but the policy of the agents also has an effect on the interaction between states. The model is based on Waltz' assumption of a deep structure that is independent of interaction but still acknowledges the role of agency in interaction. Thus, structure is independent of interaction and interaction is not determined solely by structure.

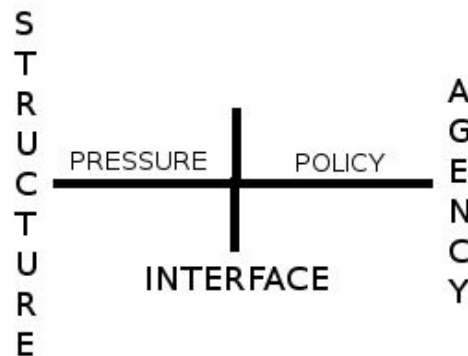


Figure 1: The Interface of International Politics

The interface component can be understood in game theoretical terms by illustrating it as a repeating Prisoner's Dilemma (see figure 2). The relationship between cooperation and defection in the Prisoner's Dilemma illustrates the

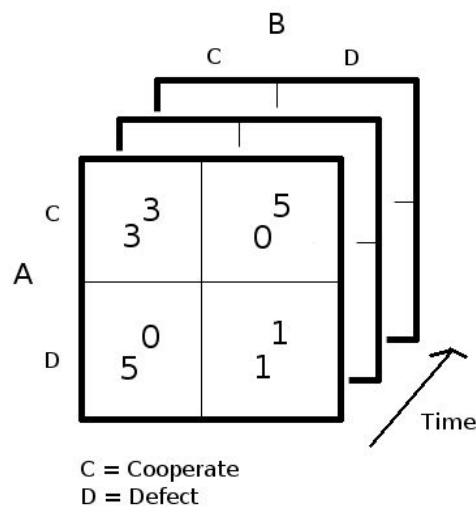


Figure 2: Repeated Prisoner's Dilemma

pursuit of absolute and relative gains in a two-party relationship. The payoff matrix is determined by the structure but the prospect of gains is determined by actor expectations. As such, the prospect of interaction for mutually beneficial absolute gains is determined by both previous interaction and prospects for the

future. This perspective is designed to take into account some of the criticism presented by Wendt (1992, p. 405) but in such a manner that it can cope with situations in which prospects influence agency without aligning itself with the constructivist perspective he suggests as a remedy.

The sum of past absolute and relative gains of a state in relation to the past gains of all other states thus equals its power. This fits well with the argument presented by Waltz (1979, p. 105) stating that even when two states make absolute gains through mutually beneficial cooperation, both must be mindful of who gains more. This sum of power can be interpreted as the outcome of the process of structural selection proposed by Waltz (1979, p. 92). States that can secure a large total of gains will achieve considerable relative strength and thus prosper. States that fail to accumulate such gains will be reduced by the same mechanism.

The model has several implications. First, it rests on essential components of the original Waltzian neorealism, being comprised of structurally undifferentiated units and deep anarchical structure. Secondly, it provides a conceptualization of agency related to such a structure.

This conceptualization can thus account for the empirical anomalies used as illustrations by proponents of both defensive and offensive realism. The pursuit of status quo is based on the prospect that absolute gains will outweigh relative gains over time. The pursuit of relative gains, even at considerable risk, is based on the calculus of increasingly hostile relations, which undermine the long-term prospect for absolute gains. If a state is at a significant relative disadvantage, this will also be an incentive for the pursuit of relative gains vis-à-vis the rivals of the state in question, which will undermine cooperation for mutual benefit unless the payoff in gains is asymmetrical in favor of the underdog.

The above outlined approach can help explain not only incentives but also conscious agency. Even if the incentives favor certain behavior, such as balancing, the conscious agent may draw different conclusions, for various reasons. This was at least in part acknowledged by Waltz (1979, p. 92), who stated that anomalies occur because states possess neither perfect information nor perfect wisdom. I argue that Waltz' perspective needs to be revised since perfect wisdom and perfect information are not the only factors in play. Actor prospects also come into play.

2.6 Maximization: Power or Security

The most important objective of any state in the anarchical system is self-preservation, as stated above. Power is a means to achieve this end, but not an end in itself (Waltz 1979, p. 126) since increased power both may and may not serve that end. Depending on the circumstances, states may adopt either cautious security-maximizing strategies or bold power-maximizing strategies in order to increase their own security. Under some circumstances, power-maximizing behavior may be expected to invite counter-balancing or pre-emptive strikes

(Hyde-Price 2008, p. 33). It is then more rational for a state to adopt a more defensive and cautious strategy while constantly looking for relatively safe opportunities to maximize power (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 33). The primary incentive is thus to maintain the status quo and increase power only when it can be done safely. If, however, one or more of the states is growing in power or has an opportunity to do so, this may create an incentive for power maximization. The remaining states will then have to keep up with the competition and the primary incentive becomes maximization of power, even if it brings higher risks, since these states may otherwise end up at a long-term disadvantage and thus at risk. I argue that in addition to this perspective, a similar situation could occur when a previously dominant state is in decline. This may invite power maximization because rival great powers may see this as an opportunity to exploit the weakness of the previously dominant great power before it can recover.

The choice between power maximization and security maximization is thus a mix of structure and agency in the sense that the choice is a result of structural incentives and actor prospects. If the actor prospects indicate a strong potential for peaceful co-existence, then the incentives can be of lesser importance. If, however, the actor prospects indicate that future security competition is likely, the incentives toward power maximization will be far more likely to influence the actions of the state(s) in question.

2.7 Polarity and Interdependence

Polarity is linked to the degree of military and political interdependence between the states in the international system. The polar constellations have different implications, as outlined below.

2.7.1 Multipolarity and Military Interdependence

Waltz (1979, p. 138) states that with *less* [my emphasis] interdependence, “the system becomes more orderly and peaceful”. Waltz (1979, p. 138) refutes the notion that interdependence has a pacifying effect and instead states that “closeness of contact [...] raises the prospect of occasional conflict”. Waltz (1979, p. 169) argues that great powers in a multipolar system have to depend on each other for stability and security. He states that “[w]ith more than two parties, the solidarity of a group is always at risk because the parties can try to improve their lots by combining” (Waltz 1979, p.174). In order to cope with this problem, nation-states seek to form alliances to pool their strengths against potential hostile coalitions. Waltz (1979, p. 169) states that “Great powers in a multipolar world depend on one another for political and military support in crises and war. To assure oneself of steadfast support is vital”. The complication is that “[w]ith three or more powers flexibility of alliances keeps relations of friendship and enmity fluid and makes everyone's estimate of the present and future relation of forces

uncertain” (Waltz 1979, p. 168). Waltz also states that “[s]o long as the system is one of fairly small numbers, the actions of any of them may threaten the security of others” (*ibid.*).

Thus, the maintenance of alliances is vital for all involved parties. In the bipolar order of the Cold War, the superpowers were so militarily strong compared to their allies that the loss of single alliance partners were rather insignificant in comparison. Waltz mentions France's decision to withdraw from NATO as an example (Waltz 1979, p. 169). Another, arguably better, example is the break between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In a multipolar order, shifting allegiances can shift the power between alliances considerably. In a bipolar setting, alliance defections are unlikely to cause any significant power shifts. Using this logic, Waltz argues that military interdependence is low in a bipolar world and high in a multipolar one (Waltz 1979, p. 169).

This increased level of military interdependence in turn leads to a volatile international climate. When Waltz wrote about multipolarity and bipolarity, the Cold War was still in full swing. I argue that his arguments on bipolarity are largely applicable to the unipolar world order that replaced bipolarity after 1989. In a unipolar world order, the hyperpower need not rely upon anyone for its security. At the same time, the hyperpower can rest easy in the knowledge that even if other powers unite against it, they will not be sufficiently powerful to pose a real threat. This created stability and predictability in the international system. However, if multipolarity returns, we may find ourselves in a considerably more chaotic world once again. After the relative stability of 44 years of bipolarity and (thus far) 20 years of unipolarity, this could present quite a shock to the international system.

2.7.2 Multipolarity and Alliances

The military interdependence brought by attempts at balancing described above has an even more profound impact in multipolar world orders. Waltz (1979, p. 166) states that “[i]n the quest for security, alliances may have to be made. Once made, they have to be managed”. Christensen & Snyder (1990) states that alliance patterns in multipolarity are characterized by the “chain-gang”/“buck-passing” dichotomy. “Buck-passing” in this case means that a state leaves the work of balancing to other states, preferring to wait and see. This means that the state in question can get away with spending less and can take fewer risks. In the case of “chain-gang” behavior, states will form alliances even with reckless partners since these are considered to be vital to the security of state and the status quo. If the partner is then compromised, even reluctant allies are pulled towards the brink of war by the “chain” of alliance. In a worst-case scenario, such as the events leading to the start of World War I, states on two sides are pulled in as they are forced to support their alliance partners and a war no-one really wants breaks out on a massive scale. Christensen & Snyder also state that “chain-gang” behavior is prompted by a belief in short, decisive wars whereas “buck-passing” will occur if states believe that war will be decided by attrition.

2.8 Hard Power Put to Use

I argue that multipolarity provides more opportunities and incentives for the deployment or commitment of hard power than bipolar and unipolar world orders. I argue that hard power in support of foreign policy manifests itself in two major ways. Either it is used for waging war in a more or less limited fashion, which I call *splendid little wars*, or it can be used as a show of strength and resolve, so-called *power projection*.

2.8.1 Splendid Little Wars

The term “splendid little war” was used by the US secretary of state to describe the war of 1898 between the US and Spain (von Platen 1999, p. 40), which resulted in a swift defeat for Spain and considerable gains for the US. By virtue of not having one or two supremely powerful states, multipolarity provides more opportunities for deployment of hard power. In a bipolar world order, any state must take the potential reaction of either one or both of the superpowers into account before deploying hard power in the international arena (Waltz 1979, p. 170-171). It is quite telling that the war between Egypt and Israel 1973 ended after the Soviet Union and the US had agreed on the terms of a cease-fire (Dunstan 2007, p. 181). According to one source, a former Israeli president and head of Israeli military intelligence, the Soviet Union played a key role in instigating the war of 1973 as well as ending it by stepping in to “save” the Arab states fighting against Israel (Herzog 1975, p. 285).

In a bipolar setting the superpowers can engage in military operations without any implicit consent from another state but must then be mindful of the response from the rival. The US invasions of Grenada in 1983 and Panama in 1989 as well as the Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 all qualify as potential examples of “splendid little wars”. Any other state planning a splendid little war in a bipolar setting must take the attitudes of the two superpowers into account. An example of this is the 1982 Falklands war. The Argentinians went to great efforts to make sure that their war plans would not provoke a response from any of the two superpowers well before they started the campaign (Hastings & Jenkins 2005, p. 68f).

In a unipolar setting, anyone interested in waging war will have to take into account that the hyperpower may respond unfavorably and thus the endeavor could lead to disaster. In a multipolar world order, however, there is more room for maneuver. A great power can use warfare as a means of making relative gains as long as it can be somewhat certain that the other great powers will not combine forces to prevent it. Wars are thus not as risky projects as they are in bipolar or unipolar settings. A great power in a multipolar environment will likely find more opportunities to engage in this type of warfare without placing its vital security interests at risk.

In a multipolar setting, effective deterrence requires that a number of great powers must be ready to take action against a state that uses hard power as an instrument of international politics if no single state is strong enough in relative terms to act as an effective deterrence alone. An opportunist state can thus exploit disunity among great powers to make a grab for itself. Waltz (1979, p. 171) states that this was the case with Hitler's international maneuvers in the years and months before World War II; the perception that no united opposition would form inspired bold behavior. In hindsight, Hitler's assessment was not entirely incorrect, he did after all manage to achieve a number of successes in the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia as well as blatantly disregard the peace agreement of 1918.

Disunity thus creates an opening for more flexible use of hard power in international politics. In cases where there is little international commitment and a readiness to deliver a quick response, a state can act swiftly and present the rest of the world with a *fait accompli*.

Using the capability synergy factor, a successfully waged war can establish foreign policy goals despite opposition, secure access to resources and increase international prestige faster and more effectively than any of the capabilities required for such pursuits can achieve separately. Thus, there is a synergetic effect involved in producing this outcome. The possession of such a capability can act as a deterrent in itself. Waging war can of course also result in catastrophic consequences for the opportunistic instigator, for example the instigator may find itself fighting a bloody war of attrition for several years.

