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The Ultimate Deterrence: Testing the Four Theories of Peace; will Institutionalism, Economic Interdependence, Common Identity and the Logic of Mutual Assured Destruction Prevent Great Power War in 21st Century?

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Abstract:

The article seeks an answer to the question whether the combination of institutionalism, interdependence, common identity and nuclear weapons the ultimate deterrent. The findings of the paper are drawing on insufficient empirical evidence of all theories, and on the contrary, the case studies condemn the real impact of the institutionalism, economic interdependence, identity building and nuclear deterrence in practice. Our argument is tested on the case studies of the Crimean War in the mid 19th century, World War I. and Russo-Georgian War in 2008. The article primarily works with approaches developed within the framework of the realist school of political thought.

Keywords: Realism, deterrent, war, economic interdependence, institutionalism, constructivism, nuclear weapons

1. Introduction

Is the combination of institutionalism, interdependence, common identity and nuclear weapons the ultimate deterrent? The very notion of this deterrent foursome goes that increasing economic interdependence is assuming predisposition to form unified institutional blocks, i.e. institutions. Economic interdependence is, according to its proponents¹, strong deterrent since states economies are becoming more tied and potential losses outweigh potential gains in case of conflict. Institutions are serving as a platform for states to connect in common interests and to settle their disputes. Therefore, these are places of state socialisation, forums where states can shape common interests, debate crises and eventually form common identities. Common identities, hence, serve as another level of deterrent because actors with shared identity are less prone to wage war on each other. Moreover, finally, if all abovementioned levels of deterrence fail, there is still omnipresent logic of mutually assured destruction, which prevents great powers to launch the all-out war on each other.

For the main argument of this study—that institutionalism, economic interdependence, common identity and nuclear weapons combined are ultimate deterrent of war among great powers – two counter-arguments can be proposed. The first one derives from the history of international relations. It shows that economic interdependence and international institutions alone are not powerful enough to prevent conflicts and that not all great powers share a common identity and that mutually assured destruction can be overcome during the struggle for survival. The second counter-argument is a theoretical one. If there is a structural disbalance² in the international system accompanied by uncertainty³ fuelled by the fear for survival⁴, war among great powers in the 21st century is possible. The aim of this article is not to claim that major war is inevitable, even with reasonable peace theories in work.

Nevertheless, to point out certain models of great power behaviour during structural disbalances with possible result in armed conflict. Scholars claim the impossibility of great power war in the 21st century present four main deterrents, which form the ultimate deterrent derived from main theories denying future major war. Each one of them mis-tested with abovementioned counter-arguments. First, we test economic interdependence as a deterrent, which

¹For proponents of economic interdependence theory see McDonald, Russett, Nye

²Notion of structural disbalance follows the logic of international change- this approach is presented in works of hegemonic stability theorists such as Robert Gilpin, William Wohlfarth, or Dale Copeland. There are also Power Transition Theorist represented mostly by Kugler and Organski, but very similar to their work are notions of Graham Allison in his piece on 'Thucydides Trap'.

Disproportion in the structure of international system must fulfil the main condition, which is the presence of established power and rising powers on the periphery. Thus, in structural language, the current structure has stopped reflecting the actual power of its framing actors, while there are potential challengers to current status quo at the periphery of the system. Disbalances in structural framework and actual power potential of actors in the system are opening the way for challenging a current status quo by rising powers, or to launch a preventive war to maintain current structural framework.

³ Concept of uncertainty is developed in works of Robert Jervis, or John Mearsheimer, who connects uncertainty directly with systemic anarchy. Andrey Baykov even maintains that effects of uncertainty are observable in hierarchical systems.

⁴ Concept of survival is taken from structural realism of Stephen Walt, Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer

presupposes that states rather seek absolute gains from cooperation, than relative gains from expansion through coercive means.⁵ Second, we test the proposition that international institutions can settle and prevent conflicts involving great powers.⁶ Third, we test the constructivist claim that there are communities of likeminded actors, who share values, identity and culture. They can form a security community where states rather cooperate. However, constructivists don't exclude struggle for power⁷ or violence. Furthermore, Alexander Wendt replacing the materialistic view of structural change⁸ by cultural change, maintains that the current structure of the international system is of Kantian culture⁹. And finally, that the great power war in the 21st century is unthinkable given the destructive potential of nuclear arsenals, or in other words the theory of nuclear revolution.¹⁰

Alternatives to main effects of the ultimate deterrent are recent pieces from Graham Allison¹¹, John Mearsheimer¹², Daniel Geller¹³, Gratzke and Kroening¹⁴, Beardsley and Asal¹⁵, Benjamin Miller¹⁶ and Koffman and Sushentsov¹⁷ which are amongst a long list of scholars addressing the possibility of great power war in 21st century. Not with standing a quality of abovementioned literature, all research studies referring to the subject of this research are either lacking observation of great powers behavioural patterns under proposed counter-arguments, or are too case-based, what makes them applicable only to selected situations. On the other hand, this study tests the most prominent theories of peace valid in 21st-century scholars, while puts those into contradiction with three theoretical counter-arguments outlined in the research. Base to this study is, therefore, more wide theoretical approach applicable in a vast variety of conflicting situations. Counter-arguments outlines that once structural disbalance occurs, the fear starts to fuel uncertainty and such combination makes states prone to activate their survival mode and sometimes even act irrationally and go to war. Combining these counter-arguments are making great power war thinkable even in the nuclear age. This suggestion will be proved in the paper by testing main theories of peace in the 21st century while proving the window of opportunity for eventual major war by a historical method and putting counter-arguments to work. Cases in the study must obtain both ultimate deterrent and counter-arguments. Therefore, the cases studies are analysing conflicts, where occurred structural disbalance, which fuelled uncertainty and uncertainty led to the activation of survival mode and even irrational behaviour. While there was a present high degree of economic interdependence, international institutions, common identity and logic of mutually assured destruction. Thus, presented cases will be the Crimean War and World War I. since both wars erupted despite a high degree of economic interdependence, institutional relations and common identity. However, given the latest developments in international relations such as global Kantian culture, the new model of international institutions and the existence of nuclear weapons, there is a need for more contemporary cases. Therefore, the case of the Russo-Georgian War will be additionally analysed in the paper.

