ABSTRACT

A systemic shift is occurring in international politics. The rise of China and the real possibility of a multipolar environment in the Asia-Pacific have reawakened structural sources of instability that lay dormant during the unipolar hegemony of the United States. A return to a multipolar environment in the Asia-Pacific threatens to accelerate an emerging power rivalry between the United States and China. This thesis predicts that if current strategies fail to account for the structure of the anarchic international order and the instability inherent therein, the future Sino-U.S. strategic dialogue will succumb to the same historical cycle of mutual misapprehension, distrust, insecurity and conflict that has plagued great power politics.

To illustrate how structural instability is negatively affecting regional strategies and force postures, the following chapters will present three hazards that are normally associated with great power politics and structural instability: security dilemmas, balance of power dynamics, and an overly optimistic belief in economic interdependence. Historical case studies are employed in each chapter to exhibit how the effects of a multipolar system and the larger anarchic international order have created instability and conflict throughout history. In each instance, historical parallels emerge between the case studies and the current environment of the Asia-Pacific. The research indicates the very real potential for regional instability as a structural byproduct of China’s rise and a shift in the geopolitical order towards a multipolar environment.

By highlighting the strategic calculus surrounding power politics and a state’s drive for security in a multipolar and anarchic environment, this thesis adds a much
needed and often-overlooked dimension for deciphering why today’s great power
dynamics and a rising China are surrounded by conflict and insecurity. It is not designed
as a litmus test or to offer specific policy reforms. The object of this thesis is to highlight
how age-old symptoms of structural instability have manifested themselves in the Asia-
Pacific, especially in the nascent great power contest between the United States and
China. The greatest value of this thesis is to remind policymakers that the nature of the
international system still has a profound effect upon state behavior and strategic rationale.
The hope is that by incorporating the analysis of previous great power conflicts and
forewarning about structural pitfalls, modern strategy in the Asia-Pacific can avoid
blithely following the same worn path rife with historical conflict.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION
Since the end of the Cold War, the international environment has been a historical anomaly in which the traditional strategies and motivations for interstate rivalries and zero-sum power politics were subdued. As the United States emerged as the world’s sole superpower and hegemon, so too did the current unipolar system. The era of Pax Americana, coupled with the proclaimed victories of democracy and liberal market, ushered out a 20th century marred by interstate wars and welcomed a new millennium heralded as an era of cooperation and collective prosperity. It soon became a common refrain that peace in the post-Cold War era would be founded upon multinational organizations, international norms, and the linkages of a globalized economy. This was a drastic and marked departure from the great power politics of alliance blocs, deterrence and arms races that had dominated mainstream strategic rationale during the Cold War and most of history. Under the new Pax Americana, these concepts of international power contests were deemed obsolete and understandably became dormant in a time when the most imminent threats ranged from terrorism and pandemics to rouge states and rising tides. However, the supposed passing of great power politics was prematurely based upon a benign power distribution and not a fundamental change in the structure of the global order. The cyclical calculus of power politics is rapidly resurfacing in an increasingly multipolar Asia-Pacific Sphere due to the rise of China, the forthcoming response of the United States, and the insecurity of regional actors.¹ Future stability of the Asia-Pacific is contingent upon how the relationship between the U.S. and China will evolve in a new multipolar environment. History cautions that rising powers and the

¹ The Asia-Pacific is a vast geographical expanse. For the purpose of this thesis it primarily refers to the nations either abutting or with military presence in the East China Sea and South China Sea. This includes the United States, China, Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia, Australia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand.
status quo rarely enjoy a frictionless relationship, but why does this occur? What are the unstable dynamics of the international system that plague great power politics with such frequency that some even term it the ‘tragedy’ of great powers? The answer to both questions resides in the very structure of the international order and the instability inherent therein.

The goal of this thesis is to identify the systemic causes for structural instability, which are again emerging to drive a new regional power rivalry between the U.S. and China and transform the Asia-Pacific into a region governed by power rivalries and brinkmanship. There are no new explanations or theories offered here. Instead, what is unique is the revival of previously discarded explanations of world politics to address the reemerging symptoms of great power conflicts. The strategic value of a state’s relative power in comparison to potential rivals may resemble Bismarkian Europe, but the following chapters will show that this thinking has a very real and immediate place in modern strategic planning. It may seem that this historically grounded analysis is too abstract or notional and cannot offer much strategic guidance in the current Asia-Pacific. However, by identifying the root causes of power rivalries and incorporating structural influences into operational doctrine, modern strategies can benefit by accurately deciphering an adversary’s geopolitical decision and predict the outcome based upon historical precedence. An understanding of great power politics and history allows for preemptive actions rather than a reactive posture, which only invites further misunderstandings and escalation. An analytical framework that asks why China is pursuing a seemingly destabilizing posture or assesses the impact of the U.S.’s own rebalancing actions can prevent the region from continuing to slide towards a more
hostile, militarized and volatile future. Nowhere is the need for accurate information and sound engagements more critical than in the evolving geopolitical postures between the reigning U.S. and an emerging China.

This outlook hypothesizes that if current strategies fail to account for the underlying structural influences driving geopolitical struggles, future Sino-U.S. exchanges will succumb to the same historical cycle of conflict based upon mutual apprehension, distrust and spiraling insecurity. The specter of China as a prospective regional challenger against American power rekindles the possibility that great power rivalries will soon preoccupy both sides’ interactions and jeopardize the stability of the region. This trajectory is incumbent upon China’s expanding military prowess and economic clout, which threatens to upset the current regional status quo underwritten by American preponderance in the region. China’s growing capabilities suggest that the region will be soon become a tense bipolar or even more treacherous and unbalanced multipolar structure.

The prospect of competing powers and a structural shift away from a clear hegemonic power will drive the calculated cycle of power politics, which manifests itself in the international arena as security dilemmas, entangling alliances and militarization. However, China’s military growth is not the result of tyrannical or irrational opponents. This instability is the consequence of the present international structure. The global commons is still an anarchic environment where each nation must ensure its own survival. Consequently, state strategies are driven by an intrinsic insecurity stemming from misperceptions of other state’s intentions and relative military capabilities. China’s rise is an ongoing issue, but the underlying tensions are symptomatic of enduring
geopolitical sensitivities that have long fueled national fears, thwarted peace, and bred conflict.

To demonstrate how structural instability within the global system subsists in emerging strategies and force postures, the following chapters will present three overarching ‘hazards’ that are commonly associated with great power politics and regional instability: security dilemmas, balance of power dynamics and an overreliance upon economic interdependence. Each chapter will identify how the hazard can negatively influence state strategies and each chapter follows a similar pattern of analysis. First, a brief, but comprehensive, literature review explains the definition of each hazard, traces the theoretic lineage and outlines the current scholarship. Second, a historical case study with similar characteristics to today’s operating environment will demonstrate how each of these elements contributed to and intensified past power rivalries. Third, the lessons from the case study will be juxtaposed against current strategies or regional posturing in the modern Pacific to demonstrate how these structural hazards are increasingly weighing upon today’s strategic calculus.

Research Methodologies and Parameters

This work faces a number of methodological challenges unique to the scope of the problem presented in the following chapters. To examine structural issues in the Asia-Pacific, each of these topics were addressed using systemic level of analysis. Unlike domestic or individual units of analysis, the chapters focus upon the interaction of states and the relative distribution of state power within an archaic international environment.

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2 Systemic can also be used interchangeably with ‘international’ or ‘interstate’.
Systemic level analysis allows the problem of structural hazards to be addressed without becoming embroiled in the competing perspectives of numerous individual or domestic groups. There are many different and valid methodological approaches to address these problems. However, this thesis examines each structural hazard by utilizing a qualitative comparison between a historic case study and the present situation in the Asia-Pacific instead of relying upon purely theoretical explanations, statistical averages or game theory. Because the level of analysis is at the systemic level, the nation-state remains the primary actor in both instances, as does the importance of national motives for security and relative power. Different historic periods can be juxtaposed to explore how structural drivers of insecurity have fostered instability in the past and whether there are common trends that could predict the possibility of future structural instability since the “units of measurement” remain constant.

Historical case studies provide the best means to address a variety of analytical challenges inherent to analysis of systemic issues with themes and terminology that have long, complicated and contentious academic records. In every chapter, the analysis must simultaneously verify the idea that structural hazards even pose a legitimate threat to regional stability, and that these same structural threats truly present an ongoing risk to stability in the Asia-Pacific. Case studies demonstrate the validity of the underlying theory behind structural hazards accordingly by translating abstract academic theories into real episodes of instability and war. This is a theoretical burden of proof that other contemporary issues like drone or cyber warfare do not have to account for.

In each of the following chapters, historical case studies demonstrate how largely conceptual problems, like the security dilemma, pose a legitimate and tangible threat to
modern states. Any discussion of the present Asia-Pacific from a purely theoretical viewpoint would be instantly undermined without first proving the problem exists outside academic debates. Nonetheless, any discussion involving international relations theories necessitates a thorough appraisal of the accompanying literature. These reviews add substantial length and complexity to each chapter, but to invoke the perils of structural hazards without acknowledging the previous scholarship would be overly simplistic. Analysis without a solid theoretical foundation leads to anecdotal conclusions and flawed policy recommendations. This thesis introduces each historical case study with a comprehensive literature review tracing past and present scholarship to prevent misinterpretation of the theories surrounding each structural hazard.

Since historical case studies link past episodes and contemporary analysis, this also prevents the thesis from becoming another speculative chapter in realist literature. The concepts presented here are firmly rooted in various realist schools, especially structural realism, while the work actively avoids promoting a specific theory or provoking another theoretical debate between various schools of thought. The following case studies are not designed to demonstrate the primacy of one school over another. Instead the historical analogies suggest examining a distinctive and dangerous situation from a different perspective. The case studies illustrate the complexities of the particular situation in the Asia-Pacific: a multipolar distribution of power combined with an emerging peer competitor and great power competition. The analysis and case studies are focused upon addressing specific structural dangers emblematic to this environment. Therefore, the case studies depict unique periods that reflect similar systemic dynamics relevant to each chapter. The analysis and case studies are not designed as an
advertisement for employing structural realism theories in every facet of American statecraft. The parameters of this thesis are to present a practical and useable schema from which to diagnosis the future stability of the Asia-Pacific amidst mounting structural tensions instead of debating or defending the global application of realist theories. This objective could only be accomplished by combining theoretical literature reviews, historical case studies and contemporary analysis.

Chapter Overview

The second chapter begins the analysis of modern power politics by focusing upon perceptions of national insecurity that are impelling strategies and accelerating power contests in the interstate system. To demonstrate how insecurity can consume a state’s strategy, Chapter Two introduces the enduring international phenomenon of the security dilemma. A security dilemma develops when one state attempts to increase its own security, which will decrease the security (real or imagined) of surrounding states. A security dilemma manifests as a spiraling series of progressively larger efforts by either side to increase their security in the face of mounting regional threats, which only begets further insecurity. The case study examines how security dilemmas perpetuated the mutual uncertainty between the U.S. and Soviet Union during the Cold War. Specifically, causes of structural instability and the security dilemma are identified in Cold War-era concerns over preemptive nuclear strikes, ballistic missile gaps and mutual misperception of strategic doctrines. The existence of a modern Sino-American security dilemma is then assessed in the context of China and the U.S.’ nascent operational doctrines: China’s anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) posture and the U.S.’s response: the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC). Both strategies share a common goal of
assuring operational dominance in the western Pacific. Ominously, both strategies also preach preemption and first-strike capabilities, which have analogous patterns to the insecurity and paranoia that dominated Cold War thinking. This chapter is not fixated upon a numerical comparison of forces, but seeks to expand upon how the chronic instability created by preemptive strategies is reminiscent of past security dilemmas. This trend, if left unabated, will only undermine the Sino-U.S. relationship by rousing mutual insecurity and heightening regional force postures and tensions.

The third chapter emphasizes how escalating balance of power calculations are driving regional strategies in the Asia-Pacific to preserve the existing status quo. A balance of power system predicts that there is a coherent ordering of international relations that will prevent the rise of a regional hegemon and preserve a relatively balanced concentration of power. States will reorganize and deliberately ‘shift’ the regional order against a rising power whose disproportionate increase in power would threaten the independence and security of other actors. Balance of power describes the overarching arrangement of the international structure, but balancing polices often materialize by forming external alliances and increasing internal military power. Chapter Three’s case study is the period of geopolitical rivalry and gamesmanship, which permeated European politics before World War I. The political tragedy of the First World War was that in an effort to maintain a stable balance of power, period actors only exacerbated regional tensions by engaging in increasingly destabilizing alliance and militarized stances. The balancing calculations prior to 1914 are remarkable similar to the current Asia-Pacific power structure. The World War I case study is a pertinent example to showcase how balancing nexuses are affecting today’s regional balance of
power considerations. Chapter Three’s analysis demonstrates that in an effort to counteract China’s rise in a multipolar environment, regional actors and the U.S. have created an opaque web of security arrangements that has been coined the Asian ‘power web.’ In addition, regional actors are embracing more nationalistic and expanding military bulwarks against China. These local balancing trends are echoed by the United States’ own rebalancing pivot and reinforced security arrangements toward the Asia-Pacific. Maintaining a stable balance of power is a perpetual and dangerous endeavor. Dependent upon the exact balance at any given moment, these power assessments leave little margin of safety. The historical legacy of balance of power instability warns that modern strategies must understand the structural risks incurred when attempting to use hard power balancing against China’s rise – or risk creating the alliance groundwork and military capacity for a regional conflict to quickly escalate out of control, as did World War I.

The final chapter takes a different approach towards the perennial consequences of structural instability and addresses the economic counterarguments against power politics. Economic interdependence underpins the arguments that interstate war has become far too costly in today’s globalized and economically integrated environment. However, the literature review shows that this tactic about the deterrent value of economic interdependence has been recycled in commercial peace literature for centuries. In response, Chapter Four questions the geopolitical validity of using economic engagement as a strategic response to China’s rise; the theory being that the more integrated China becomes in the established economic order, the less likely China would upset it. Similar interdependence arguments abounded in Europe during the globalized era that preceded
World War I. The case study reveals that regardless of the record levels of economic interdependence between future belligerents, neither Britain nor Germany could ignore their comparative geopolitical power, vulnerability and rivals. WWI erupted due to the repetitive patterns of great power politics regardless of economic consequences. The lessons of WWI and economic interdependence shows that states will rarely subordinate geopolitical gains or security for economic benefits. Chapter Four’s analysis warns against the U.S. pursuing economic engagements strategies rather than addressing the rise of China’s power and risk outweighing economic incentives. History reveals that a state’s overriding concern will always be power and security in any geopolitical calculation.

The modern Asia-Pacific is one of the most dangerous and intricate environments geopolitical strategists have had to navigate for a long time. However, as the chapter overviews show, none of the perils associated with a rising power or a return to power politics-based strategies are a new phenomenon. The effects of structural instability have been a recognized constant in interstate relations since Athens and Sparta, yet states continue to repeat past mistakes and reap the same consequences. As of now, the nascent features of dangerous great power rivalries are evident in the Asia-Pacific, but there is still time to recognize the dangers and alter strategies accordingly. The U.S. and China can benefit from these historical lessons and systemic explanations of why China’s continuing rise could spawn a larger regional conflict. This thesis holds that conflict is never pre-ordained, but by continuing blindly down the present course, the overwhelming evidence of history suggests that Sino-U.S. relations in the Asia-Pacific sphere risk becoming the latest chapter in great power tragedies.
Chapter II

SECURITY DILEMMAS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC
The Structural Instability Posed by Competing Sino-American Military Doctrines
INTRODUCTION

Due in large part to the rapid expansion of China’s economic output, military development and regional assertiveness, the geopolitical epicenter of the international order is shifting towards the Asia Pacific. China’s rise has direct ramifications upon the balance of power in the western Pacific, a balance that has been largely underwritten and enforced by the United States since 1945. Together these two nations represent, not only the leading powers in the Pacific, but also the world. The early 21st century will likely be defined by how the relationship between these two actors evolves. Will it be partnership founded upon economic interdependence; will it retreat into a militarized détente; or perhaps descend into active conflict? Whatever the future holds, it is clear that the emerging power distribution in the Asia Pacific is quickly becoming a bipolar power structure between the United States and China. The rise of China as a regional peer competitor is especially troublesome for United States policy and force posture, which have been almost immune from traditional balance of power calculations since the end of the Cold War. However, the goal of this chapter is not to debate the rise of China or predict future Sino-American relations, but address the possible consequences of certain structural phenomenon that hamper peace and cooperation in an anarchic world. Any discussion about future security in the Asia-Pacific must address a probable, potent, and overlooked obstacle that often hinders regional stability – the security dilemma.

The existence and possible consequences of a Sino-American security dilemma will be discussed in the context of both China and the United States’ nascent operational strategies: China’s anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) doctrine and the United States’ Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC). I argue that neither strategy will effectively
dissuade opposing forces and instead inflame an escalating security dilemma between the
two principal powers of the 21st century. Both strategies seek to gain operational control
of the western Pacific. China’s maturing A2/AD strategy seeks to bypass conventional
balancing metrics and instead relies upon specific technology and regional advantages to
create an operating environment that is too dangerous to risk United States’ forces. In
response, the United States’ JOAC mandates assured access in A2/AD environments will
be a key operational requirement for future military plans and force posture. Previous
security dilemmas have occurred due to the insecurity inherent within an anarchic
international order in which the security preparations of one state will inevitable create
insecurity within surrounding states. Often historical security dilemmas manifest
themselves as arms races, competing coalitions, or even outright war. If further
implemented, China’s A2/AD and the United States’ JOAC will generate an atmosphere
ripe for the development of regional arms races and military tensions within the guise of
a larger Sino-American security dilemma.

I maintain that the operational characteristics of A2/AD and JOAC are indicative
of a classical security dilemma due to three inherent conditions shared by both strategies:
the primacy of preemptive offensive strikes, misperceptions surrounding new A2/AD
weapon technology and finally, the uncertainty created by a lack of discernable
information about China’s ultimate strategic goals in the Pacific. There is no standard
list of ingredients for security dilemmas but preemption, misperception, and uncertainty
were chosen because of the frequency these factors appeared in security dilemma
literature. These three accelerants combine to create chronic insecurity that is
reminiscent of past security dilemmas and only serve to foster an operational
environment that impedes future stability. To demonstrate the emerging structural instability within the Asia-Pacific, this chapter will utilize a historical case study method that compares how preemption, misperception and uncertainty drove the Cold War-era security dilemma between the Soviet Union and the United States to analogous patterns emerging in the Sino-U.S. relationship. To demonstrate the structural instability of preemptive attack, I will compare the Cold War’s first strike nuclear doctrine and the offensive long-range first-strike that are favored in both Chinese and United States strategic literature. For examining how misperceptions of military capabilities and technology exacerbate regional insecurity, I will compare the paranoia surrounding early Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to the nascent fear surrounding China’s anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM). Finally, I will liken the misperception surrounding Soviet grand intentions and the ensuing strategic uncertainty with a similar lack of understanding and information when attempting to decipher China’s long-term strategic goals.

By examining relevant Cold War analogies, it does not equate modern China to the Soviet Union, but rather provides relevant historical precedent to demonstrate what factors create security dilemmas and how it can escalate Sino-American tensions. This study is important because most of the literature discussing China’s expanding military capabilities focus upon China’s military modernization and specific tactical or operational level threats without mentioning larger strategic ramifications. Rather than fixating upon numerical estimations and technological comparisons, this chapter seeks to expand upon the larger consequences if the Sino-American military posture is not fully understood within the context of structural dynamics like the security dilemma.
Establishing a Baseline: Security Dilemmas, A2/AD and JOAC

The Theoretical Assumptions of a Pacific Security Dilemma

A central tenet of this chapter is that the weapons and strategies of China’s A2/AD and the American JOAC response will negatively impact the entire security situation in the Pacific. These repercussions occur because A2/AD and JOAC are contributing factors that combine to create an escalating security dilemma. The notion of a security dilemma is one of the most enduring concepts in international relations theory and some authors’ feel it has been a driving cause of intra-state conflict since Athens and Sparta. As previously stated, a security dilemma is a cyclical security phenomenon in the field of international relations and occurs because: when a state attempts to increase its own security, it will inevitably decrease the security (real or imagined) of surrounding states.

However, as ubiquitous as the security dilemma is credited to be, it is also referred to as the ‘irreducible dilemma’ or ‘security paradox’ because it is difficult to assign clearly defined parameters or criteria. The security dilemma is not the same as an overt and orchestrated strategic challenge, because any security dilemma is comprised of two overlapping dilemmas. When states increase their security against a perceived threat there is first the dilemma of interpreting another state’s action and then there is the secondary dilemma of what an appropriate level of responses is. Because, both of these dilemmas are manifestations of each state’s fears, uncertainty, and unique historical and cultural perspective; it is nearly impossible to assign a standardized set of security

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5 Ken Booth and Nicholas J. Wheeler The Security Dilemma Fear Cooperation and Trust in World Politics (New York, Palgrave MacMillian: 2008), 96
6 Ibid, 4
dilemma criteria or mark at what exact point two states entered into a genuine security dilemma. The only ingredients that are necessary for any security dilemma are any two states cohabitating an anarchic world order.

