The Security Curve and the Structure of International Politics

A Neorealist Synthesis

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Do states seek to maximize power or security? Do they balance or bandwagon? These questions are at the core of realist theory, and both have significant consequences for policymaking. Why, for example, have countries not balanced against the United States since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War? Is balancing likely as new powers rise over the next few decades? What strategy should the United States pursue to protect its primacy? Answers to these questions depend on one's views about the role of power, security, and balancing in the international system.

Observers have debated the power-security nexus since Thucydides.[1] There are three main contemporary realist theories on this subject. In the offensive realist camp, John Mearsheimer and others contend that states have a structural incentive to accumulate power.[2] Proponents of defensive realism support Robert Art's observation that "most states most of the time" enjoy a certain degree of security;[3] therefore, seeking power by pursuing expansionist policies can often be futile or, worse, self-defeating.[4] A third school, which I call "uni-

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1. Alcibiades' speech before the Sicilian expedition is consistent with offensive realist arguments. See Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (London: Longmans, Green, 1874), pp. 413–420.
2. John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001). See also Eric J. Labs, "Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer 1997), pp. 1–49; Colin Elman, "Extending Offensive Realism: The Louisiana Purchase and America's Rise to Regional Hegemony," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (November 2004), pp. 563–576; and Glenn H. Snyder, "Mearsheimer's World—Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security: A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Summer 2002), pp. 149–173.
3. Robert J. Art, "The Role of Military Power in International Relations," in B. Thomas Trout and James E. Harf, eds., *National Security Affairs: Theoretical Perspectives and Contemporary Issues* (New York: National Strategy Information Center, 1982), p. 14.
4. On defensive realism, see, for example, Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (October 1997), pp. 171–201; Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 485–507; Joseph M. Grieco, *Cooperation among Nations: Europe, America, and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as

polar realism," argues that the concentration of power in one state discourages aggression and preserves the stability of the system.[5]

The question of whether states balance or bandwagon dates to a speech entitled "For the Megalopolitans,"[6] and it remains an important issue in contemporary debates. In his seminal work, *Theory of International Politics*, Kenneth Waltz contends that states balance against power.[7] In contrast, Stephen Walt argues that they balance against threat, but he agrees with Waltz that they rarely bandwagon.[8] Historian Paul Schroeder denies that balancing, however defined, is the most common option.[9] Randall Schweller claims that neither power nor threats but interests are key to understanding state behavior.[10]

Waltz once made a statement that may help to clarify the matter: "Excessive weakness may invite an attack that greater strength would have dissuaded an adversary from launching. Excessive strength may prompt other states to increase their arms and pool their efforts against the dominant state."[11] Waltz's observation implies a parabolic relationship between power and security,

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Self-Help," in Benjamin Frankel, ed., *Realism: Restatements and Renewal* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. 122–163; Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 2001/02), pp. 128–161; and Matthew Rendall, "Defensive Realism and the Concert of Europe," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (July 2006), pp. 523–540.

5. See, for example, William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 5–41; and Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008). Brooks and Wohlforth are not the first to emphasize the stabilizing effects of the concentration of power. For earlier examples, including supporters of hegemonic stability theory and the power transition school, see Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958); A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); George Modelski and William R. Thompson, *Seapower in Global Politics, 1494–1993* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); William R. Thompson, "Dehio, Long Cycles, and the Geohistorical Context of Structural Transition," *World Politics*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (October 1992), pp. 127–152; and Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, *The Great Powers and the Global Struggle, 1490–1990* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994).

6. Demosthenes, *The Olynthiac and Other Public Orations of Demosthenes* (London: Bohn, 1852), p. 207. Many scholars consider this speech the first explicit formulation of balance of power theory.

7. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

8. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).

9. See Paul Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 117–118.

10. Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 72–107. Schweller further refined his view in Randall L. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

11. Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), p. 616. Waltz has made the same point elsewhere, but it has gone unnoticed. See Kenneth N. Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 1990), p. 36.

a relationship postulated as a consequence of balancing. The state should accumulate enough power to deter opponents, but not so much that they feel compelled to take action against it. Increasing capabilities beyond a certain threshold can thus become self-defeating. To this parabola, I add a third section: bandwagoning. Sometimes a state can amass so much power that no other state, or group of states, can defeat it. The only option, then, is to bandwagon with it.

In this article, I describe a modified parabolic relationship between power and security that has three stages. In the first stage, any increase in a state's power represents an increase in its security, because states with more power can recruit allies and deter rivals. In the second stage, further increases in power begin to diminish the state's security, because the ongoing accumulation of capabilities causes allies to defect and opponents to mobilize. In the third stage, the state has amassed so much power that opponents have no choice but to bandwagon.

In the first section, I provide an overview of the neorealist debates on power and security, as well as on balancing and bandwagoning. I argue that neorealists' claims that only structural incentives determine states' behavior and that states always balance against power have impaired the development of structural theory. In the second section, I describe a modified parabolic relationship between power and security, the "security curve," which I argue better represents the structure of the international system. In the third section, I draw on a framework elaborated by sociologist Margaret Archer to investigate the role of state interaction in forming the balance of power. In particular, I consider the possibility that hegemonic states sidestep balancing by providing benefits to their opponents.

Structural Realism: The Case for Theoretical Underdevelopment

Scholars have provided numerous, often incompatible, answers to the following questions: Do states maximize power or security? And do they balance or bandwagon? There are two reasons for these differences. First, neorealist theory posits that structural incentives are constant. Second, neorealist scholars have conceptualized balancing as a behavior rather than as an outcome. Together, these problems have impaired neorealists' ability to further develop structural theory.

POWER AND SECURITY, OR THREE STRANDS OF NEOREALIST THOUGHT
How much power does a state need to be secure? According to offensive realists, the only way a state can guarantee its security is to accumulate as much

power as possible. Defensive realists, however, claim that increases in a state's capabilities can produce a decline in its relative power position, because rivals will respond by rearming.[12] Thus, instead of constantly seeking to increase their power, states will attempt to maintain their relative position vis-à-vis others.[13] Offensive realists counter that if this were true, security dilemmas would practically never occur.[14]

Both offensive and defensive realists consider structural incentives as constant. This results in overly simplified generalizations: states always attempt to maximize their power, or they always try to maintain their power position. Both formulations have their drawbacks. Offensive realists, for example, cannot explain instances when a state declines to exploit opportunities to increase its power and improve its relative position. Meanwhile, defensive realists seem unable to interpret states' expansionist policies in the absence of the external pressures they argue impose them. Predictably, both offensive and defensive realists claim that unit-level variables explain these anomalies. Thus, domestic variables can account for the rise of expansionistic policies,[15] as well as their absence.[16]

Offensive and defensive realists seem to agree that states will seek to balance an opponent that is increasing its power. (Offensive realists, however, argue that aggression can pay dividends, at least at the regional level.) In contrast, unipolar realists contend that the concentration of power in one state exerts a stabilizing influence in the international system.[17] This difference over the role of power allows realists to support balance of power theory on some occasions and preponderance theory on others. For example, Colin and Miriam Elman argue that evidence against Waltz's balancing proposition may be consistent with the power transition school.[18] This may be true, but then there is no way to disconfirm neorealism, because whether the outcome is balancing or prolonged hegemony, at least one version of realism is confirmed.[19] This, again,

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12. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," pp. 175–177.
13. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation," p. 500.
14. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics,* p. 417.
15. Jack L. Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).
16. Although defensive realism has been the main target of criticism, offensive realism appeals to unit-level variables as well. See, for example, Peter Thompson, "The Case of the Missing Hegemon: British Nonintervention in the American Civil War," *Security Studies,* Vol. 16, No. 1 (January–March 2007), pp. 96–105.
17. Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics;* and Organski and Kugler, *The War Ledger.*
18. Colin Elman, Miriam Fendius Elman, and Paul W. Schroeder, "Correspondence: History vs. Neo-realism: A Second Look," *International Security,* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 185–186.
19. See, for example, John Vasquez, "The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz's Balancing Proposition," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 91, No. 4 (December 1997), pp. 899–912; and Colin Elman and

highlights the problem of conceiving of structural incentives in only one way, that is, states always balance against power, or they always come to terms with it.