2. Testing the Theories of Peace

Since the article refers to possibly unclear terms, there is a need for clarification of those. By great power, war is meant a hegemonic war, which is the war involving at least two or more framing powers and its purpose is to maintain or change the current distribution of power in the structure of the international system.¹⁸ The term framing powers is referring to major powers, which actions are affecting the nature of relations between actors at the systemic level. Since the hegemonic war in the paper is addressed as war out breaking from the disparity in the distribution of power, there are two kinds of framing or major powers in the system. While the established powers are reflecting the current status quo and distribution of power in the structure, the rising, or periphery powers are representing challengers to the current status quo.

The article observes chain of economic interdependence suggesting the establishment of organisations uniting interdependent actors, while those are creating common cultural identity and norms of international society. These three notions all together are supposed to create a very strong deterrent and accompanied by destructive potential thus irrationality of nuclear war, are forming the ultimate deterrent. Therefore, the following part will be dedicated to the theoretical analysis of components of the ultimate deterrent and case studies of its effectivity on cases of the Crimean War, World War I. and War in Georgia.

3. Economic Interdependence Theory

Economic interdependence theory is a prominent liberal notion that trade promotes peace through communication and transnational ties that increase understanding amongst societies and the potential for cooperation.¹⁹ According to Russett, wealth makes peace.²⁰ Most of the theory proponents argue that highly developed

⁵ For proponents of economic interdependence theory see Friedman, McMillan, Nye

⁶ For proponents of institutionalism see Keohane, Ruggie, Mandelbaum

⁷ Or rather struggle for authority in hierarchical structures- in Finnemore (2013)

⁸ Redistribution of material capabilities; redistribution of power or structural disbalance

⁹ Wendt. A. s.314

¹⁰ For proponents of nuclear revolution theory see Waltz, Schelling, Jervis

¹¹ ALLISON, G. 2017. *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. ISBN 978-0544935273

¹² Chapter „Can China Rise Peacefully?‘ in „Tragedy of Great Power Politics‘

¹³ GELLER, D. S. 2017. *Nuclear Weapons and International Conflict: Theories and Empirical Evidence*. OXFORD University Press.

¹⁴ GRATZKE E.; M. KROENING. 2009. *A Strategic Approach to Nuclear Proliferation*. Journal of Conflict Resolution.

¹⁵ BEARDSLEY, K.; V. ASAL. 2009. *Winning the Bomb*. Sage Journals.

¹⁶ MILLER, B. 1994. *Polarity, Nuclear Weapons, and Major War*. Security Studies 3:4

¹⁷ KOFFMAN M.; A. SUSHENTSOV. 2016. *What Makes Great Power War Possible*. Valdai Club.

¹⁸ 'a hegemonic war is the ultimate test of change in the relative standings of the powers in the existing system' Gilpin. 1981. s.198

¹⁹ McDonald, P. (2004). *Peace through Trade or Free Trade? The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48(4), 547-572. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4149808>

capitalists' democracies are less likely to go to war. A similar notion is presented in case of economic growth. Thus, war is causing damage to trade relations and the economy itself. Therefore, states aiming to strive economically are less prone to start a war. In sum, Russett's wealth-makes-peace argument is closely related to the one that transnational interests of trade and investment make peace.²¹

Economic interdependence theory, therefore, claims that states which economies are highly interconnected and thus interdependent are prone to maintain peaceful relations even at times of great political differences. Theory pronounces rationality of actors who are rather focused on absolute gains from immediate economic cooperation than on relative gains²² from maximising their power even with coercive means on the expense of others.

Liberal proponents of this theory also maintain that the high rates of interdependence amongst states increase capabilities of those to cripple their peer competitor's economy in times of crises. It is due to coercive economic policies such as sanctions. Since such actions can have a two-sided effect when first is to scare off the opponent with costs of potential war and the latter effect shows a willingness to risk those costs²³.

In sum, liberal peace theories rooted in economic cooperation and dependence on foreign trade are presuming, that states as rational actors will focus on absolute gains from the current trade rather than to escalation of tensions over the disputed issue. Thus, for states is waging war an irrational way how to maximise power in time of capitalistic global market economy.

4. Institutionalism

Liberal institutionalism²⁴ is the main theoretical framework observing the impact of institutions on the peaceful environment in international relations. The approach has been developing hand-in-hand with economic interdependence theories, and these two theories are often considered as one in the scientific literature. However, there are two branches of institutionalism needed to distinct. First, liberal institutionalism based on materialistic perceptions²⁵ of costs and benefits gained through net cooperation. Liberal institutionalists argument goes that cooperation is essential in the world of economic interdependence. Thereby, shared economic interests create demand for international institutions and rules. Therefore, the liberal branch is tightly connected to interdependence. Robert Keohane offers a view that contemporary international relations are rather based on the system of institutional cooperation than the alliances based on the actual balance of power. Liberal perspective maintains that states will rather choose absolute benefits from the actual trade amongst partners than going to conflict following relative gains. There is also partial to this argument that institutions serve as a platform for settling conflicts and fostering cooperation, which helps to prevent conflicts.

The second branch is idealist's notion presented mostly by constructivists.²⁶ This approach perceives institutions as promoters of multilateralism. The main deterrent is an idea of common identity shared through institutions and regulated by norms.