The security dilemma concept is a theoretical foundation in realist school interpretations of security problems and especially relevant within the defense realism and offense-defense realist subsets. A realist interpretation of the world maintains that anarchy, or the lack of any overarching authority to protect individual states, defines the international order. Therefore, as noted realist scholar John Mearsheimer predicts, there are certain “bedrock assumptions” that exist in an anarchic international system. Some of Mearsheimer expectations are: states will develop offensive military capabilities; states are never sure of another actor’s intention; and every state is a rational actor that seeks to survive in such a Hobbesian atmosphere.

Professor Shiping Tang, in his work *The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis*, builds upon Mearsheimer’s ‘bedrock’ and constructs a theoretical roadmap demonstrating the causal linkages, which explicate how an anarchic world order leads to security dilemmas and conflict. Tang shares many of Mearsheimer’s assumptions and draws connections between the self-help anarchic structure that creates a high level of “uncertainty about each other intentions and fear, states resort to the accumulation of power and capabilities as a means of defense, and these capabilities inevitably contain some offensive capabilities”. This uncertainty and resulting armament generate the security dilemma, whereas stated, other states begin to arm themselves in response. Tang

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8 Ibid, 30-31
believes that this cycle of “actions and reactions” when mixed with national psychologies and material estimations, entrenches each state into a self-propelled pattern of heightened tensions and escalatory measures—often referred to as a security spiral.\textsuperscript{10} The unfortunate outcome being that the security dilemma often results in war, deteriorating relations, or arms races. According to the security dilemma, this creates a self-defeating paradox because a state’s attempts for increased security will regularly result in a less stable and increasingly hostile environment.

Professor Tang deconstructs the security dilemma into such a linear and orderly progression that one cannot help but wonder why the United States and China do not have the foresight to simply avoid becoming entrapped by the dilemma. Political scientist Andrew Scobell examines the security dilemma in Chinese literature and offers that some states intentionally exclude the dilemma from their strategic dialogue. Scobell reasons that the “security dilemma is likely to be an alien concept for a weakling power, especially one that sees itself as the aggrieved power. China is such a power.”\textsuperscript{11} In Scobell’s analysis of Chinese strategic literature, he believes that China does not recognize the security dilemma as a by-product of its rapid military and economic ascension. From the Chinese perspective how could China pose a risk to the United States given the massive discrepancies of power? Scobell refers to this underestimation as the “underdog mentality”: a situation where China is not fully aware of its newfound stature and the resulting insecurity developing amongst its neighbors. In a similar vein, the United States may have become lulled into a false sense of reality with the unique luxury of being the world’s sole remaining superpower. A generation of American

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, 596
policymakers has been largely immune from traditional balance of power equations since the end of the Cold War. This lack of institutional knowledge may inadvertently place the United States upon a trajectory to repeat past national security mistakes by failing to account for structural realities like security dilemmas.

While the object of this chapter is not to defend or debate the merits of structural realism or the security dilemma, it stands to reason that any international relations theory will have numerous proponents and detractors. With the rise of China, security dilemma literature is enjoying a small renaissance due to increasing speculation about coming bipolar (or even multipolar) power structures in the Asia-Pacific. This naturally raises questions about deterrence, balance of power alignments and, inevitably, security dilemmas. Critics charge that security dilemmas fail to account for a multitude of other factors and challenge the underlying “bedrock assumptions” about anarchy, cooperation, rational states, the role of international institutions and domestic drivers. Volumes have been written about how competing liberal, constructivist, and realist schools of thought interpret international dynamics, but this work seeks only to address the possible consequences of whether China’s A2/AD and the U.S.’s JOAC, if left unchecked, could ignite a future Sino-U.S. security dilemma. Instead of debating academic merits, the following Cold War case studies demonstrate the historical repercussions when military doctrine and tactics ignore larger structural phenomenon like security dilemmas. This is why in contemporary security polices; an understanding of the theoretical framework of security dilemmas is necessary to provide a possible explanation for “why” China’s long-range bombers, anti-ship missiles, and competing anti-access doctrines can destabilize an
entire region. Examining military capabilities and operational doctrine can only go so far as to answer the ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘where’ questions.

*A2/AD and China’s Active Defense*

To add further complexity to the Pacific security dilemma, there is no standard definition when addressing ‘anti-access’ and ‘area-denial’ subject matter. Both terms are U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) jargon, which describe the U.S. interpretation of the strategic landscape of the Asian Pacific. In fact, A2/AD terminology does not even appear to have been adopted in China’s defense publications or strategic literature. The operational lineage of A2/AD is an elementary characteristic of military campaigns; simply put, one side attempts to limit its enemy’s freedom of action with the battle space, the area-denial component, or prevent the enemy from entering an operational area, the anti-access element. Historically, A2/AD was executed at a tactical level, thus notionally limited to a commander’s immediate battlefield. However, the evolution of military technology has enabled China to field specific A2/AD-designed weapons as a means to extend the operational definition of anti-access and area-denial to hundreds or even thousands of miles beyond it shores.

Anton Wishik, a Fellow with the National Bureau of Asian Research, agreed that the phrase “anti-access” is not often cited within Chinese defense literate but instead finds strong operational parallels in China’s Active Strategic Counterattacks on Exterior Lines doctrine (ASCEL). The ASCEL doctrine reveals its A2/AD lineage, because it seeks to defeat a technologically superior opponent with a combination of naval and

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aerial long-range first-strike platforms. Wishik’s work on ASCEL notes that it has tactics, goals, and weapons consistent with A2/AD rational. Major General Peng Guangqian, a retired senior Chinese military researcher, states asymmetric ASCEL doctrine is strategically attractive to China because it affords “…the freedom to conduct military operations and strike the enemy at a time, place and in a manner that is advantageous for China and disadvantageous for the enemy…”13 Maj. General. Peng’s comments highlight a common refrain within contemporary Chinese strategic literature for how to wage war against technological and quantitatively superior opponent – which could only be the U.S. when examining the Pacific realm.

The growing threat of A2/AD strategies is evident in the amount of attention they presently receive in official United States defense publications. The anti-access threat first began to garner attention in the late 1990s and was openly discussed as a security challenge in the DOD’s 2001 Quadrennial Defense Report (QDR).14 The 2001 QDR lists the challenge of anti-access within a broad spectrum of operational goals and simply states that the U.S. must be capable of “Projecting and sustaining U.S. forces in distant anti-access or area-denial environments and defeating anti-access and area-denial threats”.15 The language remains so vague that there is no further discussion of which countries employ A2/AD or how they even implement it. Rather the 2001 QDR only outlines a general review of how an unknown adversary could limit U.S. power projection in space, air, and naval environments.16 In comparison, the latest QDR was

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13 IBID, 42
14 The QDR outlines the nature of America’s threats and provides broad strategic guidance and force posture recommendations.
16 IBID, 39
released in 2010 and devotes an entire chapter to anti-access threats and has redefined the operational requirements from whether the U.S. can “project and sustain” in anti-access areas, but if the U.S. can “deter and defeat aggression in anti-access environments”. Operational survival has been replaced by the goal of absolute victory. What is even more telling is the 2010 QDR specifically mentions China as an A2/AD practitioner and outlined their capabilities in the anti-access section of the report:

As part of its long-term, comprehensive military modernization, China is developing and fielding large numbers of advanced medium-range ballistic and cruise missiles, new attack submarines equipped with advanced weapons, increasing capable long-range air defense systems, electronic warfare and computer network attack capabilities, advanced fighter aircraft, and counter-space systems. China has shared only limited information about the pace, scope, and ultimate aims of its military modernization programs, raising a number of legitimate questions regarding its long-term intentions.

U.S. defense publications, like the QDR, believe China is attempting to gain control of the South China Sea and nearby littorals by using the aforementioned military hardware to asymmetrically deter U.S. intervention. China has embraced A2/AD because it recognizes that it cannot conventionally match U.S. military power and has adopted anti-access strategies to counterbalance America’s numerical and technological naval predominance. While China is undergoing a conventional naval expansion and military modernization campaign, in the interim, China will use area-denial weaponries, like those mentioned above in the 2010 QDR report, to create unjustifiable risks to U.S. assets. The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission concurs and refers to A2/AD tactics as China’s Area Control Strategy. The U.S.-China Commission outlines three broad strategic advantages that China’s Area Control Strategy (i.e. A2/AD) seeks to

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18 IBID, 54
achieve: negating the technological superiority of the U.S., the tactical initiative of “firststrike” options, and controlling local territory. 19 A2/AD becomes irregular warfare on a strategic level; it seeks to make military operations too costly for the U.S. military, policymakers and public.

A2/AD is a manifestation of China’s broader “active defense” force posture. According to China’s 2008 White Paper20, China has a military strategy of active defense and “strategically, it adheres to the principal of featuring defensive operation, self-defense and striking and getting the better of the enemy only after the enemy has started an attack”.21 While the White Papers emphasize the apparent self-defense posture of China’s military to protect the mainland, there is a tremendous amount of ambiguity concerning China’s perception of what constitutes an ‘attack’. As quoted, China will retaliate only “after the enemy has started an attack”, but China’s seminal strategic work, Science of Military Strategy, displays a broader understanding of what constitutes an enemy attack; “…for the first shot on the plane of politics must be differentiated from the ‘first shot’ on that of tactics...if any country or organization violates the other country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, the other side will have the right to ‘fire the first shot’ on the plane of tactics”.22 Offensive first-strike A2/AD operations are the instrument to achieve first shot success on the ‘plane of tactics’ and are veiled in China’s official, yet equivocal, defensive posture. Therefore, it is prudent for U.S. policymakers to assess A2/AD not solely based upon China’s official statements, but rather in the

20 The White Paper is China’s biannual defense publication akin to the United States’ Quadrennial Force Report
context of their demonstrated weapon capabilities, broader strategic literature and operational history.

The American Response: JOAC and the Air-Sea Battle Concept

In response to China’s A2/AD strategies, the United States has unequivocally stated that it considers freedom of access as an operational and strategic necessity. The initial United States doctrinal response is beginning to collate in the 2012 Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC) and the nascent Air-Sea Battle Concept. Not only has the United States recognized the challenges of anti-access but is also shifting tactile United States assets to the Pacific theater in a much publicized Asian ‘pivot’. United States military leaders have also realized that traditional U.S. military formations are ill equipped and unprepared to operate successfully in a hypothetical A2/AD environment. A 2011 DOD press reports states that during a series of war games designed to test the veracity of China’s A2/AD strategy, the U.S. lost nearly every time in over a hundred repetitions. Clearly after a hundred attempts, the ability to operate under the auspices of China’s A2/AD methodology has proven troublesome for U.S. strategists and it became clear that traditional battle plans were not viable. In response, General Norman Schwartz (USAF) and Admiral Jonathon Greenert (USN) outlined an operational shift in article entitled *Air-Sea Battle- Promoting Stability in an Era of Uncertainty.* General

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Schwartz and Admiral Greenert reemphasized the evolving A2/AD threats facing the military and announced the formation of the Air-Sea Battle Concept Office in the Pentagon to promote the integration and combat effectiveness of U.S. Navy and Air Force assets operating within A2/AD environments.

The Air-Sea Battle operational guideline employs American air and naval forces in a “Networked, Integrated, Attack in Depth” campaign to “disrupt, destroy, defeat” an adversary’s A2AD capabilities.”26 The Air-Sea Battle is portrayed as the next generation model of U.S. force projection. It exchanges traditional Cold War-era notions of numerical supremacy and perpetual forward presence, in favor of a strategy that relies upon a coordinated military response across space, cyber, air, sea, and land domains. The central component of the Air-Sea Battle is the ability to offset an adversary’s offensive A2/AD abilities by targeting the delivery system during the opening salvos, in lieu of commencing a sustained campaign at the perimeter. This results in a ‘shoot the archer’ operational mentality that calls for new Air-Sea Battle order to rely upon long-range bombers, drones, anti-satellite weapons, cyber warfare systems and submarine-based stealth aircraft to facilitate joint service strikes far inside China.27

The nascent Air-Sea Battle Concept was met with some skepticism due to the lack of clarification about how it was to be implemented, but was later reinforced by General Martin Dempsey’s release of the larger strategic Joint Operational Access Concept. General Dempsey wrote that the central thesis of JOAC was to ensure Cross-Domain Synergy, or operational integration, of all military branches to overcome accelerating

26 Congressional Research Service, China’s Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress, 94
27 Ibid, 94
global A2/AD trends.\textsuperscript{28} Whereas, the Air-Battle Concept was not intended as a roadmap for ultimate victory, but rather an operational stopgap measure to deter possible Chinese aggression, JOAC envisions a strategic endpoint for how to win wars in a future A2/AD conflict.\textsuperscript{29} JOAC proposes that an integrated and 'synergized' military will ensure the U.S. military maintains “operational access” or “assured access” in A2/AD spheres. 

\textit{Operational access} is the strategic necessity for the U.S. to project military force abroad to guarantee the ability to defend economic interests, demonstrate resolve and, if necessary, successfully engage and defeat an enemy.\textsuperscript{30} The JOAC does not provide specific directives or battle plans but denotes grander strategic tenets that recognize the lethality and growing attractiveness of A2/AD by America’s opponents. JOAC-style operations maintain the best way to ensure operational access is for U.S. forces to be reoriented, reorganized and outfitted to: seize the initiative in multiple simultaneous engagements; target the enemy’s weakness while exploiting U.S. advantages; disable opposing command and control systems; use long-range weapons to disable vital infrastructure; and use attack-in-depth strategic penetration to disable A2/AD systems and perhaps most telling, "maximize surprise through deception, stealth, and ambiguity to complicate enemy targeting".\textsuperscript{31}

The fundamental characteristics JOAC of are nearly indistinguishable from China’s Active Defense policy. Both doctrines are predicated upon surprise, long-range strikes, electromagnetic supremacy, and utilizing one’s advantages to asymmetrically

\textsuperscript{29} Jan Van Tol, Mark Gunzinger, Andrew Krepinevich and Jim Thomas, \textit{AirSea Battle A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept} (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010), 13
\textsuperscript{30} Department of Defense, \textit{Joint Operationally Access Concept Version 1.0}, 10
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 34
target an opponent’s weaknesses. The principal difference remains the relative advantages of China’s ability to conduct a local ‘defensive’ war vs. the U.S.’s military supremacy. With the outlines of each strategy clear, the only remaining question is how either side’s observed military actions, strategic decisions, and surmised tactical abilities, would affect the peace and security of the Pacific.

**Cold War Case Study and Current Pacific Parallels**

The last security dilemma the United States faced against a rival power was during the Cold War against the Soviet Union. By examining the causes, conduct and outcomes of the most recent great power contest; it sheds analytical light on the possible trajectory of the Asia-Pacific security environment. The following case studies do not insinuate that China is the next Soviet Union, but there remain stark similarities between a possible Asia-Pacific security dilemma and the dynamics of the Cold War strategic environment. The relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War comprised one of the largest, longest and most rampant security dilemmas in recent history. The Cold War was plagued by mutual distrusts, spiraling insecurity and chronic misperceptions of each side’s actual intentions and true capabilities. Catchphrases like ‘mutually assured destruction’, ‘missile gaps’, and ‘the red menace’ exemplified the military, ideological and political tensions that dominated international politics and security strategies from 1945 to 1991. With the rise of China and the competing operational strategies in the Pacific, there are historical analogies that can be inferred from the United States’ long and multifaceted experience with the Soviet Union. The historical parallels will focus upon how offensive first-strike doctrine, the missile gap and gross overestimations of Soviet capabilities, provided the conceptual ammunition
for over 50 years of hostility. Each of these examples has present corollaries in the current Pacific security dilemma. By recognizing the indicators of similar patterns of insecurity, it may prevent the United States and China from repeating Cold War-era mistakes and further retreating into a competitive and openly hostile course of action.

**Offensive First Strike: Nuclear “First Strike” and A2/AD**

If there is one overarching theme defining Cold War hostilities it was the omnipresent threat of nuclear war. During the opening days of the Cold War, the U.S.’s monopoly on nuclear power allowed atomic weapons to be used in a purely deterrence fashion without fear of retribution.\(^32\) This advantage lasted only until the Soviet’s detonated their first atomic weapons in 1949 and later deployed their own intercontinental ballistic missile fleets (ICBM) in 1960.\(^33\) Consequently, the ensuing nuclear arms race and burgeoning missile arsenals, replaced preventive deterrence with preemptive nuclear strikes. As deterrence strategist Lawrence Freedman outlines, “the only apparent way to win a nuclear war was to eliminate the enemy’s nuclear capability before it could be used...”\(^34\) A nuclear first strike was dependent upon a surprise attack and destroying as much nuclear infrastructure before the other side could launch a retaliatory attack- the second-strike capability.\(^35\) Therefore, as the Cold War progressed the nuclear stratagem evolved to favor the offense.

The preponderance of offensive doctrine gave credence to the then emerging offense-defense balance theory. Offense-defense balance holds that there is a direct link

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\(^{32}\) Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 87


\(^{34}\) Freedman, 88

\(^{35}\) Ibid, 88
between the relative advantages of offense and the severity of the corresponding security dilemma. As the attractiveness of offensive grows, so does the use of first-strike strategies to maximize the gains, with the security implications being, as “the advantage of striking first grows with offensive advantages, which increases the probability of crises escalating via preemptive attacks and accidents”.36 Because each side wanted to strike first in the advent of nuclear war, the Cold War became a series of near misses and regional disputes teetering on the brink of nuclear apocalypse. The constant threat of being caught off guard forced a continuous offensive posture throughout the Cold War. This only served to accentuate either side’s perception of insecurity and hasten the world’s first nuclear security dilemma.

In the Pacific, both the U.S.’s Joint Operational Access Concept and China’s A2/AD share many similar operational tenets with the Cold War’s first strike posture. Both China and the U.S. adhere to the benefits of long-range preemptive strike when trying to counter each other’s operational mobility. As shown, Chinese strategic literature has a very liberal interpretation of what constitutes a first-strike and China’s opponents may not fathom that a political or economic confrontation was tantamount to war.37 A preemptive offensive salvo would also conform to China’s stated objective to neutralize the U.S.’s avowed technological superior military. A 2007 Rand Corporation report, entitled Entering the Dragon’s Lair, inferred the nature of China’s initial attack and the report concluded that the start of hostiles would be preceded by an A2/AD-style

attack upon U.S. pacific bases, satellites, command and control (C4ISR)\textsuperscript{38} infrastructure, and aircraft carriers.\textsuperscript{39} These attacks would simultaneously “blind” U.S. forces and neutralize the immediate retaliatory ability of carrier battle groups and bases. This would succeed in both depriving the U.S. of its principal assets while emphasizing China’s natural advantages when conducting a local war.

The U.S.’s JOAC doctrine is equally liable in the creation of an offensive dominant Pacific environment. As shown, the basic tenets of JOAC and the Air-Sea Battle are predicated upon the ability to neutralize China’s ability prior to launching an A2/AD attack. While both strategies remain models, there are indicators within the changing Pacific force posture to accomplish the “networked, integrated attack-in-depth” long-range preemptive strikes. Beginning in 2006, the Air Force has already begun to rotate forward-deploying B-2 bombers, F-35 fighters, and additional cyber and space resources throughout Asia.\textsuperscript{40} The B-2 bomber and the F-35 fighter are America’s most sophisticated aerial platforms. The presence of regional B-2 bombers is noteworthy for their ability to leverage stealth technology and large conventional (or nuclear) payload “to penetrate the most sophisticated defenses and hold at risk high value, heavily defended enemy targets.”\textsuperscript{41} The Navy is also buttressing its existing maritime first-strike platforms with the addition of three \textit{Los Angeles}, three \textit{Seawolf}, and two \textit{Ohio} class

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item C4ISR: command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems.
\item Roger Cliff, Mark Burles, Michael S. Chase, Derek Eaton and Kevin Pollpeter. \textit{Entering the Dragons Lair: Chinese Anti-access Strategies and Their Implications for the United States.} (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007)
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
submarines. 42 U.S. submarines not only allow for conventional strikes upon China’s naval assets and shipping43, but all three submarine classes have the conventional and ballistic missile ability to execute anti-A2/AD deep strikes envisioned by the Air-Sea Battle Concept. Like the B-2 bomber, submarines could accomplish their mission while remaining virtually undetectable and roaming freely within contested waters.

The evolving composition of U.S. military forces in the Pacific is indicative of a military force that poses a credible risk to China’s own A2/AD systems. This only serves to reinforce the necessity of first-strike area-denial operations in China’s strategic mentality. The systemic insecurity created by preemptive strategies kept both the Soviet and U.S. militaries on an offensive stance that limited the ability for any constructive progress in disentangling the Cold War’s security dilemma. As shown, the present Pacific security dilemma is dominated by reciprocal strategies that favor similar preemptive attacks. An overreliance upon offensive options forces both the U.S. and China to interpret each other’s actions with the possibility of gaining an offensive advantage. This aggressive posture contributes to the spiraling insecurity that plagues all security dilemmas and proves especially dangerous in the rapidly evolving Asia-Pacific sphere.


If nuclear deterrence defined the Cold War operating environment, the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) was the barometer. The ICBM, bomber and submarine, represented the three nuclear delivery systems available to either side and

would come to be known as the nuclear triad. The ICBM was notable because it afforded either side with a long-range, relatively cheap and effective means to deliver a nuclear payload almost anywhere on earth. The ICBM not only represented the most dangerous weapon on Earth, but also was a continuous source of egregious overestimation by each side.