2.8.2 Power Projection

The concept of power projection is well established in military discourse but quite absent in theoretical literature on international relations. Although the lack of a definite definition of the term results in somewhat arbitrary use, it can roughly be defined as the ability to exercise hard power over distance, often in a symbolic fashion (see for example Barrie 2007). In the old days, this was frequently described as “gunboat diplomacy” since it was often linked to the deployment of naval hard power in support of the great powers' foreign policies. In a modern context, the term also includes aircraft (for an example, see Bradley 2009). By sending military forces, usually naval assets, to a specific area, a great power can demonstrate resolve. This is a strategy commonly employed by the US. Another application of the same concept is to send military aircraft on long-range flights to approach the airspace of neighboring states to demonstrate one's reach, which is frequently used by Russia.

Power projection over considerable distance has traditionally been a tool available only to the great powers because of the costs and difficulties involved. Smaller states such as India and Pakistan have also made power projection demonstrations by testing long-distance missiles but in their case the ability is blunt and thus serves more as a deterrence. A nation that can, on the other hand, demonstrate its ability to deploy traditional hard power assets over vast distances

can try to use this to sway foreign policy makers in a desired direction through intimidation or by demonstrating support. Whereas missiles can be used for little more than to wreak havoc, traditional forces can be used in a more nuanced fashion.

Power projection can also bring risks. When a naval vessel or military aircraft appear, forces from two sides may find themselves in a stand-off. If, at that point, a single soldier, pilot or sailor opens fire on his or her own initiative, deliberately or by mistake, the situation could escalate into a mutually undesirable confrontation.

2.9 Norms and International Regimes

A stable balance of power between the system's most powerful actors is thus the basis of international order, within which minor powers can manoeuvre to gain advantages, and upon which arrangements for international 'governance' can develop. If power is balanced, then a rudimentary 'society of states' can emerge, in the minimalist sense of a basic understanding between major powers of the advantages of cooperation for system maintenance and milieu-shaping (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 40).

From a purely neorealist perspective, there is little room for norms and international governance within the system of states. Hyde-Price, in his quote above, presents a neorealist perspective on these matters. The presence of norms and international governance in the public debate in the 1990s and 2000s cannot be denied or declared to be irrelevant. However, the context in which this was debated needs to be considered. In the unipolar world order of the post-Cold War setting, the extremely asymmetric power superiority of the US backed a set of norms and promoted a kind of international governance. It suited, or at least did not collide with, the security interests of the hyperpower. Some states may be more inclined to genuinely support norms concerning human rights and justice, while some may be doing little more than paying lip-service to these ideals, depending on the orientation of the domestic policy makers. However, I argue that this context cannot be put in a linear perspective, as suggested by the neoliberal dogma (as defined by Dunne 2005, p 186).

Hyde-Price (2008, p. 34) describes the concept of “second-order concerns”, which covers “a range of moral and ethical” concerns, “from protecting the environment to international human rights”. Thus, a neorealist can acknowledge that such factors may have an influence on foreign policy. However, this is under the condition that they do not collide with the security interests of the state.

Alliance-building is a particularly problematic aspect for norms. Waltz (1979, p. 166) states that “[i]f pressures are strong enough, a state will deal with almost anyone”, citing the examples of the French-Russian alliance before World War I and the German-Soviet alliance of 1939. This view is supported by Mearsheimer (2001, p. 47).

2.10 Theoretical Summary

Unipolar and bipolar environments both have constraining qualities which are lacking in a multipolar context. In unipolarity, the hyperpower will be watching over (almost) everyone, working to maintain order according to its liking. This constricts the freedom of action for all other states. In bipolarity, the two superpowers will moderate their allies while the remaining states will be constrained by their need to maintain non-alignment and the potential threat from the superpowers. In multipolarity, neither of these factors are present. Under balanced multipolarity, relatively peaceful coexistence and international norms constraining state behavior can be achieved but if the balance is disturbed and unbalanced multipolarity appears, this can be shattered. An unbalanced multipolar setting invites power maximization and balancing, either to constrain a rising hegemon or to exploit the weakness of a powerful state in decline. Power maximization can lead to intensified power projection and “splendid little wars”. Balancing can lead to arms races and alliances with reckless states as well as chain-ganging. Both these behaviors intensify the risk for both intentional and unintentional armed confrontation. Thus, unbalanced multipolarity is inherently the most risky of the four different polar constellations.

Thus far, my argument is based on the ideas of well-established authors. However, I argue that Waltz, Hyde-Price and Mearsheimer along with Christensen & Snyder all neglect the actor perspective. Their arguments become *de facto* deterministic in the absence of actor analysis. The actor perspective I suggest illustrates that even under unfavorable structural conditions, actors may choose to be more or less focused on relative gains. However, transcendence of significant asymmetry in relative power requires a very robust relationship of cooperation and prospects of trust and mutual benefit. A crucial component in my actor/structure model is that the behavior of the actors does not alter the structure, it merely tries to cope with it.

Alliances seem to be largely unaffected by norms even under the best of circumstances and chain-ganging alliances are no exception. If dependency on allies can be expected to increase in an unbalanced multipolar world order and chain-gang alliances are formed, then risky situations may follow. Power projection displays may escalate into confrontations or contribute to rising tension. Reckless allies pursuing opportunistic policies of power maximization through the use of hard power could trigger hard power responses from the great powers, drawing them into armed conflict with each other. If the escalation then cannot be contained, the consequences could be truly disastrous.

It does not take a bellicose popular opinion or power-hungry autocrats to provoke mutually undesirable conflict. All it takes is an unstable world order, lack of trust and the ruthless logic of the anarchical self-help system.

3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach and the manner in which the theoretical framework is applied to the empirical data.

3.1 Generalization and Transferability

Many authors (see for example Stake 2007, p. 22 or Eckstein 2007, p. 128) have raised concerns about generalizations based on a small number of cases. I emphasize, however, that my study is not intended to generalize in a deterministic manner. My ontological stance, based on Brante (2001), is combined with a methodological approach presented by Gomm, Hammersley & Foster (2007, p. 100-103). They state that “lawfulness does not have to be deterministic, in the sense that everything which happens could not have been otherwise; nor does it imply reductionism” (Gomm et al. 2007, p. 101). With this in mind, I will pursue generalization from a probabilistic point of view, i.e. I will attempt to find what Gomm et al. call “patterns”, which are “stable features of the world” (*ibid.*). The difference between patterns and laws is significant in the sense that patterns in this context are to be understood as probabilistic whereas laws per definition lack exceptions and fluctuations.

A second source of inspiration for this thesis is the concept of “transferability” as described by Lincoln & Guba (2007, p. 40). Lincoln & Guba suggest that a working hypothesis can be developed from a case study and then applied to a different context provided that the other context is sufficiently similar. This degree of similarity is called “fittingness”. In this thesis, I conduct a case study on the world order of 1890-1911 and then argue that it is sufficiently similar to today's situation to be transferable to a modern context. Thus, I have developed a working hypothesis using the historical precedent and then transferred it to the modern context. While Lincoln & Guba reject generalization outright, I have used this term in my argument, since I agree with Gomm et al. that the concept of transferability in itself implies a probabilistic form of generalization.

One critical view of the concept of transferability presented by Gomm et al. (2007, p. 101-102) concerns the selection of cases. They argue that selection according to similarity means that generalization is implicitly being “smuggled in via the back door” and that these assumptions ought to be subjected to empirical testing (Gomm et al. 2007, p. 102). I have chosen to take this criticism into account in my design in two ways; first, by subjecting both my cases to a measure of empirical “testing” and second, by explicitly discussing my generalization ambitions. It should be noted that “testing” is a difficult concept to incorporate in

this context, the nature of this methodological approach does not lend itself to strict “testing”. This working hypothesis is however, in a manner of speaking, “tested” on the second case.

3.2 Empirical Analysis

The empirical analysis in my thesis is comprised of two case studies. The first case study deals with the situation 1890-1911 and forms the basis of my working hypothesis. The time frame of the first case is intended to cover a time period starting with the forced retirement of Bismarck as head of German foreign policy, which heralded the beginning of a more aggressive German behavior. The historical case ends in 1911 with the Second Moroccan Crisis, which was a major international crisis that greatly increased international tensions. This time period saw the modern era born in terms of society, globalization and economy. The second case study is a “snapshot” of the contemporary unipolar/multipolar gray area. The time frame of the second case is intended to cover a time period starting with 9/11, ending close to the time of writing, during a global economic recession. This time frame saw the decline of the American “unipolar moment”, a re-emerging Russia and extensive violations of human rights by its most prominent self-proclaimed protector, the US. Empirical material will be drawn from 2001-2009.

The primary purpose of the historical case study is to provide the empirical material on which to apply the theoretical framework and thus add perspectives to the working hypothesis. The modern case study then shows how the working hypothesis can be used to explain contemporary events.

3.2.1 Case Selection Criteria

The puzzle and purpose used as point of departure for the thesis has provided the criteria for case selection. The primary purpose is to study the impact of multipolarity on international security and thus to analyze incentives associated with multipolarity that could be potentially hazardous to the international security environment. In order to get a contemporary perspective, one of my cases is the 2001-2009 time period. In order to provide empirical illustration for my theoretical framework, I needed to choose a multipolar case similar to this time period. Since I intend to argue for transferability, I chose to study 1890-1911. It is the global case of multipolarity that lies most closely to the contemporary context in chronological terms while being similar in terms of interdependence, which is why I consider it preferable to the more recent 1920s-1940s. The two cases will be compared, the similarities as well as the estimated impact of the differences provide the basis for the transferability argument.

3.2.2 Thematic Investigation

The empirical material will be investigated from a thematic point of view. Each case will be illustrated by dividing it into four theoretical themes; 1. Structural Incentives, 2. Power Maximization, 3. Power Projection and 4. “Splendid Little Wars”. The first theme will illustrate how the polarity affects the structural incentives. The second theme will investigate actor responses to this incentive by making use of a synthetic actor/structure model. The third and fourth themes will study two different empirical phenomena linked to the use of hard power.

3.3 Methodological Causality

The mechanisms that I argue can explain state behavior are structural incentives and actor prospects. These two factors qualify as mechanisms by being causes which have causal relationships as their effects. For example, if unbalanced multipolarity leads to more aggressive foreign policy behavior among the states and an increased tendency to use hard power, then this causal relationship (unbalanced multipolarity – aggressive foreign policy/hard power use) can be explained by two mechanisms working together, being structural incentives and actor prospects. Both of these mechanisms are “structurally dependent” (Brante 2001, p. 175) in the sense that they depend on “a comparatively durable configuration of elements”, being the structure of deep anarchy and the rational preference to maximize gains, and thus fulfill the key criteria outlined by Brante (2001).

These two mechanisms explain causality in terms of structure and agency by emphasizing that the latter is enabled and restrained by the former. Structure and agency may be described as being mutually constitutive in the sense that they depend on each other for existence, although this is a result of arrangement rather than interaction. As such, even though the system may be said to be constructed rather than exogenously given, saying that it is being constantly reproduced gives a false impression of fluctuation. The extreme inertia inherent in the international structure is such that for all intents and purposes it may be considered a constant. Polarity is the result of agency but also of the structure of deep anarchy. The structure of deep anarchy itself is not affected by interaction. Even though it can be suspended by the hierarchy imposed by hegemony, which is a result of agency, it will return as soon as hegemony ceases. As such it is stable and nearly independent of interaction even if it can be affected by it, being constantly latent when it is not present. Only agency in the form of a drastic transformation of the international system, overthrowing the Westphalian arrangement of states as we know it, can change this structure. Such an event is unlikely in the foreseeable future and as such is not considered a factor of importance in this thesis.

3.4 Possibilities and Limitations

The methodological approach described in this paper links empirical illustration to my theoretical framework, thus it should strengthen the plausibility of the theory. The transferability approach limits generalization to the two selected cases but this is not of immediate concern to me since the nature of the phenomena studied limits the number of cases over time (time is the only separating dimension since two world orders obviously cannot exist simultaneously). Thus, if my theoretical framework is sound, it could potentially be applied to another context via another transferability study but that is outside the scope of this thesis.

3.5 Material

The empirical material has been gathered primarily from secondary sources, with a few primary sources in specific cases. The literature has been reviewed critically to reduce potential bias and the normal procedures for source criticism have been applied. As such, all material has been critically analyzed to cope with bias, tendentious content, outright errors, exaggerations, propaganda and lies. Considering the purpose and scope of this thesis, I do not think that a more extensive use of primary sources would provide any significant difference in quality.

3.6 Methodological Summary

The methodological framework outlined above is intended to be able to answer the question while taking the ontological and epistemological assumptions into account. Brante's postulates, in combination with Sabatier's view of structure and agency, have provided the guidelines for the methodological design as well as the theoretical framework. Structure, even though it is not exogenously given, is subjected to such a degree of inertia that it may be conceptualized as being stable and independent of interaction. Agency can be conceptualized as being the constant activity required by states in order to cope with the challenges posed by the structure. Differences in these coping strategies, for example the difference between peaceful status quo pursuits and aggressive attempts to grab power, are not the same as fluctuations in structure. The structure presents a constant challenge to the agents. The neoliberal idea of linear development, "end of history", etc. is thus not supported.