Proponents of institutionalism are primarily focusing on the ability of institutions to enhance cooperation amongst states and settlement of disputes.²⁷ In theory, International Organizations reduce the risk of war between belligerents by improving communication, facilitating cooperation, and building confidence and trust.²⁸ Some scholars even consider institutions as the bedrock of peaceful international cooperation, while the main deterrent of institutions is the multilateral system of norms regulating relations and preventing war.²⁹

5. Common Identity

Ideas of identity and community are common to constructivists school. As demonstrated above, economic cooperation creates interdependence and interdependent actors gather in institutions to maximise the effectivity of their cooperation, or to create a bigger block able to compete with more powerful actors. Finally, institutions foster a common identity and form communities regulated through norms and multilateralism. The very notion of identity influential role to international relations is not excluding terms such as violence, the struggle for power, or military conflicts. However, the notion which suggests rather peaceful relations amongst states is the idea of three cultures³⁰ presented by Alexander Wendt. Most specifically, the Kantian culture, based on ideas of collective security is accordingly peaceful. The whole construct goes that there is also the idealist's perspective besides materialist's view of international relations.³¹ Thereby, the world of ideas shapes anarchy³² and international relations. According to constructivists, ideas are shaping communities, and these are connecting. Likeminded communities are forming institutions and norms to strengthen their

²⁰Russett, Bruce, et al. *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*. Princeton University Press, 1993. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7rqf6. s.28

²¹ Russett s.28

²² Keohane.2005. s124

²³ Copeland s.31

²⁴ See Keohane (1984), Axelrod and Keohane (1985) and Ruggie (1993 and 1998)

²⁵ Robert Keohane, or David Mitrany

²⁶ See Ruggie; Karreth and Tir (2012)

²⁷ MEARSHEIMER.J.J.2018. s.211

²⁸ EDWARDS.M. S., J. M. DICICCO.2012. *International Organizations and Preventing War*. Oxford University Press.

DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.407

²⁹SANGHA.K.2011. *The Obsolescence of Major War: An Examination of Contemporary War Trends*. University of Victoria.

³⁰ Lockean, Hobbesian, Kantian

³¹ Liberalism, Realism

³²'The anarchy is what states makes of it.' Alexander Wendt

cooperation and order. And that is how the security community in the West has formed. Wendt is considering contemporary culture as Kantian from the 19th century, however, limited to the West.

Nonetheless, constructivists perceive the end of the Cold War as cultural, not structural change. Thus, the moment when Kantian culture has become a global phenomenon is the year 1989.³³

The constructivist's argument goes that common culture, in 21st century the Kantian one, unites like-minded nations to form institutions. These institutions are hierarchically organised and provide norms to the system to maintain order within.³⁴ Finnemore claims that order based on common culture is hegemonic ones, where struggles for power or rather struggles for authority could emerge. However, since these orders are bound by rules and formed in community³⁵, there is little need for the use of kinetic coercion. Coercion, therefore, is rather an exception in hegemonic order, necessary only against 'outsiders' who do not recognise the authority of hegemon³⁶ and to discipline wayward subordinates.³⁷

As already mentioned, constructivists do not exclude violence and struggle for power from international relations. However, their theory pays little attention to what do we call structural disbalance, because they perceive it as cultural change and thus, perceiving change through rather an ideational optic than the material redistribution of power.

Nonetheless, one might ask whether the ideas are driving notion behind the changes, or skilled elites understanding the power of idea using these to gain power. Anyway, regardless of constructivists arguments quality, there is also little said how Kantian culture order would react to one or more rising orders aiming to challenge its hegemony. Simply put, how western security community would react to Chinese and Russian efforts to create their own system based on their own identity.

6. Nuclear Revolution Theory

Nuclear arsenals have changed the qualitative understanding of great power war. The famous notion of Carl von Clausewitz about the continuation of politics by other means is no longer a rational option for politicians to resolve their disputes. Therefore, the logic of mutually assured destruction and great power war irrationality is stressed amongst all prominent thinking schools of international relations. The multi-paradigmatic character of nuclear arsenals destructive potential makes them the strongest deterrent amongst selected tools and the omnipresent threat for all leaders considering launching war on each other.

Realists scholars like Hans Morgenthau described the invention of nuclear weapons as 'perhaps the first true revolution in foreign policy since beginning the history.'³⁸ While Kenneth Waltz famously maintained the more nuclear weapons the bigger is chance for peaceful development in international relations. On the contrary, John Mueller, a liberal scholar, is denying the role of mutually assured destruction as a deterrent, because as he maintains the great power war is obsolete.

Nuclear arsenals have made all-out hegemonic war almost unthinkable. The nuclear revolution thesis maintains that there should be a general absence of war or the use of force short of war among nuclear-armed states. Besides, there is the expectation of few (or a diminishing number of) crises in nuclear dyads, as the fear of escalation will exert a powerful constraint on aggressive behaviour.³⁹

7. Case Studies

7.1. Crimean War 1854-1856

Crimean War aroused over trade straits of declining Ottoman Empire⁴⁰ amongst status quo powers- Russia against Great Britain and France on the side of Ottoman Turkey. All three status quo powers were parts to predominant pattern of great power relations after Napoleonic Wars institutionalised in Vienna System or Concert of Europe.⁴¹ All great powers during Vienna peace talks agreed on the non-violent balance of power politics, because of Napoleonic Wars destructive consequences. Therefore, the Vienna System could be qualified as an effort to formalise and thus institutionalise relations amongst great powers to maintain peaceful relations in Europe based on the balance of power logic.

The economic interdependence between Russia, Great Britain and France was mostly based on Russian exports to the West. Because Russian trade with Europe was crucial to the ongoing industrialisation of the country and dropped significantly on 38% of its former value during the war period. (see figure 1.)⁴² Nonetheless, Russia and Great Britain shared interests in maintaining Turkish straits safe so the goods from the Black Sea region could flow freely. Dependence of Britain on agricultural imports from the region was caused by Irish famine as a consequence of a disastrous harvest in the late 1840s. While Russia in efforts to hasten its industrialisation was funding process by increasing exports of its own goods.⁴³ Thereby, neither Great Britain or Russia shared interest in the outbreak of military conflict in the region.

³³ Wendt. S.314

³⁴ Finnemore M. J. Goldstein.

³⁵ Security community in our case

³⁶ Soviet Union; or contemporary China and Russia

³⁷ Lake A. David. 2013. Authority, Coercion and Power in International Relations. (in Finnemore and Goldstein 2013).