While the U.S. created the first atomic weapon, the Soviets launched the first ICBM in 1957 and followed shortly on October 4, 1957 with Sputnik, the first orbiting satellite. This created a visceral and emotional outcry in the U.S., where “Journalist, politicians, and military leaders began to speak of a “missile gap”—a perceived strategic deficiency brought on by the Soviet Union’s gains in the field of rockets, missiles, and nuclear weapons.” The missile gap paranoia of Soviet ICBM capabilities, induced a corresponding despondence over the U.S.’s national security preparations. For example, a National Intelligence Estimate, disseminated only a year after the first ICBM launch projected the Soviets would have 800 ICBMs by 1961. However, in 1961, the Central Intelligence Agency, predicted there were only between 10-25 missiles and history later revealed the Soviets only had six ICBMs in 1961. The perception of a missile gap (by both sides) and the insecurity it drove an exponential increase in ICBM stockpiles and by the 1970s the cumulative nuclear yield of the Soviets alone—was the equivalent of nearly 450,000 Hiroshima bombs. The exaggerations of Soviet weapon systems, when

combined with U.S. acute sense of vulnerability, would contribute greatly to one of the largest, most expensive, and dangerous arms races in world history.\footnote{Columba Peoples, "Sputnik and 'skill thinking' revisited: technological determinism in American response to the Soviet missile threat" \textit{Cold War History} 8, no. 1 (2008): 59}

In an analogous military revolution, albeit considerably smaller, there is another weapons system that is causing some U.S. military leaders to question the further use of America’s principal force projection asset- the carrier battle group. The Chinese have been pursuing an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) for several decades and it is suspected that the Dongfeng DF-21D ASBM is now operational. The ASBM has been heralded as a strategic “game changer” in the Pacific theater and some pundits have coined it the “carrier killer”.\footnote{Duncan Lennox, “Analysis: China’s ASBM project: keep calm and carry on”, \textit{Janes Defense Weekly}, (16 Feb. 2011): 2, accessed 20 March 2013, http://www.Janes.com} The DF-21D is a derivative of China’s conventional road-mobile Dongfeng ballistic missile class.\footnote{\textit{Military Technology World Defense Almanac 2012}, XXXVI ed., (Bonn, Germany, Ionch Publishing, 2002), s.v. “Chinese Strategic Missile Force”, 338} Estimated to number between 60-80 weapons, the DF-21D is believed to employ a maneuverable reentry vehicle (MARV) warhead, which could independently track, maneuver, and self-correct to intercept a moving ship.\footnote{Congressional Research Service, \textit{China’s Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities-Background and Issues for Congress}, 13.} As renowned Chinese maritime analysts Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes note, the advent of a ballistic missile capable of hitting a moving target would subsequently mean “ballistic missiles once depicted as inaccurate terror weapons have emerged as formidable precision munitions boasting genuine warfighting capabilities”.\footnote{Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, \textit{Red Star over the Pacific: China’s Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy} (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 104} If this proves correct, there are huge maritime implications for the U.S., which could possibly face a weapon that is capable of delivering a 600kg warhead at ranges over...
U.S. maritime mastery is centered upon the carrier battle group and it is accepted doctrine that “In any Sino-U.S. confrontation on the Pacific Rim, carrier strike groups would be the main source of U.S. military power”. The growing fear is that China now possesses an unprecedented ability to use land-based power to achieve a mission-kill strike upon a U.S. carrier or other surface assets, thereby severely restricting U.S. military responses to a crisis in the far Pacific.

The uncertainty surrounding missiles development was a source of constant insecurity during both the Cold War and present security situations. During the Cold War it was a fear of quantitates that drove both sides, leading to severe overestimations and burgeoning stockpiles. In the present Pacific theater it is not the number, but rather the nature of the missile that concerns American policymakers and military leaders. The U.S.’s Pacific Fleet is the principal means of protecting American interests, reassuring allies, and underwriting a relative Pacific peace since 1945. The carrier as a strategic linchpin in U.S. Pacific strategy has not been unnoticed by Chinese officials and when the 7th Fleet intervened in the 1995-1996 Taiwan Crisis, it was widely reported that a Chinese General amicably informed the local U.S. defense attaché “we’re going to sink your carriers with ballistic missiles and we had a long conversation about it”. Now, less than 20 years later, China may have accomplished that goal. In December 2010, the

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53 Craig Hooper and Christopher Alban, “Get off the fainting couch” United States Naval Institute Proceedings 136, no 4 (2010): 43
U.S. Navy prudently classified the DF-21D ASBM as reaching Initial Operating Capability (IOC).\textsuperscript{56,57}

China’s ASBM is a concrete example of the insecurity created by A2/AD operations. The ASBM creates similar strategic questions within U.S. policy as the first ICBM challenged America’s early deterrence doctrine and belief in technological superiority. Now U.S. strategist must ask what are regional ramifications if the U.S. cannot deter cross strait aggression against Taiwan or prevent escalating tensions in the South China Sea between China and Japan? The ASBM is specially designed to target the U.S.’s principal asset, the omnipresent aircraft carrier. The lack of absolute confidence in the predominance of America’s capital ships, forces the U.S. to rethink its strategic calculus in the Pacific. This entails either embracing the escalatory nature of a JOAC-inspired offensive mindset or risk retreating from the western Pacific all together.

\textit{Chronic Misperceptions: America’s Window of Vulnerability and China’s “24 Character” Strategy}

States, much like individuals, are driven by fear and uncertainty. As security dilemma scholar Robert Jervis outlined, national fear “once aroused as a function of uncertainty about others’ intentions can acquire a life of its own and become a powerful driver of the security dilemma and spiral”.\textsuperscript{58} Jervis’s national-level fear due to the uncertainty of others in the international system has been a powerful stimulus for states to assume the worst and prepare accordingly. This fear and uncertainty is often believed to


\textsuperscript{57} Initial Operating Capability (IOC) is a DOD broad classification extending from experimental to possibly ready for real-world applications.

\textsuperscript{58} Shipping Tang, “Fear in International Politics: Two Positions” \textit{International Studies Review} 10 (2008): 452
emanate from the anarchic nature of international order, but at the Cold War and Pacific case study level, this uncertainty is also the product of misperceptions, imperfect information and an overreliance upon military estimations.

Analysis of the Cold War has an added complexity of being an ideological contest layered with economic, political and military trappings. The U.S.’s ideological foundation was codified in the National Council Report 68 (NSC-68) policy paper, which informed President Harry Truman that the “Soviet Union is developing the military capacity to support its design for world domination”. America’s zero-sum perception of the Soviets translated into a strategic mentality that from the very onset of the Cold War unfailingly regarded every Soviet maneuver as inherently dangerous. As is often the case, America’s preconceived notions had little corresponding evidence to substantiate its claims. As history now verifies, an alarmist mindset led many U.S. leaders to embrace the “window of vulnerability” myth. If alleged missile gap spawned arms races, the window of vulnerability notion believed that any and every Soviet military advancement, acquisition, or geopolitical maneuver, was an indication of U.S. vulnerabilities. Thus, any Soviet action could shift the entire balance of power in their favor.

When Robert Johnson, a member of the National Security Council in the 1950s, later examined the window of vulnerability mentality, he discovered that the vulnerability myth became so persuasive because there was almost no way it could be disproved. Johnson believed that within such stark ideological positions as “world domination” the early estimations of the Soviet Union focused entirely upon technological and military

benchmarks, and “No knowledge of Soviet history or of the complex structures of Soviet political goals and motivations is required. The relevance of history and politics is, in fact, denied by the claim that Soviet international behavior is dominated by Soviet perceptions of the strategic balance”. This inability to look beyond the American construction of the Soviet threat became embedded within much of the U.S.’s intelligence estimations, which often generated a “red” threat wherever they looked. For instance, the now infamous 1976 “Team B” intelligence exercise pitted Team A (intelligence analysts) and Team B (outside academics and retired senior military leaders) against each other in a competitive intelligence exercise to deduce Soviet strategy. Team A relied upon conventional analysis and available intelligence that corroborated existing intelligence estimates. Whereas, Team B, rebuked both Team A and the intelligence estimates as lacking, because they “substantially misperceived the motivations behind Soviet strategic programs, and thereby tended consistently to underestimate their intensity, scope, and implicit threat”. To many American pundits, like Team B, the evidence could never dissuade a basic belief in the constant threat of Soviet attack and their basic malicious intentions.

However, as declassified documents reveal, the Soviet Union often felt that its strategy was driven by U.S. provocations. A declassified 1976 RAND report reviewing Soviet strategic programs between 1964-1972 had already begun to question the veracity of U.S. constructions of the Soviet threat. The report highlighted that the accelerating Soviet military buildup in the 1960s and 1970s could rationally be explained, not by Soviet world domination, but external stimuli. For example, the report notes that Soviet

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61 Ibid, 951
leadership was anxious because: it was publically revealed that the missile gap favored the U.S. by the early 1960s, the worldwide deployment of U.S. ICBMS, the widely broadcasted political and strategic victory of the U.S. during the Cuban missile crisis, and the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations. These were just a few examples that the security dilemma of the Cold War was driven in large part by faulty analytics and blinkered assessments that were clouded by preconceived notions and an overreliance upon military numbers.

While China is hardly portrayed as a Soviet-level threat and there are no discernible measures to contain Chinese ‘communism,’ the Pacific security environment is similarly afflicted by limited understanding and misperceptions. Within U.S. circles, it is becoming increasingly difficult to discern exactly what China’s overarching strategic goal is. How should the U.S. interpret China’s rising naval power and A2/AD-style weapons like the ASBM? It could be China’s rationale is similar to those outlined in the rival hypothesis section, but with little positive indicators and clear communiqués, the U.S. has limited information to act on and, as often quoted, hope is not a strategy.

Many Sino experts believe that China has committed the last several decades to a longstanding strategic approach to build the foundations of national power and global power projection. Aaron Friedberg, among many other authors, highlighted former Chinese premier Deng Xiaoping’s infamous “24 character strategy” as proof of this strategic ‘waiting’. In 1991, after the fall of the USSR and Tiananmen Square, Deng Xiaoping said China should “observe calmly, secure our position, cope with affairs calmly, hide our capabilities and bide our time, be good at maintaining a low profile, and

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never claim leadership." Many pundits judge the 24-characters as the nearest approximation of China’s comprehensive strategic beliefs, but discerning what ‘hiding capabilities and biding time’ means, does not provide any illumination on China’s future conduct and operations. Consequently, American policymakers and the public place too much analytical weight upon smaller regional disputes and extrapolations of China’s military capacity.

As the Cold War demonstrated, a more accurate assessment of either sides’ true intentions or even a more basic understanding of either sides’ mindset, could have alleviated much of the insecurity that hampered any constructive solutions from 1945 on. While the Sino-U.S. relationship has not reached the ideological fervor of the Cold War, the lack of stated intentions could further exacerbate the U.S.’s worrisome prognostications of China’s A2/AD methods and weapons. A lack of information or even basic understanding drives the fear and uncertainty that negatively afflicts a national psyche. Fear of the unknown, fear of being surprised, fears of new weapons, all coalesce to drive national policy beyond what the true security conditions actually merit. These fears can become so ingrained within the national dialogue that the policies enacted are actually conducive for security dilemmas.

The Cold War Legacy

The Cold War left a lasting imprint in the field of international relations literature. The theoretic underpinnings of the modern security dilemma were conceived during the Cold War, but appeared to fall out of favor in the 21st century. Present studies seem to

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characterize contemporary threats to world peace as rogue states, failed states, transnational terrorism or even environmental catastrophes. While these are all relevant dangers, there is still a very real need to remember the systemic lessons of the Cold War—especially the security dilemma. Great power politics and peer competition may not have occupied many strategists at the onset of the 21st century, but interstate rivalries have never been far from the forefront of international politics. The tensions of the Pacific theater and Sino-U.S. relationship are not a historical anomaly but a reemergence of classical balance of power equations. The coming situation cannot be met with military force alone and will require an absolute commitment by the U.S. and China to mitigate the budding indicators and very real dangers of the security dilemma.

**Rival Hypothesis**

It is not this thesis’s intent or my personal belief that a Sino-U.S. war, or any war, is preordained. This chapter seeks to examine disconcerting Sino-U.S. systemic trends with historical connections to previous security dilemmas, but it stands to reason that there are numerous ways to interpret what the rise of China means for the global structure. There is a broader liberal ideology, which is predicated upon international institutions and the calming effects of economic interdependence. As such, many pundits and policymakers believe the U.S. should take part in constructive economic, social and political engagements to further strengthen Sino-U.S. relations. While these theories are beyond the scope of this chapter, there are more specific competing hypotheses that propose reasonable economic, political, and historical motivations in which the future of Sino-American relations may not be driven by a security dilemma.
Analyst Jonathon Holslag, author of *Trapped Giant: China’s Military Rise*, does not refute the possible security ramifications of China’s rise, but questions the reason for the increased militarization. Holslag offers that China’s growing military capabilities may not be a hegemonic thrust for power, but a response to China’s perceived geopolitical encirclement. China is encircled along its entire periphery by Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, India, and now U.S. bases in former Soviet satellite states along its entire periphery and could reasonably conclude that it is prudent to have a strong military deterrent before being surrounded by U.S. bases and allies.65 At an even more basic level, noted scholar Robert Ross writes that the present naval buildup is a historically common illustration of “naval nationalism”. The fielding of a blue water navy is an internationally recognized mark of status and prestige. Ross relays the sentiments of a senior Chinese scholar who told Ross it “is humiliating that the navies of not only the United States but also of India and Japan can sail the South China Sea, while China’s navy lacks such a capability”.66 Therefore it may be reasonable to conclude that China is following a strong historical current, in which the vast majority of modern powers have sought a robust navy to protect their homelands and international interests.

There is also additional literature that supports China’s military rise as a predictable response to its growing assets and economic interests abroad. Norman Friedman, in *Sea Power as Strategy*, reinforces this opinion that the geopolitics of sea power necessitate that any nation must have the maritime means to protect trade routes

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and national interests abroad. In China’s case this is noticeably reflected in its dependence upon foreign sources of oil, which often traverse sea-lanes of communications (SLOCs) under the auspices of U.S. Navy protection. In response, the Chinese navy has already begun amassing a list of friendly ports between the Middle East and China. This route with pro-Chinese ports has acquired the moniker “Sting of Pearls.” Each of these locales or “pearls” provides a geographical point from which China can exert military and political influence to help protect the oil trade. As Colonel Christopher Pehrson notes in his analysis, “China’s development of these strategic geopolitical ‘pearls’ has been nonconfrontational, with no evidence of imperial or neocolonial ambition.” Many energy analysts, such as Gabriel Collins, William Murray, Joseph Chang, and Andrew Kennedy, concur that China’s crucial reliance upon foreign oil places China in a geopolitically precarious position. China is heavily dependent upon imported oil from the Middle East and over 80% of China’s oil consumption passes through the narrow confines of the Straits of Malacca alone. Hence, China is keenly aware of the immediate economic turmoil any naval blockade or disruption to the SLOCs would create; and this may have justifiably motivated China to ready a blue water navy.

These are only a few of the plausible explanations and legitimate rationale for a strong Chinese navy and history may prove one of them correct. However, this is exactly why structural insecurity prevails in an anarchic world order. The security dilemma is so dangerous because it does not discriminate based upon a nation’s rationale

67 Norman Friedman, Sea Power as Strategy Navies and National Interests. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 56
for greater security. Each of the previous explanations was a valid and pragmatic response to China’s domestic needs and security, but other nations cannot be sure if a Chinese warship is meant to combat piracy or reinforce territorial claims in the South China Sea. From the Chinese perspective, their policymakers can never be absolutely sure the United States Navy is present to maintain open sea-lanes or provide a buffer against the rise of China. The following explanations may believe the intentions are benign, but how can they know for sure - this is the quintessential security dilemma. No state can attempt to reinforce its security without affecting the status quo. This holds especially true in the Asia-Pacific where much of the military power is predicated upon maritime strength. Naval power is almost indistinguishable as purely defensive or offensive in nature; therefore it is entirely possible that individual nations may have differing perceptions of China and the United States strategies in the Asia-Pacific.

**Policy Implications**

Is the future of Sino-U.S. relations doomed to mistrust and war because of the security dilemma? The answer is resoundingly no, but in the same breath the security dilemma makes the prospects of future peace and stability in the Asia Pacific more challenging. The security dilemma will continue to endure in one form or another as long as nations try to coexist in an anarchic world. No state seeking security and survival will ever truly escape the security dilemma in one form or another. Therefore, the foreign policy questions for future Sino-American relations and greater Asia-Pacific stability, must address the effects of security dilemmas and any effective strategy will seek to minimize the dilemma. Clearly, China’s A2/AD and the United States’ JOAC are potentially adding fuel to the dilemma’s escalatory security spiral. This chapter forwards
two possible strategic-level solutions that could help the United States mitigate the effects of the security dilemma without effecting force readiness: benign signaling and control of the commons.

This chapter tried to remain agnostic when it came to the competing viewpoints and scholarly opinions surrounding the security dilemma. However, there is a very applicable new post-Cold War security philosophy argued by Charles Glaser in his book *Rational Theory of International Relations*, which asks how can states often choose to cooperate or avoid conflict in an archaic world. Glaser believes that by assessing a state’s motives, material, and information variables, his theory “provides a rational baseline against which actual state behavior can be evaluated.”

Glaser argues that if a security-seeking state wants to increase its own security while avoiding upsetting the status quo, it must simultaneously signal to other states its benign motives. A state can broadcast benign (i.e. security-seeking) motives by a variety of means including arms control, defense emphasis and unilateral restraint. Glaser believes that if a state can effectively signal nonthreatening intentions with one or more of these policies it may:

…be able to set in motion a positive spiral. As its adversary concludes that the state is less likely to be greedy, the adversary should be more willing to signal its own benign motives, which could enable the state to engage in additional costly cooperation, with further improves relations.

Therefore, it becomes notionally possible to determine whether another state’s polices or military are “greedy” or “security-seeking” and avoid becoming enveloped by the uncertainty of the security dilemma.

71 Ibid, 65
72 Ibid, 68
Benign signaling proves applicable to the present situation in the Asia-Pacific, because it provides several possible actions that can be taken by either China or the United States to decrease the potency of a security dilemma. Again, Glaser outlines arms control, defense emphasis, and unilateral restraint as possible roadmaps to encourage positive spirals or at the very least-no spirals. It may not be reasonable or prudent for the United States to exercise unilateral restraint in the Asia Pacific, but arms control and emphasizing a defensive posture remain viable alternatives. For example, arms control has proven effective in diffusing arms races in the Cold War period and could be especially relevant to assuaging United States worries about China’s Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile. China is not yet a signatory of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Missile Treaty, which was originally developed to eliminate Soviet and America intermediate-range missiles at the end of the Cold War. As recently as 2011, the Pentagon has voiced support for restoring the treaty and inviting China to join because of the prospect of anti-ship ballistic missiles. Treaties like this would remove one of the major sources of insecurity in the Sino-American relationship and help clarify China’s intentions within United States policy circles. In the meantime the United States can also signal benign security intentions by emphasizing a more defensive posture in the Pacific.

This defensive posture is predicated upon refocusing American security policy upon what Barry Posen refers to as “command of the commons.” Posen contends that America’s true military power is rooted in its ability to exert total control within the operational domains of land, sea, air and space and this “…allows the United States to exploit more fully other sources of power, including its own economic and military might.

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73 Congressional Research Service, China and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and Missiles: Policy Issues, 71
as well as the economic and military might of its allies." Posen believes the actual source of American power is the supremacy of the commons, but this is often overlooked when present national security considerations emphasize military quantities and forward deployments. However, even absolute command of the commons is challenged by "The Contested Zone"; or the inherent strategic, economic, political and tactical advantages an adversary has against American forces when fighting a local war. This 'home court' advantage is easily discernable when conducting potential operations in China’s littorals: Chinese antiaircraft missiles pose a legitimate threat to American air power; the shallow confines of the littorals limit America’s subsurface and carrier power; and land-based options are unheard of in American contingency plans.

The contested zone illustrates why China’s array of A2/AD strategies and weapons are operationally effective against conventional force projection. The United States’ greater military strategy is still based upon Cold War-era military primacy provided by America’s hegemonic foundation. Posen argues this broad, forward deployed and assertive approach has spawned the military pushback and weapon programs in nations like China, Russia, North Korea and Iran, which in turn only heightens American concerns and military readiness (more security dilemmas). Instead Posen counters the United States should adopt a nimbler and more disciplined strategy that focuses America’s political and military objectives upon maintaining supremacy within the global commons. Command of the commons allows American policymakers to concentrate upon pursuing specific goals like preserving the global

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75 Ibid, 22
balance of power, combating terrorism and stopping nuclear proliferation.\textsuperscript{77} By redeploying American assets to the Pacific commons, the United States maintains the military capabilities to project power if need be - but the era of steaming through the Straits of Formosa to quell every crisis may be over. Posen believes this will actually contribute to the overall stability of the Asia Pacific region, because the United States maintains the military might to intervene but by not keeping American assets forward deployed “…its efforts do not unnecessarily threaten China and thus encourage the very ambitions Washington hopes to deter or prompt a new round of free-riding or reckless driving by others in Asia.”\textsuperscript{78} By refocusing American power upon the commons and narrowed strategic goals, it may not signal completely benign intentions but may broadcast an overall more defensive strategic posture. This may be enough to demonstrate to China that American motivations are indicative of a “security-seeking” state rather than a “greedy state” attempting to contain China’s rise or pursue hegemonic objectives. A strong United States military is vital for maintaining the balance of power in the western Pacific and keeping the simmering territorial disputes, historic animosity and mutual distrust from destabilizing the entire region. The challenge becomes how to maintain American military power without unnecessarily aggravating structural instability. Control of the commons and benign intentions provide a roadmap for military strategists to develop an operational plan that avoids escalating the security dilemma without sacrificing their state’s relative safety.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 119
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid, 119
Conclusion

The comparative stability and absence of interstate war amongst major powers since the conclusion of the Cold War, gives credence to a growing body of literature that believed there has been a fundamental shift in international relations. A wide range of policymakers and scholars believe this was perhaps a “new world order”, where cooperation and economic advancement had replaced security competitions as the driver of international affairs. The recent security challenges faced by the United States have reinforced this belief by focusing upon insurgency, terrorism and rouge nations. Little time and energy was expended upon the dangers from rival states. However, this shift away from the structural dynamics of great power politics was premature and will prove a historical anomaly. The fundamental characteristics of the international structure have not changed. The world remains an anarchic environment, in which states must ensure their own survival. Nowhere is the reemergence of structural dynamics and the inherent instability of an anarchic world more apparent than the emerging security environment of the Asia Pacific Sphere.