The purpose of this thesis is not to establish necessary and sufficient conditions and to thus prove the theory correct. It would simply be folly to attempt to isolate variables in such complex cases as those studied in this context.

Instead, I have chosen a different approach by arguing for transferability. If some intervening variables are having a hidden impact on the first case, then the similarity between the cases may mean that they are carried over as well. Thus, I do not intend to *prove* that my theoretical framework is correct but rather to provide a *plausible* analysis of the potential link between the use of hard power and multipolarity as well as the mechanisms causing this.

4 The Case of 1890-1911

The 19th century saw the birth of the first true global economy, one that could penetrate even the most remote corners of the world (Hobsbawm 1989, p. 87). After a remarkable period of growth and profits, the world was hit hard by a global recession in 1873. According to Hobsbawm (1989, p. 51), the crisis was felt worldwide, affecting old industrial countries, colonies and the agricultural producers of the East and West Indies. This crisis had many dimensions. Deflation ravaged the prices, in Great Britain prices dropped by 40% in 1873-1896. From the 1870s and on, the global *laissez-faire* trade regimes were gradually replaced by growing protectionism. The global center of finance and business, Great Britain, had to provide support to its banks in an attempt to cope with a growing international debt crisis (Hobsbawm 1989, p. 104). This economic recession inspired the great powers to search for means of making relative gains since the economic means of acquiring absolute gains were diminishing.

1890-1911 was also an era of relative peace for the European great powers. Hobsbawm (1989, p. 392) emphasizes that peace was the “normal and expected” order of things for people living in Europe. Since 1815, there had not been a single war involving all the great powers and since 1871, no European great power had opened fire on another European great power. The 43 years of European peace in 1871-1914 stand out in contrast compared to the rest of the 19th and 20th centuries and the two destructive world wars. Hobsbawm (1989, p. 402) states that no European great power before 1914 wanted a war with another European great power, as indicated by the efforts to prevent confrontation during the crises of 1906 and 1911. That a war might break out was expected but it nevertheless took most of the world by surprise when it did. As late as 24 hours before the assassination of archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, even a top-level US diplomat and the British foreign minister were convinced that neither France, Great Britain, Germany nor Russia wanted a war (Fromkin 2004, p. 109).

4.1 Structural Incentives

In 1890-1911, the multipolar world order was dominated initially by six great powers, a number that later expanded to eight. The original six were: Austria-Hungary, France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Russia. The two additions were the United States and Japan. Of these eight, the UK was by far the most powerful in economic, political and several military (most notably, naval) terms. France, although in possession of a sizable colonial empire, was still weaker than Germany in most respects. Austria-Hungary was a fragmented realm torn by

internal conflicts. Italy, also recently united, was a new ambitious player on the global arena, eager to assume the role of a great power.

In theoretical terms, the unbalanced multipolar world order was dominated by Great Britain, with several growing great powers at the horizon. Germany, Italy, Japan and the US were the most recent great powers and also the ones that were most eager to expand.

4.1.1 A British Perspective

Great Britain was the greatest of the great powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Royal Navy was unsurpassed on the world's seas and Great Britain was the global center of trade and finance. Being so dependent on trade, Great Britain pursued *laissez-faire* liberalism, stubbornly refusing to support tariffs and other instruments that could obstruct the flow of trade goods. According to Fromkin (2004, p. 23), the UK was “the largest, richest and most powerful of all the great powers [my translation]”. The UK controlled one fourth of the world's surface and population and it had unprecedented control over the seas. In 1914 the British steam ship fleet alone (sailing ships were still fairly common) was 12% larger than all other European merchant fleets combined. The same year, France, Germany, the US, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland accounted for 56% of all overseas investment in the world while Great Britain alone accounted for the remaining 44% (Hobsbawm 1989, p. 73). Great Britain dominated global finance, making enormous profits on commercial and financial services, approx. 137 million pounds sterling in 1906-1910.

Britain was at the height of its power in 1890-1911. Although its industrial strength was about to be surpassed by both Germany and the US, it still maintained an unequaled position in global finance and trade. Thus, it had the strongest incentive to maintain status quo and avoid potentially weakening conflicts.

4.1.2 A German Perspective

Germany, after being united under Prussian rule in 1871, had the strongest army in the world (Fromkin 2004, p. 23). As a newborn great power, its combined population, technology, military strength and wealth provided it with enormous potential. It was, however, at a disadvantage compared to the older great powers, which had already claimed large parts of the world. The Germans perceived that Germany's potential did not match its allocation (Fromkin 2004, p. 61f), thus it had a strong incentive for power maximization. The status quo-pursuing policies of the chancellor Bismarck, who had carefully governed German foreign policy for decades, were replaced by militant expansionist policies when Bismarck was relieved of his duties by the emperor Wilhelm II in 1890.

Bismarck had worked to maintain the status quo, in particular through diplomacy and alliances, such as the dual alliance with Austria-Hungary and

Russia, intended to preserve the peace between the two (Fromkin 2004, p. 24). With Bismarck gone, Germany started to pursue a more aggressive expansionist foreign policy, which included colonial conquests. In support of its new foreign policy ambitions, Germany also embarked on an extensive naval build-up. The German navy was intended to become a powerful tool for the German government, capable of acting globally in force. The strongly disproportionate strength of the British Royal Navy was thus challenged, which caused quite a bit of alarm in the British government and provoked countermeasures, such as increasing the number of Royal Navy ships in the home waters (Koenig 2004, p. 146).

4.1.3 An American Perspective

The United States was a growing empire which started to assert itself early. The unique geographical location of the United States meant that it had few rivals in its own hemisphere, which it was quick to exploit as early as 1823 by presenting the Monroe doctrine (*Monroe Doctrine*). This doctrine was intended to prevent any further involvement from the European great powers in the western hemisphere, thereby giving the US time and space to grow undisturbed until it was ready to make a serious grab for global power. Although not taken seriously at first, the Monroe doctrine became an important policy during the latter part of the 19th century when the US had grown into a true great power. The Monroe doctrine can be viewed as an attempt to preserve the status quo in the Western Hemisphere, at least until 1904 when president Theodore Roosevelt added the Roosevelt Corollary to the doctrine, explicitly giving the US sole right to intervene in the affairs of the Latin American states, “in cases of flagrant and chronic wrongdoing” (*Monroe Doctrine*). The US underwent a transition from being worried about European encroachments to launching a power-maximizing campaign of its own, starting with the Spanish-American War of 1898.

The US, being a relative newcomer in terms of great power status, had an incentive to exploit this potential and take up a position closer to the older great powers. However, the US also had room to grow in its own hemisphere by virtue of its huge land mass as well as the naval ability and geographical location allowing it to choose the weakened Spain as its opponent in its colonial conquests. As such, it could steer clear of the more infected great power conflicts related to the power maximization of the time.

4.1.4 A Japanese Perspective

After the remarkable Meiji restoration of 1868, Japan was a rapidly industrializing nation, looking to the Asian mainland for room to expand. The Japanese secured a position in Manchuria and Korea, where it soon found itself challenged by Russia. The Japanese had anticipated conflict with France or Russia and thus pursued a vigorous naval build-up plan, which provided it with a powerful, modern fleet

(Koenig 2004, p. 122). Like Germany, Japan was a newborn great power with huge potential and like Germany it soon found its ability to grow restricted by the older great powers, most notably Russia. The Japanese solution to this problem was to form an alliance with Great Britain in 1902, intended to secure British assistance in case Japan was to be attacked by an opportunistic great power while it was already involved in a war (*Anglo-Japanese Alliance*). The idea was quite obviously to plan for a war against Russia without having to worry about French interference since France and Russia were the two primary rivals Japan had to face (Koenig 2004, p. 122).

Japan found itself in a position similar to that of the US. Although it had to clash with Russia and risk confrontation with France, it could choose to expand at the expense of the relatively weak Russia while trying to maintain good relations with Great Britain and avoid angering France unnecessarily.

4.2 The Scramble for Colonies

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, all the great powers took part in an intense competition in which each tried to secure colonies. The global recession and the protectionism caused by it contributed to the situation. In 1897, the British prime minister expressed his sentiments to the French ambassador by saying; “If you hadn't been such stubborn protectionists, we wouldn't have to be so eager to annex new territories” [my translation] (Fromkin 2004, p. 93). Several old great powers, most notably Great Britain and France, had already colonized significant areas but even middle and minor powers such as Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and Belgium had considerable colonial empires. The already partially colonized Africa was completely engulfed (save for Ethiopia and Liberia) by the imperialist great powers. In their scramble to grab territory, armed expeditions representing France and Great Britain collided in Egyptian Sudan in 1898, sparking the Fashoda Incident (*Fashoda Incident*). After a tense confrontation, it was resolved diplomatically through a negotiated division of the contested territory.

Germany entered into the great imperialist conquest race after Otto von Bismarck was relieved of his duties as head of German foreign policy in 1890 (Fromkin 2004, p. 16). At the same time, Italy was satisfied with trying to conquer overlooked, barren areas and eventually found itself unable to conquer Ethiopia.

Between 1876 and 1915, Great Britain increased its colonial possessions by some 10 million km², France by some 9 million km², Germany acquired more than 2.6 million km² while Belgium and Italy seized nearly 2.5 million km² each. The US conquered approx. 250,000 km², mostly from Spain, while Japan took almost as much from China, Russia and Korea. The old Portuguese colonies expanded by about 750,000 km² (Hobsbawm 1989, p. 83).

4.3 Gunboat Diplomacy

The scramble for colonies led to confrontations, which sparked crises. While the Fashoda Incident was resolved peacefully quite quickly, two other crises would cause hostile attitudes that would linger for much longer. These are the First and Second Moroccan Crises, occurring in 1905-06 and 1911 respectively. During the First Moroccan Crisis, the German emperor denounced French influence in Morocco and demanded an “open door policy” during a visit in Tangiers, thus presenting a direct challenge to France (*Moroccan crises*). This crisis was solved through a conference, which recognized the independence of Morocco, albeit under French and Spanish policing, and the equal rights to economic access for the great powers.

Another infamous power projection incident was the so-called Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896. Although a war by name, it was comprised of little more than a 38-minute long bombardment of the royal palace on the island of Zanzibar in eastern Africa by the Royal Navy (*The Anglo-Zanzibar War of 1896*). The incident was sparked by a coup on Zanzibar, which made Great Britain react since its influence over the island was challenged by the usurper.

The United States also did its fair share of power projection, including the deployment of the gunboat *USS Nashville* to support the independence struggle of the Republic of Panama from Colombia in 1903 (*TR's Legacy - The Panama Canal*). The US launched another, more pompous display of power in 1907-1909 when it sent a large fleet with a core of sixteen new battleships on a voyage around the world in a “grand pageant of American sea power” (*The Great White Fleet*).

The second Moroccan crisis in 1911 was instigated by the German move to send the gunboat *SMS Panther* to Agadir, ostensibly to protect German interests during local unrest. This excuse was not accepted by France and Great Britain. According to the New York Times, the latter contemplated a countermove in the form of a naval power demonstration (“Two War Clouds Menace Europe”). The crisis was later resolved through international negotiations which gave Germany some strips of territory in the French Congo in exchange for recognition of Morocco as a French protectorate (*Moroccan crises*).

4.4 Splendid Wars of the Past

The 1890-1911 time period featured a number of “splendid little wars”. Short campaigns with limited but significant objectives yielded favorable results in several cases and led to bloody wars of attrition in some.

4.4.1 The Spanish-American War, 1898

The Spanish-American war of 1898 is an example of a successful war in which the US emerged as a true global great power by seizing Cuba, Guam, the Philippines and Puerto Rico from Spain in a swift naval campaign as well as

annexing Hawaii (Koenig 2004). The war catapulted the US to a position of significant power and global reach. The US maintained control over the Philippines until 1946, exercised considerable influence over Cuba until 1959 and still owns Puerto Rico and Guam. The Spanish-American war yielded few casualties for the instigating Americans. Only 395 Americans were killed in battle. However, several thousand perished from food poisoning due to a dangerous mistake at a meat-packing company in Chicago (von Platen 1999, p. 40). This did not cloud the remarkable gains made by the victory. In Cuba, The American Tobacco Co established a large-scale operation, Bethlehem Steel took over most of the production of iron and steel while United Fruit bought vast expanses of agricultural land at bargain prices (von Platen 1999, p. 40f).