³⁸ Morgenthau. H. 1964. *The Four Paradoxes of Nuclear Strategy*, American Political Science Review 58 (March 1964): 23-3

³⁹ GELLER. D. S. 2017. s.8

⁴⁰ Also referred as „the sick man of Europe“

⁴¹ Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria and Prussia

⁴² Walter McK. Pintner. (1959). Inflation in Russia during the Crimean War Period. American Slavic and East European Review, 18(1), 81-87. doi:10.2307/3001047

⁴³ Copeland D. 355

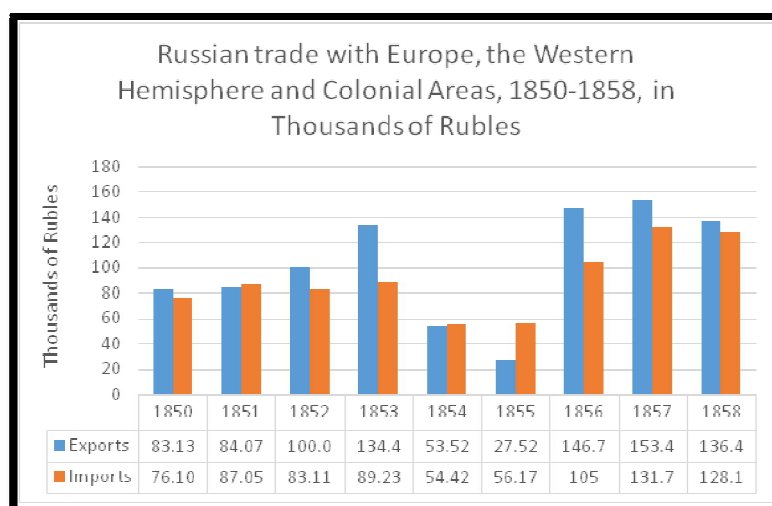


Figure 1

Source: Walter Mck. Pintner. (1959). *Inflation in Russia during the Crimean War Period*

As already mentioned, relations amongst the strongest actors had contours of the institution. All included powers also shared interests in lasting peace what could be base for the perception of Kantian culture. As Alexander Wendt maintains, the Kantian culture started to exist in the 19th century and was limited to the West. Therefore, European Concert qualifies for what constructivists label as a common identity.

The main reason of Crimean War outbreak was weakening Ottoman Empire. Power in retreat has caused structural disbalance. Another cause of structural disbalances was Russian slow pace in developments. Russian population grew rapidly, while the industrialisation was slow.⁴⁴ On the other hand, revisionists France wanted to take advantage of the situation by seeking an equal position with the Orthodox Church in the Holy Land. It caused fear of Russian czar Nikolai, who understood that if Russia would not interfere, it will send a sign of its weakness. It also could cause unrest amongst 12 million Orthodox believers in the Ottoman Empire⁴⁵ what would, eventually, lead to the collapse of an empire in decline. Thereby, chaos would occur during which stronger France and Britain could take over the Turkish straits vital to the industrialisation of the Russian Empire. Uncertain faith of Ottoman Empire which stability was crucial both to Great Britain agricultural consumption and Russian industrialisation, led both empires to a series of talks about the division of Ottoman Empire to prevent conflicts over its leftovers. Russia sought support for the treaty with Turkey which would support a superior Russian role in the region. The czar's goal was to keep France out of the area while avoiding an inadvertent clash of British, Austrian, and Russian forces. However, none of those talks was successful because anti-Russian hardliners in Great Britain thought that such a treaty would make the Ottoman Empire a vassal state to Russia, what would make Russia significantly powerful. Therefore, Great Britain persuaded Turkey to reject the treaty proposal, which led to Russian irrational action.

Russian czar uncertain about the integrity of the region caused fear of decline. Thus, he launched the occupation of Bessarabia and crushed the Turkish fleet at Sinope in 1853. All the actions were accompanied by a high degree of irrationality since Nikolai I. was certain about France's and Britain's reaction to war with Turkey. Thus, Britain and France, far stronger than Russia, crushed the czar's army in the Crimean campaign.

7.2. World War I. 1914-1918

One of the bloodiest wars in human history arose from the German quest for superiority in Europe. This case is used by many authors⁴⁶ who try to prove economic interdependence theory wrong. Indeed, economic interdependence amongst major actors was significant at the time. As table 1 points out foreign trade share to Great Britain's GDP was 43% in the period between 1905-1913, while German was 38,1% and French 53,7% during the same period.⁴⁷ However, most viable interdependence was paradoxically between the main rivals at the time- Britain and Germany. According to Paul Papayoanou, one-fifth of German raw material consumption was provided by the British Empire. Also, Britain was the main destination for German exports- 14,2%. In fact, the volume of trade between the two rivals was the second main contributor to Britain's GDP.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Kennedy P.1989. s172

⁴⁵ "There were ten to twelve million Orthodox Christians living in the Ottoman territories. The czar understood that any perception that Russia could no longer protect them would lead to Christian revolts across the Turkish Empire and the disintegration of the Turkish state, creating a direct threat to the straits—a threat he had been fearing since the mid-1820s. A formalized treaty would give the czar greater confidence that Russia's authority with Turkey's Christians would be maintained." Copeland s.350

⁴⁶ Allison (2014); Mearsheimer (2018); Kennedy (1989)

⁴⁷ Katzenstein, P. (1975). International Interdependence: Some Long-Term Trends and Recent Changes. *International Organization*, 29(4), 1021-1034. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706208>

⁴⁸ PAPAYOANOU, P. (1996). Interdependence, Institutions, and the Balance of Power: Britain, Germany, and World War I. *International Security*, 20(4), 42-76. doi:10.2307/2539042

	Date	Percent	Date	Percent	Date	Percent
Great Britain	1837-1845	21.6	1909-1913	43.5	1924-1928	38.1
France	1845-1854	18.0	1905-1913	53.7	1920-1924	51.3
Germany	1872-1879	36.7	1911-1913	38.3	1925-1929	31.4
United States	1834-1843	12.9	1904-1913	11-0	1919-1928	10.8

Table 1: Ratios of Foreign Trade to GDP

Source: Katzenstein, P. (1975). *International Interdependence: Some Long-Term Trends and Recent Changes*

The period before World War I. is considered as part of the abovementioned Vienna System. The balance of power logic pattern of relations amongst European powers was not able to prevent conflict on a global scale. One might argue, that the Vienna System was not a real institution and balance of power is working only when its logic matches interests of the strongest actors. Therefore, it might be useful to bring up institutional relations based on the principle of collective security before World War II. If compared, many similarities would occur in events foretelling the bloodiest conflicts in the modern-day era, while the approaches supposed to contain potential aggressors were principally different. Thus, neither the Vienna System based on the balance of power or League of Nations based on collective security could not prevent the very same structural dynamics prevent to outbreak in conflict.