THE BALANCING PROPOSITION, OR BEHAVIOR VERSUS OUTCOME
Is it possible to identify broad political outcomes without describing their constituent parts? The answer has serious implications for understanding balancing and the balance of power. If State A balances against State B, which is increasing its power, while States C, D, and E do not, many scholars would claim that balancing has not occurred, because a majority of states chose not to balance. Some scholars would argue, however, that if State A counters State B with sufficient effort—that is, to restore an approximate balance with it—then the balancing mechanism was effective.[20]

The origins of this controversy date to *Theory of International Politics*, in which Waltz defends both interpretations of the balancing proposition without identifying the one he supports. In Waltz's volume, a latent contradiction exists between his exposition of the balance of power as an unintended outcome (chapter 6) and his exposition of the socialization and competition mechanisms (chapter 4). On the one hand, Waltz claims that the aim of his theory is to explain the recurrence of balancing independently of the policies that actors may implement.[21] On the other hand, in describing the processes of socialization and competition through which the structure operates, he greatly accentuates the uniformity of behavior forced upon states, suggesting a deterministic interpretation.[22]

For years, balancing as an unintended outcome remained a largely ambiguous concept and a difficult proposition to test. Whether supporters or critics of realism, scholars maintained that the balancing proposition refers to a regularity of behavior and should be tested accordingly. As noted above, Walt and

Miriam Fendius Elman, "Lakatos and Neorealism: A Reply to Vasquez," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 91, No. 4 (December 1997), pp. 923–926.
20. Kenneth N. Waltz, "Evaluating Theories," *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 91, No. 4 (December 1997), pp. 913–917; John A. Vasquez and Colin Elman, eds., *Realism and the Balancing of Power: A New Debate* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002); Susan B. Martin, "From Balance of Power to Balancing Behavior: The Long and Winding Road," in Andrew K. Hanami, ed., *Perspectives on Structural Realism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 61–74; and Marc Trachtenberg, "The Question of Realism: A Historian's View," *Security Studies,* Vol. 13, No. 1 (Autumn 2003), pp. 156–194.
21. Waltz writes, "Balance-of-power theory claims to explain the results of states' actions, under given conditions, and those results may not be foreshadowed in any of the actors' motives or be contained as objectives in their policies." Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 118.
22. "Socialization and competition," argues Waltz, "are two aspects of a process by which the variety of behaviors and outcomes is reduced." Ibid., p. 77.

Schweller sought to modify the balancing proposition,[23] but their critics consider their refinements mere terminological redefinitions that seek to rescue an essentially flawed theory.[24] Others have identified different kinds of balancing (i.e., economic, diplomatic, or military).[25] Still others doubt whether the balancing-bandwagoning dichotomy can explain the tremendous variation in state behavior.[26]

Scholars' conception of balancing as a behavior rather than an outcome has had important consequences for structural theory. The debate on balancing as a regularity of behavior greatly improved our understanding of the determinants of foreign policy. With regard to explaining systemic outcomes, though, the balancing debate has advanced little since the publication of *Theory of International Politics*. When seeking explanations for systemic outcomes, scholars seem to conceive of them merely as an aggregation of individual behaviors.[27]

International Structure Revisited

I argue that structural incentives change as a state moves along the power continuum. These incentives derive from trends in balancing and bandwagoning, which I place in the context of state power and security. As a state's power in-

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23. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances;* and Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).
24. Walt's and Schweller's critics reached this conclusion by evaluating the balancing hypothesis in terms of the regularity of behavior. See Vasquez, "The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs." See also Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 91–196.
25. See, for example, Mark R. Brawley, "The Political Economy of Balance of Power Theory," in T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 76–99; Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security,* Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 7–45; T.V. Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security,* Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 46–71; Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Hard Times for Soft Balancing," *International Security,* Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 72–108; and Kai He and Huiyun Feng, "If Not Soft Balancing, Then What? Reconsidering Soft Balancing and U.S. Policy toward China," *Security Studies,* Vol. 17, No. 2 (April 2008), pp. 363–395.
26. Other options include "hiding," "transcending," "buck-passing," "tethering," "hedging," "distancing," and "binding." See, for example, Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory," pp. 117–118; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization,* Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 137–168; and Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances: Proponents of Peace, Weapons of War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004).
27. Many scholars begin by inquiring about the nature of alliances, and then claim that the aggregation of states' alliance choices allows them to predict systemic outcomes. This tendency is evident in Walt's and Schweller's approaches, but it is also evident in the work of Patricia Weitsman. See Walt, *The Origins of Alliances;* Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances;* and Weitsman, *Dangerous Alliances.*

creases, its security increases—up to a point. When it becomes too powerful, the state triggers a balancing reaction that puts its security at risk. For a while, further increases in the state's capabilities reduce its security. At a certain point, however, the state has amassed such a vast concentration of capabilities that its rivals cease to balance and instead bandwagon with it. At first, the state's security increases, then decreases, and finally increases again. The power-security curve is therefore a modified parabolic function.

THE SECURITY THRESHOLD

I define "power" as a state's aggregate capabilities. By "security," I mean a state's probability of survival.[28] In different eras, different amounts of absolute power may produce the same level of security, whereas the same amount of absolute power may produce different levels of security. To identify an ideal-typical relationship between power and security, one must therefore consider relative, not absolute, power. In practical terms, this means that internal balancing must be considered relatively ineffective. I hypothesize that the relative power of a state varies, starting from near-zero levels and increasing steadily. I then ask what the consequences are for a state's security as its power increases.

The idea of a parabolic relationship between power and security is not new, but it has been more implicit than explicit in the literature.[29] When a state is weak, any increase in its power is a positive development for both the state and its partners. If the state lacks power, it is not an attractive partner because it cannot negotiate on an equal footing with its rivals. If the state's power in-

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28. This minimal definition is appropriate for ideal-typical purposes. Scholars have often credited Barry Buzan with opening the "black box" of security, though the debate that followed his contribution has had little impact on scholarship in the United States. See Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Brighton, U.K.: Wheatsheaf, 1983); Pál Dunay, Gábor Kardos, and Andrew J. Williams, eds., *New Forms of Security: Views from Central, Eastern, and Western Europe* (Brookfield, Vt.: Dartmouth Publishing Group, 1995); Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1997); and Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

29. As previously mentioned, Waltz claims that states should be neither too strong nor too weak. He made this argument when discussing security as the state's objective, so his intent was probably limited to illustrating the point that power maximization is at times self-defeating, and thus power is of little use as an ideal-typical goal. George Liska speaks of decreasing gains from power. This implies a parabolic relationship between power and its utility, not between power and security. Raymond Aron argues that at some point power maximization and security maximization diverge. In every system, an optimum level of force exists. Further strengthening eventually leads to a decline in a state's relative position, either because some allies defect and join the neutral side, or some neutrals decide to join the enemy camp. See Liska, *International Equilibrium: A Theoretical Essay on the Politics and Organization of Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957); Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966 [1961]); and Waltz, "Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory."

creases, the situation can only improve. Its allies will welcome the increase in their coalition's power, while adversaries will have to consider the ramifications for their security. At the same time, the adversaries will be unable to coalesce, because the coordination costs will still exceed the threat they are facing. Of course, the state that is amassing power will experience both positive and negative security externalities in relation to many, often unpredictable, foreign policy contingencies. In purely abstract terms, however, it is fair to suppose that the state will experience a positive aggregate outcome.

Beyond a certain point, the gains that a state accrues from further increases in its power will start to diminish. This result stems from a structural disequilibrium between allied relations, on the one hand, and relations with enemies and neutrals, on the other. When the state's coalition is able to effectively discourage aggression, its allies find that further increases in its power become gradually less useful. Meanwhile, the control that the major partner exercises over its allies becomes stronger. At some point, the game is no longer worth the candle for the allies: the threat posed by their enemies is relatively less significant than the threat of growing control posed by their major partner. In the meantime, neutral states begin to reflect on the costs of their neutrality, especially if one side should defeat the other, leaving them with little choice but submission.

Further increases in the major partner's power will exacerbate differences with its allies, and some will leave the alliance. The flow of defectors encourages the major power's rivals, which acquire new energy. Neutral states realize that the moment has come to take sides. The situation eventually reaches a tipping point, where further increases in the major state's relative power no longer compensate for the defection of its allies and the mobilization of neutral states into the enemy coalition. Further increases tilt the balance in favor of the major power's rivals, leaving the aspiring hegemon less secure than before. A parabola nicely illustrates the relationship between power and security that I have just described.