The Sino-American relationship will inevitably define the political temperature of this region. Therefore it is essential in the era of Asia-Pacific grand politics that all actors are fully aware of systemic dangers like the security dilemma. National strategies should reflect the actual security environment and the Cold War remains a potent warning how the insecurity and distrust of the security dilemma can hijack national psyches and policies. Benign intentions and defensive posturing are only several vehicles for preventing an unwarranted escalation of Sino-American tensions. There are numerous economic, social, political and diplomatic tools that are better suited for
maintaining normal Sino-American relations and these will only become available if the
Chinese and American military postures are not on a constant war footing. The first step
for ensuring stability in the Asia Pacific is to prevent the security dilemma from
permeating regional relationships. Thus, it becomes imperative that the United States and
China rethink their perspective offensive first-strike military doctrines like A2/AD and
JOAC. History demonstrates that the alternative to ignoring the security dilemma leads
to arms races, regional entrenchment, rival alliances, and outright war.
Chapter III

BALANCE OF POWER IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

The Dangers of Great Power Balancing Strategies in Multipolar Environments
Introduction

The current Asia-Pacific sphere is reemerging as a classical great powers contest. This translates into an intricate multipolar structure complete with a reigning power, the United States; a rising power, China; and a host of powerful secondary actors. This environment will present new diplomatic, military and economic challenges for all parties involved and raises concerns about a return to great power politics and levels of regional competitiveness. One of the primary concerns about the latest geopolitical calculations is how the systemic distribution of power will preserve regional peace. These fears manifest themselves as one of the most widely referenced and least understood concepts in international relations – the balance of power. The balance of power theory is often dismissed as an outmoded notion, more appropriate for Napoleonic Europe and assumed to be ill suited for the intricacies and interconnectivity of today’s globalized world. However, with the recent American ‘pivot’ to the Pacific, rising provincial Navalism and growing military budgets, the theory has undergone a small renaissance to explain the strategic decision-making of Asia-Pacific actors.

The strategic landscape of the Asia-Pacific is progressively more difficult because many of the recent developments are indicative of power calculations not recently encountered under a unipolar system of American hegemony. To clarify the modern Asia-Pacific, much of the recent literature has focused upon regional developments surrounding the rise of Chinese power projection and the accompanying fear that the U.S. will withdraw from its historic role as regional stabilizer.

The analysis demonstrates that Pacific states, great and small, are navigating changing power dynamics by resorting to classic hard power balancing strategies like
increasing internal military capabilities and ballooning regional security arrangements. The first section of the text traces the historic lineage of balance of power theory and illustrates how it has changed to reflect changing strategic environments. The following sections use two case studies to compare current geopolitical realities with historical multipolar environments and the complications that arise from maintaining these systems via hard balancing strategies. The first case study examines the effect of European naval races upon the balance of power from 1871 to 1914. The second case study examines the entangling peacetime alliances that permeated European balance of power calculations during this same period. The First World War provides a fitting template from which to juxtapose the present Asia-Pacific environment. Both regions are multipolar structures that share striking similarities with naval mobilization, intricate power webs, nationalist rhetoric and regional flashpoints. The case studies demonstrate that the actors within the Asia-Pacific are adopting traditional hard-balancing measures to maintain the current power status-quo and also the highlight the consequences of misreading or allowing balancing strategies to commandeer strategic decision making.

This thesis does not hold that conflict is preordained in the Asia-Pacific or the rise of China is an inherently dangerous occurrence. The goal of the chapter is to outline how traditional hard power balancing is reemerging in regional multipolar structures and why the potential dangers associated with balance of power gamesmanship must be understood against historical precedent. If the current environment is being explained through the balance of power lens, there must be an accompanying understanding of what the balance of power entails and how it can influence policy – for better and worse. Policymakers must understand the level of structural risk in a multipolar Asia-Pacific and
accurately interpret balance of power calculations or again succumb to what John Mearsheimer refers to as the ‘tragedy of great power politics.’

**Balance of Power Theory**

Balance of power theory is one of the most widely referenced in international relations and correspondingly one of the most contested concepts. The literature surrounding balance of power theory has its roots in the Peloponnesian wars, but the longevity of this theory does not translate into any codified or agreed definition. A standard definition for balance of power is so indefinable, because it can be used simultaneous as a means to prescribe policy, describe a singular event or even label the whole international environment.79 Consequently, the literature explaining balance of power theory becomes very opaque and this continues into contemporary literature.80 However, the majority of balance of power theorists agree upon two established baselines: balance of power is used to describe “the relative distribution of power among states into equal or unequal shares”81 and that all states exist in an anarchic system wherein each state must ensure its own survival.82 Therefore, the goal of state survival motivates interstate competition and peace is maintained by ensuring no single state becomes an overwhelming power, i.e. hegemon, which could upset the distribution of power and security of surrounding states. When such a state threatens to disrupt the

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79 There have been as many as eight different interpretations of the term balance of power: (1) any distribution of power, (2) an equilibrium or balancing process, (3) hegemony or search for, (4) stability and peace in a concert of power, (5) instability and war, (6) power and politics in general, (7) a universal law of history, (8) a system for and guide to policy-makers. See: Ernst B. Hass, ‘The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept or Propaganda?’ *World Politics* Vol. 5, No. 4 (1953): 442-477
80 Martin Griffiths, Terry O’Callaghan and Steven C. Roach *International Relations: The Key Concepts.* (London: Routledge, 2008), 17
81 Ibid, 17
distribution of power; the balance of power dynamic supposes that states will either begin
reinforcing their own defense (internal balancing) or combining capabilities with other
states into alliances (external balancing). However, how states maintain or pursue the
balance of power is where the literature diverges widely.

Although the security dilemma and balance of power concepts are closely related
in national security dialogues, there are subtle differences that separate them into distinct
categorizes. Chapter Two demonstrated that security dilemmas originate from a state’s
fear, misperceptions and uncertainty of rival powers, and are a dangerous byproduct of a
state’s attempts to defend against mounting threats. Balance of power literature also
stems from a similar perspective, but the principal difference is that states often choose
whether to organize or partake in man-made balance of power alliances. This depends on
which interpretation of balance of power is being utilized. If it is an active and deliberate
balancing against an emerging rival, the balance of power is often understood as a
distinct foreign policy tool. Both the balance of power and the security dilemma are
emblematic of structural forces of instability in power politics, but they are two distinct
subjects in international relations. Therefore, even though both can occur simultaneously
and share many overlapping themes, the literature and definitions vary enough to warrant
separate consideration.

This chapter discusses the negative episodes when balance of power failed to
maintain equilibrium amongst regional states. There are many notable exceptions when
the balance of power system did create a stable, but ultimately temporary environment.
For example, the Concert of Europe between 1815 and 1914 is often cited as one of the

83 William C. Wohlforth, Richard Little, Stuart J. Kaufman, David Kang, Charles A. Jones, Victoria Tin-
most enduring examples of a successful balance of power. However, it is important to
remember that any balance of power system can only maintain the status quo within the
distribution of power at a certain time. Balance of power orderings are a fluid and
dynamic arrangement that do not have a predetermined lifespan. As the Concert of
Europe demonstrates, the balance did end with the outbreak of the most destructive
conflict to date. The fragility of any balancing arrangement becomes even more tedious
when there are competing and obscure alliances, arms races and militarization. The
WWI case study and the Asia-Pacific will demonstrate that any balance of power system
is a temporary and unpredictable environment.

Balancing and Bandwagons

One of the most instrumental balance of power works is Kenneth N. Waltz’s
seminal book the *Theory of International Relations*, which introduced Waltz’s neorealist
interpretation of the balance of power. Waltz’s neorealist school holds that the basic
structure or ‘ordering principal’ of the international environment is the absence of any
overarching authority and this is turn means states must fend for their own survival.
Waltz’s belief that anarchy drives the balance of power dynamic, builds upon earlier
interwar scholars like Quincy Wright who held that ensuring a balance of power between
states was the best way to preserve international stability. Waltz’s neorealist theory
agrees with Wright’s view on the importance of balance of power, but forwards that
states will often maintain the balance by joining the weaker side against the stronger and

85 Emily Griggs. “A realist before “realism: Quincy Wright and the study of international politics between
more threatening actor.\textsuperscript{86} Waltz reasons “on the weaker side, they [secondary states] are both more appreciated and safer, provided, of course, that the coalition they join achieves enough defensive or deterrent strength to dissuade adversaries from attacking.”\textsuperscript{87} In the end, balancing is a means for states to maintain stability in the system and although individual occurrences of balancing are not a permanent fixture, balancing will arise regularly to restore order.\textsuperscript{88}

Waltz recognizes that a state has several options for how to balance and must decide whether to use internal balancing to increase its own military capabilities or engage in external balancing in the form of alliances. For Waltz, the decision is often based upon the existing capabilities of the state and highlights that more powerful states like the United States or the Soviet Union are likely to rely on internal balancing and weaker states will often have to resort to external balancing.\textsuperscript{89} A contemporary theorist of Waltz was Hans Morgenthau, who also predicted that states would engage in balancing behavior against more powerful states. Morgenthau agrees with Waltz that balancing is the likely means to preserve the power equilibrium and he wrote that it was a matter or expediency by states rather than principle.\textsuperscript{90} Therefore, balancing states will set aside minor differences for the common and greater cause of preventing a rising hegemon.\textsuperscript{91}

Waltz and Morgenthau represent the most traditional notion of the balance of power theory that states will inherently maneuver to balance against rising power to maintain the status quo. However, other scholars begin to quickly add additional criteria

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Waltz, 127
\item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 127
\item \textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 128
\item \textsuperscript{89} Ibid, 168
\item \textsuperscript{90} Hans Morgenthau. \textit{Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 175
\item \textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 176
\end{itemize}
for why states would form alliance to balance against a hegemon. Following the theory’s evolution, Stephen Walt introduced his *balance of threat theory*. Walt agrees with Waltz and Morgenthau that the system is anarchic and states will often engage in balancing behavior, but balancing will be against perceived external threats and not simply to counter power. Walt does not believe that balancing is an intrinsic phenomenon that maintains equilibrium, but a calculated choice by states based upon a wide variety of factors. Walt maintains that states will decide if another state is threatening based upon the sum total of its aggregate power, geographical proximity, offensive power and aggressive intentions. Even with the added criteria, Walt believes that states will continue to choose balancing, because as he states “for the simple reason that no statesman can be completely sure of what another will do.” Walt’s balance of threat theory attempts to advance the balance of power theory to explain more complicated situations, but in the end it follows a very similar vein to works by Waltz and Morgenthau.

As time progressed, other scholars began to question why states do not automatically exhibit balancing behavior against every rising power. What explains the numerous historic incidences when states chose to align with the rising or hegemonic power? Paul Fritz and Kevin Sweeney are among the most vocal in challenging the inconsistent empirical record of balancing behavior. Fritz and Sweeney argue that balancing behavior forwarded by Waltz, Morgenthau and Walt is not always an inevitable outcome and states, including great powers, will often join the stronger side in

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93 Ibid, 24-28
94 Ibid, 29
an act known as *bandwagoning.* Fritz and Sweeney agree that states will ally with the weaker side if “significantly threatened”; but if not threatened, states will ally – bandwagon – with the stronger state if they stand to profit the alliance. Fritz and Sweeney document that bandwagoning is actually a much more common occurrence than balancing and they concluded that states engage in a simple cost-benefit analysis before deciding whether to balance or bandwagon. Balancing is an extremely expensive and risky undertaking, whereas bandwagoning is a relatively cheap and safe proposition. Therefore, states will choose to balance or bandwagon based upon the specific interests of the state in mind and will not automatically balance against any and every rising power or national threat to the larger distribution of power. Fritz and Sweeney do not reject the concept of balancing, but advance the literature by adding additional conditions for why and when states engage in balancing versus the more common bandwagoning behavior. States will continue to use balancing, but the author’s stress that threat perceptions will drive balancing behavior. And only if the threat is serious enough will a state chose balancing over interest-driven bandwagoning behavior.

*Balance of Power Theory: Hard and Soft Power*

The previous review is only a small sliver of the available literature surrounding the balance of power theory, but the selected authors established an initial theoretical baseline and highlight important internal disagreements within the balance of power.

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95 Fritz and Sweeney did not coin or introduce the notion of bandwagon. Bandwagoning in international relations has existed within the literature since the 1940s and many of the authors cited here acknowledged its presence in their works.


98 Fritz and Sweeney. “The (De)limitations of Balance of Power Theory”: 303
theory: threat vs. power, balance vs. bandwagon and external vs. internal balancing. However, the balance of power literature has been relatively untouched since the fall of the Soviet Union and only recently enjoyed a small renaissance. The principal cause for this analytical gap reflected the composition of the international system. The balance of power theory examines how multiple states interact with one another, and with the bipolar Cold War most of the literature focused upon the role of ideology and political structures within alliance formations. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the emergence of the United States as the world’s sole superpower left little room for balance of power analysis in a unipolar world. However, U.S. hegemony and the absence of any balancing against the U.S. have reinvigorated the debate surrounding balance of power theory. Classical balancing theorists like Waltz maintain that it will only be a matter of time and patience will prove the balance of power theory is still applicable. Other scholars have begun forwarding other explanations and most of the new ideas surrounding balance of power (or lack thereof) focus upon the idea of soft power.

Joseph Nye first introduced the concept of soft power to clarify what he saw as new sources of power in international affairs. Nye believes that by the end of the 20th century, power was not limited to a state’s martial capabilities or economic might but also rested with the magnetism of its culture, political values and legitimacy of its foreign policies. Hard power is used to coerce states, but Nye believes states could also

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99 Most authors agree that it would be nearly impossible for a single work to coherently address all the various strains, interpretations and disagreements within balance of power theory and consequently most scholars address one particular segment or period of time.
achieve their policy goals by attracting others to its side or cause. The more attractive a state’s culture, values and polices become, the more soft power it wields. Soft power was introduced at the dawn of a globalized world policed by Pax Americana and has since become a common phrase for governments throughout the world.

Soft power balancing, like diplomatic maneuvering, is not without its critics, Stephen Brooks and William C. Wohlforth are suspicious that soft power balancing cannot be truly identified and only maintains academic credibility due to its links to balance of power theory. Brooks and Wohlforth write that soft balancing cannot be distinguished from behavior that is commonly associated with states pursing economic interests, regional security concerns, policy disputes and bargaining and domestic political incentives. Therefore, Brooks and Wohlforth believe soft power is not a manifestation of systemic balancing but everyday statesmanship. The growing debate concerning soft versus hard power balancing only adds to balance of power’s long history of internal debates.

Balance of Power Theory in the Asia-Pacific: Hedging and Accommodation

Soft power balancing is now used as a common rationalization for state behavior in the Asia Pacific. The literature is focused upon both the systemic interaction between major regional powers like China and the U.S. and how regional secondary actors like

105 Secondary actors in international relations literature refers to any non-great power actor. In the Pacific theater usually every state besides the U.S. and China are categorized as secondary actors. Periodically, there are arguments that India, Japan and Australia should be classified as a separate class between great powers and secondary actors. However this is personal preference and for this paper references to secondary actors will include all states besides the U.S. and China. Secondary states are also referred to as minor powers.
Japan, India, Australia, Singapore and others are adapting to the evolving situation. In regards to the U.S.-China strategic relationship, many authors have written that both the U.S. and China are employing soft balancing measures against one another. Kai He and Huiyun Feng believe economic interdependence has made U.S. hard balance policy too costly for U.S. policymakers.\textsuperscript{106} Even though the U.S. maintains a robust military presence in the Pacific and treaty alliances with China’s neighbors, He and Feng write that the U.S. retains enough of a power advantage over China that it does not need to resort to hard power balancing tactics. Therefore, the U.S. can afford to employ soft power balancing tactics like engaging China in non-proliferation treaties and military sales to Taiwan to constrain Chinese power.\textsuperscript{107} Conversely, Marc Lanteigne argues that China has also been actively engaged in a concentrated effort to maximize power through soft balancing tactics. Beijing even refers to this policy as “peaceful rise diplomacy” and it is manifested through growing economic aid and bilateral diplomatic relations with its neighbors.\textsuperscript{108} However, a lack of Chinese transparency and a burgeoning military modernization programs leads many regional states to view China’s overtures with suspicion. China and the U.S. represent the two largest powers in the region and their respective military (hard power) capabilities far exceed any other actor in the region and often their use of soft balancing is viewed as a convenient or stalling tactic. However, the majority of Pacific nations faced with a rising China and the possible drawdown of U.S. forces, have turned to soft power balancing as a reflection of their perilous security circumstances. These nuances have further subdivided soft balancing measures


\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 395

\textsuperscript{108} Marc Lanteigne. “Water Dragon? China, power shifts and soft balancing in the South Pacific”, \textit{Political Science} Vol. 64, No. 21 (2012): 37
employed by secondary actors into two more concrete strategies – *accommodation* and *hedging*.

Robert Ross likens accommodation to adaption. States will compromise by offering political or economic incentives to the great power in a calculated effort to avoid antagonizing it. ¹⁰⁹ Accommodation differs from bandwagoning because the secondary state will not align with or submit to the greater power in matters of strategic interests like military cooperation, arms transfers and basing rights.¹¹⁰ Baogang He stresses that accommodation is not appeasement. He argues that appeasement is “unprincipled and comprehensive compromise, such as accepting imposed conditions so as to give in to the demands of an aggressors…”¹¹¹ He agrees with Ross that accommodation by secondary states can termed as a series of “strategically selective” choices to assent with the more powerful state, but decline other demands most often dealing with strategic issues of war and peace.¹¹² If all the balancing options were ordered, accommodation would be closest to the soft power version of bandwagoning and hedging would be the soft power derivative of balancing. Jeongseok Lee describes hedging not as a single tactic, but rather as a strategy based on strategic flexibility and argues that states will prudently decide upon the appropriate strategy based upon the geopolitical realities.¹¹³ This diversified policy portfolio will allow states to choose between balancing or bandwagon options and quickly adapt to the surrounding situation. Lee believes that the strategic

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 368
¹¹² Ibid, 58
uncertainty permeating the Pacific theater means that almost every secondary actor is coping with the rise of China with a hedging strategy until the security picture becomes clearer.

As shown, balance of power theory is comprised of many converging interpretations and yet has nonetheless survived as a viable pedagogical tool to describe events in the international realm. However, caution must be exercised when discussing the role of soft power in balance of power calculations. Too many authors have divorced soft power balancing from the originating concept of balance of power—how states seek to distribute power and ensure their survival in an anarchic environment. Even though there are illustrated examples for how states react to changes in the international distribution of power beyond traditional balancing/bandwagon decisions, the use soft power strategies do not ensure a non-military outcome. As soft balancing scholar T.V. Paul forewarns, soft balancing often lays the foundation for cooperation and collaboration which can be quickly translated into hard balancing measures if the situation changes.114 Soft balancing arguments are becoming too far removed from the central tenets of balance of power theory argued by Waltz, Morgenthau and Walt. The ideas of hedging and especially accommodation are useful strategies for short-term survival, but they do not adequately address the long-term distribution of power.115 If China continues to rise, surrounding states cannot afford to remain apathetic and history demonstrates that eventually all states must make a choice or risk their survival.


115 Other authors have even advocated adding hiding, appeasement and transcending to the list of prescribed soft balancing strategies.
The vast majority of the literature surrounding balancing behavior in the Pacific describes the current strategic landscape in the view of individual actors, but does not offer any indication for how the emerging balance of power will affect the long-term collective stability of the region. There has been extensive analysis surrounding balance of power consideration for individual dyads and these strategies may serve Australia, Vietnam, Malaysia, South Korea and others well, but what happens when all these balancing strategies began to overlap? There has been little discussion based upon the systemic insecurity caused by the fragmentation of the Pacific’s balance of power.

Case Studies: Balance of Power and the Outbreak of the First World War

Although the passage of almost one hundred years makes direct policy synchronization difficult, the geopolitical calculations prior to World War I provide useable bellwethers for managing peacetime balance in the Asia-Pacific’s regional power dynamics. The following case studies examine historical analogies for how shared balance of power issues like naval expansion, military mobilization and entangling alliances have the potential to inadvertently destabilize the entire region. The case studies show that regional balancing dynamics in the Asia-Pacific are dominated by ‘traditional’ hard power measures. Contemporary actors are employing strategies akin to European maneuvers prior to the First World War, rather than soft balancing strategies polices advocated in contemporary literature. Like Europe circa 1914, the present Asia-Pacific is also a multipolar structure, increasingly militarized, rift with historical animosity and relying upon alliances to augment internal power and maintain an effective balance against a rising China. While novel for contemporary statesman, the geopolitics and balancing calculations prior to the First World War are remarkably similar to the
current Asia-Pacific power structure. The following two case studies will demonstrate
that the entangling alliances and naval mobilization that preceded the outbreak of the
Great War are pertinent examples for how balancing linkages affect today’s growing
regional balance of power considerations.