Identity of the European powers prior to World War I. was pretty much the same. Western imperialism fuelled by capitalism if used materialist's vocabulary, or in idealist one Kantian culture. Tight bonds between ruling elites were common for this period. Therefore, it is to no surprise that the British king George V. was an uncle of German Kaiser Wilhelm I.⁴⁹

Structural disbalance at the time caused a rapid growth of Germany and the USA, while the British Empire was in relative decline. The main structural problem was the fact that the only actor what could contain expansionist Germany was strictly isolationist USA. Great Britain, however, put a lot of efforts in containing Germany- this rivalry has cost Britain its influence in Western Hemisphere because it could not cope both with the growth of Germany and USA in different regions.

Therefore, if used John's Mearsheimer terminology, the structure was unbalanced multipolarity. Thus, structure with the presence of potential hegemon- Germany. This layout is causing uncertainty amongst established powers, mostly because of the power potential of rising power. Therefore, Great Britain saw growing might be of Germany, which caused uncertainty about the future of the Empire. German rapid development of fleet fostered uncertainty in Britain.⁵⁰

Austrian declaration of war on Serbia has led to a chain reaction based on uncertainty and fuelled by fear for survival. Because if Austria together with Germany would conquer Balkans and defeated Russia their power capabilities would be far one-fifth than those of Britain and France together. Thereby, it would lead to German hegemony in continental Europe and easy to challenge the British position or even threaten its existence.

8. Russo-Georgian War 8.8.2008-16.8.2008

Prelude to this war was a shift in Georgian political discourse which became pro-Euro-Atlantic aiming to become part of NATO and EU. This new reality has led to structural disbalance on the regional level, provoked countermeasures conducted by Russia and fear of Georgia. Both countries have significant economic relations. For instance, Russian import to Georgia was second largest with 11% in 2007- a year prior to the war. While most of the Georgian import were strategic goods from Russia such as petroleum and wheat.⁵¹

Both countries were members of international institutions, namely the United Nations (UN), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, while Georgia took over of regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia invaded disputed regions despite the fact, that together with Russia are members of OSCE and were maintaining peacekeeping mission in demilitarised zones under the supervision of the abovementioned organisation. Finally, both countries were a former Soviet republic, which indicates that besides shared institutions, membership in the security community, they also shared a great deal of identity.

One might ask about the logic of mutually assured destruction in this case. Such logic was in place since NATO-backed Georgia. The country led by president Saakashvili received amounts of military material from NATO members as well as public support in media outlets.⁵² If NATO would have decided to defend Georgia, the war between nuclear power and nuclear alliance might be considered as an option. Therefore, the MAD logic took its part as well.

Structural disbalance was in place since Georgian president Saakashvili decided to make a U-turn from the pro-Russian course, by letting NATO enter the Caucasus region- a border region of Russia. Therefore, the regional structure was in disbalance, which caused uncertainty on both Russian and Georgian side. Russia, uncertain about NATO intentions in its border territory, acted to counter NATO influence. In Georgia, these actions caused uncertainty fuelled by fear about future Russian intentions. It is hard to say whether president Saakashvili acted in fear of its survival, or blind faith, that

⁴⁹ Allison. S.250

⁵⁰ German fleet became from sixth largest the second largest in the world within 20 years. Paul Kennedy

⁵¹ Source OEC https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/import/geo/rus/show/2007/

⁵² Haas.M. 2009. NATO-Russia Relations after the Georgian conflict.

https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20090000_cscp_artikel_mhaas.pdf

NATO would join his efforts to cease Russian hostilities. However, both calculations were irrational since he attacked nuclear power aiming to drag the nuclear alliance into the conflict.

War resulted in the decisive defeat of the Georgian army and declaration of independent republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Nonetheless, the outcome is that once the states feel their survival is at stake, no institutional obstacles can restrain them from preserving their sovereignty. Even more, once states feel their survival is at stake, they can pursue irrational policies, such as occupying territories with resulting in armed conflict with nuclear power.

9. Grasping the Ultimate Deterrent

Evaluation of research results points out that in all cases were main arguments of peace theory at work to a certain degree and in various combinations. In all three cases was economic interdependence at work. Russia launched the war on Turkey knowing that connections with other imperial powers were crucial to its development.⁵³ Prior to World War I. German economy depended on supplies of crude iron ore from France, while most of its export-led to Great Britain. Yet, Wilhelm in Germany chooses an expansive course. Georgia imported strategic goods from Russia and yet choose to become a part of NATO and the EU. Georgian leadership must have been sure about the provocative nature of its move and despite all that president, Saakashvili ordered an attack on disputed territories, what led to the war. Georgian imports from Russia has dramatically dropped during the war and its GDP with it.

Institutional part of the ultimate deterrent was also active in all three cases, but a different meaning. While in the first two cases, the European powers were part of semi-institutionalised Vienna system based on the balance of power logic. However, the logic of collective security had failed prior to World War II. when League of Nations and Briand-Kellogg Pact did not help to prevent the bloodiest conflict in recorded history. The third case observes regional power and small actor on purpose. Both actors were members of number trade, intergovernmental and security organisations, which could not prevent the war from starting. It seems that institutions can be effective in solving civil wars or wars between minor actors, but once there is great power politics on the table, institutions are becoming just minor components in the structure. Idealists component of the ultimate deterrent has two levels. First is that Kantian culture supposedly most peaceful one, which was present throughout all cases in the paper. Not to mention the fact that the European powers from the 19th century until the end of WW I. shared imperial identity and most of their ruling elites were relatives. The second level is shared identity and relationship regulated through norms and institutions, and this was the case of Georgia and Russia. Both were former Soviet republics and shared post-soviet identity through CIS, OSCE and tight economic relations. Yet, the security interests in the case of Russia and future welfare prospect in case of Georgia were more important than the identity, or current cultural orientation. In this case, has occurred also matter of MAD. Georgia in its reckless attack probably counted with broader help from NATO. However, broader engagement of NATO would mean boots on the ground, which could lead to war between nuclear power and nuclear alliance. Therefore, Saakashvili must have been well aware of this basic fact and yet he irrationally invaded disputed territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia relying on help from NATO, which came in a very limited scope.