The apex of the parabola corresponds to an implicit concept in realist balance of power theory: the security threshold. This threshold represents the maximum amount of power a state can accumulate before further increases begin to reduce its security. The security threshold corresponds to the quantity of power that Waltz calls "appropriate" for a state to be secure in an anarchic international system. The concept of balancing necessarily implies that there is a maximum amount of power that a state can accumulate to achieve maximum security. Beyond that threshold, power maximization and security maximization become incompatible goals. Classical realists did not make this point ex-

plicitly, because they thought in terms of absolute, not relative, power.[30] Obviously, there is no amount of absolute power that can guarantee a state's security once and for all. The concept must be understood in a relative sense, so that it can accommodate the evolution of technology and the eventuality that an arms race could frustrate a state's expansionist efforts.

Redefining balance of power theory in terms of a parabolic relation between power and security has implications for the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning. Many scholars believe that the correct way to assess both concepts is to determine how many states balance and how many bandwagon. If more states balance, then balancing is the prevalent tendency; if more states bandwagon, then bandwagoning is prevalent.[31] This method of analysis is not without value; indeed it has given rise to fruitful discussions in the alliance literature. It is inappropriate, however, when considering systemic outcomes, which ought to be measured in terms of security. An example from the Napoleonic Wars illustrates this point.

During the Napoleonic Wars, many states practiced bandwagoning.[32] In 1809 Austria fought France almost alone.[33] During the Russian campaign, Russia stood alone against France (apart from the 1808–14 Peninsular War). In contrast, many countries bandwagoned with France, because they either feared reprisal or were attracted by the prospect of territorial aggrandizement (or both). But does it really matter? The actions of second-tier states, such as Denmark or the Kingdom of Saxony, have little impact on another state's security. The actions of first-rank powers, such as Austria, Britain, and Russia, however, can make a difference. It does not matter what the majority of states do, provided that others are willing to assume a greater burden. What matters is the net outcome in terms of security. At Austerlitz and Waterloo, for example, France's security was at stake. Despite many small states, and occasionally

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30. Hans Morgenthau, perhaps the most influential classical realist, was aware of this problem. As John Mearsheimer acutely observes, a careful reading of Morgenthau shows that he had a conception of relative, not absolute, power, although he did not develop this point. See Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 416; and Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978 [1948]).
31. As John Vasquez puts it, "Waltz's attempt to explain what he regards as the major behavioral regularity of international politics was premature because states simply do not engage in balancing with the kind of regularity that he assumes." Vasquez, "The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs," p. 910.
32. Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-realist Theory," pp. 120–121.
33. Austria would have preferred to be part of a coalition, but Prince Metternich returned from Paris with encouraging news, and his arguments won the day. See Gunther E. Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversary: Archduke Charles and the Austrian Army, 1792–1814* (London: Batsford, 1982), p. 122.

some great powers, deciding to bandwagon with France, French actions triggered reactions that repeatedly put the country's security at risk.

In assessing a firm's market performance, analysts do not count the number of goods sold. They look instead at its profits. Similarly, international relations scholars cannot measure systemic trends by counting the number of states that balance or bandwagon. States are very different in size, and sometimes a determined adversary may be more dangerous than a stronger, but less resolute, opponent. The real issue is the aggregate outcome in terms of security. In 1739–40 France was not overwhelmingly strong, but French security was at its apex.[34] In 1807 France was the strongest power, but its security was increasingly at risk.[35] In 1887 Germany was at the center of an intricate web of pacts and agreements that secured its position. In 1905 or 1908, it was much stronger than it had been at the time of Bismarck, but it no longer enjoyed the same level of security.

In the ascending phase of the parabola, increases in a state's power pay dividends. Some states will oppose the ascending state; others will bandwagon. In net terms, however, the state is more secure. In the descending phase of the parabola, a state's continued accumulation of power produces increasingly negative security externalities, as others begin to balance against the rising state. Bandwagoning is therefore the prevalent systemic outcome before the security threshold is reached, and balancing the prevalent systemic outcome after it is crossed. Thus, instead of counting the number of states that practice balancing or bandwagoning to determine the regularity of behavior, scholars should examine the net impact of these behaviors on the state's security.

This synthesis of traditional balance of power theory poses two problems. First, it seems contradictory that, at very high levels, as a state's relative power increases, its security declines. Second, if balancing had the status of law or quasi law, states would have internalized it long ago through the socialization and competition processes.[36] The history of European international politics would look substantially different than it does today. Instead of repeated hege-

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34. See Arthur Hassall, *The Balance of Power: 1715–1789* (Rivington, U.K.: Percival, 1896), p. 129; and Arthur McCandless Wilson, *French Foreign Policy during the Administration of Cardinal Fleury, 1726–1743* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. 346.

35. David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon: The Mind and Method of History's Greatest Soldier* (New York: Scribner, 1973 [1966]), pp. 593–594.

36. Two passages by Waltz illustrate this contradiction: "Sooner or later, usually sooner, the international status of countries has risen in step with their material resources." A little later, however, Waltz affirms that "hegemony leads to balance . . . through all of the centuries we can contemplate." See Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 66, 77. If hegemony inevitably leads to balancing, it is unclear why states should not limit their power themselves. This issue has led defensive realists to

monic challenges being repeatedly defeated, there would have been fewer wars and longer periods of peace during which states exerted greater self-restraint.

Balance of power theory describes only the initial part of the security curve. If states that practice balancing were to wage war against a would-be hegemon and win, then the balance would be restored. If they were to lose, or if the hegemon's rise were too rapid to allow effective opposition, then balancing would have failed. This "failure" is different from the balancing failure that Schweller attributes to political constraints on states that can sometimes prevent a prompt response to an external threat.[37] Here, I am referring to a structural mechanism that generates systemic outcomes, a global balancing failure similar to that described by Stuart Kaufman, Richard Little, and William Wohlforth in their examination of extra-European international systems.[38]

THE ABSOLUTE SECURITY THRESHOLD

Balancing makes sense as long as it has a theoretical possibility of success. When an aspiring hegemon's concentration of power becomes too great, however, balancing ceases to be possible. If a state were to become so powerful that it no longer feared its rivals, even if they were in a coalition, then opposing it would be useless. This hypothesis appears to drive William Wohlforth's analysis of U.S. unipolarity.[39] I refer to this concept as the "absolute security threshold,"[40] that is, the amount of relative power beyond which negative security externalities revert to being positive because balancing becomes impossible (see figure 1).

One could argue that when rivals pool their efforts to counter a hegemon, the hegemon's relative power position should decline. Although this is probably true, it is not always so. Sometimes the hegemon's latent power is simply too great, as the Macedonians and Romans demonstrated.[41] Aware of their limitations in the face of such preponderant adversaries, weaker states bandwagon with the hegemon, and the hegemon's security increases rapidly in

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rethink the traditional security dilemma. See Glaser, "Realists as Optimists"; and Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited."

37. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*.

38. Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little, and William Wohlforth, eds., *The Balance of Power in World History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

39. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World."

40. The scholar Marco Cesa came to the same conclusion. He also suggested the adjective "absolute" to characterize the second threshold.

41. Macedonia and Rome were to the *poleis* what India and China are to the contemporary state system. Provided that their latent power is fully developed, they will raise the bar of competition to an unprecedented level.

Figure 1. The Security Curve

ST = security threshold; AST = absolute security threshold
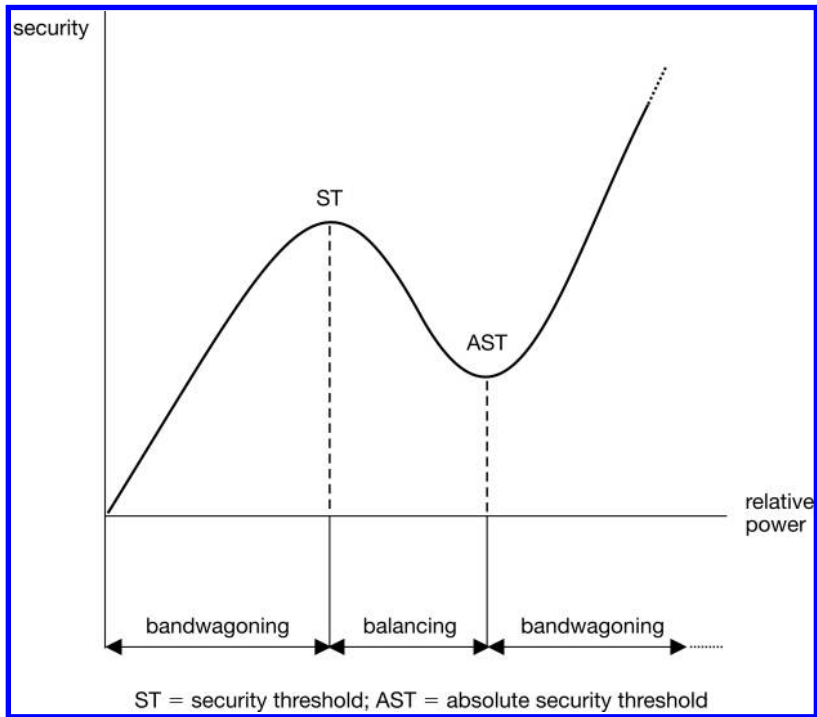
step with its power. The security threshold is "absolute" because no state or group of states can impede the hegemon.