Entangling Alliances and Conflicts at the Periphery

The first case study demonstrates how balance of power rationale and the
entangling alliances that permeated pre-1914 politics allowed for a regional Balkan
dispute to engulf the entire world. To maintain the balance of power, European states
moved from internal naval mobilization and begun to form regional alliances. Thus,
Great Britain, France and Russia where soon aligned against Germany, Austria-Hungary,
and the Ottoman Empire. The catalysts of the First World War have their roots in these
alliances that enveloped every major power on the continent. Without these linkages, the
Balkan crisis may have been limited to internal struggles and dissent within the Austro-
Hungarian Empire. However, the arms race and balance of power anxieties, which had
motivated and sustained a series of peacetime alliances, had become embedded within
European politics and power calculations. Consequently the assassination of Austrian
Archduke Franz Ferdinand ignited a series of alliance ‘dominos’, which with a single
gunshot soon pitted every European country at odds. Austro-Hungary declared war on
Serbia, the German military mobilized to honor its pact with Austria, and Russia quickly
came to defense of its Serbian allies. With Russia and Germany entering the war in

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116 Patricia Weitsman, “Dangerous Alliances Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War” (Stanford: Stanford
University Press, 2004), 138
Serbia, France was bound by treaty with Russia and England also had to mobilize as an ally of France.\textsuperscript{117}

The summer of 1914 highlights why alliances are sought in multipolar structures and how these alliances can quickly escalate situations with a phenomenon referred to as “chain gaining”. The use of alliances and the interdependence this creates, means when one state makes a rash strategic decision it will drag any alliance with it. The other members of the alliance will usually follow, lest they lose a partner and be at the mercy of other coalitions.\textsuperscript{118} This creates a collective mindset of hyperactive balancing and a self-defeating spiral. Where in an effort to ensure their safety, states will often engage in far riskier alliance behavior. Stephen Waltz’s demonstrates the dilemma this creates in multipolar structures and attempts to rationalize how the leaders in 1914 viewed the situation from a balance of power perspective:

If Austria-Hungary marched, Germany had to follow; the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would have left Germany alone in the middle of Europe. If France marched, Russia had to follow; a German victory over France would be a defeat for Russia. And so it was all around the vicious circle. Because the defeat or the defection of a major ally would have shaken the balance, each state was constrained to adjust its strategy and the use of its forces to the aims and fears of its partners.\textsuperscript{119}

Less than two months after the assassination, the entire continent was at war and soon other global powers and colonies joined the fray. The preservation of the balance of power was the overarching rationale for sustaining these peacetime agreements, but with the advent of war, these overlapping alliances were in fact the vehicles for which a localized Balkan conflict accelerated out of control. In a multipolar system with a diffusion of power, states seek allies, because any group of states can quickly gain

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid, 139
\textsuperscript{118} Thomas J. Christenson and Jack Snyder “Chain gangs and passed bucks: predicting alliance patterns in multipolarity” \textit{International Organization} Vol. 44, No. 2 (1990): 140
\textsuperscript{119} Waltz, \textit{Theory of International Politics}, 167
leverage over a single state. As demonstrated by the First World War, in this multipolar environment states have to be concerned about the stability of their allies, because “the degree to which one state views its own security is directly tied to the near-term security of a real or potential ally…”\textsuperscript{120} The inherent instability caused by a network of alliances was poorly understood by period actors and the perception of strength through alliances proved instead to be the mechanism for global mobilization and conflict.

\textit{Military Mobilization and Naval Arms Races}

In the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the British Royal Navy was the preeminent naval power in the world and maintained England’s vast empire. However, by the 1900s, Germany was equally anxious to capitalize upon a colonial network for economic expansion and Kaiser Wilhelm began a concentrated effort to construct the High Seas Fleet.\textsuperscript{121} By 1905, the Imperial German Navy was a well-organized and modern fleet with an increasing number of capital ships, support vessels and the then-revolutionary submarines. However, no military expansion occurs in a vacuum and soon anxious English policymakers viewed German naval power as a threat in both capabilities and proximity to English home waters.\textsuperscript{122} In response, England began to reassert its dominance over maritime domains and inadvertently sparked a revolution in naval war fighting with the introduction of the \textit{HMS Dreadnaught} and the subsequent \textit{Dreadnaught}-class of ‘super’ battleships. Germany responded in kind and the first decade of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century was marred by a concentrated period of massive naval mobilization, with both sides laying as many keels

\textsuperscript{121} Lisle A. Rose, \textit{Power at Sea The Age of Navalism 1890-1918}. (London: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 41
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid
as public sentiment and government budgets would allow.\textsuperscript{123} As more battleships were launched in an effort to preserve or gain naval superiority, a global arms race ensued where Britain built thirty dreadnaughts, Germany nineteen, France seven, Italy six, Russia seven and the U.S. fourteen.\textsuperscript{124} As period historian Lisle Rose aptly describes it “The coming of the dreadnaught era in 1906 ignited a blatant arms race, turning the British and German fleets into scorpions and the North Sea into the narrow bottle that contained them…”\textsuperscript{125}

Although there was little direct confrontation between England and Germany (and even family ties between the Monarchies), English policy was obsessed by rise of German naval power and the effects this had upon Europe’s balance of power. English policymakers believed that they could no longer guarantee the security of the home isles by relying solely upon the British Fleet and embarked upon a series of alliances to ensure the naval balance of power remained in their favor. In 1912, France and England agreed to concentrate their perspective naval resources and divide geographical responsibilities to counter Germany’s rising power.\textsuperscript{126} In response, Germany began to also align their naval assets with other powers and as a result the initial foundations of the Triple Entente and Triple Alliance were born.\textsuperscript{127} The naval arms race of 1890-1914 was not an isolated phenomenon, but instead an embodiment of mutual concerns about the balance of power and England and Germany’s respective place within it. The naval arms race contributed

\textsuperscript{124} William Kelleher Storey, 28
\textsuperscript{125} Lisle A. Rose, 41
\textsuperscript{126} Paul M. Kennedy \textit{The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery} (New York: Humanity Books, 1998), 228
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, 228
to the outbreak of war by promoting alliance formations and accelerated militarization plans.

**Balance of Power in the Asia-Pacific**

A review of Europe’s balance of power considerations serve as a pertinent warning for the Asia-Pacific and are a cautionary tale for contemporary strategists and calculations. The descent into war during 1914 is believed to be one of the most complicated geopolitical schemas in modern history, but there is little doubt that the Anglo-German naval race and Europe’s shifting alliances ignited a decade of simmering tensions and narrowly averted crises.\(^{128}\) The current Asia-Pacific is also an enmeshing web of bilateral security arrangements, which has become so opaque that recent scholars have coined it the ‘power web’. The current web, in an effort to maintain a balance of power in a new multipolar environment, is fabricated upon a host of simmering conflicts and geopolitical flashpoints that could ignite into a larger war. In addition, China’s rapid naval rise and the feverish regional militarization had led several analysts to note that there is “an enthusiasm for active naval development and use not entirely dissimilar to the nationalistic *Dreadnought* fever of Britain and Germany before the First World War.”\(^{129}\) By understanding how actions to maintain the European balance of power ultimately proved to be one of the most destabilizing elements, it provides a useful context from which to gauge the possible repercussions of today’s actors’ external and internal hard balancing approaches.

*Internal Balancing: Asia’s Carrier Race and Naval Mobilization*

\(^{129}\) Geoffrey Till, 243
The Dreadnaught naval race and the ensuing hostilities have significant historical linkages to the Asia-Pacific’s strategic environment. The Asia-Pacific is a maritime domain and until recently China had little if any ability to project force beyond its borders. However, China has recently undergone a massive naval expansion program. As pre-1914 British policy demonstrates, naval power is often hard to categorize or interpret by nearby actors. On the high seas, a single warship can support humanitarian mission and combat piracy or launch a first-strike missile attack or blockade a maritime chokepoint. This inability to accurately distinguish between the offensive and defensive roles of naval power is why it becomes an inherently destabilizing element in regional affairs. Britain could never be sure if Germany’s battleships were to support economic expansion or challenge British control of the seas or even attack the British Isles. In much the same light, Pacific countries observe China’s burgeoning naval capabilities and are forced to reconsider their security arrangements. Does China want an aircraft carrier to defend its maritime trade routes or assert sovereign dominance in the South China Sea? A specific answer to this question was impossible for the British admiralty and will be equally difficult for today’s policymakers.

China’s Naval Rise

The bulk of current literature addressing the Asian power dynamic focuses upon China’s rising power projection capabilities – especially at sea. However, analyzing China’s naval rise as the destabilizing element is equivalent to blaming a symptom rather than the cause. Naval power has customarily been a badge of great power status and few nations in history have been successful in maintaining robust international trade without accompanying military (especially naval) power. In modern history, there is a strong
correlation between the world’s largest economies and naval power: 15th century Spain, France in the 1700s, Queen Victoria’s England, and today’s United States. Naval strategist Norman Friedman argues that sea power is a fundamental national perquisite for a nation to protect their trade routes and national interests abroad.\textsuperscript{130}

Nevertheless, the apprehension surrounding China’s naval rise is not the result of over active imaginations and whatever China’s motivation; it is clear that their naval power is growing considerably stronger in every metric. In just the past few years, China’s People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has catapulted itself from coastal defense operations into a force capable of projection regional power, or in naval jargon a ‘blue water navy’. The rise of Chinese maritime strength is exceptional, because it not only has achieved remarkable increases in gross fleet tonnage; it has also concentrated on secondary systems necessary for sustaining global operations. Between 2000 and 2012, China’s tonnage at sea increased by 161%.\textsuperscript{131}

Although still dwarfed by the U.S. Pacific Fleet, China now commands the second largest navy and largest submarine fleet in the Pacific. This rapid growth is not due to the haphazard acquirement of Cold War relics, but represents the design and fabrication of China’s own frigates, aerial platforms, submarines and amphibious ships. As noted, China’s numerical expansion is clear and it also coincides with a dedicated effort by China to increase the equipment, expertise and training necessary to buttress its command and control networks (C4ISR), at sea replenishment, overseas bases and logistical supply lines. These advancements create the infrastructure necessary that translate naval assets into a legitimate global power. Perhaps no single acquisition

\textsuperscript{130} Norman Friedman, \textit{Sea Power as Strategy Navies and National Interests}. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 56
\textsuperscript{131} Geoffrey Till, \textit{Asia’s Naval Expansion An arms race in the making?} (London: IISS, 2012) 35
represents China’s global maritime goals best than the unveiling of its first aircraft carrier the Liaoning. The Liaoning embodies the ultimate aspirations of China’s global navy. As the modern capital ship, aircraft carriers symbolize national naval prowess and the ability to conduct sustained overseas operations.132

Regional Navalism

Just as Europe could not ignore Germany’s newfound power, China’s neighbors cannot dismiss the growing imbalance in naval power. If the North Sea was the ‘bottle’ for the great battleship fleets, the South China Sea is believed to be the probable catalyst for this century’s naval confrontations. Geostrategist Robert Kaplan believes the wars of the 21st century are likely to ignite and be decided within the narrow confines of the South China Sea. Kaplan reasons that as “China’s navy becomes stronger and as China’s claim on the South China Sea contradicts those of other littoral states, these states will be forced to further develop their capabilities.”133 Kaplan’s fear is supported by the swelling defense budgets and bilateral security agreements that have permeated the Asia-Pacific. A study examining Asian defense spending since 2000 concludes the overall defense budgets of China, India, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have doubled since 2000 and this report did not account for the growing power of Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.134 To put in greater context: in 2012, regional military spending in Asia neared almost 300 million dollars and 47 percent of all global weapon imports were destined for Asian

132 Andrew Erickson, Abraham M. Denmark and Gabriel Collins, “Beijing’s “Starter Carrier” and Future Steps Alternatives and Implications” Naval War College Review 65, no. 1 (2012): 40
133 Robert Kaplan, “The South China Sea is the Future of Conflict”, Foreign Policy, no. 188 (2011): 7
markets.\textsuperscript{135} This drastic reinforcement of Asian militaries is an archetypal example of internal balancing in the face of rising threats. For example, China is not the only nation to have recently launched an aircraft carrier. In the fall of 2012, India and Japan both launched an aircraft carrier within a week of each other. The Indian carrier, \textit{Vikrant}, represents the first carrier designed and produced in India and it has been heralded as a source of Indian national pride for joining the elite club of carrier-equipped nations.\textsuperscript{136} Japan is constitutional self-prohibited from producing offensive military forces, but the ‘helicopter-destroyer’ \textit{Izumo} looks suspiciously like a scale-model of a conventional flattop carrier. Japan insists the carrier is for self-defense submarine patrols, but the \textit{Izumo} is the largest warship that Japan has produced since World War Two and is suspected of being a test-run for Japan’s massive commercial shipyards.\textsuperscript{137} Each carrier symbolizes a nation’s ability to project global power and has become the de-facto measurement of naval power. While all the Asian carriers are still far from being fully operational, the aircraft carrier race is remarkable similar to the \textit{Dreadnaught} fever that gripped Europe.

The present naval expansion in the Asia-Pacific has the potential to spark into a full-blown arms race resembling the earlier battleship rivalry that engrossed Europe. While present building levels have not reached the singular focus that the \textit{Dreadnaughts} required, the aforementioned spending levels in the Pacific clearly indicate that countries are investing heavily in their military resources. In some instances, the battleship races


\textsuperscript{137}Ibid
were actually less dangerous because as naval historian Geoffrey Till outlines; battleships were designed to only engage other battleships, but present naval modernization means corresponding increases in “high intensity capabilities”, such as ballistic-missile defense, nuclear deterrence systems, sophisticated submarines, long range missile capabilities and ‘electromagnetic dominance and informationisation’”. 138 In particular, India, Japan, China and the U.S. are assessing their respective naval power and the future balance of power appears focused upon naval forces.

Although recent naval modernization and redeployments should not be confused with a full-scale arms race or a prelude to the Third World War, there is no denying the obvious historical parallels between the naval environment prior to the First World War and the present Asia-Pacific sphere. Each period focuses upon naval power as the primary instrument in balance of power consideration and both eras are categorized by massive increases in military expenditures. The burgeoning Asian armadas only increase each states perceptions of insecurity, decrease the probability of cooperation and increase the ability of governments to buttress inflammatory rhetoric with military power.

External Balancing: The Asian Power Web

The rise of intra-Asian alliance as a means to control the balance of power is comparable to the strategic behavior and decisions of actors in pre-1914 Europe. The Asia-Pacific balance of power cannot be maintained by soft-balancing measures alone and the billowing defense budgets, Navalism, and increasing defense cooperation of secondary states are more indicative of the balancing proposed by Waltz, Morgenthau and Walt, then of the recent strategies suggested by soft balancing literature. These

hard-balancing measures must be recognized for what they are and not dismissed as archaic vestiges of statecraft or coached in the guise of soft balancing. The alliances of Europe maintained a semblance of stability from 1871 to 1914, but also allowed a single assassination to galvanize a sequence of alliances ‘dominos’ that could not be stopped. The strategic landscape in the Pacific is equally dangerous and it is very plausible that a dispute over the Senkaku Island or any number of territorial tinderboxes in the South China Sea could also ignite a global confrontation. The use of alliances is viewed as a solution to balance a rising China, but if done haphazardly as in World War I, it risks escalating smaller disputes on the periphery into larger regional conflicts.

A recent study by the Center for a New American Security referred to this as an Asian “power web.” The study examined the bilateral agreements currently in place between Australia, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam and documented a marked increase in the number of defense-based diplomatic meetings, military exchanges, joint training exercises, arms sales and technology transfers. Although this increase in ‘defense diplomacy’ has not reached the point of collective security or formal defense pacts, these latest patterns of behavior are symptomatic of a region increasing fearful of China’s expanding power and worried about the U.S.’s commitment to the region. As previously mentioned, these arrangements may appear as soft balancing, but in fact lay the foundation for alliance behavior that could be quickly translated into traditional alliances comparable to those of the First World War.

139 Patrick Cronin M, Richard Fontaine, Zachary M. Hosford, Oriana Skylar Mastro, Ely Ratner and Alexander Sullivan, 27
140 Ibid, 18-27
141 See Literature Review, Balance of Power in the Pacific Section, T.V. Paul
What makes the new ‘web’ of alliances all the more unsettling is that there is no overarching collective security arrangement or means of control to prevent another chain-gaining episode. During the Cold War, the U.S. purposely forgoes a collective security arrangement in the Pacific and instead constructs a Bismarkian ‘hub and spoke’ system of bilateral treaty alliances. Presently, the U.S. has bilateral defense arrangements with Japan, Thailand, Philippines, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and vague obligation for ‘mutual deterrence’ with Taiwan. The lack of an Asian NATO was not an oversight and the U.S. deliberately chose to maintain a bilateral system rather than a collective security arrangement. The resulting bilateral alliances were asymmetrical in nature with the U.S. guaranteeing the security of its allies under the umbrella of American extended nuclear deterrence. The resulting unequal distribution of power and reliance upon U.S. deterrence, allowed for a great deal of control over Asian alliances. This control was seen as necessary to prevent an Asian conflict from escalating into a larger nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. In fact, the U.S. concerns about being entrapped in a chain-gang alliance against the Soviets were so high, policy directives towards Asia during the Cold War placed equal emphasis on avoiding alliance ‘entrapment’ as it did communist containment.

While the U.S. still maintains Cold War-era bilateral alliances, they now coexist amongst burgeoning inter-Asian alliances. The existence of two competing alliance systems creates a situation that risks entangling the U.S. into smaller regional disputes.

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144 Cha, 161
145 Ibid, 164
and instantly elevates any Asian confrontation into a Sino-U.S. power struggle. In addition, the U.S. is losing the ‘control’ of alliances it enjoyed during the Cold War with an increasingly militaristic and bellicose Japanese government, a drawdown of U.S. personnel in South Korea and an Indian government suspicious of any formal defense pacts and unsure of its role in Asia-Pacific security.\footnote{K. Alan Kronstadt and Sonia Pinto, \textit{India-U.S. Security Relations: Current Engagement}, (Washington D.C., Congressional Research Service, 2012), 2}

The Asia-Pacific is in many ways a more complicated strategic environment than the European theater. The Asia-Pacific has been relatively stable and this is due in large part to the preponderance of U.S. military power in the region.\footnote{Evelyn Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies” \textit{International Security} Vol. 32, No.3 (2007): 113} The presence of forward deployed American assets and formal treaty obligations has underwritten the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific since the end of World War II. This created a unique environment that provided regional secondary actors, with the expectation of continued American deterrence in the region much more latitude and subtlety in their power calculations.\footnote{Ibid, 133} However, with the unremitting rise of China’s navy and a U.S. policy that has been preoccupied with counterterrorism and is faced with declining defense budgets; many regional actors have begun to forge local security arrangements similar to traditional external hard balancing. This has created a multi-level alliance structure with great power politics between the U.S. and China on the surface and smaller bilateral agreements between non-aligned countries in the margins.

Since 1945, international statecraft has had little practice with great power politics and classic balance of power calculations. The Cold War was a bipolar contest and since the Soviet Union’s collapse, the U.S. had been at the helm of a unipolar global order.
Consequently, in recent history, many of the traditional elements of statecraft such as deterrence, balance of power, military alliances and major wars were dismissed in favor of new collaborative mantras like globalization and the capitalist peace theory. Although the U.S. will remain the world’s superpower for the foreseeable future, this does not preclude the possibility of regional multipolar contests as witnessed in the Asia-Pacific sphere. As Robert Ross points out, the strategic limitation of distance and time can degrade even a superpower’s influence and “a balance of power system can develop within various regions because at great distances a superpower may simply be one among other regional powers contending for security and resources.”¹⁴⁹ Consequently, policymakers, at home and abroad, should not presume that even though the U.S. still reigns as the world’s superpower this will prevent localized balance of power contests from emerging. Ross highlights, history proves that a superpower and a regional balance of power can exist simultaneously within the larger systemic scheme.¹⁵⁰

**Conclusion**

The rise of China and the implications of a multipolar Asia-Pacific have created renewed interest in the balance of power studies and real-world applicability. The international structure is approaching a watershed moment – moving away from absolute American unipolarity to more regional multipolar environments. The prospect of renewed multipolar contests and the strategic balance of power calculations exhibited by actors throughout the Asia-Pacific align with traditional hard balancing tenets. The dramatic increase in Asian naval capabilities and the increasing linkages of Asian intra-

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¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 168
state alliances are two of the most historically prevalent hard power balancing premonitions of Walt, Waltz and Morgenthau. This does not mean that the U.S. will cede its superpower position, but acknowledges that the U.S. may not be capable or seek to singlehandedly sustain the world’s present economic and political systems. Instead of viewing the recent American hegemony as an indefinite reality, it should be rationalized instead as a unique period where several intersecting trends allowed for such a preponderance of U.S. power. The emerging multipolar structure in the Asia-Pacific should be viewed as a return to a more realistic distribution of international power.