In sum, the theories of peace area certainly strong deterrent, but as historical analysis points out, there are examples when these could not deliver on desired outcomes. Thus, one might ask why such anomalies in states behaviour can occur, when there are such strong deterrents at work? It is clear that economic interdependence and institutions are deepening cooperation amongst states, but as history and recent practice point out these two components cannot prevent great powers from aiming at the bigger claim from international distribution of power, when there is an opportunity to do so. The very similar claim makes Robert Gilpin in his piece war, and Change in World Politics and qualitative research of the power redistribution is further developed in Power Transition Theory introduced by Organski and Kugler. As well as economic interdependence and international institutions cannot prevent the great powers from being suspicious about the intentions of other actors, especially rivals of theirs. And finally, it is completely clear that they cannot guarantee that one's sovereignty will be preserved, or justice will prevail. Quite the opposite, as the case of Russo-Georgian war, points out the big ones benefit on the expense of small ones, and this sometimes includes even sovereignty. Therefore, as John Mearsheimer correctly points out, the best strategy for survival is to become as powerful as possible.⁵⁴ However, such behaviour causes uncertainty fuelled by fear about the future intention of powerful actors, which leads other actors to pursue the same power maximising strategies. It was the case of German pursuit for power prior to World War I. Therefore, such spiral creates a predisposition for future clashes no matter the high degree of economic interdependence or shared seats in several institutions.

The second level of counter-argument represents uncertainty during the structural disbalance with a high degree of economic interdependence. Uncertainty could be represented in two ways. First, is focus on relative gains and therefore uncertain results of prepared economic, or military expansion.⁵⁵ While second is the concept of fear represented by the uncertainty of other actors' intentions. Uncertainty is fuelled by fear, especially at times of structural disbalances when it gives way to calculations about future conflicts and starts arms races with increasing tensions.⁵⁶ Great Britain at the brink of WW I. could have chosen deep economic ties with Germany instead of joining France and Belgium in summer of 1914.

⁵³ Dale Copeland in his book *Economic Interdependence and War* examines his theory of trade expectation. He took liberal argument of economic interdependence and putted it upside down. In short, he claims that states are in some cases willing to risk a war in order to secure higher trade incomes. Case of Crimean War was to a good part clash over the future trade incomes, but both Russia and Britain were dependent on Turkish straits and yet Britain supported revisionists French position, which was based upon dividing territories of Ottoman Empire in decline.

⁵⁴ Mearsheimer.2008. s.138

⁵⁵ EDWARD D. MANSFIELD, BRIAN M. POLLINS.2003. *Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate*. Michigan Publishing. ISBN 978-0-472-09827-9. s.137

⁵⁶ JERVIS, R. 2017. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics: New Edition*. Princeton University Press. ISBN 978-0691175850 s. 175

However, on the contrary to the Franco-Prussian war⁵⁷, during which Great Britain was representing non-interested observer watching Prussia becoming Germany on the expense of France, the WW I was arising from structural disbalance and high level of uncertainty about future of European status quo. In other words, fear from unknown⁵⁸ arising from structural disbalance always trumps economic cooperation represented by absolute gains.

The relative threat to the actor's survival always trumps absolute gain from economic cooperation. An interesting example offers World War II, following and during which many of U.S businesses invested vast money into Nazi Germany. Some of them were Ford, General Motors, Texaco Oil and IBM. Yet, the American government was offering loans and material help to Great Britain and France, while American companies continued in lively cooperation with Germany until it did not declare war on the U.S and started the submarine campaign against U.S trade ships in Atlantic. Months following the U.S companies ceased business with Nazis either willingly or forced by government sanctions. In sum, U.S companies were profiting from business with Nazi Germany until its survival was at stake. Earlier, the U.S kept balancing structural disparity through loans and material help to allies, while they gave way to potential economic cooperation with Germany⁵⁹. But structural disbalance opened the way for Japan's and Germany's speculations about the future role of U.S in World War II and therefore, occurred an uncertainty. Thereby, they tried to contain possible U.S campaign against them with launching a preventive war. This war led the U.S to activate the survival mode and to end all economic ties with Nazi Germany forcibly. This logic also counts the opposite way, since Germany declared war on the U.S, despite the vast American investments. Because of uncertainty about its future in case of U.S would join the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France in war efforts. In this case, uncertainty led Germany to worry about its survival and to act irrationally. Considering that the U.S did not declare war on Germany after Japan conducted an attack on Pearl Harbor and it is not clear if it whether would ever do- if it was not of Germany who declared war first. Therefore, once the states feel their survival is at stake, the economic ties are less important and sometimes even make irrational choices.

All cases in the presented study point out the low reliability of institutional constraints. Either semi-institutional relations based on the balance of power logic or highly institutional relations based on collective security and multilateralism are too limited in the scope of their counter actions, that these cannot do anything without broad consensus and the bigger the actor is, the lesser impact institutions have. As it turned out, institutions cannot prevent disbalances in structure as well as they cannot prevent the rise of periphery powers. Simply because, institutions are just structural components of power distribution established by framing powers, or actors with similar interests at the time. Once the structure ceases to reflect reality in the distribution of power, the functionality of such components is reduced to the sphere of influence of actors which has formed these. The World War II and first attempts of institutionalised collective security through League of Nations and Briand-Kellogg Pact from 1928 were the first to test of this theory applied to hegemonic war. Once both Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany were on the rise, no institutional obstacle could prevent those from following its interests. Thus, there were no obstacles for Germany to start the war, as well as there are no real obstacles represented by institutions for great powers to follow their interests and eventually start a war. Even as the lessons of 21st century from Georgia, Iraq, Libya and Syria points out, that shared values and identity in organisations, or vetoed resolutions in the United Nations Security Council does not represent an obstacle to framing powers to pursue their interests and even go to the war.