From a theoretical perspective, the structural incentives are ambiguous, because the function that describes the relationship between power and security is not linear. Up to a certain point, the maximization of power coincides with the maximization of security. But when an aspiring hegemon crosses the security threshold, it must decide whether to aim for the absolute security threshold or maintain a position of preeminence as a great power, though not as the hegemon. In neither case can it be said that the state has disregarded structural constraints or that structural variables are the only determinants of its behavior. In light of the security curve, scholars should reconsider the debate regarding the strategy of maximization.

An example illustrates my point. Schweller argues that neorealism suffers from a status quo bias. He is able to reach this conclusion because he conflates the state's ideal-typical goal in Waltz's model (security) with a concrete foreign

policy goal (the status quo). "Status-quo states," Schweller writes, "are security maximizers (as opposed to power maximizers), whose goal is to preserve the resources they already control."[42] Given that not all states pursue status quo policies, Schweller thinks that neorealism has a distinctive status quo bias. The economic analogies made familiar by Waltz help to evaluate this proposition.

If Schweller's argument is correct, then one should agree that a policy of industrial stability or downsizing would clash with the goal of profit maximization. Proceeding in this direction, one would need to distinguish among enterprises wishing to maximize their profits (an expansion policy) from those wanting to keep their profits constant (a stability policy) from those seeking to reduce the overall size of their operations (a downsizing policy). All three are profit-maximizing policies. Depending on market conditions, it can be more profitable to convert enterprises (in saturated sectors) or keep them as they are (in mature sectors). These are maximization strategies, just as much as industrial expansion is.

Similarly, depending on the circumstances, a state may adopt an expansionist policy or a status quo policy to preserve its security. It may even decide to retreat. Pursuing an expansionist policy is useful when the state is attempting to reach the security threshold or when the activities of other powers force a response that keeps it near the threshold. Maintaining the status quo is sensible when the state is near or at the security threshold. A state that has crossed the security threshold but does not have the resources or ambition to reach the absolute threshold may choose retreat.[43]

This conceptual clarification of the reasons why states choose different foreign policies is useful for integrating the three strands of realism. The ascending portion of the security curve corresponds approximately to the offensive realist hypothesis that states seek to maximize power. Here the incentive is to exploit every opportunity to do so. The area near the threshold corresponds approximately to the argument of defensive realists that states generally enjoy a degree of security sufficient to encourage them to preserve what they already have. A state that seeks to exploit every new opportunity to increase its power can be self-defeating, because the state risks crossing the threshold and inviting balancing.[44]

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42. Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances,* p. 24.
43. Therefore Schweller does not misunderstand neorealist theory. Rather, Waltz's elaboration of structural theory leaves certain controversial points unaddressed, which can give rise to discordant interpretations.
44. I do not claim that defensive realists posit a negative relationship between power and security.

Different positions along the power continuum generate different incentives. With the security curve, scholars can explain conflicting evidence within a unified framework. As Colin Elman notes, in the absence of external constraints, the United States pursued an expansionist policy in the early nineteenth century to achieve regional hegemony.[45] Matthew Rendall depicts European politics in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars as substantially compatible with the hypotheses of defensive realism.[46] Peter Thompson describes Great Britain as a "missing hegemon" that could have benefited from the American Civil War had it chosen to intervene.[47] The security curve casts new light upon these discordant case studies.

At the time of the Louisiana Purchase, the United States was positioned along the first section of the security curve, which helps to explain its decision to expand in the Western Hemisphere. Although Britain and Russia emerged from the Napoleonic Wars as potential European hegemons,[48] both showed restraint in the years after 1815. The reason for this restraint is that both countries were close to the apex of the parabola. They had no vital need to deploy resources in a consuming struggle for mastery (especially after Napoleonic France demonstrated the risks entailed in such attempts).[49] Similarly, it would have been risky for Britain to intervene in the American Civil War. Given Britain's prominent position in the mid-nineteenth century, such action was not strictly required. The hypotheses of both offensive and defensive realism are correct as long as scholars do not assume that they describe all state behavior. Rather, they should be considered partial hypotheses, capable of describing state behavior given different levels of power or at two distinct moments in the political life of an individual power.[50]

Instead, they stress that states usually enjoy sufficient security and that expansion is often self-defeating. Offensive realists' claims, on the other hand, are more radical. As Glenn Snyder puts it, "There are no status quo powers in Mearsheimer's world." See Snyder, "Mearsheimer's World," p. 155.

45. Elman, "Extending Offensive Realism," pp. 563–568.

46. Rendall, "Defensive Realism and the Concert of Europe." See also Matthew Rendall, "Russia, the Concert of Europe, and Greece, 1821–29: A Test of Hypotheses about the Vienna System," *Security Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Summer 2000), pp. 59–90.

47. Thompson, "The Case of the Missing Hegemon."

48. Enno E. Kraehe, "A Bipolar Balance of Power," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (June 1992), pp. 707–715; and Paul W. Schroeder, "Did the Vienna Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?" *American Historical Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (June 1992), pp. 686–690. Although they disagree in many respects, both historians hold that Russia and Great Britain gained near-hegemonic positions after 1815.

49. Significantly, states farther from the apex of the parabola were also more prone to escalate crises and threaten a European war, as Prussia and France did in 1814 and 1840, respectively.

50. This explanation should not be confused with the cycle of the rise and fall of powers. The security curve does not take into account a temporal variable. Therefore the curve, read from left to

The security curve also reduces the need to rely on unit-level variables to understand structural outcomes. In attempting to explain expansionist policies, defensive realists have appealed to, for example, domestic politics, hypernationalism, the nature of military organizations, or the perceived offense-defense balance. Offensive realists cite domestic variables in explaining why states sometimes choose not to expand. In light of my structural explanation, adding these variables is not strictly necessary. Unit-level variables are still useful to complement the structural explanation, not to rectify a structural theory characterized by anomalies. The security framework also weakens arguments by critics of neorealism for its use of domestic variables.[51]

The same argument applies to offensive and defensive realism, on the one hand, and unipolar realism, on the other. Offensive and defensive realists agree that the concentration of power leads to balancing. In contrast, unipolar realists stress that the rise of a hegemon can exert a stabilizing effect on the international system. The two positions—balance of power versus hegemonic stability—seem irreconcilable, but I argue that they are not. A state that increases its power will experience balancing, but only as long as it is moving toward the absolute threshold. Once it reaches this threshold, balancing is no longer an option, and the state establishes hegemony. There is no contradiction between balance of power theories and hegemonic stability theories. Both are valid, depending on where the state is along the power continuum.

Offensive, defensive, and unipolar realists have different conceptions of the meaning of international structure and the impact of that structure on states. As a synthesis of their views on structural incentives, the security curve corresponds to the international structure. According to Waltz, "Structures shape and shove" state behavior. Another way to express this concept is to say that states move along a power-security curve. When moving along the power continuum, states face either a decrease or an increase in their security. They cannot disregard these security externalities without considerable risk. Therefore, the shape of the curve compels states to think strategically, which in turn influences their behavior.

In *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz considers balancing the product of a

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right, does not represent the chronological life of a state, because the state can move along the power continuum in both directions, or it can stand still, or it can zigzag from left to right and vice versa.