4.4.2 The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905

In 1904, the competition between Russia and Japan over the control of Manchuria and Korea prompted Japan to resort to military action. Japan planned to destroy the Russian naval assets in Asia, which would secure the Japanese sea lanes and undermine the Russian ability to fight in the region. In 1904, Japan declared war on Russia and in 1904-1905 utterly crushed the Russian navy and defeated the Russian army in a series of decisive battles with few losses of its own, thus securing its own role on the Asian mainland (Koenig 2004, p. 129-144).

4.4.3 The Boer War, 1899-1902

The British army found itself in a more difficult position in the Boer war of 1899-1902. After setbacks against the British in conventional battles, the Boers switched strategy. Being expert marksmen equipped with modern weapons, they engaged the British forces in a guerrilla war that came to last for three years. The British responded with drastic measures and harsh policies towards the civilian population in order to secure their victory (Smedberg 2005, p. 348). There is no doubt that the British intended the Boer war to be a splendid little war. When the troops were ready to depart from Britain, it was expected that they would participate in a “tea-time war”, i.e. a war that would be won before the five-o-clock tea (von Platen 1999, p. 111). After three years, 21,842 men had been killed in action or by diseases and more than 75,000 had been wounded. 448,435 British troops had to be dispatched to finally end the costly debacle (von Platen 1999, p. 111f).

4.5 Empirical summary: 1890-1911

Structural incentives were not the only factor in play during 1890-1911. According to Fromkin (2004, p. 95), Germany felt that it was threatened and

encircled by France and Russia. The German alliance with Russia dating back to the days of Bismarck before 1890 was replaced by intense hostility when the Kaiser abandoned the status quo policy in favor of power maximization. The US and Japan found it easier to maximize their power since they could choose weak opponents in their own spheres of interest. Where the actors anticipated benefits from cooperation, such as the Anglo-Japanese agreement and the alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany, treaties were signed. This also illustrates the degree of military interdependence at the time; great powers could not afford to stand alone without guarantees of some sort. The German kaiser Wilhelm II said in 1908 that “we cannot afford to lose Austria, with its 50 million inhabitants and strong and effective army, but neither can we let it draw us into an armed conflict that...could lead to a large-scale war, in which we definitely would have nothing to gain” [my translation] (Fromkin 2004, p. 71).

Interestingly enough, loyalties shifted with short notice. The Anglo-Japanese treaty could have brought Great Britain into open conflict with Russia or France, which it would later ally itself with. Hobsbawm (1989, p. 404) describes this by stating that the alliances of 1914 were impossible to predict in 1880. As such, both structural incentives and actor prospects need to be taken into account to understand the policies of 1890-1911.

The growing military interdependence manifested by the alliance treaties eventually brought the great powers into a chain-gang situation where Germany in 1914 had to support Austria-Hungary while Russia had to support Serbia and in turn be supported by Great Britain and France. The chain-gang logic ultimately became one of the reasons for the number of states involved in World War I but, as illustrated by this case study, it posed a danger several years before that event.

For all its perils, the time period between circa 1870 and 1914 became known as “*la belle époque*” [“the beautiful era”] after the Great War (von Platen 1999, p. 76). That may be a sign of how the time before the war was romanticized afterwards by hazy memories but it may also show that the people who lived then genuinely thought that it was a time of belief in the future, faith in mankind and progress. Little did they know just what kind of path they were treading.

5 Working Hypothesis

This chapter briefly lists the assumptions of the working hypothesis based on the theoretical framework and the empirical data from chapter 4.

5.1 The Risks of Multipolarity

The case of 1890-1911 illustrates how the unbalanced multipolar world order of the time inspired the great powers to pursue power-maximizing policies. The decline of the most powerful of the great powers and the lack of stable alliances created an opening for opportunistic new great powers on the rise. When traditional diplomacy and negotiations did not yield the desired results, the great powers deployed hard power in support of their foreign policy objectives. This increased the risk of international confrontations. My working hypothesis is thus;

- Unbalanced multipolarity with a dominant great power in decline provided the incentive for power maximization
- Actor prospects that favored relative gains meant that the actors could not transcend the structural incentives through cooperation
- Opportunities to make relative gains without seizing them from another great power were identified in the form of annexation of uncontested territory
- The simultaneous attempts to secure uncontested territory sparked “scrambles” and confrontations in which hard power was deployed to demonstrate resolve
- Alliance patterns were unpredictable and based on short-term interests rather than ideological or normative concerns
- Hard power was used as an instrument for conducting foreign policy, in particular in cases where traditional means did not yield the desired results
- Hard power was used in two ways; for power projection displays and for instigating “splendid little wars”
- The potentially rapid unfolding of “splendid little wars” increases the risk of chain-gang alliance behavior

6 The Case of 2001-2009

With the end of the Cold War, the US found itself standing strong but with no equals. Few if any would argue that the US has been the sole superpower since then, taking on the role of hyperpower and protector of the international system. As long as the hyperpower was looking over everyone's shoulder, multilateralism could be built on noble foundations and the world of international interaction seemed to take on a more just and peaceful nature. However, after September 11th 2001, things have started to change.

6.1 Structural Incentives

After fighting two lengthy and costly wars in two distant theaters of operation, suffering from the impact of the greatest economic disaster since the Great Depression as well as bearing the cost of a global "war on terror", the international giant has been severely wounded. The US, while still the strongest of nations by a wide margin, needs to step back, tend to its wounds and cope with the financial crisis. A reduced US influence in the global arena leads to the possibility of new great powers emerging. The currently most plausible contenders are Russia and China. The EU is also in possession of considerable capabilities but as of yet, insufficient coordination is preventing it from aspiring to great power status.

6.1.1 An American Perspective

The US under George W. Bush abandoned the illusion of normative behavior by resorting to extrajudicial extraditions, torture and going to war without the blessing of the UN. Now the US is planning a withdrawal from Iraq and requires assistance from its NATO allies to cope with its commitments in Afghanistan (Whitlock 2008; Erlanger & Cooper 2009). The overstretched American hard power assets will need some time to recover from the drain of manpower and resources imposed by the lengthy wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, those who think that US foreign policy will be considerably less inclined to use hard power and abandon all the criticized methods employed under the previous administration should consider the fact that after only a few weeks in office, President Obama authorized the CIA to continue the controversial extraditions (Burton & West 2009).

At the same time, NATO remains one of the most important US foreign policy projects. The recent NATO expansion has brought the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the alliance. Georgia and the Ukraine are also being considered for membership. This was previously an important objective for the US administration but lately the process has been bogged down by internal disagreement, the European NATO members being particularly reluctant to support such plans (Dombey 2008).

6.1.2 A Russian Perspective

According to Fedorov (2002, p. 39), the unipolar world order and the dominance of the US is the main threat to Russia's national security. Multipolarity and a EU that is more independent of the US are identified as means to reduce American influence. In the Russian *Foreign Policy Concept* of 2008, an “emerging multipolarity” is mentioned as well as the Russian negative view of NATO expansion, especially in Georgia and the Ukraine (*The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*). Russia's ambition is to undermine the US power base by encouraging a split between the US and the EU, intended to weaken NATO (Fedorov 2002, p. 39). The multipolar view of the international system is also explicit in the Russian military doctrine (Ulfving 2005, p. 223). When the Polish foreign minister Radoslaw Sikorski suggested that Russia join NATO, the Russian envoy to NATO Dmitry Rogozin replied that “Great powers don't join coalitions, they create coalitions. Russia considers itself a great power” (Pop 2009).

6.1.3 A Chinese Perspective

China has perceptions similar to that of Russia and is openly supportive of Russia's ambitions to achieve a multipolar world order (Isachenkov 2005). In addition, China has launched an economic and diplomatic offensive in Africa (Servant 2005) and is pursuing military relations in Latin America, which has caused both John McCain and Hillary Clinton to express concern² (Pessin 2006). Although China has been less confrontational than Russia vis-à-vis the US, it has also repeatedly warned the rest of the world that Taiwan remains a sensitive issue (*ibid.*) and is still focusing on strengthening its military capacity near Taiwan (Pessin 2009).

6.2 The Scramble for the Arctic

The “scramble for the Arctic” is a contemporary illustration of the conflict between power-maximizing and international norms. Like the scramble for

²Both were senators at the time

colonies of the great powers of the past, it's comprised of an attempt to secure resources which are, in a sense, "up for grabs". The "Arctic Five", being the five nations with territorial claims on the Arctic region (the U.S, Norway, Denmark, Russia and Canada), are in dispute over who has a right to which territory. In the summer of 2007, Russia sent a mini-submarine to the seabed to plant a Russian flag made of titanium. Canada's prime minister Stephen Harper dismissed the event as a "stunt" but a few weeks later he announced plans for construction up to eight new armed Arctic naval patrol vessels and a new deep water port in the Arctic (Sullivan 2008, p. 25; Cressey 2007, p. 521).

The year after, all five nations pledged to let the matter be settled by scientific criteria ("Race for the North Pole is cancelled") but no more than a few months later, a Russian senior official stated that Russia was planning on increasing its military presence in the Arctic and that Russia has "a number of highly professional military units in the Leningrad³, Siberian and Far Eastern military districts, which are specifically trained for combat in Arctic regions" ("Russia to increase its Arctic military presence"). The importance of Arctic oil and gas resources is indicated by the fact that Russia in 2007 began constructing two new, very large (70,000 dwt) arctic ice-capable shuttle tankers, intended to transfer oil between Arctic oilfields and a cargo transfer terminal in Murmansk. These will be the largest ships ever built by the Admiralty Shipyards in S:t Petersburg ("Azipods: just add ice").

The Arctic is not only of interest because of its potential oil and gas deposits, it also has significant strategic importance because of the sea lanes that are opening up as the ice coverage is being reduced by global warming (Yenikeyeff & Krysiak 2007, p. 9). The Northern Sea Route (NSR)⁴ and the Northwest Passage⁵ could become new alternative shipping routes. The NSR could, according to Yenikeyeff & Krysiak (2007, p. 9), reduce the traveling distance by 40% for voyages between Europe and the west coast of North America, Northeast Asia and the Far East, compared to the traditional routes via the Suez or Panama Canals. At present, the NSR is accessible only during the summer but global warming could make it open all year round in 20-30 years (*ibid.*). In August 2008, both the Northwest Passage and the NSR were open at the same time, for the first time in circa 125,000 years (Lean 2008). A German-based shipping group has reported that it will start using the NSR in 2009, thus reducing the distance of the voyage between Germany and Japan by some 4,000 nautical miles (*ibid.*).

The Northwest Passage is today covered in dense ice most of the year. Using real-time satellite images, it can be traversed, albeit with great difficulty, without the assistance of icebreakers (Behrend 2006). However, within 20-30 years, it too is expected to become passable without such assistance (Yenikeyeff & Krysiak 2007, p. 11). The US and EU consider the Northwest Passage to be international waters but Canada maintains territorial claims on it, insisting that ships using the

³ The Leningrad military district has kept its name even though the city of Leningrad is now called S:t Petersburg (Ulfving 2005, p. 89)

⁴ A.k.a. the Northeast Passage, a sea lane linking Europe with Asia via the Arctic waters off the northern coast of Russia

⁵ A sea lane linking the Pacific Ocean with the Atlantic via the Canadian arctic archipelago

passage should report to Canadian authorities, a policy expected to be opposed by the US (Lean 2008).

6.3 The Contemporary Gunboats

The scramble for the Arctic has, like its historic counterpart, inspired acts of power projection. On August 7, 2007 the Canadian armed forces launched Operation Nanook, described as a “sovereignty operation” (“Arctic sovereignty operation Nanook set to launch in Nunavut”). The operation lasted 10 days and involved more than 700 army, navy and air force personnel, along with 30 Canadian Inuit Rangers and members of the coast guard and various government departments. The operation supposedly revolved around a drug-interdiction and oil-spill scenario but in addition to the two navy surface vessels, a submarine and fighter jets were also deployed (*ibid.*). The submarine and fighter jets were presumably part of the “sovereignty” ambition rather than Arctic drug-interdiction and environmental protection operations.

This was not, however, the first power projection display in the north in 2007. The same year, the Norwegian armed forces observed an increase in Russian long-range bomber sorties along Norwegian air space in July, following a major naval exercise in the area (Moskwa 2007). The Russian bombers deviated from the usual flight paths by going farther south than before, forcing the scramble of both Norwegian and British fighter aircraft (*ibid.*).

In the South China Sea, China has recently engaged in power projection against a US intelligence vessel, the *USNS Impeccable*, which was accused of spying by Beijing (Reid 2009). The *Impeccable* is equipped with an advanced towed-array sonar designed to detect submarines (Pike 1999). In March 2009, five Chinese ships “harassed” the *Impeccable* by maneuvering in a manner that forced the *Impeccable* to take evasive action to avoid colliding with them (Pessin 2009). The incident took place in international waters. In response, the US has dispatched heavily armed destroyers to protect the *Impeccable* from further Chinese actions (Reid 2009).