Sometimes institutions fail to address structural changes because they represent the old order which is about to change. Nonetheless, they even cannot prevent wars occurring from the relatively stable structure and concept of uncertainty is used as the main driver behind war efforts in the 21st century. For instance, domino theories are the most frequent examples of how institutions fail to prevent war when uncertainty is on the table. Domino theories are known from the Cold War era and have been used as justification for fighting wars and regime change. In short, these theories claim that if ongoing social change or policies of pursuing WMD's by the dictator of some minor regional power could potentially lead to regional, or even global scale turmoil against established powers.⁶⁰ Yet, despite lacking empirical data approving these theories, the main driver behind them may be fear caused by uncertainty. One of the most recent institutional failures of preventing conflicts on the base of uncertainty is 2003's Iraq war and incorrect information about its WMD's programs.

On the other hand, nuclear revolution theorists correctly argue, that given destructive arsenals of great powers all-out nuclear war between major powers is no longer possible. This absolute claim is hard to prove given hundreds of years of international relations practice which is violent. As well as the existence of nuclear arsenals that have not made great power competition obsolete. Case of Russo-Georgian War presented in the article is clear evidence of how nuclear power could engage in conflict with minor actor backed by the nuclear alliance.⁶¹ The local crisis erupted to new West-Russia rivalry on the grand scale. Downing of Russian fighter jet Su-24 by Turkey's F-16 in 2015 was the situation closest to the outbreak of major war according to Andrey Sushentsov.⁶² Therefore, it is clear that for the past 70 years, the great powers were involved in crises, which could have ended in a major conflict. However, the contemporary structure might end up in unbalanced multipolarity within a couple of years. This reality is for now unobserved phenomenon for international relations pundits.⁶³ Therefore, it is hard to say whether will violent great power competition prevail in

⁵⁷ War for German Unification

⁵⁸ Either fear concerning future survival, or intentions of others

⁵⁹ This logic is represented by Wohlforth and Copeland. States can choose whether they're satisfied with current status quo, or not and accordingly they're choosing cooperation, or conflict.

⁶⁰ See Walt (2018) or Mearsheimer (2018)

⁶¹ Very similar situation is currently happening in Ukraine

⁶² EurasianStrategiesConference. 2018

⁶³ Non-western nuclear power is challenging the status quo globally

structure with the U.S, China, Russia and possibly with India and Germany as framing powers. There is also a possibility of war between great powers led with conventional weapons or limited nuclear conflict. Contemporary great power relations are pointing at political warfare, or struggles led by hi-tech weapons and cyber warfare. Both options are already in motion and tensions are rising even though the structure has shifted from unipolar just recently.

In sum, presented theories of peace as the ultimate deterrent cannot always prevent great powers from maximising their share on power distribution and even create international crises involving other great powers. While three counter-arguments tested on main theories peace theories have proven, that structural disbalance and uncertainty fuelled by fear for survival can be labelled as possible catalysts of future great power war. However, the main claim of the paper was not to conclude, that great power war is inevitable, but to prove that all four theories of peace have cracks in their construct. As well as there is a certain pattern in the political behaviour of great powers, which foretell their future aggressive behaviour, with possibly resulting in war. The pattern goes from structural disbalances, through uncertainty fuelled by fear to survival mode, which sometimes even makes states to act irrationally.⁶⁴

10. Implication of Findings

The realisation that the ultimate deterrent does not always imply the practice of international relations is not making great power war inevitable. All three theories are serving as background for peaceful cooperation amongst great powers at times of structural stability. Even at those times, can great power rivalries occur, but the balanced structure is relatively stable. However, the contemporary structure shows the first signs of future redistribution of power i.e. structural disbalance. Three prominent theories of international relations describe such events. These are theories of structural realism⁶⁵, hegemonic stability theory⁶⁶ and power transition theory⁶⁷. All three theories are pointing out the structural disbalance as the main driver for events leading to the outbreak of war. For instance, either John Mearsheimer or Graham Allison maintains that under certain conditions is hegemonic war in the 21st century possible.⁶⁸ All three theories are going along with the argument presented in article- when structural disbalances are causing uncertainty of major powers, their behaviour is being affected with possibly resulting in great power war. The main difference is that power transition theorists claim that it is rising power which causes great power war similarly with Grahams Allison's claim. While hegemonic stability theorists are adding an element of satisfaction of the status quo. Therefore, if great powers are satisfied with status quo and structural disbalance occurs, they won't try to change it. Structural realists agree that it is a combination of unbalanced structure and anarchy, which forces states to behave aggressively. Nonetheless, all three theories agree that it is structural disbalance which leads to great power war.

Structural disbalances are causing uncertainty of great powers. The uncertainty stems from the anarchical environment, which supports speculations over intentions of other actors.⁶⁹ Therefore, it is a lack of information that causes fear. However, this claim also justifies the claim of Russian political scientist Andrey Baykov who maintains that it is not only anarchic environment which gives way to speculations over intentions, but the same logic describes the behaviour of uncertain actors in the system with a clearly hierarchical structure. Thus, the concept of uncertainty is applicable also in internal politics, or even incorporate environment.

In sum, the lack of information about the intentions of others is causing uncertainty. Uncertainty is causing fear. Fear forces the states to become as powerful as possible. Once other actors see their peers becoming more and more powerful, they will fear their survival so they will try to cope with others. Subsequently, the states can start to fear about their survival; they act according to dictates of real politik and wars can occur. Sometimes, when survival is at stake, states act in an irrational way and can even launch a nuclear war.