51. For criticism regarding the introduction of domestic variables, see Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?" *International Security,* Vol. 24, No. 2 (Fall 1999), pp. 5–55. This does not mean that this simple curve explains the foreign policy of every country. My framework represents an ideal type and, as such, it does not consider foreign policy contingencies. Still, contributing ideas about the abstract relationship between power and security is useful.

state's search for security in an anarchic environment. The security curve provides a more detailed explanation of balancing based on an analysis of allied, neutral, and adversarial relations. Waltz identifies two processes, socialization and competition, through which structures shape state behavior.[52] His account of the structural constraints on state behavior, however, is overly general. The security curve allows scholars to identify specific incentives along different points of the power continuum that explain different systemic outcomes. Waltz discards the proposition that some states can become hegemons, despite various examples from the Classical era and non-European history.[53] The security curve provides a broader framework, aimed at explaining both balancing and hegemony. Finally, Waltz acknowledges that he cannot predict when a balance of power will form. By quantifying the security threshold, scholars may be more able to hypothesize when this is likely to occur.

Determining the security threshold in rigorous, universal terms is difficult; perhaps it can be determined in reasonably precise terms only by examining distinct "systems" one by one.[54] That said, does empirical evidence exist to support such an examination? Some scholars have investigated whether an even distribution of power favors peace between pairs of states.[55] Others have

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52. See João Resende-Santos, *Neorealism, States, and the Modern Mass Army* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For a critical appraisal of Waltz's notion of socialization, see ibid., pp. 83–85.

53. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 74–77. As Kai Alderson puts it, Waltz's concept of socialization "insinuates the fundamental norms of 'security egoism' and balance of power politics into the behaviour of states." Alderson, "Making Sense of State Socialization," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (July 2001), p. 416.

54. Similar problems affected the Laffer curve.

55. On the distribution of power at the dyadic level, see, among others, David Garnham, "Power Parity and Lethal International Violence, 1969–1973," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (September 1976), pp. 379–394; Erich Weede, "Overwhelming Preponderance as a Pacifying Condition among Contiguous Asian Dyads, 1950–1969," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (September 1976), pp. 395–411; Zeev Maoz, "Resolve, Capabilities, and the Outcomes of Interstate Disputes, 1816–1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (June 1983), pp. 195–229; Randolph M. Siverson and Michael P. Sullivan, "The Distribution of Power and the Onset of War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (September 1983), pp. 473–494; Randolph M. Siverson and Michael R. Tennefoss, "Power, Alliance, and the Escalation of International Conflict, 1815–1965," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (December 1984), pp. 1057–1069; William Brian Moul, "Balances of Power and the Escalation to War of Serious Disputes among the European Great Powers, 1815–1939: Some Evidence," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (May 1988), pp. 241–275; Woosang Kim, "Power, Alliance, and Major Wars, 1816–1975," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (June 1989), pp. 255–273; Woosang Kim and James D. Morrow, "When Do Power Shifts Lead to War?" *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (November 1992), pp. 896–922; William B. Moul, "Power Parity, Preponderance, and War between Great Powers, 1816–1989," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (August 2003), pp. 468–489; and Gregory S. Sanjian, "Arms Transfers, Military Balances, and Interstate Relations: Modeling Power Balance versus Power Transition Linkages," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 47, No. 6 (December 2003), pp. 717–727.

focused on the distribution of power at the systemic level.[56] In this article, I seek to determine the concentration of power required to trigger balancing. In their study of balancing in the European system, Jack Levy and William Thompson conclude that the continental powers elicited a balancing reaction from the great powers after accumulating around one-third of the military resources in the system.[57] Although their analysis is based on the European system, I use the same ratio as an initial approximation of when a state has reached the security threshold, at least in the case of Europe's continental powers. Whether the state acquired these capabilities through foreign adventures or domestic production is not tremendously significant. Balancing should occur in both cases, though the argument is probabilistic.[58] The one-third figure may appear relatively arbitrary, which is often a problem when setting numer-

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56. On the distribution of power at the systemic level, see, among others, J. David Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820–1965," in Bruce M. Russett, ed., *Peace, War, and Numbers* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1972), pp. 19–48; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Measuring Systemic Polarity," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (June 1975), pp. 187–216; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Systemic Polarization and the Occurrence and Duration of War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (June 1978), pp. 241–267; Charles W. Ostrom Jr. and John H. Aldrich, "The Relationship between Size and Stability in the Major Power International System," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (November 1978), pp. 743–771; Alan Ned Sabrosky, ed., *Polarity and War: The Changing Structure of International Conflict* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1985); William R. Thompson, *On Global War: Historical-Structural Approaches to World Politics* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988); Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman, "Empirical Support for Systemic and Dyadic Explanations of International Conflict," *World Politics*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (October 1988), pp. 1–20; Michael Brecher, Patrick James, and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, "Polarity and Stability: New Concepts, Indicators, and Evidence," *International Interactions*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (March 1990), pp. 49–80; Gregory A. Raymond and Charles W. Kegley Jr., "Polarity, Polarization, and the Transformation of Alliance Norms," *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (March 1990), pp. 9–38; and Edward D. Mansfield, "The Concentration of Capabilities and the Onset of World War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (March 1992), pp. 3–24.
57. Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, "Hegemonic Threats and Great-Power Balancing in Europe, 1495–1999," *Security Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January–March 2005), pp. 1–33. In a more recent contribution, Levy and Thompson investigate balancing in maritime systems. According to their data, the probability of balancing against a naval power is low and becomes even lower if the naval power strengthens its relative position. Balancing occurs at times, but more as a consequence of specific threats from a state's naval power than as a response to its overall strength. I do not use these data because they invite objections already familiar to the "global system" literature. Levy and Thompson isolate a "global maritime system" in which states such as Portugal and the Netherlands are promoted to the status of "leading powers," and then object that other states failed to balance against them. Those countries, however, were neither leaders nor close to being hegemons. The idea that other states should have coalesced against them seems odd. Jack S. Levy and William R. Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea: Do States Ally against the Leading Global Power?" *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Summer 2010), pp. 7–43.
58. Levy and Thompson write, "Whereas the threat from dominant continental powers derives from who they are, the threat from dominant global powers derives from what they do." Levy and Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea," p. 39; see also pp. 19–20.

ical thresholds in the social sciences. Further research should be able to adjust this preliminary figure.

In principle, the absolute security threshold should not pose the same problem because of the logical limits in determining it. Ideally, the absolute threshold should represent 50 percent of the capabilities in the system, because at this level the sum of all the forces opposing the aspiring hegemon is insufficient to successfully balance it. Still, it is useful to consider William Wohlforth's admonition: "If balancing were the frictionless, costless activity assumed in some balance-of-power theories, then the unipolar power would need more than 50 percent of the capabilities in the great power system to stave off a counterpoise. . . . But such expectations miss the fact that alliance politics always impose costs."[59] It is therefore reasonable to assume that the absolute security threshold is around 45 percent of the military capabilities in the system. This is the figure William Thompson suggests in describing a near-unipolar system.[60]

In this light, the absence of balancing against the United States today appears less puzzling. The United States has already moved beyond the absolute threshold, making balancing futile.[61] Levy and Thompson raise the important question of why other states failed to balance against the United States when it was a rising power but not yet a hegemon.[62] Part of the answer lies in the United States' unusual path to primacy. For decades, the Soviet Union maintained a rough balance with the United States.[63] U.S. primacy resulted from the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union. It may be an exaggeration to suggest that the United States became a hegemon by accident, but the outcome was not planned.[64] The extraordinarily wide gap in capabilities created by the fall of the Soviet Union left other states with little choice but to acquiesce. Countries such as China, Iran, Russia, and Syria, or even Brazil and Pakistan, may not like U.S. primacy, but they lack the capabilities to challenge it.[65] Meanwhile, other countries benefiting from U.S. primacy appear not to be worried about it. The next section considers hegemonic strategies that can soften opposition.

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59. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," p. 29.
60. Thompson, *On Global War.*
61. This argument originated with Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth in *World Out of Balance.*
62. Levy and Thompson, "Balancing on Land and at Sea," p. 37.
63. The security threshold should be higher for bipolar systems, because the concentration of forces is greater between two great powers. For simplicity's sake, I focus on the multipolar system.
64. I thank Robert Jervis for suggesting this point.
65. Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira, "Brazil as a Regional Power and Its Relations with the United States," *Latin American Perspectives,* Vol. 33, No. 3 (May 2006), pp. 12–27.

Structural Constraints and State Interaction

The neorealist literature does not address the nexus between structure and state interaction.[66] Waltz claims that the definition of structure should not include unit interaction. To assess the impact of structures on actor interaction, scholars must first distinguish between the two levels.[67] When pressed by his critics, Waltz once suggested that states can sidestep structural constraints through political skills.[68] This concession demonstrates that, even before the onslaught of constructivist criticism, realists were aware of a structure-interaction problem in their reasoning. Structures should create a uniformity of outcomes based on actor interaction. If states can get around structural constraints through interaction, then what is the point of structural theory?