Careful study of the genoses of the First World War reveals how states can become quickly trapped in the structural underpinnings that accompany multipolar diplomacy. The Asia-Pacific is an equally dangerous environment where short-term security solutions may only increase long-term structural instability. Independent rivalries, historical mistrust and rising power all threaten to create an overtly militaristic and unstable system. In order to prevent a small spark, like the Senkaku Islands, from creating regional strife that may drag unwitting regional powers in, policymakers should focus on not unintentionally replicating the cascading system of European alliances. Max Hasting’s examination of the various diplomatic and cultural manifestations that preceded 1914 suggests that in an age of rapid technological and social transformation the diplomats of Europe “found it difficult to adjust their thinking and conduct to the new age into which they were so abruptly thrust, to the acceleration of communication which transformed human affairs, and to an increase of military destructive power which few understood.” 151  Hasting notes that many Europeans were not surprised by the onset of hostilities, but had completely underestimated the size, scope and lethality of the various

151 Hastings, 3
alliances and militarization efforts. With a return to a multipolar structure that few statesmen have experience with, today’s policymakers are in a very similar circumstance. This is why a study of past multipolar conflicts and the circumstances that ignited and spread hostiles will be a vital guide for future statecraft and a valuable tool to maintain peace and security.

This chapter was not designed to be an all-encompassing geopolitical examination of the Asia-Pacific, but rather a warning of the underlying challenges posed by multipolar structures and the balance of power gamesmanship it entails. Several of the systemic causes of the First World War serve as a cautionary tale about the dangers of attempting to maintain a stable balance of power arrangement via hard balancing methodologies. The hazards demonstrated by the case studies are not meant to suggest hard balancing should not be utilized, but stress the importance of understanding the regional repercussions for misestimating a dynamic power environment. The U.S. has already begun contributing to hard balancing strategies with a concentrated and publicized ‘pivot’ to rebalance China in the Pacific. In response to the growth of the PLAN, the U.S. is deploying significant hard assets back to the Pacific in an effort to reaffirm U.S. power in the Pacific balance of power. An emerging China power must be met with countervailing military power and the U.S. has identified a number of defense deployments that will increase America’s total forward deployed from 50 to 60 percent of aggregate military capabilities. The pivot’s internal balancing measures are augmented by external balancing in the form of strengthened formal alliances with Japan, Australia, Philippines and Singapore. U.S. strategists have little practice with the perils and pitfalls of

multipolar calculations and must be mindful of how American actions could affect regional alignments and power considerations.

Hard power balancing strategies are reemerging across the Pacific and a return to multipolar environments will be inherently more complex and potentially dangerous, but it is not an automatic sentence of war. The actors of the Asia-Pacific have the advantage of balance of power research and historic examples that were not available to the leaders of Europe a century ago. Their mistakes are valuable lessons while entering a renewed period of balance of power gamesmanship. The long historical legacy of balance of power instability aptly displays why policymakers must understand the level of structural risk in a multipolar Asia-Pacific. This necessitates that today’s leaders accurately interpret both external and internal balance of power maneuvers or again succumb to the tragedy of great power politics so aptly demonstrated by the outbreak of the First World War.
Chapter IV

ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE
The Limits of Commercial Peace in Great Power Balancing Strategies
Introduction

The current strategic dialogue in the Asia-Pacific is dominated by the rise of China and the growing apprehension surrounding how China’s expanding power will reverberate throughout the region. A multitude of questions remain about how China will wield its growing regional clout and military capabilities. There is a vocal Chinese and international chorus claiming China is committed to a “peaceful rise”.\(^{153}\) However, is there such a thing as a peaceful rise in global power rankings? History forewarns that one of the most dangerous periods in international relations is the occurrence of an emerging power and the destabilizing effects this has upon the status quo.\(^{154}\) Historically, these episodes have drawn the emerging power and established power into direct military confrontation. China’s peaceful rise principle argues that it seeks to grow, not through power competitions and conflict, but rather modernize via the established economic system. Therefore, since China benefits tremendously from the present status quo, it does not seek to challenge the United States role as guarantor of the present economic system.

In response to China’s rise, the U.S. is pursuing a mixed strategy that utilizes both economic engagement and military balancing. Yet, in an alarming fashion, there is a lack of scholarship examining how a shared economic entente would actually facilitate a peaceful Sino-U.S. relationship. The goal of this chapter is to evaluate the prospects of a stable Sino-U.S. dyad built upon the premise of economic interdependence. Will this


\(^{154}\) Since 1609 there have been eight agreed great power shifts and each of these episodes coincides with a marked increase in warfare within 25 years before and after great power ascent. See Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983): 88-91
economic interdependence facilitate the first episode in which the established power was willing and able to accommodate its rising peer? Or will the rise of China inevitably repeat the violence and instability that has often shadowed the emergence of a new great power? This chapter argues that the economic system created and defended by U.S. power has created an untenable strategic paradox for itself and regional allies. Instead of bolstering American power, the U.S. underwrites an economic system that is simultaneously fueling the aggregate power of its most potent long-term rival. Consequently, the deeper the Sino-U.S. economic interdependence becomes, the greater China’s ability to challenge the U.S. position of regional power.

As China’s power trajectory rises and the U.S. faces a possible relative decline, even the most complex and deeply rooted system of economic interdependence will not usurp larger geopolitical calculations and security concerns between the U.S. and China. Placing undue faith in the strengths of economic interdependence and continuing to foster China’s peaceful rise endangers the stability of the Asia-Pacific by pursuing strategies that intensify future balance of power gamesmanship rather than focusing upon maintaining the current status quo. Therefore, economic interdependence should not be considered a remedy to the structural challenges posed by a rising power against the stability of status quo.

This chapter’s analysis of economic interdependence is not designed as an overarching critic of the liberal theory or intended to debate the merits of economic interdependence amongst allies or nonthreatening states. States often and logically seek to maximize economic growth, comparative advantage and join trade unions, as long as these linkages do not adversely affect a state’s relative power. This was not an issue
during America’s last power contests with the Soviet Union, because alliance blocs were divided along clearly distinct political and economic models – democracy and capitalism vs. communism. Accordingly, U.S. efforts to bolster and link the economies of its allies had little spillover into the Soviet Bloc’s coffers and neither side relied upon one another for capital, trade or markets. In contrast, within the Asia-Pacific, the present economic interdependence has created vast amounts of wealth, but there is little control how the wealth is distributed amongst America’s allies and rivals in a globalized marketplace. Upsetting commercial growth may not appear logical when viewed through the lens of economics, but it is conceivable when remembering that a state’s overriding preoccupation is security - not profits - in an anarchic system.

The current economic interdependence argument will be juxtaposed against a very similar economic and political environment that occurred in pre-1914 Europe to support the hypothesis. In this example, the economies of Europe were as comparatively interwoven, profitable and dynamic as today. However, the status quo and reigning power, Great Britain, could not ignore the negative geopolitical implications of rising German power. Even as economic relationships deepened, so too did the military alliances and mobilizations that preceded the 1914 Crises. This chapter will demonstrate that the U.S. has to balance economic linkages and America’s national standing against the larger geopolitical challenges posed by China’s rise. The chapter’s literature review will present a brief overview of the main strands of economic interdependence literature. Finally, the chapter concludes with several policy recommendations for separating

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economic interdependence from future U.S. strategy in the Asia-Pacific concerning the rise of China.

**Historiography of Economic Interdependence**

The role of economic interdependence in power politics is not a novel concept. Various economic peace theories have been swirling since the Peace of Westphalia, so the lack of available literature is not an obstacle. The issue is that economic interdependence has not been sufficiently vetted as an instrument to suppress the structural tensions that shadow a rising power. Mainstream scholarship addressing rising powers, balance of power, and war, usually do not include a thorough review of economic linkages and vice versa. The role of interdependence as a tool of strategic statecraft and national policy necessitates a fundamental understanding of the economic peace theories before exploring the role interdependence will supposedly play towards preventing war in the most important dyad of the 21st century.

A tour of the various strands of economic peace theory demonstrates that there remains a strong undercurrent of Kantian idealism, rather than a verifiable record of success. A comprehensive review of economic interdependence highlights that the present scholarship is unable to explain the negative outcomes when commercial linkages do not work, or in other words, when economically interdependent states do go to war. This chapter is not focusing upon critiquing economic interdependence theories or the larger liberal school in their totality, but appraises the theoretical basis for possibly using economic interdependence as a linchpin of national strategy to address the rise of China.
and maintain stability in the Asia-Pacific. To discuss economic interdependence amongst like-minded or neutral states is much different than discussing the role of economic interdependence between the standing power and its rising peer competitor. Presumptions garnered in the first instance may not directly translate into a viable strategy in the second environment. The harsh reality is that states do not and cannot place economic gains above larger geopolitical considerations and security matters.

*Early Economic Peace Theories - Economic Deterrence*

The premise of early economic interdependence theory is simple: economic interdependence creates shared linkages, which deters conflict that would disrupt mutual commercial gains. The more costly war becomes, the less likely war becomes. This premise originated with Enlightenment-era theorist like Montesquieu and Adam Smith. Both authors recognized a correlation between the influences that free markets had in influencing national interests away from the need for military expansion. Immanuel Kant also wrote that markets were one of the key ingredients to his idea of ‘perpetual peace’. Kant’s perpetual peace consisted of other necessary pillars like republicanism and international organizations, but common markets and economic freedom were a means to replace the spoils of war with market gains. The rationale of the early philosophers equating the opportunity costs of disrupting trade aligns with a classic deterrence

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157 There is an accompanying strand of liberal theory, neoliberalism, which believes cooperation is possible between rational unitary actors because each act of reciprocity can foster greater levels of cooperation. However, reciprocity is not a failsafe against increasing hostility and even the most acrimonious relationships have demonstrated reciprocal acts, such as releasing hostages or lifting blockades. Reciprocity does not always reflect the true nature of the larger geopolitical relationship.


159 Erik Gartzke, Quan Li and Charles Boehmer “Investing in the Peace: Economic Interdependence and International Conflict” *International Organizations* Vol. 55, No. 2 (Spring 2001): 393
rationale. The early theorists presume that no state would intentionally upset the free market if the resulting conflict would only have negative reverberations throughout their own economy. Therefore, the greater the economic interdependence between states, the greater the economic deterrent to militarized conflict.

If Kant, Montesquieu and Smith laid the intellectual foundation, Norman Angell’s *The Great Illusion* is the analytical framework from which much of later interdependence theory would build upon. Angell’s work is predicated upon the belief that war and economic profit could no longer be viewed as mutually exclusive endeavors. Angell was not naïve about the propensity for conflict in history, but reasoned in the modern era, the spoils of war cannot be gained through territorial conquest because “financial and industrial security of the victor is dependent upon financial and industrial security in all considerable civilized countries.” Angell’s thesis was the first to directly link how capitalism, trade and economic interdependence contributed to interstate peace. If modern state economies and production cannot be subjugated via force, Angell reasoned that modernity encourages profit rather than conquered plunder. Due to economic integration, any damage inflicted upon one state will have inevitable and uncontrollable repercussions upon the entire system, including the aggressor. Angell did not judge war as obsolete; rather it had become too costly for ‘civilized’ states to pursue.

The inability of early economic peace theory to rationalize the outbreak of the First World War marked the beginning of a long hiatus of economic interdependence from mainstream international relations theory. The scholarship examining the linkages

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162 Ibid
between economic interdependence and peace was reinvigorated with the fall of the Soviet Union and the ‘victory’ of the capitalist system. The success of liberal economies over communism and a return to a globalized economy resuscitated the current debate about the pacifying nature of economic integration and capitalism.\footnote{Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 44} Richard Rosecrance is one of the few authors who preserved the interdependence argument during the Cold War. Rosecrance, like Angell, believes that economic interdependence deters military campaigns by inflicting too high a cost on either side. However, Rosecrance cautions “habits of interdependence would not restrain antagonisms if trade were suddenly blocked between erstwhile commercial partners.”\footnote{Richard Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 212} The author’s warnings about the sustainability of an economically peace is based upon the premise that interdependence does work; but, it does so because modern states must ensure that the international free market remains open and there is sufficient military-political power to support the system.\footnote{Ibid, 228} Rosecrance’s work began to establish links between the economic realm and larger geopolitical calculations. However, the author’s basic premise that interdependence works because war becomes too costly is very similar to Angell’s basic commerce-as-deterrence thesis.

Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye provide the most straightforward and referenced definition of interdependence. Keohane and Nye attempt to reconcile traditional realist Cold War concepts with the realities of an increasingly interconnected global economy. As a result, the authors introduce *complex interdependence* to explain a world where territorial states now share influence with corporations, intergovernmental
organizations and transnational movements. They believe that interdependence alone is an insufficient definition because it can be oversimplified into mutual dependence and this provides very little ability to decipher the political and economic processes in a complex environment. Keohane and Nye believe that there are three defining characteristics of complex interdependence: multiple channels of informal and formal linkages that combine interstate and transnational relations; issues between states are non-hierarchal and no single agenda dominates; and military force is not used to settle disputes if the previous two conditions are present. Keohane and Nye elevated the idea of interdependence into the larger sphere of international politics. Their argument is not limited to the economic realm, but reflected a growing recognition that the early deterrence model of Angell or even Rosecrance may not be sufficient to explain exactly how economic peace works.

*Modern Economic Interdependence Theory and Strategic Interaction*

The viewpoint of modern economic interdependence literature reflects the current economic system. The communications revolution, e-commerce, growth of transnational industries and power of subnational movements have led to a reexamination of the customary explanations for how the interdependence-peace phenomenon works. In fact, the introspection in modern literature has progressed to the point where it no longer considers high trade-levels by themselves a reliable deterrent of militarized conflict.

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167 Ibid, 10

168 Ibid, 24-25

169 See Gartzke (2001), Mark J. Gasiorowskis (1986) work on capital flows increasing conflict versus trade and Mary Ann Tetreault’s (1980) work on the quantitative difference between interdependence and interconnectedness in n-conflict studies.
This is a marked departure from the teleological argument of the classic capitalist peace camp that believes the final outcome of interdependence is invariably peace. As Erik Gartzke, a noted capitalist peace scholar, quips, the classical theorists may have been more lucky than right. Previous authors correctly identified the phenomenon between economic linkages and peace, but were mistaken in their prognosis for how interdependence reduces conflict. The current evolution of interdependence theory is less focused upon the deterrent capitalist-peace model and seeks to establish an empirical relationship between economic interdependence and lack of military conflict.

A common suggestion is that the key to economic interdependence is understating how trade can be used as an effective signaling tool to reduce interstate conflict. Erik Gartzke, Quan Li and Charles Boehmer’s research suggests, “instead of deterring conflict, interdependence can convey credible signals, obviating the need for costly military contests.” Signaling via trade offers that trade alone is not an innately pacifying concept, but instead an effective way for states to demonstrate their resolve and bargaining power to avoid military escalation. Gartzke and Li believe today’s globalized economy is well suited to use market signaling as a means for states to replace the battlefield with the marketplace. First, global markets allow states to buttress the subjective and often misconstrued rhetoric of political leaders with quantifiable costs. Second, open market signaling, like a stock index, allows leaders to gauge how domestic interests would weigh economic loss with possible political choices.

\[171\] Erik Gartzke, Quan Li and Charles Boehmer, 401
\[172\] Ibid
\[173\] Erik Gartzke and Quan Li, 569
\[174\] Ibid
intentions through capital markets is nonviolent. It may have economic repercussions, but upsetting markets prevents escalating conflicts into a military struggle by avoiding challenges to the military balance.\textsuperscript{175}

Another strand of modern literature questions whether economic interdependence genuinely reduces interstate conflict, or does interdependence simply replace military conflict with another, albeit, less violent form?\textsuperscript{176} James D. Morrow agrees with the other authors that market signaling conveys economic costs and enhances possible bargaining positions.\textsuperscript{177} Morrow also acknowledges that trade signaling may appear similar to the previous deterrence-based explanations from what he calls the ‘traditional camp’. However, Morrow highlights that signaling is different because it is used during an on-going dispute, whereas the deterrence model was seen as a means of avoiding conflict all together.\textsuperscript{178} The signaling hypothesis is difficult to fully vet because of the sheer number of variables present in a conflict. Nonetheless, the role market signaling could play in economic interdependence demonstrate the different direction a new generation of scholars is leading the field. The signaling hypothesis also shows that economic interdependence may not be a reflexive outcome, but a dynamic modus for states to navigate the global landscape and resolve strategic disputes.

The other branch of modern literature is focused upon identifying the specific causal effects explaining why economic interdependence theory works. As stated, the modern literature no longer accepts the rationale that trade alone creates the necessary

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid
\textsuperscript{176} Gartzke, Erik, and Dong-Joon Jo. \textit{Tipping the Scale: Signaling and the Democratic Peace}. Unpublished manuscript, Pennsylvania State University, 2000
\textsuperscript{177} James D. Morrow. \textit{Assessing the Role of Trade as Source of Costly Signals in Economic Interdependence and International Conflict New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate} edited by Edward D. Mansfield and Brian M. Pollins, 89-95 (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), 89
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid, 90
linkages for states to avert war. Staunch commercial peace supporters John Oneal and Bruce Russett conceded that there must be other contributing elements that affect the viability of interdependence theory. Their recent work highlights that commerce reduces that risk of conflict, when accounting for other factors like geographical proximity, comparative GDPs, population differences, presence of democracy, common alliances, shared membership in intergovernmental organizations, common strategic rivals, signed trade agreements, etc.\textsuperscript{179} However, the authors still maintain that by increasing economic interdependence it has a proven statistical effect upon reducing the outbreak of militarized conflict and states “increasing economic interdependence from the 10\textsuperscript{th} to 90\textsuperscript{th} percentile reduces the risk of a fatal dispute by 32 percent.”\textsuperscript{180} Dale Copeland argues a similar vein, but stresses that economic interdependence will only work if states expect trade levels to increase in the future. The author writes that the correlation between trade and conflict is a much more dynamic relationship and warns that the classic interpretation that “the benefits of trade and the costs of severed trade on their own say nothing about this expected value.”\textsuperscript{181} Copeland’s theory of trade expectations holds that when deciding between trading or invading, states will not be dissuaded by the prospect of only upsetting current levels of trade dependence.\textsuperscript{182}


\textsuperscript{180} The estimated coefficients are based upon a study of changes in bilateral trade and militarized conflict from 1885 to 1992. See John R. Oneal, Bruce Russett and Michael L. Berbaum “Causes of Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations 1885-1992” \textit{International Studies Quarterly} Vol. 47 (2003): 388 Shared memberships in intergovernmental organizations reduce the risk of fatal disputes by 43 percent. Democracy, interdependence, shared membership the reduction is 95 percent.


\textsuperscript{182} Ibid
Critiques and Counterarguments of the Economic Interdependence

The attempts to forward economic interdependence arguments are based upon a particular interpretation of the international system. Critics of economic interdependence target these presumptions as a fundamental misconception of the reality of the archaic environment. Interdependent proponents believe economics can mitigate forces in the anarchic structure; whereas detractors believe that it is impossible to do so or even go further and argue that economic linkages create dangerous dependencies. As Hans Morgenthau notes in *Politics Among Nations*, Angell’s interdependence thesis is based upon a rational and peaceful environment, but “War carries with it an element of irrationality and chaos, which is alien to the very spirit of capitalism.”183 These counterarguments focus upon the greater balance of power-geopolitical calculations in an anarchic environment. Can interdependence overcome the myriad of political, ideological, political, rivalries and perceived dangers that have often spurred states to war innumerable times throughout history? This is the basic question that the previous survey or economic interdependence could not answer, but this question is central to the validity of the interdependence claim in modern strategy and will factor prominently in the upcoming case study and analysis.

Interdependence critic Kenneth Waltz maintains that in an anarchic-self-help-system the cooperation of states required for economic integration to work is impossible. Waltz reasons that if one state becomes economically dependent or even interdependent with another state, the original state has to worry about securing its needed resources. Therefore, the author believes that the “high interdependence of states means that the

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183 Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 52
state in question experience, or are subject to, the common vulnerability that high-interdependence entails.” 184 Waltz concludes that a state will not expose itself to an obvious vulnerability and will always work to minimize their exposure to interdependent relationships. 185 The argued incompatibility between interdependence and geopolitics is that the current structure encourages little cooperation between states, especially when issues of national security and relative power are in play. Waltz’s fellow detractor John Mearsheimer also challenges the possibility of interdependence coexisting within an archaic structure. Mearsheimer shares Waltz’s premise about the limits of cooperation in the international system, but goes even further and questions why interdependence would motivate states to enter into such a pact? The author believes that the fatal flaw in interdependence logic is that ‘optimists’ erroneously believe that the primary motivation of states is prosperity. 186 Mearsheimer concurs with Waltz that in a self-help system, states will always maximize political-based strategies, which value security more than economic opportunities. 187 Mearsheimer contends that in this environment, states will actually avoid economic interdependency. The author compares interdependence logic to Cold War nuclear deterrence arguments; if states were entrapped in a system where they fear economic fallout, why wouldn’t they attempt to bolster their position by ensuring economic self-sufficiency? 188

Waltz and Mearsheimer examine the weaknesses of interdependence from a macro-level systemic viewpoint, but R. Harrison Wagner examines specific

184 Kenneth N. Waltz Theory of International Politics, 107
185 Ibid
187 Ibid
188 Ibid, 223
vulnerabilities of economic linkages within interstate relations. Wagner’s work focuses upon the correlation between interdependence and a state’s bargaining power during conflicts. The author’s work disputes the signaling utility of interdependence and the ability for trade to mitigate disputes. Wagner supposes that no state will enter into an agreement without seeking an advantage and overcoming the hurdle of ‘asymmetrical’ interdependence is impossible.\textsuperscript{189} Therefore, in any economic relationship there exists the potential for the more powerful, or less dependent states to seek concession from the other state and “there may be no feasible exchange of economic benefits for political concessions that is mutual beneficial.”\textsuperscript{190} Wagner supposes that previous arguments did not address the relative power position of states in economic agreements and automatically assumed symmetrical intrastate relationships. Wagner, Waltz and Mearsheimer’s rebuttals all forward that interdependence theory is unsuited for the realities of statecraft. No one argued that states do not seek revenue and strong economics, but collectively balked at the idea that states would ignore larger geopolitical realities for the sake of commerce.