The restructuring of many armed forces today with the ambition to create rapidly deployable units for peacekeeping/peace enforcement missions abroad also has the side effect that it provides the instruments for remote power projection. Hyde-Price (2008, p. 124) states that Germany's restructuring efforts should provide it with “an enhanced capability for power projection” within ten years (i.e. by 2018).

6.4 Splendid Wars of the Present

The 2001-2009 time period, like its historical predecessor, featured a few “splendid little wars”. Again, a short campaign with limited but significant objectives yielded favorable results in one case and led to a bloody war of attrition in another.

6.4.1 The Iraq War, 2003-

The US, anticipating a swift victory, invaded the already weakened Iraq in 2003, with the ambition to oust its leader and replace it with a government more to the liking of the US. Like the Boer war, the initial successes in conventional battles were soon replaced by an atrocious guerrilla war in which the great power found itself pouring more and more funds and men into the conflict but with few gains to show for it. The war was instigated despite considerable international protests, including from the secretary-general of the United Nations (“Iraq war illegal, says Annan”). Rather than a “splendid little war”, the US found itself bogged down in a low-intensity war of attrition. Like its predecessor in South Africa, it not only has had to endure casualties and costs but also harsh criticism from around the globe.

Although the Iraq war is not a “splendid little war” in the multipolar sense, it shows that “splendid little wars” was considered a viable foreign policy option for the US even at a time when it was met with considerable international opposition.

6.4.2 The Russia-Georgia War, 2008

The Russian war against Georgia in the summer of 2008 is arguably the most clear-cut modern example of a successful “splendid little war” fought by a great power. Russia used its vast superiority in intelligence to prepare and plan for the expected Georgian move, then responded by using massive force to deliver a devastating blow against Georgia. Russia was most likely expecting the Georgian move and had made extensive preparations for it (Clover, Belton, Dombey & Cienski 2008), including the deployment of troops to forward positions (Friedman 2009). Russia seems to have had a long-term plan for this eventuality, since it has previously targeted Georgian intelligence-gathering assets, for example by shooting down Georgian reconnaissance drones in Georgian airspace (“Russia 'shot down Georgia drone’”). The Russian campaign was thus most likely more than a defensive reaction to a Georgian attack. The war had all the hallmarks of a well-planned operation intended to deliver a swift forceful blow to show Russian resolve and strength.

6.5 Empirical summary

In 2001-2009, the structural incentives have undergone a change. Starting out in unipolarity, the world has started to gradually shift towards multipolarity. The reeling hyperpower can no longer maintain its steady grip and the emerging great powers have noticed that they can make a bid for power. While the EU remains ambivalent and divided, Russia and China seem to be repeating the behavior of their great power predecessors. The US is working to maintain the status quo but finding itself more or less on the defensive, while Russia, and to some extent China are trying in their different ways to reduce the relative gap between them and the US. Russia has shown once again that the risky calculus of “splendid little wars” can pay off and is now flexing its military muscle in the Arctic. China is maintaining more of a low profile but is nevertheless doing some risky power projection of its own in the South China Sea. In addition, China's plans for the future seem to involve increased Chinese influence abroad, while the conflict over Taiwan remains unsolved.

If the transition process continues and the US finds itself becoming increasingly incapable of asserting itself alone, then it will inevitably become more dependent on its allies. These allies can use this to act more independently and pursue their own interests, assured that the American dependence means that it will have to support them regardless of their actions. Even if the allies are not reckless, they may become targets for an aggressive *fait accompli*-seeking rival great power. This chain-gang logic could lead to dangerous situations if the US has to strengthen its ties with, for example, Georgia, Taiwan or the Ukraine. Even if the US' partners in NATO seems less than enthusiastic about including Georgia and the Ukraine into the alliance, nothing can stop the US from forming a bi- or multilateral alliance on another basis than NATO, similar to its current close military relations to, for example, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Qatar.

7 Transferability

In this chapter, I argue that the working hypothesis based on the historical case is applicable to a modern context. I discuss aspects related to interaction capacity, economic interdependence, hard power/soft power, norms and the role of public opinion, international as well as domestic.

The transferability concept is based on the methodological approach described in chapter 3, in which it is stated that a working hypothesis can be developed through the application of a theoretical framework on a single case study. This working hypothesis can then be transferred to another context, provided that it is sufficiently similar, which by Lincoln & Guba (2007, p. 40) is described as degree of *fittingness*.

7.1 Interaction Capacity

Buzan & Little (2000, p. 276-299) argue that "interaction capacity" is a crucial component in technological change and globalization, and that Waltz has overlooked this aspect of the international system. Interaction capacity determines the ability of units to interact and as such is determined by technological development in communications, infrastructure and related fields. At a glance, one of the most significant differences between 1890-1911 and today would be the impact of a drastically improved interaction capacity. However, most of the drastic breakthroughs listed by Buzan & Little, for example the sailing ship, the steam-driven iron and steel ships, railways and the electromagnetic telegraph, were already part of everyday life in 1890-1911. Not only did these factors exist, they had already started to have a global reach. For example, the transoceanic cables for telegraphs were laid out in the 1850s and 1860s, meant that messages could travel across the world in a single day. In the early 20th century, it also became possible to send wireless messages across the Atlantic via radio.

I argue that the world around 1900 had considerable interaction capacity, albeit in a manner that was more restricted to the political and financial elite. I do not propose to say that ordinary people around 1900 had anywhere near the global outreach ordinary people have today. However, I do argue that heads of state, senior decision-makers and journalists could communicate effectively and relatively rapidly on a global level as early as the 1870s, thanks to the telegraph and from the early 1900s and onward, wireless communications. Trade, goods and people moved across the globe on railways and ships.

Since I work with the international system and states are the actors in this thesis, interaction capacity is interesting primarily at the level of the state. Thus,

the achievements of the late 19th century created sufficient interaction capacity for my arguments to be transferable. Even if a message can be sent in seconds today compared to hours at that time, I argue that interaction on the state level is normally preceded by careful deliberations, which means that differences in terms of interaction capacity at the state level need to be more significant than the difference between hours and seconds to have an impact. As such, it can be a major factor in an analysis of earlier stages in history but I argue that it is of minor importance to the study of events from the late 19th century up until today.

7.2 Economic Interdependence

The concept of economic interdependence may be fairly recent but it has implications stretching back far into history. Waltz, in his analysis of economic interdependence, found that the great powers in 1910 were far more dependent of trade with each other than, for example, the US was in the 1970s (Waltz 1979, p. 158-160). The figures quoted by Waltz indicate that exports plus imports as a percentage of GNP were 33-52% for the U.K., France, Germany and Italy in 1909-1913 (Waltz 1979, p. 141). Putting these figures into perspective, the equivalent figures for 2008⁶ for the US would be 25%, for the EU 19%⁷, for China 62% and for Russia 44% (*CIA World Factbook*).

Waltz (1979, p. 158) goes on by quoting John Maynard Keynes, who stated that “[t]he statistics of the economic interdependence of Germany and her neighbors are overwhelming”. Germany was “the best customer of six European states, including Russia and Italy; the second best customer of three, including Britain; and the third best customer of France”. In addition, Germany was “the largest source of supply for ten European states, including Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Italy; and the second largest source of supply for three, including Britain and France” (Waltz 1979, p. 158).

This clearly shows the degree of economic integration between the great powers in the early 20th century. Despite this, the great powers clashed in a monumental war which ravaged their economies. The historical record of economic interdependence clearly indicate that it has not proven to be capable of discouraging war, even at levels resembling those we have today. The First World War also contributed to the demise of economic interdependence in the early 20th century. The economic interdependence during the interwar years of the 1920s and 1930s was far less extensive (Waltz 1979, p. 144).

⁶ For the modern examples, I have used GDP figures rather than GNP, since GNP figures are usually not listed today. The difference between GDP and GNP measurements may have an impact on the precise accuracy of the figures but will not have a significant influence on the comparison. For example, for the US, GDP accounted for 99.2% of the GNP in 2008 (*Flow of Funds Accounts of the United States*).

⁷ Excluding imports and exports within the union between EU member countries

7.3 Hard Power: Still a Factor

Hyde-Price (2008, p. 21) describes the contemporary optimistic view of the international system with the following statement;

International anarchy may not have been ended [...] but its competitive logic has been mitigated by pooled sovereignty, porous borders, multi-level governance, multilateral institutions, economic interdependence and transnational social integration.

He goes on by saying that "the problem" with this description of the world order is that "we have been here before" and that "[i]n the wake of the Great War of 1914-18 a similar mood of infectious optimism blossomed throughout Europe and North America" (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 21). The League of Nations was organized and the president of US made bold speeches about how justice and self-determination would be the order of the day in global politics. After no more than 20 years, the optimism was gone and the world once again stood at the brink of war, this time the confrontation would be more destructive than anything previously seen.

Hyde-Price (2008, p. 23-24) identifies two problems which color both the contemporary optimism and that of the early post-Great War era. The first one is what Hyde-Price calls "presentism". This is the tendency to overestimate the long-term impact of contemporary historic events by thinking that the anarchic "self-help" system has been replaced by a rule-based "post-Westphalian" order (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 23). The second problem is the tendency to downplay the significance of power. Hyde-Price (2008, p. 24) states that the concept of soft power proved empty and toothless when faced by violent conflict, he mentions the break-up of Yugoslavia as an example. Furthermore, he also mentions that the 1990s started and ended with two wars, that in the Gulf War and the operations in Kosovo (Hyde-Price 2008, p. 24).

The 2000s have not been significantly different at the time of writing this in 2009. In 2001, the US supported by a coalition resorted to traditional hard power in Afghanistan. Two years later, despite considerable international controversy, the US launched yet another war, this time in Iraq. The EU deployed some hard power of its own in the Democratic Republic of Congo during Operation Artemis in 2003 and later again in 2008 in Chad. The Russian operation against Georgia in 2008 also showed that even in today's world, hard power can trump all other arguments in a quick and effective fashion.

With this in mind, I argue that hard power is every bit as relevant today as ever. Soft power has failed to entirely replace its "hard" counterpart in global politics. When push comes to shove, vital issues are still handled by the military forces capable of shouldering such responsibilities.

7.4 Norms of the Past and Present

A frequently mentioned criticism against the view that contemporary international politics has many similarities with the past is that there is a new mindset in which human rights and self-determination are held in much higher esteem than was the case in the late 19th and early 20th century. However appealing these views may be, I argue that they too are a difference in degree rather than in kind. A similar mix of hidden agendas and seemingly noble intentions was present in 1890-1911, for example in the form of the *mission civilisatrice*. This doctrine exemplified the ambition to spread civilization to the “savage” populations of the colonies (Hobsbawm 1989, p. 99). According to, for example, Paris (2002, p. 638), modern peacebuilding efforts are the modern rendering of the *mission civilisatrice*.

The above argument does not intend to reduce the contemporary human rights and peacebuilding efforts to the level of imperialist antics but rather to illustrate that during the era of imperialism, there were widely-held notions that imperialism was in fact beneficial for the colonial subjects. Even though the mindset of the time was deeply influenced by ideas of racial superiority, norms and international opinion nevertheless played an important role. The rumors of British concentration camps in South Africa forced the British authorities to make public denials until it was confirmed that Boer women and children were dying in the British camps. The outrage in Europe inspired the upper society in Berlin to hold “Boer parties” to support the Boer cause and Polish officers traveled to Transvaal to enlist as volunteers to help the Boers (von Platen 1999, p. 138). Other volunteers went all the way from Scandinavia to form the “Scandinavian volunteer corps”. In France, the government met with the Boer president Paulus Krüger. When the British monarch Edward VII visited France the year after the Boer war had come to an end, the public showed its contempt by being utterly silent when they had gathered to “greet” the king of Great Britain.

Similarly, in 1894-1899, the Dreyfus scandal split public opinion in France in two. Captain Alfred Dreyfus had been wrongfully accused of treason, chosen to be a scapegoat because of his Jewish descent. A considerable part of the public was outraged and the whole of Europe got involved. Germany denounced any affiliation with Dreyfus in a remarkably generous gesture intended to demonstrate his innocence. Queen Victoria encouraged “the martyr” to appeal and the public all over the globe “from Iceland to New Zealand” [my translation] took sides (von Platen 1999, p. 145-177). In the end, the French military court that had sentenced Dreyfus had to accept the appeal and changed the sentence, setting Dreyfus free.