Constructivists respond that structure and interaction are mutually constitutive. According to scholars such as Alexander Wendt, there is no structure without interaction, and a change in interaction is a change in structure.[69] Although this argument may be correct in principle, it is methodologically weak, because it does not allow for the testing of hypotheses. It is impossible to discern the impact of structures on behavior, and there is no course of action that marks a departure from a previously described structure.[70] In an attempt to avoid Waltz's structural determinism, constructivists run into the same meth-

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66. According to Waltz, a system comprises a structure and interacting units. The latter are thought to constitute a "process," a term reminiscent of Morton Kaplan's classic volume, *System and Process in International Relations.* Waltz was concerned mainly with isolating structure as an analytical concept, so his discussion of nonstructural variables is to some extent inaccurate. In particular, it seems incorrect to conflate units with their interaction. I would argue instead that neorealist theory has five distinct analytical levels. From the general to the particular, they are (1) structure (2) structural modifiers, (3) relationships, (4) interaction modes, and (5) units. Taken together, levels 2, 3, and 4 constitute the "process." My classification draws on categories developed by Glenn H. Snyder, "Process Variables in Neorealist Theory," *Security Studies,* Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1996), pp. 167–192.
67. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics.*
68. Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 343–344.
69. For the original argument, see Alexander E. Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization,* Vol. 41, No. 3 (Summer 1987), pp. 335–370.
70. Wendt writes, "[W]e should not treat structure and process as different levels of analysis. . . . There are no structures without agents, and no agents (except in a biological terms) without structure. Social processes are always structured, and social structures are always in process." See Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 186. The bottom line, however, is that one can neither formulate nor test hypotheses about actor behavior. As Robert O. Keohane notes, "There are no propositions about state behaviour in *Social Theory of International Politics*—not even the 'few and big' propositions that Kenneth Waltz develops in his *Theory of International Politics,* which is both Wendt's model and his target." Keohane, "Ideas Part-Way Down," *Review of International Studies,* Vol. 26, No. 1 (January 2000), p. 126.

odological confusion that Waltz tried to avoid when he proposed omitting state interaction from structural analysis.

Sociologist Margaret Archer tried to solve the structure-interaction problem by incorporating a temporal dimension into the analysis of structural constraints. In the beginning, structures constrain actor behavior. These constraints partly shape actors' choices. Their interactions, in turn, either reproduce or change the structure: in the latter instance, the changes in structure alter the constraints operating afterward.[71] With the help of Archer's framework, it is possible to examine more closely Waltz's observation that states can sidestep structural constraints. Structural constraints compel states to think strategically when moving along the power continuum. Aware of the shape of the curve (time 0), a would-be hegemon may attempt to engage in different modes of interaction vis-à-vis other states, in an effort to change the security externalities deriving from the accumulation of power (time 1). Both the would-be hegemon and the other states will then find themselves in a modified structure, which will exert constraints different from those imposed earlier (time 2). The hegemon can sidestep structural constraints in various ways. Below I summarize the main risks and opportunities associated with each option.

If a powerful state does not want to risk its security, it can remain near the security threshold and forfeit further increases in power. This strategy has two benefits. First, it entails few costs, because the state does not have to engage in expansionism or fight balancers. Thus, if other states grow stronger, the "missed hegemon" will have greater economic resources to employ against them.[72] Second, if the "missed hegemon" does not cross the threshold, it can enjoy better relations with other states and possibly create a balancing coalition against a future aspiring hegemon.[73]

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71. Taking a page from Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration, Wendt has predictably little to say about the interplay of structure and interaction, which is not causally a major source of contention in Giddens's theory either. See Margaret S. Archer, "Morphogenesis versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (December 1982), pp. 455–483; and Margaret S. Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). In international relations theory, scholars have long been aware of the problems associated with structuration theory. See David Dessler, "What's at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?" *International Organization*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Summer 1989), pp. 442–443.
72. As Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky state, "Prosperity is both a 'means' and an 'end.' As a means, economic strength is the foundation for long-term security, because wealth can be converted into military power." Gholz, Press, and Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Spring 1997), p. 9.
73. In Layne's words, "A good strategy, however, hedges against unknown (and unknowable) future contingencies. Hence an offshore balancing strategy would not rule out the possibility that, as

In the nineteenth century, Great Britain was the consummate master of this strategy. Historically, Britain's maritime strength prevented other European powers from threatening the British Isles. At the same time, Britain's army was too small to win a war of conquest in Europe.[74] At the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15, Britain chose to reinforce its position as a maritime power instead of seeking territorial aggrandizement in Europe. Despite some criticism, the policy proved sound.[75] Preventing the rise of a continental hegemon requires flexibility, because relations among powers can change rapidly. Britain's lack of possessions in Europe allowed Britain to change sides depending on its political needs at the time:[76] in the 1830s, Britain, together with France, restrained Russia. Then, in 1840 Britain restrained France with the help of Russia. The British backed the Crimean coalition against Russia in 1856. They joined the Mediterranean agreements promoted by Bismarck against France and Russia in 1887, and later sided with France and Russia when Germany became the greater threat.

Some states, however, aspire to hegemony. In his perceptive discussion of overexpansion, Jack Snyder distinguishes between good and bad learners. Some states learn the lessons of history and limit their foreign ambitions; others do not and, as a result, experience relative decline because they become involved in self-defeating wars of expansion. In discussions of the security threshold, it is important to distinguish between the concepts of security externalities and overexpansion, or imperial overstretch. Many pages have been

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the balancer of last resort, the United States might need to intervene to thwart the emergence of a hegemonic challenger." Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security,* Vol. 22, No. 1 (Summer 1997), p. 117.

74. It was an odd corollary to the Peninsular War. Later, Lords Howick and Hardinge undertook limited reforms, with mixed results. See Peter Burroughs, "An Unreformed Army? 1815–1868," in David G. Chandler and Ian Beckett, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 161–186.

75. British Foreign Secretary Castlereagh was criticized at home for achieving too little his country, while spending too much time trying to mediate differences among the powers. See Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna: A Study in Allied Unity: 1812–1822* (London: Cassell, 1989 [1946]), pp. 182–186, 236–237; and Christopher J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 145.

76. Hanover, a personal union of Great Britain and Ireland, which lasted from 1714 to 1801, comes to mind as the most notable exception. With time, however, the relevance of personal unions declined. In an age of increasing industrialization and nationalist uprisings, the idea of personal unions came to be seen as a relic of the eighteenth century. Hanover's demise in 1837 was painless. See, among others, Adolphius William Ward, *Great Britain and Hanover: Some Aspects of the Personal Union* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1899); Ragnhild M. Hatton, *The Anglo-Hanoverian Connection, 1714–1760* (London: University of London Press, 1982); Uriel Dann, *Hanover and Great Britain, 1740–1760: Diplomacy and Survival* (Leicester, U.K.: Leicester University Press, 1991); Jeremy Black, "Hanover and British Foreign Policy, 1714–60," *English Historical Review,* Vol. 120, No. 486 (April 2005), pp. 303–339; and Brendan Simms and Torsten Riotte, eds., *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History, 1714–1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

written about the political cycle of states, from Edward Gibbon to Paul Kennedy.[77] "Imperial overstretch" refers to the incongruence between a state's internal resources and its external commitments. "Negative security externalities" refer to the incongruence between the strategic goals of a state and those of its rivals. In the first case, the discussion concerns internal politics and the costs relative to the state's projection of power abroad. In the second, the discussion centers on international politics and on the costs of expansion in terms of security.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the costs of its small empire abroad did not hobble Wilhelmine Germany, but its security was nonetheless vanishing. France was hardening its attitude toward Germany;[78] Great Britain was relinquishing its policy of isolation;[79] and Russia was giving its alliance with France an anti-German orientation.[80] In contrast, the United States at the time of the Vietnam War experienced little cost in terms of its security, but faced rising internal costs because of an unpopular war. Although imperial overstretch and negative security externalities are not synonymous, they may occasionally coincide, as during the reign of Charles V, when the huge economic costs of empire accompanied outside hostility.