The realist counterargument highlights the overriding flaw in the interdependent argument: a lack of collaborative historical proof. There is little historical precedence that economic engagement provides a tactic to avoid military strife. The works cited in the literature review are too dependent upon large-scale statistical surveys of war and economic ties. These models presuppose that the lack of any conflict is proof of a positive correlation between interdependence and peace. However, these connections have to be scrutinized when faced with an environment portrayed by the historical strife


\textsuperscript{190} Ibid
that permeates the international system and especially great power rivalries. This arena is framed by uncertainty, competitions and misinterpretations. The following section will examine the conditions under which high levels of economic interdependence could not mitigate the effects of geopolitical power rivalries.

**Historical Case Study: Economic Interdependence and the First World War**

The environment of Europe in 1913, presents a strategic conundrum comparable to the challenges of today. Even though time, region and actors differ between the two episodes, the interdependent arguments and strategic rationale are so similar as to warrant further comparison between historical parallels and current strategic interactions. The global economic structure of 1913 was a globalized network with economic revolutions in international finance, transport and communications. The WWI episode is also an analogy driven by necessity. The current Asia-Pacific and the rise of China are indicators of an emerging multipolar environment. Although a historically common distribution of power, the U.S. has not confronted a legitimate multipolar environment for several generations. Thus, it is necessary to travel back to pre-WWI eras to find an appropriate background with similar geopolitical jockeying and economic interdependence to contrast with the modern Sino-U.S. discourse.

This historical analysis will identify two overriding geopolitical concerns that overrode Europe’s economic linkages prior to the WWI. First, European states openly acknowledged the benefits of interstate trade, but their strategies were preoccupied with the rise of German military power and the instability this created in the European balance of power. Second, the role of conflicts among smaller states at the periphery of Europe and the interlocking challenges this posed to even the economically intertwined great
European powers. The case study demonstrates that the strategic maneuvering between Britain and German naval power and alliances in Eastern Europe challenges the claims of interdependence literature. Britain and Germany, like the U.S. and China, were considered the pivotal power in European balance of power calculations and were the linchpins upon which further balancing alliances were constructed. The pervasiveness of strategic maneuvering among highly interdependent European powers has direct comparisons with developing tensions in the Sino-U.S. discourse. If these same considerations plagued the Anglo-German relationship with disastrous outcomes, it is then necessary to use this historical analysis to reexamine the stated role economic interdependence should play in coming strategic decisions.

World War I – The Chink in Economic Interdependence Literature

Historian John Keegan refers to the era preceding WWI as European harmony because “Europe in the summer of 1914 enjoyed a peaceful productivity so dependent on international exchange and co-operation that a belief the impossibility of general war seemed the most conventional wisdom.”191 Keegan’s portrayal of Europe’s economic growth was not short-lived phenomenon, but a largely peaceful and enormously profitable trajectory that had been developing since 1815.192 The Concert of Europe, which had replaced centuries of warfare with commerce, was said to be based largely upon international free trade and banking.193 Even the principal antagonists of the period, the United Kingdom and Imperial Germany, were not immune from the riches of this global economy. In fact, this economic dyad was one of the largest and most profitable

in the world. The Anglo-German relationship was originally based upon England’s industrial goods and Germany’s agrarian products, but by 1900 they were the competing industrial and financial centers of Europe. Nonetheless, this relationship produced enormous quantities of wealth and the most profitable year was 1913.\textsuperscript{194} In that year, both were each other’s favorite customers; Germany was the top market for British exports and Germany imported more than 20 percent of all goods from British factories and its nascent industrialization was financed by London banking houses.\textsuperscript{195} European states soon became dependent upon trade to fill state coffers and as 1914 approached, trade (measured as a percentage of gross national product) stood at a record 52 percent for Britain and 38 percent for Germany.\textsuperscript{196} State fortunes (literally) depended upon their trading partners and strong domestic interests soon emerged to lobby their governments to maintain these constructive relationships.\textsuperscript{197} It is perfectly understandable to see how the pre-WWI era makes a compelling case for the arguments presented in the literature review. Yet, the outbreak of WWI remains the unresolved ‘kink’ in the power of interdependent economies argument. Consequently, there has been no satisfactory rationalization to explain how such high levels of the trade were disregarded in favor of war. Clearly, in 1914, trade had still not made war too ‘costly’.

What the states of Europe, especially Britain and Germany, valued above all else was to maintain their respective power in the international system. A brief overview of either side’s national policies show that they acknowledged the benefits of trade, but were

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{194} Paul Kennedy. \textit{The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914} (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 292
\item \textsuperscript{195} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{196} Paul A. Papayoanou. “Economic Interdependence and the Balance of Power” \textit{International Studies Quarterly} Vol. 41 (1997): 54. In this instance trade is measured as both exports and imports. For comparison France’s trade-to-GDP ratio was even higher at 54 percent.
\item \textsuperscript{197} Paul Kennedy. \textit{The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914}, 302
\end{itemize}
overwhelming focused upon their rival’s relative power. As the economic and naval status quo power in Europe, the British cabinet was acutely sensitive to any gains in German power. Yes, English factories profited from German trade flows, but the larger political rationale was never able to reconcile economic gains at the cost of financing Germany’s naval buildup. For an island nation, the rise of Germany’s naval power was than perceived as an existential threat. This was not an imagined slight, but represented an official German effort, the Second Naval Laws, which sought to rival British naval power in European waters. The British Admiralty were convinced as early as 1904 that Germany was a legitimate naval rival and in the same year created the new home-based North Seas Fleet to increase British naval power in European waters. Thus, with the pressure to England’s crucial naval supremacy and the balance tipping towards Germany, British leadership was fixated upon not losing the Anglo-German Dreadnaught race and yielding naval supremacy to Germany. The result was Britain’s multidimensional “straddle” policy. Britain struggled to balance against Germany by maintaining naval superiority and establishing loose alliances with France and Russia; all the while trying to preserve an economic truce with Germany by refusing to commit military resources on the continent. This is referred to as a straddle policy, because it attempted to overlap geopolitical realities and a strong domestic constraint advocating for economic growth. Paul Papayoanou identifies these domestic restraints as “strong supporters of

198 The strategic rationale for the naval laws is obvious in the laws opening preamble: “To Protect Germany’s sea trade and colonies in the existing circumstances, there is only one means: Germany must have a battle fleet so strong the even an adversary with the greatest seapower, a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil his own position in the world.” Robert Massie Dreadnought Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War (New York: Ballantine, 1991), 181
international business and financial interests led by a majority of the Cabinet in opposing an alliance and in seeking a commitment to neutrality.”201 British leaders focusing on foreign policy were advocating a much stronger mobilization of resources to check German naval expansion, but the economically minded ministers had successfully lobbied to temper the response with weaker responses like the non-intervention declaration.202 Ultimately, history affirmed the fears of the former. When war came, the British attempts to address Germany’s rise by simultaneously balancing military power without upsetting commercial linkages ultimately left them unprepared for the outbreak of hostilities on the continent.

Germany’s appraisal of their economic linkages is similar, because they pursued an expansionist foreign policy and naval buildup while believing that they would not upset their English trading power. Germany was well aware of the pivotal role that British power could wield in any continental showdown and they attempted to bolster their forces without crossing the line they believed would draw Britain into war.203 However, Germany continued to funnel their economic gains from the international market into their *Dreadnaught* fleet and financed an aggressive diplomatic, military and economic policy dubbed *Weltpolitik*. Germany’s very expansion and continued rise was dependent upon maintaining open trade flows. Nonetheless, the German naval race and aggressive maneuvering in period crises and colonial negotiations reflect Germany’s own recognition of their more important strategic vulnerabilities.204 This was an insecurity

201 Paul A. Papayoanou. “Economic Interdependence and the Balance of Power”, 129
202 Ibid, 117
203 Paul A. Papayoanou. “Interdependence, Institutions and the Balance of Power: Britain, Germany and World War I”, 79
204 German Admiral and architect of naval strategy, Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, informed the Emperor Wilhelm II that a strong German naval presence in Europe meant that Britain would lose “every inclination to attack us and as a result concede to Your Majesty to carry out a great overseas policy” See Jeffery W.
that no amount of foreign trade and economic prosperity could alleviate. In this light it is not surprising Britain and other powers were uncertain about German intentions for its newfound naval capabilities given the displays of German brinkmanship.\textsuperscript{205} All sides were driven by fears of an anarchic order and the unknown intentions of mounting rivalries.

There is also another explanatory strand to address the outbreak of WWI despite record levels of interdependence. The interdependent economies in Western Europe were not drawn into direct confrontation, until the chaos in Eastern Europe finally drew the major powers into war via overlapping alliances. Erik Gartzke and Yonatan Lupu agree with this argument and contend that “disputes among the highly interdependent powers were generally resolved peacefully in the pre-World War I era… disputes among the less interdependent powers generally escalated into wars…”\textsuperscript{206} Gartzke and Lupu base their argument upon the idea that “war did not begin among the interdependent powers.”\textsuperscript{207} In the years prior to WWI, the major powers of Europe were constantly involved in mediating and avoiding regional wars, revolts and simmering tensions in Morocco, Balkans, Greece, Turkey, Italy and Albania.\textsuperscript{208} Gartzke and Lupu’s analysis divides Europe into two economic systems, which delineates the economically interdependent epicenter of Britain, France, and Germany apart from the less integrated and economically marginalized powers of Austria-Hungary, Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Italy.


\textsuperscript{206} Erik Gartzke and Yonatan Lupu “Trading on Preconceptions Why World War I Was Not a Failure of Economic Interdependence” \textit{International Security} Vol. 36, No. 4 (2012), 142

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 148

\textsuperscript{208} For a detailed description of the various crises see Margaret MacMillian Ch. 13-16
and the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{209} The authors present these reoccurring conflicts amongst the less-interdependent Eastern Bloc countries as positive proof that economic interdependence actually worked to mediate the rivalries between Britain, France, Germany and Russia.

World War I is often referred to as the ‘Achilles heel’ of liberal theory because one of the deadliest conflicts in history was directly preceded by one of the most commercially intertwined periods in history. The economic interdependence believes commerce can temper the ideological motivations for war or alleviate the perception of insecurity, but the Anglo-German example of 1913 directly challenges this assumption. The notion that economic interdependence actually worked to prevent war in Europe is supposedly vindicated by the idea that the spark for WWI was in Sarajevo, instead of London or Berlin. The claim that interdependence actually worked to mediate the power rivalries is an abstruse argument for commercial peace theory. Firstly, WWI shows that states are most attentive to geopolitical considerations and strategic gains. Western Europe had ample evidence concerning the volatile nature of the Balkans region, but the great powers still felt compelled to invest themselves into larger balance of power calculations. Second, it implies that economic interdependence will only work if every participating state has a sufficiently vested in international trade. This is an impossible proviso to meet in any historic or modern system. If interdependence needs to be accompanied by a caveat that it does not work if less economically entwined states are involved or linked; where will this prove an effective tool of statecraft? As WWI demonstrates, both Germany and Britain acknowledged the gains from an open

\textsuperscript{209} Gartzke and Lupu, 127
international market, but each side separated political realisms from economic gains. The mutually recognized role that trade played in pre-war policies underlines the importance either side placed in bilateral trade, but the occurrence of war also shows the effect of each side’s perception of their relative power and vulnerabilities. The British were determined to check a potential German peer competitor. Germany was equally dogged to free itself from its perceived trading and supply vulnerabilities in British controlled waterways. The national goals and security of Britain and Germany depended upon maintaining a perceived political or strategic advantage over commercial profits.

Analysis: Interdependence and Conflict in the Asia-Pacific.

History underscores that the U.S. cannot ignore the strategic ramifications of China’s expanding power and the regional instability this entails. However, robust economic linkages between the world’s two primary economics complicate any geopolitical calculations. The relationship between Britain and Germany offers a telling illustration of the possible dangers of overestimating the clout economic profits factor into a state’s rationale for war or peace. An understanding of how the economic system in 1914 did not assuage structural competition offers several key structural-historical lessons, which could help the U.S. and China avoid a larger systemic conflict. As was the case in pre-war Europe, strong levels of economic interdependence between Asian neighbors and global trading partners typify the Asia-Pacific economy. This economic interdependence has led to some of the fastest economic growth in recent history and has cemented the Asia-Pacific economy as a major driver of world markets and growth. The

rapid economic ascendency of Asian markets coupled with increasingly high-levels of interdependence and relative political stability of the region is tempting fodder for interdependence peace theories. However, as the WWI case study demonstrated, economic growth and cooperation can occur even as other geopolitical forces are creating overarching security concerns.

After surveying the economic and strategic landscape of 1913, the modern Asia-Pacific, specifically the U.S.-China dyad, has very similar patterns emerging when economics and security diverge. The ensuing section will demonstrate how the lessons of WWI – geopolitics over economics and unconnected regional flashpoints – have remerged in in the Asia-Pacific. The analysis will focus upon the economic relationship between the U.S. and China and highlight possible strategic tensions due to China’s economic and regional rise. Regardless of the size and profits generated by U.S.-China commercial linkages, both parties are increasingly concerned about their relative power in the Asia-Pacific sphere. These considerations correspond to similar strategic challenges that both Britain and Germany grappled with in the spring of 1914. The analysis will then focus upon the arguments of weak economic interdependence and conflicts at the periphery presented in the case study. As in WWI, history questions whether the U.S. would continue to favor economic relations if their credibility and allies’ security is being threatened or even attacked. The return of these classic pitfalls continues to challenge the reliability of economic interdependence theory and strategies of economic engagement in great power politics.
China: The Strategic Vulnerability of Rising Power

The U.S. and China find themselves in a similar predicament facing Germany and Britain a century prior. The U.S. and China’s bilateral trade ranks amongst each other’s largest conduit of goods and China is currently the U.S.’s second largest trading partner ($562 billion) and the largest holder of U.S.’s Treasury securities ($1.3 trillion). The depth of Sino-U.S. trade and financial investment has led many policymakers to believe that the surest way to maintain stable relations is to further integrate China into the world economic system. This reasoning harkens back to the economic deterrence presented in the literature review. In an increasingly common refrain, the premise is that if China has too much invested in the status quo it will not risk upsetting a beneficial flow of commerce. However, China’s economic growth has corresponded with a growing regional political and military assertiveness. Since 1988, China has engaged in increasingly aggressive disputes with Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, and Malaysia over control and sovereign jurisdiction of the regional waterways, the South China Sea, Senkaku Islands and Spratly Islands.

Instead of solidifying China’s support of the present system and promoting continued stability, China’s strategic choices in the Asia-Pacific suggest their economic success has been funneled into a more confrontation route. Much like Germany’s economic rise, China’s newfound resources have been devoted to enhancing military capabilities. This risks upsetting the very environment that financed China’s recent

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212 Ibid, 49
ascendancy. The case study illustrated that Germany also increasingly justified a more aggressive foreign policy because it too feared becoming overly dependent upon an economic system that was largely patrolled by their economic and political rival.

One of China’s principal justifications for their increased military presence and naval expansion in the Asia-Pacific is a growing dependence upon foreign oil sources. China’s booming economy is driven by an uninterrupted supply of oil and China is forced to turn to international market and trade routes to quench its thirst. China, like Germany prior, in nervous that their perceived rival, the U.S. Navy, could easily blockade or disrupt their maritime trade flow. The prospect of naval blockade has created a strategic vulnerability for Chinese industry and power projection.\(^{214}\) As Chinese strategist Ye Hailin unequivocally states, “A big country (China) that builds its prosperity on foreign trade cannot put the safety of its ocean fleet in the hands of other countries.”\(^{215}\) Thus, Chinese strategic thinkers accurately observe that while today the United States Navy is “policing” the Seas, there is no stopping the same vessels from blockading the strait tomorrow. Therefore, China is attempting to gain control over vital maritime arteries and underwater oil fields. China’s actions disregard the deterrent or pacifying effects of the global economic system, which is providing the necessary material via an open market. China’s recent behavior clearly places geopolitical considerations and national disadvantages far above economic policies designed not to disrupt the economic marketplace or discourage trading partners.


United States: Pivot and Straddle

The U.S. finds itself in a very similar predicament to Britain in the early 20th century – a strategic dilemma between maintaining profitable economic ties while contending with a new challenger and the relative decline of power. However, this problem is even more acute, because the U.S. is supporting the very system that is allowing for China’s growing relative power. China represents one of the U.S.’s must lucrative trading relationships, yet China’s behavior and capabilities are quickly emerging as a legitimate regional challenger. U.S. financial markets, currency, and military presence underwrite the present economic system; yet the U.S. is keenly aware of losing its power standing in the Asia-Pacific. In response, the U.S. has no concrete China policy and successive administrations have waxed and waned over what the best course of action is for maintaining stability in the Pacific. Consequently, U.S. policy has developed into an amalgam of various engagement and balancing strategies akin to Britain’s early straddle policy. The British straddle policy attempted to balance Germany naval power via aggressive naval expansion, but tried to avoid upsetting the commercial relations by abstaining from direct confrontation with German interests on the continent. Britain did enter into a series of informal ententes with France, Russia and Japan, but declined to engage in more forceful diplomatic measures or formal alliances to counter German military power.216

Professor Aaron Friedberg has described the Obama administrations ‘pivot’ towards China as a hybrid of containment and engagement policies or “congagement”.217 Friedberg is not the first author to notice the U.S.’s pattern of equivocal strategizing and

216 Joll and Martel, 60-64
217 Aaron L. Friedberg, A Contest for Supremacy China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012), 113
as early as 1999, a RAND study highlights congagement as the ‘third option.’ The RAND authors describe congagement as continuing to encourage China’s integration into international political and economic systems, “while both preparing for a possible Chinese challenge to it and seeking to convince the Chinese leadership that such a challenge would be difficult to prepare and extremely risky to pursue.” What the RAND authors could not have foreseen in the 15 years since their study is China’s atmospheric economic growth, burgeoning military capabilities and publicized anti-access strategy to keep the U.S. out of East Asian waters. The Obama administration has followed the basic tenets of congagement and the pivot’s strategic engagement continues to pursue various political, economic, climate and regional dialogues designed to foster Sino-U.S. cooperation. However, a substantial portion of the pivot is comprised of military elements intended to ensure continued U.S. military supremacy.

The military portion of pivot is based upon a deploying a total of 60 percent of naval assets to the Pacific by 2020. This includes reinforcing total fleet tonnage and submarine squadrons plus rotating forward deployed Air Force, Marine and Army assets throughout bases and allied countries in the western Pacific. The U.S.’s pivot and Britain’s straddle policy differ on how to constructively engage with a rival power, but both highlight the difficult and enigmatic position of supporting economic gains without

218 Zalmay M. Khalilzad, Abram N. Shulsky, Daniel L. Byman, Roger Cliff, David T. Orleestsy, David Shlapak and Ashley J. Tellis. The United States and a Rising China Strategic and Military Implications (Washington D.C.: RAND, 1999), 72
219 Ibid
220 For an in depth examination of China’s anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) strategies see Chapter II.
221 Engagement in the Asia Pacific: Hearing before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs Senate Foreign Relations Committee, United States Senate (Jan. 21, 2010) (statement of Kurt M. Campbell, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Washington D.C.)
223 Ibid
losing their strategic primacy. In both instances, the hedging demonstrated by the British naval buildup and the U.S. redistribution of military power reveals the overlying security concerns of both actors with their primary trading partner. The insecurity created by the military expansion and power of both Germany and China could not be reduced by trade flows and the military response shows the prevalence of traditional military force over economics. Nonetheless, as in 1913, this remains a delicate tactic by the U.S. and any military maneuvers have to be weighed against upsetting the domestic economy and constituencies. Consequently, the U.S. continues attempting to juggle both elements of congruence.

Regional Flashpoints

There is one final comparison with the First World War that bears consideration with current power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific. As the case study highlighted, some economic interdependence theorists believe WWI was not a failure of interdependence. The logic persists that war never erupted in a direct confrontation between the principal economic powers, but rather in the economic and political margins of Europe’s eastern economies. This rationality has already been challenged, but if it is entertained to its conclusion, perhaps Britain and Germany may have never fought but remained a highly insecure and militarized trade dyad. If contrasted with the present Asia-Pacific, perhaps the U.S. and China will remain a guarded, economic entente. Still, as in 1914, there are similar regional conflicts that could draw both parties into direct confrontation over needless territorial disputes and simmering historic animosities.\textsuperscript{224}

\textsuperscript{224} See Chapter III for a more detailed survey of regional disputes and alliance structures.
Much of the conflict stems from China’s generous interpretation of what their sovereign maritime territory is; combined with heightened competition for energy resources and growing regional anxiety about China’s strategic intentions. A 2013 Congressional Research Report outlined the various territorial disputes in the South China Sea, East China Sea, Sea of Japan and Yellow Sea.\textsuperscript{225} In each instance, China is in direct dispute with the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, South Korea and Japan.\textsuperscript{226} These disputes are on top of the latent Sino-U.S. impasse concerning the reunification of Taiwan. In some cases these disputes involve major U.S. allies and treaty partners, but most economic relations pale in comparison to the China-U.S. dyad. However, in any instance of Chinese expansionism, the region will look to the U.S.’s response and gauge their commitment to the stability of the Asia-Pacific. A small rock in the middle of the South China Sea has suddenly become a larger strategic bellwether for who is the regional hegemon in the Asia Pacific. From this perspective, it becomes all too conceivable that the U.S., as Germany and Britain did a hundred years prior, will chose to side with a smaller, less economically significant ally for the sake of regional power dynamics. These are calculations of power and security; they are not based upon detached economic estimations of trade ratios and profit margins. History has routinely demonstrated that great power politics is built upon a currency of credibility, deterrence and military power.