While the Dreyfus scandal and the Boer war were headline news around the globe, the American campaign against insurgents on the Philippines after replacing Spain as the colonial master of the islands was revealed to be ruthless and brutal. The accusations included torture and massacres. The American secretary of war Elihu Root publicly stated, with the support of four witnesses, that the American army had been nothing but humane and generous. One of the witnesses, William H. Taft (later to become president), stated that;

[...]there never was a war conducted, either against an inferior race or others, in which there was more compassion and more restraint and more generosity, assuming there was a war at all, than there has been in the Philippines (“Secretary Root Defends Army in Philippines”)

The above shows clearly that norms, international as well as domestic, was a factor to be reckoned with even during the ruthless age of imperialism. Even if Taft and the others were either lying or exaggerating, the fact that they felt compelled to make such statements indicates the importance of norms to the public opinion. It is also important to keep in mind that this was the era that saw the birth of the Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907, both intended to provide a secular legal framework in support of a more humane world. The Geneva convention of 1864 is another noteworthy example. The problem was that time and time again, noble intentions gave way to ruthless calculation during the 24 years of gradual escalation between 1890 and 1914. The great powers frequently resorted to appalling measures and then tried to hide it from the public. The international norm system built by the status quo-pursuing diplomats during the mid-19th century was undermined, step by step. By 1914, the liberal norms had been mostly replaced by belligerent nationalism.

I argue that the same can be said of today; although noble intentions are widespread, states, and in particular great powers, tend to let security issues take precedence over such concerns. This was, for example, the case with the recent use of torture and extrajudicial extraditions by the US. In addition, at least two of the emerging great powers, Russia and China, have never held human rights in high regard to begin with.

7.5 Transferability Summary

The two cases I have employed are not identical. I argue, however, that they are *sufficiently similar* to allow for limited, probabilistic generalization. The interaction capacity argument is insufficient to dismiss these similarities since globalization in trade, economics and politics as well as public opinion and liberal norms was already an important factor in 1890-1911. Again, the circumstances were not identical but there were key similarities. In fact, I argue that the 1890-1911 time period is probably more similar to the contemporary situation than, for example, the 1950s. In some respects, most notably trade and interdependence, 1890-1911 is more similar to today than even the 1970s.

One of the most memorable crimes of the era, the colonial conquest of Africa, should not be allowed to obscure the image of the 1890-1911 time period completely. There were nuances, just like there are nuances today. The ruthless power politics of 1890-1911 provoked public outrage several times, just as similar behavior does today. Ultimately, economic interdependence, international norms and public opinion have proven to be insufficient to prevent the violent and dangerous policies of the great powers, in the past as well as the present.

8 Conclusions

The historical and contemporary empirical analyses converge in light of the theoretical framework; in an unbalanced multipolar world order, the incentive for power maximization combined with actor prospects of low cooperation benefits drives expansionist policies. The great powers then pursue both internal and external balancing. The external balancing is comprised of alliances, wars and “scrambles” to grab resources, especially those that are available in areas in which other great powers have a weak power base. The internal balancing is comprised of massive armament programs. During the age of imperialism, the great powers tried to grab colonies and later undertook ambitious military build-up efforts, among these massive German naval investments stand out. Today, the great powers are trying to grab parts of the Arctic while Russia and China have been pursuing extensive re-armament programs for several years, trying to reduce the gap in their relative strength vis-à-vis the US.

8.1 Incentives and Prospects

In both the historical and contemporary cases, power maximization efforts have been backed by military power projection displays. The gunboats of 1911 may have been replaced by the strategic bombers and polar patrol vessels of 2007 but the pattern remains the same. Even if no shots are fired, they can contribute to increased international tension and indicate the start of area-specific (i.e. naval, polar, etc.) arms races.

The current hyperpower will have to cut back on its ambitions and thus cease to dominate global politics. This will inevitably create a power vacuum in the international system. This in turn will provide opportunities for the re-emergence of great power politics. The US has already shown that even today, a sufficiently powerful actor can disregard contemporary international norms, ranging from *jus ad bellum* to torture, and get away with it. Even if it hadn't, the decline of the hyperpower means that there is no one to make sure that everyone plays by the rules. As such, international norms will need to be accepted by all the great powers to be effective, unless an alliance steps forth to shoulder that responsibility.

Actor prospects can potentially make actors transcend the rational but mutually undesirable outcome inherent in short-term/low-trust contexts, as illustrated by the Prisoner's Dilemma view of international politics. In both my empirical examples, several great powers have chosen the “defect” option rather

than “cooperate” since the relative power balance is to their disadvantage to such an extent that it becomes impossible to close the gap through mutual gains. Thus, they pursue relative gains as the quickest and most efficient means of closing in on their rivals. Such was the case with Germany and Austria-Hungary in the past and with Russia and potentially also China in the present.

In these unbalanced multipolar settings, the asymmetrical allocation of power presents a significant potential for conflict. When the dominant power is weakening, the rising great powers may see this as an excellent opportunity to expand at its expense, thus making considerable relative power gains.

The differences in actor expectations have a profound impact on the agency responses to this type of situation. Whereas some great powers are more cautious, preferring more peaceful strategies, others are more aggressive and confrontational. For example, the current Russian policy view of NATO expansion as a security threat to Russia and its interests does not bode well. The Russian stated ambition to undermine NATO and increase the transatlantic rift between the EU and the US may also become a destabilizing factor in the near future. The reoccurring Russian tendency to make statements using neorealist terminology by using words like “multipolarity” (*Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation*) and “great power” (Pop 2009) clearly illustrates their prospects. Meanwhile, sources of controversy between China and the US remain in the form of Chinese backing to rogue states such as Burma and North Korea as well as the latent conflict over Taiwan.

Naturally, it becomes impossible to maintain positive actor expectations on a unilateral basis. The aggressive and confrontational great powers will force more hostile actor expectations from the other great powers, whether these want to or not. In the historical case, Germany and Austria-Hungary greatly contributed to the international tension and forced the other great powers to form alliances, thereby severely destabilizing the international environment. In the present case, there are strong indications that Russia will continue to pursue similar strategies. China's strategy is as of yet quite unclear but it has shown tendencies to pursue power maximization and launched an aggressive power projection display, albeit in a less drastic form than Russia.

8.2 A Military Perspective

As stated in chapter 6.3, many armed forces today are undergoing a restructuring from conventional territorial forces shaped by the demands of the Cold War, to smaller, more mobile units capable of deployment around the globe. The peacekeeping/peace enforcement missions of the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s have set the standards for this process. However, this also makes them more suitable for remote power projection and expeditionary warfare. In this sense, they become less similar to the large armies of the Cold War and more like the armed forces of 1890-1911.

A process designed to produce the advantage of having forces ready for humanitarian missions could also have more sinister, volatile effects. The traditional military organizations have a certain inertia which is now being removed. Quick moves and counter-moves are thus becoming available options.

Power projection displays and “splendid little wars” are not unique to multipolar constellations. The most crucial difference, however, is that in a multipolar setting there are more powers that could potentially make use of these hard power tools in more situations without having implicit or explicit approval from other states. In addition, more powers will be able to take part in “scrambles”. These factors combined multiply the number of potential confrontation situations and the number of states capable of resorting to hard power, compared to unipolar or bipolar settings.

8.3 A Transition Phase?

We may be experiencing the early phases of an unbalanced multipolar power game that could lead to growing tensions and a downward spiral of great power rivalry. The structural incentives are mostly determined by economic development, the future of which is difficult to predict in a time of global financial crisis. Nevertheless, the significant Russian and Chinese economic bases in terms of labor forces, large export sectors and natural resources may be useful assets when the world emerges from the global recession and the more diversified US economy may be burdened by debt. In addition, the pursuit of securing economically valuable assets may lead to more future “scrambles” and consequently to some form of confrontation when scarce resources are subjected to claims and counter-claims.

8.4 Predictive Capacity

An analysis based on a probabilistic view of causality can identify regularities. In this sense it is similar to a deterministic approach. Regularities can be used for limited prediction by virtue of being regular. However, whereas a deterministic analysis that has identified necessary and sufficient conditions can make a prediction that could hypothetically be valid for any context, a probabilistic approach must be more humble. The nature of probabilistic analysis means that any prediction will be subject to probability and as such weaker than law-based regularity.

In addition, if the conclusions from a transferability study such as this were to be applied on a number of cases which strongly diverge from the original ones, its explanatory power would most likely be weakened by intervening variables. However, within the framework of the original probabilistic analysis of this thesis,

I argue that the predictive potential of the theoretical framework within the chosen time frame is sufficient to be useful. Provided that no dramatic changes in the path along which the international structure is developing occur in the following years, the theoretical framework should be valid for prediction within this context. There's no clear and sharp boundary between the polar constellations. The current situation seems to be a gray area between unipolarity and multipolarity, which means that the working hypothesis is applicable but at the same time, the actors are also less confrontational than in a mature multipolar world order. In this gray area, all the characteristics of a truly multipolar world order are not yet evident. Consequently, international norms and restraint may exercise a stronger lingering influence than can be maintained over time. If the world continues to move towards unbalanced multipolarity, then the working hypothesis could become even more useful as time goes by.

8.5 Learning From the Past

The historical context is one of many extremes, not the least in the form of the ultimate result, being a long and atrocious global war. Hopefully, things will not go that far again. My argument is not that we will repeat the exact mistakes that preceded World War I, a global war between the great powers remains highly unlikely. However, some patterns are repeating themselves. Hard power is still a viable instrument for conducting foreign policy. Power maximization, power projection and “splendid little wars” still occur. This leads to growing international tension and could vastly increase the risk of military confrontation on a smaller but still dangerous scale. In addition, stand-offs between great powers or their coalitions, such as the potential Russian response to future NATO enlargement, could quickly erode into situations that are difficult to predict and control, especially considering the increasing military interdependence and potentially reckless allies. Georgia is a good example of this. “Splendid little war” ambitions and chain-ganging alliances is arguably one of the most dangerous combinations, past or present. Small, vulnerable nations are prime targets for “splendid little wars” since they can potentially be defeated in a very short time. If a small, vulnerable nation has powerful allies, the chain-gang logic of high military interdependence combined with the prospect of a potential swift defeat can trigger a rapid escalation. This happened when Serbia was threatened by Austria-Hungary in 1914 and could happen in the near future if Georgia joins NATO and finds itself clashing with Russia once again.

The most crucial difference between my theoretical framework and the more common brands of neorealism is that it emphasizes the role of actor prospects. Even if structural incentives remain a challenge, as they most likely will for quite some time to come, actors can still influence how nations cope with this challenge. With enough trust and reciprocity, even the risks of unbalanced multipolarity could be manageable. An important lesson of the past is that alliances and interdependence is not necessarily a benevolent force. Chain-

ganging remains a highly dangerous phenomena and one that is exacerbated as military interdependence grows in a multipolar setting. If actor prospects are to overcome these dangerous incentives, then that implies that statesmen and leaders must be willing to accept relative asymmetry even when it is to their disadvantage, rather than pursuing power maximization. If the leaders of the world, especially those in Russia, are willing to accept such terms, is yet uncertain. They would be wise to remember the lessons of the past. The catastrophe of 1914 still serves as a stark reminder of the risks of proceeding too far down this path.

9 Executive Summary

The purpose of the thesis is to study how multipolarity affects the risk of confrontation in an international context, in particular in the form of wars and power projection. The theoretical framework is based on Waltz' (1979) *Theory of International Politics* with an added actor perspective based on game theory as defined by Axelrod (1987). The main argument is that the international system can be understood as a Prisoner's Dilemma. The payoff matrix in the Axelrod version of the Prisoner's Dilemma forms the basis for understanding the role of anarchy in the international system. Actor prospects and the relative balance of power then determine how actors decide to react to these incentives; either by pursuing short-term relative gains (in game theory terms: defection) or by seeking long-term absolute gains (in game theory terms: cooperation).

9.1 Assumptions and Purpose

The thesis departs from the idea that the world order is in a state of transition, from unipolar to multipolar. This notion has been frequently mentioned in publications specialized in international affairs, for example *The Economist* ("Europe: A worrying new world order; Charlemagne") and *International Relations* (Scott 2007, p. 33).

If this is the case, then it beckons the question of what the world can expect from modern multipolarity. In search of an answer, the thesis turns to what I argue is the most similar previous time period; 1890-1911. Similar in the sense that there was a considerable degree of interdependence and similar in the sense that the early stages of globalization were already a fact. The degree of interdependence; political, military and economic, makes it different from the multipolar 1920s/1930s, which is why I preferred 1890-1911 instead.