Importantly, there are no bad learners in structural terms. An aspiring hegemon's decision to continue to expand is just as rational as a decision to

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77. See Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* Vols. 1–3 (New York: Penguin, 1994); and Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987).

78. To be sure, the French leader Joseph Caillaux favored compromise with Germany, and George Clemenceau even made a deal on Morocco. But Caillaux fell after it was revealed that he had undertaken secret negotiations with Germany, and Clemenceau feared that, if the Bosnian crisis escalated, France would have to face Germany without help on land, because Russia had been temporarily weakened as a result of its war against Japan. See Eber Malcolm Carroll, *French Public Opinion and Public Affairs, 1870–1914* (New York: Century, 1931), pp. 246–251; and E.W. Edwards, "The Franco-German Agreement on Morocco, 1909," *English Historical Review,* Vol. 78, No. 308 (July 1963), p. 467.

79. The first formal departure from isolationism was the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902, the last great achievement of Prime Minister Salisbury's cabinet. Germany later tried to break out of its encirclement in Asia by joining the United States and China. See Luella J. Hall "The Abortive German-American-Chinese Entente of 1907–8," *Journal of Modern History,* Vol. 1, No. 2 (June 1929), pp. 219–235.

80. In 1899 Foreign Minister Théophile Declassé renegotiated the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 out of fear of an imminent partition of Austria. See Christopher Andrew, "German World Policy and the Reshaping of the Dual Alliance," *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 1, No. 3 (July 1966), pp. 144–147. Raymond Poincaré was the statesman most responsible for shaping a new, more aggressive deal with Saint Petersburg. See Georges Michon, *The Franco-Russian Alliance, 1891–1917* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1929 [1921]), p. 201. For a more benevolent appraisal, see John F.V. Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 98–100; and M.B. Hayne, *The French Foreign Office and the Origins of the First World War, 1898–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 245.

maintain the status quo. Knowing that when it reaches the absolute security threshold its rivals will have to bandwagon, a regional or a global hegemon could rationally attempt to unify the system. It could decide that the time has come to end confrontation with its rivals once and for all by pursuing the absolute security threshold. The desire for absolute security, however, could easily turn into unlimited ambition, as "absolute security implies absolute mastery."[81] This choice certainly entails risks, including a short-run diminution of security. Yet, hovering around the security threshold is always precarious. New powers can arise, and old powers in crisis can find new momentum. Today's equilibriums are not eternal, and a state could experience challenges to its relative security. Attempting to unify the system may be risky, but it is neither irrational nor always doomed to fail.[82]

To reduce the risks posed by its accumulation of power, the hegemon could implement a counterbalancing policy, that is, a policy aimed at reducing its potential security losses when it crosses the security threshold. Here I concentrate on three strategies:[83] deception, ideology, and subsidization. First, a rational hegemon could deceive competitors by masking its determination to expand, as Adolf Hitler did before World War II, when he repeatedly asserted that Germany was pursuing limited goals. This strategy is unlikely to be successful for long, as states will begin to realize the true motivation of the expanding power.

Second, the hegemon could use ideology to attract potential rivals. With the possible exception of eighteenth-century Europe, all powers in history have to varying degrees tried to use ideology for this purpose. Already at the time of Macedonian expansion in the fourth century B.C., a nonnegligible component of Philip's strategy consisted of presenting himself as the continuer of Greek civilization.[84] Similarly, the Romans tied their military superiority to the su-

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81. Raymond Aron writes, "La sécurité absolue implique la domination absolue. La sécurité de l'un entraîne 1'asservissement de l'autre." [Absolute security implies absolute domination. The security of one power means the servitude of the other.] This should not be taken as Aron's point of view regarding international affairs. It describes instead the logic of the Peloponnesian War as explained by Thucydides. Aron, "Thucydide et le Récit des événements" [Thucydides and the historical narrative], in *History and Theory,* Vol. 1, No. 2 (1961), p. 113. Arnold Wolfers had a similar view: "A country pursuing the mirage of absolute security could not stop at less than world domination today." See Wolfers, "The Pole of Power and the Pole of Indifference," *World Politics,* Vol. 4, No. 1 (October 1951), p. 51.
82. Because the security curve is a linear function modified to take into account the balancing mechanism, it may be just a sophisticated version of offensive realism.
83. Options available to hegemons for submitting to the system have been the subject of a noteworthy study. See Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
84. Macedonian propaganda themes are evident in the works of a number of Greek orators. Isocrates comes to mind as the most prominent example. See Minor M. Markle, "Support of Athe-

premacy of Rome's culture and civilization. Today, the "American way of life" proves to be either a source of attraction or repulsion for peoples struggling to free themselves from underdevelopment.

Third, the hegemon could provide other states with selective benefits or public goods to prevent or, at least, soften their opposition. For example, the United States' decision to pay for European recovery and promote economic integration after World War II was crucial in establishing a security community under its leadership in Western Europe. A more aggressive policy would have probably triggered European resentment and opposition. Even today, U.S. power and resolve are not the main reasons for the lack of balancing by European countries. In a recent speech, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates prompted European countries to increase their military expenditures, but they kindly declined.[85] Why should they pay even some of the costs of their security if the United States, which they do not view as a threat, is willing to assume them?

The United States–European security arrangement may be a success story but, in general, subsidization can be problematic. Whereas deception and ideological appeal entail little cost, subsidization implies the provision of political and economic support, in other words, the deployment of resources. This, in turn, poses the following questions: How many resources does the aspiring hegemon need to employ? How long will its rival accept the subsidies? Is it wise for a hegemon to dispense resources to others instead of using them itself?

Until a state has reached the security threshold, it is neither necessary nor perhaps possible to implement counterbalancing strategies. From the security threshold onward, a would-be hegemon may use whatever resources are necessary to implement counterbalancing policies, because it is being subjected to security losses. It is reasonable to suppose that an aspiring hegemon provides increasing subsidies as it moves away from the security threshold: in fact, the farther it moves from the threshold, the more serious are the security externalities it will face. When the state reaches the absolute threshold, its security starts once again to increase rapidly. Even if the hegemon is still willing to pay subsidies to other states, it is reasonable to assume that the size of the subsidies will start to decrease. The hegemon can now increase its security through the accumulation of power, making it less necessary to pay subsidies to others.

Figure 2 illustrates the process of hegemonic counterbalancing. Having

nian Intellectuals for Philip: A Study of Isocrates' Philippus and Speusippus' Letter to Philip," *Journal of Hellenic Studies,* Vol. 96 (1976), pp. 80–99.
85. Brian Knowlton, "Gates Calls European Mood a Danger to Peace," *New York Times,* February 23, 2010.

Figure 2. The Process of Hegemonic Counterbalancing
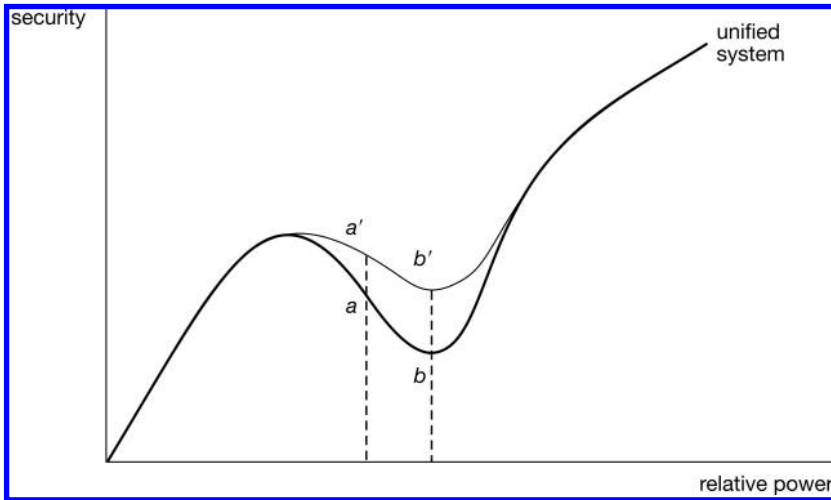
reached point *a*, the hegemon attempts to prevent its ever increasing concentration of power from diminishing its security. Therefore it provides its rivals with a subsidy to discourage the formation of an antihegemonic coalition. The security of the hegemon increases to point *a′*. If the hegemon pursues a system-unifying strategy, then it will have to increase the size of its subsidies as it continues to accumulate resources, if it is to prevent growing negative security externalities. When the state crosses the absolute security threshold, the trend is reversed and the state starts to reduce the amount of its subsidies, as unification of the system approaches. Eventually, the independent variable (power concentration) becomes unitary: the hegemonic power has succeeded in building its regional or global empire, and it has achieved a de facto monopoly of force within the borders of the system. The chance of survival becomes unitary as well, because armed opposition is no longer possible. Although civil war may still occur, war among independent states ceases to be a possibility.