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid
Conclusion

The geopolitical state of the Asia-Pacific is a strategic paradox. It is a commercially vibrant region with expanding economic influence, yet it is a region rift with historical animosities, nationalistic rhetoric, regional flashpoints and exploding military budgets. These seeming incompatible spheres overlap and extend into most important relationship in the region: United States and China. Additionally, the U.S. finds itself protecting that very system that is enabling the rise of its nearest regional competitor. Both actors preach the importance of productive relationships and preserving strong economic growth and yet each side is determined to flex its regional muscle. China seeks the military anti-denial capabilities to deny entry to outside forces (i.e. U.S. navy), while the U.S. is also rebalancing its own forces in the Pacific ‘pivot.’ Navigating such a complicated and incongruous backdrop is treacherous and U.S. policymakers are trying to simultaneously balance both military balancing and engagement strategies.

There are still those who argue for the power of engagement. Elizabeth Economy believes that international focus and economic integration has prompted the Chinese government to undertake domestic reforms, making it a more responsible global actor.\textsuperscript{227} If the U.S. is patient, the pressures and incentives of market economics will provide the necessary stimulus for China’s peaceful rise as a responsible stakeholder. Former Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson also proposes implementing robust economic engagement with China. Paulson notes that the once all-encompassing economic linkages of trade and investment are no longer sufficient to overcome widespread

\textsuperscript{227} Elizabeth Economy. “Don’t Break the Engagement- Staying the Course on China” \textit{Foreign Affairs} Vol. 83, No.3 (2004): 109
anxieties about globalization, nationalism, and environmental degradation. In response, Paulson was one of the key architects of the U.S.-China-Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) to manage tension and reinforce existing rapprochements. Paulson notes that the U.S. and China, despite their “long history of interaction, they frequently display a stunning ability to misunderstand each other.” Therefore, the Economic Dialogue was meant to build upon shared policy areas, like resource scarcity, which were equally important to both China’s economic reforms and U.S. politics. This was seen as a means to deepen the understanding between the U.S. and China in the economic realm, but has not translated into a sustainable dialogue for conflict resolution in other strategic issues. However, the U.S. is still actively pursuing the SED and is even considering involving China into the nascent Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement.

Statecraft reflects geopolitical realities and neither Economy nor Paulson’s arguments offer convincing assurances of China’s true intentions and future stability. Both authors advocate that economic engagement cannot address how future relations between the U.S. and China will evolve as China’s relative power increases. The U.S. cannot ignore China’s rise nor can the U.S. divorce itself from the economic system that continues to benefit both economies while the relative power gap grows smaller. To address this strategic conundrum and buttress against China’s continued rise, the U.S. should focus less upon an exact formula of political, economic, and military ingredients. Instead the U.S. should clearly signal what their position is and what actions would be viewed as unacceptable or escalatory. Given the economic nuances and the overriding

228 Henry Paulson. “A Strategic Economic Engagement” Foreign Affairs Vol. 87, No. 5 (2008), 9
229 Ibid, 2
230 Ibid, 4
political and strategic considerations, the simplest solution may be the classic combination of resolve, commitment and consistency to limit misperception and uncertainty.

Dale Copeland argues that this adaptable, middle ground between appeasement and containment is the best course for continued stability, while addressing near-term changes to the distribution of power. Copeland stresses it is crucial that “leaders in Beijing must have a clear idea what the U.S. will defend through military force and economic sanctioning, and those it will not.” Copeland believes the most dangerous route is to continue upon the present course in which each successive U.S. administration adopts a new approach towards China. The ensuing swings in strategy limit the ability of both China and the U.S. to accurately gauge the costs of potential actions. Any U.S. strategy can never be confused with appeasement, capitulation or withdrawal, but a clear delineation of acceptable behavior creates an environment where economic engagement on other issues can be pursued without fear of destabilizing the relative distribution of power.

The U.S. cannot ignore that China is a regional actor and as such, China has a legitimate role in regional affairs and a larger interests in international policy. The defining idea is legitimate role. In this case, Charles Doran defines a legitimate role as one that “must be compatible with the other interests of the international community, especially the interests of the great powers…” In this light, the burden is upon China to

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233 Ibid
234 Ibid
235 Doran, 86
236 Ibid
wield its newfound power in a manner that does not create unnecessary insecurities and tensions in the region.

A recent ‘expert roundup’ by the Council on Foreign Relations reevaluated the impact of the U.S.’s current Asia Pivot strategy. The reactions of Asian partners were mixed, but the underlying theme was that the results would be catastrophic if the U.S. preferred to withdraw from the Pacific. As panelist Michael Fullilove put it, “without a strong U.S. presence in the Pacific, the region faces strategic uncertainty, power imbalance and the risk of destabilizing rivalry.”237 This is not a new position for the U.S., whose military power and economic leverage has been underwriting the stability of the region since World War II. However, with the rise of China and their increasingly strident foreign policy, this position has become complicated by the need to concurrently address remerging great power issues. Engage or balance? Retreat or contain? These were the same dilemmas faced by Britain and Germany as they do now the U.S. and China. As shown, there has been little study devoted to navigating great power transformations conditioned by economic interdependence. If the U.S. and China do not want to follow a similar path as before, there must be a candid reassessment of whether these two powers value their economic relationship enough to deter conflict. Is this threat imminent? Probably not, but as Europe shows, a lifetime of peaceful relations can quickly unravel when power dynamics begin to reemerge. If it happened before, a pragmatic strategy would not discount it from occurring again. The difficulty in hedging strategies is the notion of self-fulfilling prophecies. If the U.S. treats China as a hostile rival, or vice versa, won’t this inevitable drive either side into conflict? Not necessarily,

as exemplified by Britain’s straddle policy. A strategy that struggles to promise both continued economic growth and solve strategic problems can fail just as dramatically. Therefore, it is necessary that future U.S. policy learns from previous historic episodes and separates the economic from political realm instead of attempting to combine every facet of statecraft.
Chapter V

CONCLUSION
This thesis presents an unflattering, yet realistic, depiction of the conditions inherent in the international structure – an anarchic system that impels states’ mutual fears, apprehension and unrelenting quest for security. Against the backdrop of an accelerating Sino-U.S. struggle for regional supremacy and the emergence of a multipolar Asia-Pacific Sphere, this representation of the ‘classical’ international environment provides the best analytical framework for assessing future prospects of regional stability. The research clearly supports the hypothesis that systemic causes of structural instability are resurfacing throughout the Asia-Pacific. If left unchecked, the great power politics between the United States and China risk descending into the same reinforcing patterns of systemic distrust and spiraling insecurity that have preoccupied international relations and hampered peace and stability since the Peloponnesian Wars. To support the hypothesis, three different specters of structural instability were identified for analysis: security dilemmas, balance of power dynamics and economic interdependence. Each of these structural pitfalls were selected due to established patterns of state behavior based upon shared assumptions of the international realm, the likelihood of affecting ongoing strategy in the Asia-Pacific and future risks posed to regional stability.

Chapter Two examined security dilemmas and how cycles of escalating security preparations foster increased insecurity. This case study examined the role of security dilemmas in the Cold War and determined that a regional security dilemma flourished in conflicts driven by preemptive strategies and cumulative misperceptions of opposing strategies and military capabilities. The Cold War security dilemma between the U.S. and Soviet Union was then compared with modern strategies: China’s anti-access/area-denial doctrine and the U.S.’s own response, the Joint Operational Access Concept.
Either strategy is designed to ensure operational supremacy in the western Pacific, but each strategy is also predicated upon preemption, first-strike platforms and secretive weapons like China’s “carrier-killer” missiles. The operational parallels between modern strategies and Cold War-era doctrine suggested an increased likelihood of security dilemmas commandeering regional strategies and heightening regional tensions.

Chapter Three focused upon emerging balance of power calculations and how it is driving great power calculus in the Asia-Pacific. Balance of power is a difficult concept to analyze because it can concomitantly translate into a situation, policy, and symbol or describe the overarching system. In this instance balance of power was used to describe the system, or the emerging organization of states, arising to offset the rise of Chinese power. Faced with a potential hegemon and a shift in the power status quo, regional actors are displaying trademark strategies designed to maintain the current balance. This chapter examines balance of power in the form of external alliances and internal militarization that are permeating regional strategies and alignments, including the U.S.’s own Asia pivot. The World War I case study examined how both alliances and militarization preoccupied European policies in the run-up to 1914 and provided the foundation from which a regional Balkan conflict quickly spiraled into a global war. In comparison, the research demonstrates that the Asia-Pacific, in order to justify regional security, has experienced a similar surge in alliance formations and military expansion. As history reveals, maintaining a steady balance of power is an inherently volatile endeavor because in an effort to maintain any semblance of stability, the very acts to safeguard the present distribution of power only invite greater perceptions of mutual insecurity and increase the chances of entangling conflicts. While Asia’s balancing
developments have not reached the fervor of pre-war Europe, the groundwork is being laid along congruent lines for a single geopolitical spark to ignite a regional conflict.

Chapter Four approached the idea of structural instability in a different way. Instead of previewing another structural pitfall, it questioned a common counterargument for stability in the Asia-Pacific—economic interdependence. The deterrence effect of economic interdependence has been recycled as a keystone argument for centuries, and the logic follows that if states are fully vested in the international system and markets, they have too much to lose and will not risk the prospect of war. The U.S. is following a similar tact with China and while simultaneously executing the pivot. U.S. policies are attempting to further integrate China’s economy and role as a responsible stakeholder in a strategy dubbed ‘congagement.’ The case study examined the likelihood of success for U.S. engagement strategies against the poor historical record of economic interdependence actually forefending conflict. In pre-war Europe, economic interdependence had culminated in its highest levels of volume and value in 1913, yet the great powers were still preoccupied with the larger geopolitical forces surrounding Germany’s rise. The failure of economic peace in World War I highlights that economic interdependence advocates misunderstand the true hierarchy of state priorities and economic linkages are built upon the geopolitical environment. They do not shape them as some would wish.

Conclusions

It is not difficult to draw historical parallels between the offered case studies and the current environment of the Asia-Pacific and Sino-U.S. interactions. The research indicates the potential for increased instability is a very real and dangerous structural
byproduct of China’s rise and the cascading shifts in the geopolitical order. Interstate
tensions often emanate from the anarchic structure of the interstate order and conflict is
not the sole purview of competing ideologies, historical grievances or political acrimony.
The ongoing specter of structural instability presents an even greater challenge to the
prospect of a peaceful Asia-Pacific because the case studies highlight that any change in
the geopolitical order will have inevitable repercussions upon the strategic mindset of
regional actors. Whether this insecurity compels future security dilemmas, arms races or
billowing alliances, what is certain is that adding the structural explanations for interstate
conflict contributes to future strategic planning by analyzing the basic motivations
driving state strategies.

By highlighting the strategic calculus surrounding a state’s unrelenting quest for
security in an anarchic environment, this thesis adds a much needed and often-overlooked
dimension for deciphering why great power relationships and rising powers are fraught
with conflict and insecurity. The Asia-Pacific is the most likely locale to emerge as a
renewed multipolar environment, but too much of the modern literature is fixated upon
side-by-side military comparisons or the effects of bygone conflicts. These references
are helpful, but they fail to address why China is relentless in its pursuit of regional
military dominance, why this is so unsettling for regional actors, and why the U.S. is
quickly responding to reassure allies and rebalance against China. The actual
motivations of each actor may differ, but the common denominator is that each state is
attempting to maximize their relative position of security in a treacherous world.
Accounting for structural drivers of insecurity allows policymakers to tailor future
strategy to weigh both individual states’ security qualms against the prospect of regional
stability- akin to strategic empathy or the ability to infer how state strategies will be perceived by rival states. This requires a return to the classic elements of great power politics and heightened appreciation of the relative distribution of power, but it does not sentence the region to return to great power conflicts. The case studies demonstrated that conflicts occurred when the systemic instability usurped sound political strategy. If the problem of insecurity is the result of the very architecture of the international order, the best solution is to draft strategies that reflect current geopolitical concerns while simultaneously accounting for the perils of structural hazards.

Recommendations

The object of this thesis was to highlight symptoms of new structural instability rather than offer specific policy remedies or reforms. The difficulty for prescribing exact recommendations is that any strategy must balance ongoing geopolitical events with the cognitive obstacles of misperception, uncertainty and fear that drive states into the recurrent great power conflict. Therefore, an all-encompassing strategy must address the strategic reality while attempting to understand a rival’s behavior and perception of the events. However, this is easier said than done and, as misperception theorist Robert Jervis highlights, history is littered with trifling conflicts that escalated because “…statesman assume that their opposite numbers see the world as they see it, fail to devote sufficient resources to determining whether this is actually true, and have much more confidence in their beliefs about the other’s perceptions than the evidence warrants.”

Jervis continues to explain that states habitually fail to grasp their rivals and even allies’ true

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estimations of credibility, strategic value and alternatives. In an anarchic world, these chronic, yet understandable, patterns of misperceptions have often guided competing strategies into a collision course.

Nevertheless, at the conclusion of each chapter a brief suggestion was proposed for how strategy could better mitigate the structural pitfalls that drive states towards conflict. The common thread among the different chapters was that an effective strategy must fulfill policy goals and also address the cognitive effects of misperceptions. For the security dilemma, the proposal to deescalate the competing strategic doctrines was for the U.S. to focus upon command of the commons and utilize the benign signaling of defensive postures. A renewed emphasis upon control of the commons would allow the U.S. to maintain a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific, but would diminish the possibility of preemptive military postures descending into a spiraling security dilemma. The instability of balance of power dynamics in Chapter Three revolved around the trappings of entangling alliances and arms races. This creates a strategic impasse for the U.S. American military power underpins the present strategic arrangement, yet the U.S. is increasingly exposed to being dragged into murky regional alliances’ substructures and militarization. There is no easy solution, except to heed the warnings of past balance of power episodes during World War I. In the Asia-Pacific there is no codified and formal treaty alliance like NATO, and the U.S. cannot become attached to an opaque and shifting regional alliance structure that multiplies the probability of misperceptions. The U.S. must honor its strategic commitments but focus upon the larger strategic ordering rather than regional disputes. To mistake the two would increase the chances that the

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Senkaku become the next Balkans. Lastly, the problem of misperceptions was addressed in the final chapter concerning economic interdependence. The research underscored that the U.S. has no concrete systemic-level approach to China and is employing a variety of strategic options ranging from engagement to military balancing. The lack of a codified response to China creates an unwieldy strategic portfolio that tries to link economic relations into larger power politics. The fluctuations in U.S. policy only increase the likelihood of mixed signals and misperceptions. Instead, the chapter concluded that the U.S. should separate economic profits from power politics and refrain from further confusing great power politics with economic signaling.

All these recommendations are predicated upon the ability of the U.S. to recognize how misperception can impede stability and engulf strategic mindsets. By incorporating this viewpoint into future strategies, the U.S. and China can respond to geopolitical concerns while avoiding an unnecessary conflict based upon the unseen drivers of structural instability. None of the aforementioned strategic recommendations requires a fundamental shift in U.S. force posture, defense acquisitions or allied guarantees. What strategic empathy does require is a major shift in U.S. strategic mentality. The U.S. must acknowledge the changing dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region that accompany China’s rise. This will be the greatest challenge for future U.S. policy: how to operate in a multipolar structure rather than having the unipolar luxury to frame the parameters of the regional order. This transition necessitates that the U.S. recognize the structural dangers of a multipolar and anarchic system, which could be overlooked during an era of hegemonic power. This strategic introspection will be the determining factor for successful U.S. policy, and once accepted, not a mark of American weakness,
but a signal of adaptability and continued power in the changing global order; the U.S. can modify any strategic goal to account for remerging structural influences.

Limitations

Notwithstanding the value of historical case studies, no research based upon historical events will be able to foresee the future and is subject to various methodological limitations. Noted theorist Hans Morgenthau touched upon the limitations of historical analogies and stated “…when we ask ourselves the meaning of a contemporary occurrence, we can only understand that event and judge it by resorting to the accumulated treasure of historic knowledge.” 240 Morgenthau’s assessment about the validity of historical analogies is a necessary caveat to any analysis attempting to extrapolate likely scenarios from past experiences. Unlike scientific theory, the international realm cannot be easily categorized, independently tested and repeatedly confirmed. Each historical episode can be further tainted by one’s own biases of world affairs and independent research goals. However, each of the aforementioned case studies was not selected because of a favorable outcome; rather each case was chosen based upon similarities in the operating environments and the strategic choices presented to actors. The U.S. and China have a comparatively short historical dialogue, especially in the realm of great power considerations, and it was a research necessity to utilize historical analogies to predict future impediments to the relationship. Although the technology, actors and circumstances may vary greatly across time and space, the

research demonstrates that the strategic rationale and driving structural dynamics remained remarkably similar.

Another notable research limitation is the lack of a large-scale sample size. This paper was not focused upon defending specific theories, but rather how changing power dynamics in the Asia-Pacific could become more dangerous because of structural hazards that often accompany systemic power shifts. Throughout history there are very few great power shifts, academics roughly agree on eight since 1600, and this number decreases substantially when discussing modern states or even nuclear states.\(^{241}\) The available historic research on how a post-American hegemonic world be structured is also purely speculative. Therefore, the use of the few available scenarios that combined modern states, multipolar environments, great power rivalries, rising power, economic interdependence and the presence of one of the structural hazards was very small. That is why most of the historical case studies were centered upon 1914 in Europe and the Cold War dynamics between the U.S. and Soviet Union. However, the research goal of the thesis was to prevent the work from using only theoretical evidence and this thesis maintains, even though the case study groups were very limited, that a solid theoretical grounding and historical examples are much more illustrative of forthcoming challenges than conjecture. The U.S. and China are entering an unfamiliar, but not unprecedented, operating environment. Whatever information gleaned from the past should be scrutinized, while remembering that this is quite a rare confluence of international events with an extremely small historical record.

\(^{241}\) Since 1609 there have been eight agreed great power shifts. See Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975*
In addition, to highlight historical aspects of structural instability in the case study comparisons, this chapter interpreted both the U.S. and China as rational actors seeking security and power. Although, certain strategies and postures were depicted as escalatory and dangerous, none of the strategies were categorized as evil or unjustifiable. The U.S., China and regional actors are responding to their specific perceptions of insecurity. This is the malady of an anarchic system; each state will respond however they can to ensure maximal geopolitical advantages. This thesis was focused upon examining how the systemic effects translated into unstable great power strategies and was less concerned about the internal dynamics, cultural factors and questions of law and morality that arise from comparing two very distinct countries. In the present international structure, this chapter argued that the key to understanding any strategic maneuvering was the systemic impetus for security. Therefore, China’s rise is not ‘evil’ because it is Chinese, but is dangerous because China’s ascension mirrors historical patterns of structural instability. By focusing upon the structural hazards of the international system rather than domestic dynamics, this thesis underscores the continued necessity for examining the emerging Sino-U.S. strategic dialogue in this context.

Further Avenues of Study

World War I and the Cold War were great power tragedies. The inherent instability of the international system drove competing strategies that fed off each actor’s own perceptions of insecurity and vulnerability. The international system exacerbates these perceptions and often drives states towards needless conflicts that are the product of systemic drivers rather than national interests. The Asia-Pacific is precariously close to following this similar trend of power rivalries, and history forewarns that great power
conflict is often the rule rather than the exception in a multipolar environment. There will always be an ongoing necessity for military power and even war to safeguard states and further national security, but states do have the option to decide the context in which this happens. The stability of the Asia-Pacific and the Sino-U.S. relationship will depend upon how regional actors decide to pursue their strategic goals. Will it be a future framed by traditional great power rivalries and conflict; a future acquiesced to China; or will statecraft finally have the wherewithal to truly examine how the underlying international structure influences state decisions? There are an overwhelming number of historical warnings and theoretical literature to support the caustic effects of structural instability. The key remains incorporating this analysis during the midst of an ongoing crisis and how to best utilize historical examples to illustrate how seemingly rationale geopolitical maneuvering can in fact further destabilize a regions’ balance of power. This thesis is founded upon the idea that incorporating the lessons of previous great power conflicts and forewarnings about structural pitfalls can help modern strategy from blithely following the same worn paths rife with historical conflict. However, acknowledging how structural instability affects evolving power contests in the Asia-Pacific is only the beginning. The next steps will be to maintain this perspective in an escalating environment and alter strategy to focus upon the rival and the underlying instability. The stability of the Asia-Pacific and the future of the 21st century’s world powers depend on this, and it will only become more difficult and urgent.


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