9.2 Theoretical Framework

The backbone of the theoretical framework is Waltz' (1979) *Theory of International Politics*. Waltz' concept of system-level pressures shaping functionally undifferentiated actors is the basis for the definition of the system in the framework. Waltz himself did not include an actor perspective into his theory but stated that it could influence outcomes. In an attempt to overcome the deterministic actor perspectives presented by offensive realism as defined by

Mearsheimer (2001), I chose to base my actor perspective on game theory. More precisely, I used Axelrod's (1987) theories on actor behavior in iterated games. The game-theoretical perspective can be used to illustrate the role of relative versus absolute gains in Waltz' system-level interaction. Waltz himself mentions relative and absolute gains in *Theory of International Politics* but doesn't elaborate on this aspect. He does, however, state that even when absolute gains can be made, each actor must consider how these gains will affect their relative balance (Waltz 1979, p. 105). The Prisoner's Dilemma model presents a way of conceptualizing this by having actors choose between cooperation and defection. In addition, each state should be considered to have a sum of points, representing its power. This hypothetical figure represents previous gains and losses. I have not included any figures beyond the ones necessary to illustrate the payoff matrix in the Prisoner's Dilemma, simply because I have no theoretical instruments with which to calculate such figures. Consequently, they serve as undefined metaphors.

9.2.1 The Role of Polarity

I argue that the polarity of the system has a major influence on the incentives of the great powers in their choice of whether to pursue relative or absolute gains. In a unipolar setting, the metaphorical figure representing the power of the dominant state will be so high that any attempt to catch up will be futile and even dangerous, in the sense that it may invite countermeasures. Absolute gains are thus favored. In a bipolar setting, the superpowers will compete among themselves but maintain a direct or indirect controlling influence over their allies and any neutrals. As such, wild grabs for relative gains will be risky in a bipolar setting as well, where stable relations with one or both superpowers will be preferable. In a balanced multipolar setting where the great powers are close to equal in power, attempts by one to increase its lot will most likely provoke a response from the others. Although more volatile than uni- and bipolarity, balanced multipolarity nevertheless makes absolute gains a viable option as long as all great powers grow at a roughly similar pace.

Unbalanced multipolarity, on the other hand, is the most unstable of all the four polar constellations. In an unbalanced multipolarity, one great power will be considerably more powerful than the others but not so powerful as to be a hyperpower or hegemon. This makes it different from a unipolar setting. The strongest great power may be in a state of decline or on the rise. If it is in decline, the other ambitious great powers may be tempted to seize the opportunity to make a grab for relative gains, thereby pushing the system closer to balanced multipolarity, where the great powers will be more equal. If it is on the rise, the others may form an alliance to intervene before a hyperpower can emerge. In unipolar settings, only one state can use hard power without any restrictions or restraint. In bipolar settings, this number is increased to two. In multipolar settings, that number may be as high as the number of great powers, depending on the alliance patterns. This creates a multitude of new possibilities and risks.

9.2.2 The Role of Hard Power

Since my main concern is with the risks of confrontation, I have primarily been interested in the role of hard power as an instrument of foreign policy. I have not studied soft power since I simply do not consider soft power to be a threat to international security. My contemporary empirical case illustrates clearly that an analysis of hard power is warranted since it still plays a role in the international context as an instrument of coercion and threat/deterrence. The working hypothesis has identified two major ways in which hard power is put to use in support of foreign policy. These are; power projection and “splendid little wars”.

Power projection is comprised of the use of military assets for displays or symbolic actions. This may include sending military vessels to foreign ports as a form of implicit threat, i.e. “gunboat diplomacy” in older terminology. It may also include deliberate violation of other states' airspace by military aircraft. Power projection is inherently risky since it brings military assets to the fore, which may provoke mutually undesirable escalations or contribute to international tension.

“Splendid little wars” are military campaigns in which a great power identifies an opportunity to make significant gains through a short and relatively unbloody war, preferably against a weak opponent. The great powers of the past and present may use this instrument to overthrow uncooperative governments or to seize territory, among other objectives. A worst-case scenario is that a “splendid little war” could provoke a response from another great power or lead to a lengthy war of attrition.

9.3 Methodology

The methodology used is based on the concept of transferability, as defined by Lincoln & Guba (2007). The theoretical framework is applied on a historical case, being 1890-1911. This time period was chosen because it is the world order that is most similar to the contemporary situation. The starting point is the downfall of Bismarck as head of German foreign policy and the end is marked by the Second Moroccan Crisis, both key events in the time period leading up to World War I. The argument for similarity is based on polarity, economic and military interdependence as well as grade of state-level interaction capacity. The second case is a “snapshot” of the contemporary situation. In temporal terms, this is defined as the 2001-2009 time period. The years are chosen to reflect the start of the post-9/11 era up until today.

The conclusions from the historical case form the *working hypothesis*, as outlined by Lincoln & Guba. This working hypothesis has then been transferred to the modern context. I argue that the two cases, while not being identical, are *sufficiently similar* to warrant such a transfer. The conclusions of the application of the working hypothesis to the modern context are illustrated in the same manner as the empirical data in the historical case; by discussing each aspect thematically. I argue that the result of the methodological approach is that the

empirical material illustrates that the working hypothesis can explain some of the events that have occurred recently and can also provide the basis for probabilistic prediction of patterns of hard power use, provided that the shift towards multipolarity continues.

9.4 Conclusions

My conclusions are that the theoretical framework is well suited to explain and analyze the risks of confrontation as related to polarity. It also provides an actor perspective to the theoretical tradition of neorealism, where it is often absent. The Prisoner's Dilemma payoff matrix represents the international state of deep anarchy as presented by Waltz. At the same time, the model also explains why states sometimes pursue absolute gains, such as the status quo policies of the early post-Napoleonic 19th century. The incentives vary with polar constellation, with unbalanced multipolarity being the most volatile of the four. Actor prospects, however, may overcome the challenge posed by the structural incentive, provided that the actors can trust each other to such an extent that mutually beneficial gains are preferable to relative ones.

The theoretical framework introduces two ways of empirically defining power maximization through use of hard power; power projection and “splendid little wars”. These two phenomena are found in both the historical case and the contemporary one. The modern world may be in a state of transition towards a more clear-cut case of unbalanced multipolarity. If this happens, then the structural incentives will be more volatile than they have been for nearly 100 years. This is amplified by the seemingly negative actor prospects that have been signaled by Russia and possibly also China. Russia seems to be on the same course as Germany in the 1890-1911 time period, pursuing aggressive expansive policies for maximization of relative gains in an attempt to reduce the asymmetry between itself and the US.

Although this does not have to lead to direct confrontation between Russia and the US or any of the American allies, it is already leading to potentially dangerous behavior in the Arctic and in Georgia. This kind of hard power use will increase international tension and also influence the actor expectations of other states, possibly contributing to a more hostile international environment. The growing role of dependence on allies inherent in multipolar constellations further add to this problem since the US may become dependent on potentially reckless allies, such as Georgia, to such an extent that it may have little power over them but still have to defend them.

The thesis ends with a warning. International tension, arms races and confrontations may not yet be a thing of the past. The structural dangers inherent in multipolarity must be taken seriously, as well as the risks posed by opportunistic and confrontational actor policies.

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11 Appendix

Below I have included the contents of the two e-mails listed among the references.

11.1 Burton & West 2009

Obama and the Treatment of Terrorist Suspects

February 4, 2009

By Fred Burton and Ben West

U.S. President Barack Obama signed an executive order Feb. 1 approving the continued use of renditions by the CIA. The order seems to go against Obama's campaign promises to improve the image of the United States abroad, as renditions under the Bush administration had drawn criticism worldwide, especially from members of the European Union. The executive order does not necessarily mean that renditions and other tactics for dealing with terrorist suspects will proceed unchanged, however.

Obama came into office promising changes in the way the United States combats terrorism. One of these changes was a new emphasis on legal processes and a shift away from controversial methods of treating terrorist suspects, like rendition, harsh interrogation techniques and secret prisons. The Obama administration can and will roll back some of these tactics, as demonstrated by the president's Jan. 22 order to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. But some will continue.

Renditions and the Legal Process

Renditions are a powerful tool for counterterrorism operations. They involve agents moving into a foreign country to execute a warrant. Once the fugitive is located, agents track, seize and transport him out of the country for interrogations, or to stand trial, as in the cases of Lebanese hijacker Fawaz Younis, CIA shooter Mir Amal Kanzi, 1993 World Trade Center bombers Abdel Basit (aka Ramzi Yousef) and Mahmud Abouhalima, and even Ilich Ramirez Sanchez (aka Carlos the Jackal).

Some of the individuals targeted for renditions have warrants out for their arrest, but are taking refuge in countries that either lack the law enforcement capability to capture them or cannot arrest and extradite them for political reasons. By contrast, the renditions where there is no indictment or warrant and where the suspect is transported to a secret prison for interrogation and detention without a public trial are far more controversial. Renditions of either kind virtually always occur with the knowledge of the host country, and usually with the host government's express consent. (Few countries wish to shelter suspected terrorist masterminds.)

Renditions thus involve legal questions as much as they do diplomatic questions. Before renditions can be carried out, the Washington bureaucracy kicks into full swing. The U.S. State Department must consider the diplomatic ramifications. The ambassador in the host country must consider his or her position and judge the response of his or her contacts in the host country government. The U.S. Justice Department must also sign on. Finally, the agency in charge of actually nabbing the suspect must be willing to work within any restrictions imposed by any one of the many individuals who must approve the operation.

Even when the government ultimately deems a rendition operation legal, numerous factors can still stymie the effort (not least of which is that by the time all the necessary approvals have been obtained, the window of opportunity to nab the suspect might have closed). So while Obama's executive order in theory permits renditions, it is only one part of the whole process; the appropriate members of Obama's administration must also be on board.

Many members of the Obama administration also served in the Clinton administration, which was widely seen as considering all legal ramifications of potential renditions before taking any action. As a former deputy attorney general in the Clinton administration, new Attorney General Eric Holder enjoyed a reputation for deliberating on renditions to the point of inaction — effectively vetoing such operations.

While an appearance of greater attention to the law might come as a relief to many, actors in the field do not have the luxury of endless deliberation and total consensus — they have a narrow window of opportunity in which to act on perishable intelligence. Assuming that Obama's administration acts with deliberation and pursues consensus building (as he himself has emphasized, and has demonstrated in the bipartisan nature of his Cabinet selections), the legality of renditions might become moot if they are not agreed upon in a timely manner. There is a fine line to walk between efficiency and legality in this field, with extremes on either side being detrimental to national security.

By their very nature, renditions are ad hoc and rarely fit into a nice, clean process, something that explains their controversial nature. They frequently occur in countries allied to the United States, meaning the practice falls outside the scope

of war. And renditions resulting in suspects' standing trial are far less controversial than those involving secret prisons, harsh interrogation tactics and reliance on third countries to carry out interrogations — tactics disfavored by the Obama administration.

Alternatives to Rendition

Apprehending suspects in foreign countries does not always involve controversial tactics. U.S. counterterrorism officials also use tactics abroad that are not forbidden under U.S. law, though they might be illegal if used within the United States (and could well be illegal in the country where U.S. agents employ them). In general, such tactics remain constant as administrations change. These tactics include surveillance of foreign targets, ruse operations and economic incentives and punishments to encourage cooperation in counterterrorism efforts.

Ruse operations, a less controversial way to apprehend fugitives than renditions, involve deception, obviating the need to jump through the bureaucratic hoops required for renditions. Ruse operations involve luring suspects to a location where U.S. agents can apprehend them legally. This involves persuading targets to venture into international waters, for example, or even to travel to the United States, where U.S. agents lie in wait.

While such tactics avoid the legal complexities surrounding renditions, they are extremely difficult to carry out. Suspects worth chasing around the world typically are not overly gullible, and know where it is safe to travel. So while there is no reason to believe that ruse operations will cease anytime soon, successful ones are few and far between.

Sometimes killing a terrorist target is both more efficient and less legally complex than renditions or ruse operations. Tactical strikes, such as the unmanned aerial vehicle-launched missile strikes against suspected al Qaeda targets in Pakistan, both remove a suspected terrorist target and avoid drawn-out legal processes. Like its predecessor, the Obama administration apparently sees striking at al Qaeda targets along the Pakistani-Afghan border as acceptable within the scope of the ongoing war in Afghanistan, despite Pakistani protests. The latest such U.S. strike came Jan. 23, just three days after Obama took office. Given the administration's presumed hesitation based on legal reservations and an unwillingness to expand warfare beyond the Afghan theater, this tactic is unlikely to pop up in other areas of the world without a serious threat escalation.

Secret Prisons and Interrogation Issues

Obama on Jan. 22 also ordered the CIA to close its secret prisons around the world that hold detainees without adhering to U.S. legal standards. Because fewer than 100 detainees were held in these prisons, however, this is a minor point.

A different executive order also issued Jan. 22 applied the interrogation guidelines outlined in the U.S. military field handbook and the Geneva Conventions to the CIA. Obama and Holder also have made it clear that the new administration views waterboarding as torture and thus illegal, settling the debate on the matter.

Still, it is only a matter of time before new techniques used by interrogators in the field will face questions of legality and morality. No national leader can micromanage at the field level. Even though the Justice Department and senior White House officials in the Bush administration signed secret findings authorizing the CIA to conduct waterboarding in specific cases, tactical, field-level topics do not stick around at the level of national policy for very long.