However, no data are describing the behaviour of nuclear powers in unbalanced multipolarity during structural disbalance. Therefore, it is not completely safe to say that nuclear powers won't launch a war against each other. Also, there is a possibility for conventional conflict or limited nuclear war. Or as Koffman and Sushentsov argue, future great power war will be led through cyber, economical, space, specs-op, informational and hi-tech modern warfare⁷⁰, very similar to this definition is also term the political warfare⁷¹, which for now excludes hi-tech warfare and adds regional conflict. Nonetheless, these notions point out that great powers are engaging in crises and the structural disbalance is giving way to clashes between major powers. Interests start to cross and sooner or later they clash over them. Classic signs of structural disbalances are regional clashes of great powers or proxy wars. For instance, the events foretelling the World War II were regional conflicts between established and rising powers such as Japanese Invasion to Manchuria (1931), War in Ethiopia (1935) and Spanish Civil war (1936). These conflicts had the same feature of structural disbalance, giving way to rising powers to challenge the current status quo in the disputed area. Yet, under the threat of nuclear war, major powers are engaging such conflicts in the 21st century and that is simply because of structural disbalances. During the Yugoslavian war, Russian Federation was a relatively silent witness of the destruction of its former ally, while during the Iraq war Russia vetoed resolution approving 'boots on the ground' solution and during the Syrian war, Russia directly

⁶⁴I assume that the principal motive behind great-power behaviour is survival. In anarchy, however, the desire to survive encourages states to behave aggressively' Mearsheimer.2008. s.54

⁶⁵ See Waltz, Walt

⁶⁶ See Gilpin, Wohforth

⁶⁷ See Kugler and Organski

⁶⁸Limited only to region; non-nuclear war; misunderstanding leading to crisis; technological error

⁶⁹ Moreover, because states operate in an anarchic system, there is no night watchman to whom they can turn for help if another great power attacks them. Although anarchy and uncertainty about other states' intentions create an irreducible level of fear among states that leads to power-maximizing behavior, they cannot account for why sometimes that level of fear is greater than at other times.

⁷⁰ KOFFMAN M.; A. SUSHENTSOV.2016. s.9

⁷¹ RAND CORPORATION.2018. *Modern Political Warfare: Current Practices and Possible Responses*. Rand Corporation. ISBN 978-0-8330-9707-1

intervened to protect its ally. It is eminent, that while the structure was unipolar and the U.S was undisputed leader, Russia couldn't defend its interests. However, the 21st century has brought structural changes and the world is no longer clearly unipolar⁷², while Russian status has been resurrected back to one of framing powers. That makes Russia capable of confronting U.S interests in areas of their ones. The structural argument, therefore, gives way framing powers to confront each other.⁷³ Structural disbalances and an increasing number of confrontations in the structure are then giving way leaders to start calculations involving their own survival, or power maximisation, what creates a certain degree of uncertainty, which sometimes leads to irrational choices.

During Cold War, catalysat or of survival mode, uncertainty, has been relatively reduced through a system of bilateral non-proliferation and arms control treaties, which served as a framework for security architecture between the Soviet Union and the United States. Thereby, these treaties were reducing second thoughts of world leaders on preventive strike-through eliminating selected kinds of the arsenal, de-arming certain regions, or just reducing strategic arsenals of opposing sides. However, the Cuban Missile crisis points out how close to nuclear war were two superpowers during that time. It was placing the American missile systems in Italy and Turkey, which led Soviets to erase U.S strategic advantage and build a missile base on Cuba. Initially, it was the uncertainty of USSR about U.S intentions that activated survival mode, during which Soviets placed their missiles on Cuba. These events provoked the reaction of the U.S, bringing the world on the brink of nuclear war. In other words, the U.S activated their survival mode. The wise decisions of then leaders have adverted all threats of nuclear war. However, these events are a constant reminder of how easy the world can witness the beginning of the potential nuclear war as well as fact, that nuclear powers also engages in crises.⁷⁴

In the case of previously mentioned Russo-Georgian war, it was structural disbalance caused by NATO which started to back Georgia. This structural disbalance created tensions and uncertainty about the future of border territories and the security environment in the region. The outcome was an irrational attack of a small country on territories guarded by peacekeeping forces of nuclear power. If NATO would enter the conflict, a situation could escalate into an all-out war between nuclear power and nuclear alliance. A very similar scenario is ongoing in Ukraine today. Indeed, nuclear arsenals have eliminated the second thoughts of solving great power competition by armed conflict. However, examples of Georgia-Russia war or contemporary Ukraine are pointing out, that states when uncertain about their future activates survival mode and sometimes even act irrationally. In fact, they mostly act irrationally in their efforts to drag great powers allies to reckless attacks on other great powers area of interests. Georgia and Ukraine have NATO support and probably calculating with its full-scale support in order to contain Russia, even in situations when they act aggressively. Not to mention events such as intentionally shooting down of Russian fighter jet Su-24 by Turkey's F-16 in 2015. If Russia, in retaliation, would declare war on Turkey, we would find ourselves in the war between NATO and Russia. Such animosities sometimes occur, and it is mostly about the evaluation of political and military elites how do they react. Finally, the USA in its latest Nuclear Posture Review⁷⁵ reserves right of using nuclear weapons even in cases of high conventional threat and in cases their allies are under attack. Notwithstanding the fact, the U.S has never adopted the policy of 'no first use'. All these facts are making the hegemonic war between nuclear powers thinkable even in the 21st century.

The pattern of great powers political behaviour, therefore, makes way for its future use in analysing of events involving the strongest actors in the system. It is obvious that structural disbalances does not occur very often, but when they do it is accompanied by a high degree of fear and uncertainty and it is certain, that states will fear about their survival, what makes them act aggressively. Therefore, the observed chain of counter-arguments proves its capability to enhance future great power rivalries and even wars.

11. Conclusion

This study has proven that peace theories represented as the ultimate deterrent are not answering to all questions of great power war obsolesce. Yet, they form a strong argument for why great power war has not occurred in the past 74 years. However, these facts have not stopped great powers engagement in rivalries and violent crises. As well as the structural disbalances leads to uncertainty, which activates survival mode, in which as we could observe, states sometimes act irrationally. Thereby, the three of four proposed theories are prone to fail in situations of structural disbalance in a high degree of uncertainty, while the fourth one has made, even theoretically, hegemonic war hard to imagine, but still possible. In practice, they are conflicting situations when great power war could erupt already happened. Fortunately, leaders correctly evaluated the situation and wisely adopted policies avoiding direct great power confrontation on the battlefield.

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⁷² Probably the best way how to define current structure is starting shift from unipolarity to unbalanced multipolarity with U.S supremacy

⁷³ However, Beardsley and Asal (2009a, p. 251) also note that the 'restraining effect of nuclear weapons on violent aggression does not appear to affect the propensity for actors to engage each other in general crises, in contrast with the expectations of ... the 'nuclear revolution' model. .'

⁷⁴ See Gilpin 1988

⁷⁵ NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW.2018. Office of The Secretary of Defense. Washington. Online: <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>

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