With secret prisons on the way out, more restrictions on how agents act in the field and an expected decline in renditions, a greater U.S. reliance on third countries to carry out rendition operations is possible. During the Clinton and Bush administrations, countries like Egypt and Jordan were known to cooperate with U.S. agencies in detaining and interrogating prisoners.

Critics claimed that relying on third countries exploited a loophole that allowed the United States to see that unsavory acts were committed without directly carrying them out. Obama's emphasis on using diplomacy to improve the U.S. image in the world suggests that his administration will turn to other countries for counterterrorism assistance instead of operating unilaterally. Obama already has asked for other countries to help out more in Afghanistan (specifically European countries). Obama might also tap third countries like Portugal, Switzerland or Germany to take in detainees leaving Guantanamo who are not sent back to home countries like Yemen and Saudi Arabia after the facility's closure. Working with these countries to ensure safe delivery of the detainees out of U.S. custody will remove a lightning rod for criticism of the United States in the Muslim world.

Delegating counterterrorism responsibilities to other countries allows the United States to avoid the legal complexities inherent in renditions, secret prisons and harsh interrogation. But ultimately, increased reliance on other countries with different interests can enhance the overall complexity of missions. It is also important to remember that the United States possesses one of the most capable counterterrorism forces in the world, and that other countries simply cannot carry out the same missions that the United States does. This is not to say that pursuing U.S. interests abroad does not call for diplomacy (which is one of the administration's main tools to fight terror), but that seeking international approval and establishing legal cover does reduce efficiency and restrain U.S. capabilities. Finding the balance between fighting terror efficiently and remaining within legal boundaries will be a key challenge for the Obama administration.

11.2 Friedman 2008

The Russo-Georgian War and the Balance of Power

August 12, 2008

By George Friedman

The Russian invasion of Georgia has not changed the balance of power in Eurasia. It simply announced that the balance of power had already shifted. The United States has been absorbed in its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as potential conflict with Iran and a destabilizing situation in Pakistan. It has no strategic ground forces in reserve and is in no position to intervene on the Russian periphery. This, as we have argued, has opened a window of opportunity for the Russians to reassert their influence in the former Soviet sphere. Moscow did not have to concern itself with the potential response of the United States or Europe; hence, the invasion did not shift the balance of power. The balance of power had already shifted, and it was up to the Russians when to make this public. They did that Aug. 8.

Let's begin simply by reviewing the last few days.

On the night of Thursday, Aug. 7, forces of the Republic of Georgia drove across the border of South Ossetia, a secessionist region of Georgia that has functioned as an independent entity since the fall of the Soviet Union. The forces drove on to the capital, Tskhinvali, which is close to the border. Georgian forces got bogged down while trying to take the city. In spite of heavy fighting, they never fully secured the city, nor the rest of South Ossetia.

On the morning of Aug. 8, Russian forces entered South Ossetia, using armored and motorized infantry forces along with air power. South Ossetia was informally aligned with Russia, and Russia acted to prevent the region's absorption by Georgia. Given the speed with which the Russians responded — within hours of the Georgian attack — the Russians were expecting the Georgian attack and were themselves at their jumping-off points. The counterattack was carefully planned and competently executed, and over the next 48 hours, the Russians succeeded in defeating the main Georgian force and forcing a retreat. By Sunday, Aug. 10, the Russians had consolidated their position in South Ossetia.

[image excluded]

On Monday, the Russians extended their offensive into Georgia proper, attacking on two axes. One was south from South Ossetia to the Georgian city of Gori. The

other drive was from Abkhazia, another secessionist region of Georgia aligned with the Russians. This drive was designed to cut the road between the Georgian capital of Tbilisi and its ports. By this point, the Russians had bombed the military airfields at Marneuli and Vaziani and appeared to have disabled radars at the international airport in Tbilisi. These moves brought Russian forces to within 40 miles of the Georgian capital, while making outside reinforcement and resupply of Georgian forces extremely difficult should anyone wish to undertake it.

The Mystery Behind the Georgian Invasion

In this simple chronicle, there is something quite mysterious: Why did the Georgians choose to invade South Ossetia on Thursday night? There had been a great deal of shelling by the South Ossetians of Georgian villages for the previous three nights, but while possibly more intense than usual, artillery exchanges were routine. The Georgians might not have fought well, but they committed fairly substantial forces that must have taken at the very least several days to deploy and supply. Georgia's move was deliberate.

The United States is Georgia's closest ally. It maintained about 130 military advisers in Georgia, along with civilian advisers, contractors involved in all aspects of the Georgian government and people doing business in Georgia. It is inconceivable that the Americans were unaware of Georgia's mobilization and intentions. It is also inconceivable that the Americans were unaware that the Russians had deployed substantial forces on the South Ossetian frontier. U.S. technical intelligence, from satellite imagery and signals intelligence to unmanned aerial vehicles, could not miss the fact that thousands of Russian troops were moving to forward positions. The Russians clearly knew the Georgians were ready to move. How could the United States not be aware of the Russians? Indeed, given the posture of Russian troops, how could intelligence analysts have missed the possibility that the Russians had laid a trap, hoping for a Georgian invasion to justify its own counterattack?

It is very difficult to imagine that the Georgians launched their attack against U.S. wishes. The Georgians rely on the United States, and they were in no position to defy it. This leaves two possibilities. The first is a massive breakdown in intelligence, in which the United States either was unaware of the existence of Russian forces, or knew of the Russian forces but — along with the Georgians — miscalculated Russia's intentions. The United States, along with other countries, has viewed Russia through the prism of the 1990s, when the Russian military was in shambles and the Russian government was paralyzed. The United States has not seen Russia make a decisive military move beyond its borders since the Afghan war of the 1970s-1980s. The Russians had systematically avoided such moves for years. The United States had assumed that the Russians would not risk the consequences of an invasion.

If this was the case, then it points to the central reality of this situation: The Russians had changed dramatically, along with the balance of power in the region. They welcomed the opportunity to drive home the new reality, which was that they could invade Georgia and the United States and Europe could not respond. As for risk, they did not view the invasion as risky. Militarily, there was no counter. Economically, Russia is an energy exporter doing quite well — indeed, the Europeans need Russian energy even more than the Russians need to sell it to them. Politically, as we shall see, the Americans needed the Russians more than the Russians needed the Americans. Moscow's calculus was that this was the moment to strike. The Russians had been building up to it for months, as we have discussed, and they struck.

The Western Encirclement of Russia

To understand Russian thinking, we need to look at two events. The first is the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. From the U.S. and European point of view, the Orange Revolution represented a triumph of democracy and Western influence. From the Russian point of view, as Moscow made clear, the Orange Revolution was a CIA-funded intrusion into the internal affairs of Ukraine, designed to draw Ukraine into NATO and add to the encirclement of Russia. U.S. Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton had promised the Russians that NATO would not expand into the former Soviet Union empire.

That promise had already been broken in 1998 by NATO's expansion to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic — and again in the 2004 expansion, which absorbed not only the rest of the former Soviet satellites in what is now Central Europe, but also the three Baltic states, which had been components of the Soviet Union.

The Russians had tolerated all that, but the discussion of including Ukraine in NATO represented a fundamental threat to Russia's national security. It would have rendered Russia indefensible and threatened to destabilize the Russian Federation itself. When the United States went so far as to suggest that Georgia be included as well, bringing NATO deeper into the Caucasus, the Russian conclusion — publicly stated — was that the United States in particular intended to encircle and break Russia.

The second and lesser event was the decision by Europe and the United States to back Kosovo's separation from Serbia. The Russians were friendly with Serbia, but the deeper issue for Russia was this: The principle of Europe since World War II was that, to prevent conflict, national borders would not be changed. If that principle were violated in Kosovo, other border shifts — including demands by various regions for independence from Russia — might follow. The Russians publicly and privately asked that Kosovo not be given formal independence, but instead continue its informal autonomy, which was the same thing in practical terms. Russia's requests were ignored.

From the Ukrainian experience, the Russians became convinced that the United States was engaged in a plan of strategic encirclement and strangulation of Russia. From the Kosovo experience, they concluded that the United States and Europe were not prepared to consider Russian wishes even in fairly minor affairs. That was the breaking point. If Russian desires could not be accommodated even in a minor matter like this, then clearly Russia and the West were in conflict. For the Russians, as we said, the question was how to respond. Having declined to respond in Kosovo, the Russians decided to respond where they had all the cards: in South Ossetia.

Moscow had two motives, the lesser of which was as a tit-for-tat over Kosovo. If Kosovo could be declared independent under Western sponsorship, then South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the two breakaway regions of Georgia, could be declared independent under Russian sponsorship. Any objections from the United States and Europe would simply confirm their hypocrisy. This was important for internal Russian political reasons, but the second motive was far more important.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin once said that the fall of the Soviet Union was a geopolitical disaster. This didn't mean that he wanted to retain the Soviet state; rather, it meant that the disintegration of the Soviet Union had created a situation in which Russian national security was threatened by Western interests. As an example, consider that during the Cold War, St. Petersburg was about 1,200 miles away from a NATO country. Today it is about 60 miles away from Estonia, a NATO member. The disintegration of the Soviet Union had left Russia surrounded by a group of countries hostile to Russian interests in various degrees and heavily influenced by the United States, Europe and, in some cases, China.

Resurrecting the Russian Sphere

Putin did not want to re-establish the Soviet Union, but he did want to re-establish the Russian sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union region. To accomplish that, he had to do two things. First, he had to re-establish the credibility of the Russian army as a fighting force, at least in the context of its region. Second, he had to establish that Western guarantees, including NATO membership, meant nothing in the face of Russian power. He did not want to confront NATO directly, but he did want to confront and defeat a power that was closely aligned with the United States, had U.S. support, aid and advisers and was widely seen as being under American protection. Georgia was the perfect choice.

By invading Georgia as Russia did (competently if not brilliantly), Putin re-established the credibility of the Russian army. But far more importantly, by doing this Putin revealed an open secret: While the United States is tied down in the Middle East, American guarantees have no value. This lesson is not for American consumption. It is something that, from the Russian point of view, the Ukrainians, the Balts and the Central Asians need to digest. Indeed, it is a lesson

Putin wants to transmit to Poland and the Czech Republic as well. The United States wants to place ballistic missile defense installations in those countries, and the Russians want them to understand that allowing this to happen increases their risk, not their security.

The Russians knew the United States would denounce their attack. This actually plays into Russian hands. The more vocal senior leaders are, the greater the contrast with their inaction, and the Russians wanted to drive home the idea that American guarantees are empty talk.

The Russians also know something else that is of vital importance: For the United States, the Middle East is far more important than the Caucasus, and Iran is particularly important. The United States wants the Russians to participate in sanctions against Iran. Even more importantly, they do not want the Russians to sell weapons to Iran, particularly the highly effective S-300 air defense system. Georgia is a marginal issue to the United States; Iran is a central issue. The Russians are in a position to pose serious problems for the United States not only in Iran, but also with weapons sales to other countries, like Syria.

Therefore, the United States has a problem — it either must reorient its strategy away from the Middle East and toward the Caucasus, or it has to seriously limit its response to Georgia to avoid a Russian counter in Iran. Even if the United States had an appetite for another war in Georgia at this time, it would have to calculate the Russian response in Iran — and possibly in Afghanistan (even though Moscow's interests there are currently aligned with those of Washington).

In other words, the Russians have backed the Americans into a corner. The Europeans, who for the most part lack expeditionary militaries and are dependent upon Russian energy exports, have even fewer options. If nothing else happens, the Russians will have demonstrated that they have resumed their role as a regional power. Russia is not a global power by any means, but a significant regional power with lots of nuclear weapons and an economy that isn't all too shabby at the moment. It has also compelled every state on the Russian periphery to re-evaluate its position relative to Moscow. As for Georgia, the Russians appear ready to demand the resignation of President Mikhail Saakashvili. Militarily, that is their option. That is all they wanted to demonstrate, and they have demonstrated it.

The war in Georgia, therefore, is Russia's public return to great power status. This is not something that just happened — it has been unfolding ever since Putin took power, and with growing intensity in the past five years. Part of it has to do with the increase of Russian power, but a great deal of it has to do with the fact that the Middle Eastern wars have left the United States off-balance and short on resources. As we have written, this conflict created a window of opportunity. The Russian goal is to use that window to assert a new reality throughout the region while the Americans are tied down elsewhere and dependent on the Russians. The

war was far from a surprise; it has been building for months. But the geopolitical foundations of the war have been building since 1992. Russia has been an empire for centuries. The last 15 years or so were not the new reality, but simply an aberration that would be rectified. And now it is being rectified.