Because subsidies entail costs, they complicate a hegemon's unification policy. Figure 2 illustrates two distinct types of unification strategy. An aspiring hegemon reaches point *a*. It gives its rivals a subsidy, and then moves to point *a′*. It continues to provide the subsidy until it reaches *b′*. This process naturally increases the hegemon's costs, which could compromise its goal of increasing its relative power. Alternatively, the hegemon could try to move directly from *a* to *b*, possibly deciding to provide a subsidy later. Which is the better choice? Pay today in order to expand tomorrow, or implement a

more aggressive strategy from the beginning? If the objective is to cross the absolute threshold, a hegemon may rationally use its limited resources by aiming directly for expansion. But this strategy implies a degree of risk because, to a greater extent, the hegemon will encounter negative security externalities. If the hegemon's resources are too limited, would it not be better to abandon this ambition and stay within the vicinity of the security threshold?

The most obvious answer to this question might be to say that the hegemon should undertake both tasks. It could continue to offer subsidies that, while sufficient to hold back rivals, are not so costly as to compromise its long-term expansionist strategy. The economist Luca Lambertini likens the hegemon's need to pay such subsidies to the prisoner's dilemma.[86] The hegemon can provide subsidies or not, and its rivals can compete with the hegemon or not. In a single game, the only equilibrium is bilateral defection, with the hegemon not providing subsidies and its opponents practicing balancing. Cooperation is possible, however, if the game is repeated over an infinite time horizon. The hegemon's optimal subsidy should satisfy this condition.[87]

Squaring the circle is not that easy, however. First, a well-known problem with repeated prisoner's dilemma games is that one player can use gains secured in an earlier round to end the game. As the aspiring hegemon moves toward the absolute threshold, other states should become increasingly worried. Once the absolute threshold is reached, there is neither the possibility of balancing nor a compelling need for the hegemon to continue paying subsidies. As soon as the rivals realize that they have been tricked, they will defect, exposing the would-be hegemon to the very risks it has tried to avoid. It can never recover the sunk costs of having paid subsidies, and the related security benefits will have vanished. Second, subsidies that are optimal for achieving cooperation in a repeated prisoner's dilemma might not be optimal for a system-unifying strategy.[88] Given that paying less than the minimum amount to co-opt rivals would be pointless, the aspiring hegemon might be encouraged to cross the threshold without paying any subsidies at all.

The above discussion is useful when thinking about China's current position in the international system. China is moving toward the security threshold.

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86. Luca Lambertini, "Is America Unrivaled? A Repeated Game Analysis," unpublished paper, Economics Department, University of Bologna, 2006.

87. The prisoner's dilemma can be solved if the payoffs of bilateral cooperation are greater than the payoffs of exploitation over the first period, added to the actualized payoffs of bilateral defection for the remaining periods.

88. In the literature on hegemonic stability, a controversial point concerns setting tariffs by the hegemon. If a hegemon is so powerful as to be able to manipulate trading terms, why not impose its own optimal tariffs on other states? My discussion suggests that strategic constraints and security externalities could limit the margins of maneuver for hegemonic powers.

Given its latent power, its ultimate goal might be the absolute threshold. China may have difficulty using ideology to counterbalance its rivals, but it could use deception or offer subsidies. It could reassure its neighbors by declaring that it will pursue strictly limited goals. At the same time, China could use its monetary and economic power to provide selective benefits to foreign countries. Seasoned geopolitical analysts would reasonably see such stratagems as attempts by China to divert rivals from focusing on its more ambitious political goals.[89]

Meanwhile, the United States has already crossed the absolute security threshold but seems unable to advance. Despite having established a security community in Europe under its leadership, it has not been able to duplicate this process elsewhere. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the subsequent NATO crisis, illustrate this point. The United States is thus too powerful for other states to balance, but not so powerful as to be able to unify the system. Time is not on the side of hegemons that fail to capitalize on their primacy. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States' primacy has inhibited power politics, but this "frozen" political system will probably heat up as soon as the U.S. margin of advantage begins to erode.[90]

Conclusion

In this article, I described a modified parabolic relationship between relative power and security. As a state's power increases, so, too, does its security. At a

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89. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999); and Liu Mingfu, *Zhongguo Meng: Hou Meiguo Shidai de DaGuo Siwei yu Zhanlüe Dingwei* [China's dream: Major power thinking and strategic posture in a post-American era] (Beijing: Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi, 2010). On the academic debate regarding China, see, among others, Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Steve Chan, "Is There a Power Transition between the U.S. and China? The Different Faces of National Power," *Asian Survey,* Vol. 45, No. 5 (September/October 2005), pp. 687–701; Zbigniew Brzezinski and John J. Mearsheimer, "Clash of the Titans," *Foreign Policy,* No. 146 (January/February 2005), pp. 46–49; Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security,* Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall 2005), pp. 7–45; Robert S. Ross, "Balance of Power Politics and the Rise of China: Accommodation and Balancing in East Asia," *Security Studies,* Vol. 15, No. 3 (July–September 2006), pp. 355–395; Jeffrey W. Legro, "What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power," *Perspectives on Politics,* Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 2007), pp. 515–534; He and Feng, "If Not Soft Balancing, Then What?"; Edward Wong, "Chinese Military Seeks to Extend Its Naval Power," *New York Times,* April 23, 2010; and Robert D. Kaplan, "The Geography of Chinese Power," *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 89, No. 3 (May/June 2010), pp. 22–41.
90. I borrow this wording from Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction," in Lipset and Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 1–64.

certain point, however, further increases in the state's power will cause other states to balance against it. If the state's power becomes too great to balance, its rivals will bandwagon with the state whose security again begins to increase. Below I summarize other important findings from this study.

First, structural incentives are not constant. Initially, states have an incentive to increase their relative power. Once a state reaches the security threshold, the further accumulation of power starts to generate negative security externalities. When the state reaches the absolute security threshold, the maximization of power again becomes compatible with the maximization of security.

Second, Kenneth Waltz provides a rigorous definition of structure and describes the mechanism through which structures shape actor behavior. He says little, however, about when and why balancing should or should not occur. The security curve explains both balancing and hegemony. By identifying the security threshold, it is also possible to hypothesize on when to expect balancing.

Third, the security curve synthesizes the three major strands of contemporary realist thought. The first section of the curve corresponds approximately to the offensive realist hypothesis that states seek to maximize their power. Points near the security threshold correspond to the defensive realist hypothesis that states generally enjoy a sufficient level of security, so they might not need to pursue expansionist policies. The third section of the curve describes the unipolar realist hypothesis that the concentration of power in one state does not trigger political instability. Thus defensive realism, offensive realism, and unipolar realism can be brought together in a single, more coherent framework.

Fourth, the security curve reduces scholars' need to consider domestic variables for explaining state behavior. For decades, defensive realism has sought to explain why states would seek to expand if this behavior provoked balancing. Similarly, offensive realism has been hard-pressed to explain why states that could expand sometimes chose not to do so. Both schools claim that domestic variables explain these anomalies. In contrast, I argue that the security curve provides a coherent structural explanation. Domestic variables can still play a role, but as a complementary, not an alternative, explanation. Therefore the criticism that realism introduced domestic variables to fill explanatory gaps no longer holds.

Fifth, in the case of continental powers, the security threshold corresponds approximately to one-third of the military capabilities in the system. The absolute security threshold corresponds to about 45 percent of military capabilities.

Sixth, balancing and bandwagoning are systemic trends that analysts should

evaluate in terms of security. A precise sequence of balancing and bandwagoning is associated with the security curve. Bandwagoning is the prevalent tendency before a state reaches the security threshold and after it crosses the absolute security threshold. Between the two thresholds, states will seek to balance a rising power, which will generate a sharp decrease in the aspiring hegemon's security.

Seventh, a state that has crossed the security threshold will adopt a counterbalancing policy to minimize its security losses. The state can choose among the following three main counterbalancing policies: deception, ideology, and subsidization.

I would like to conclude by suggesting a few ideas for future research. First, perhaps more than one structure exists. The security curve can to help explain world history, including European history before 1945. It is far less useful in explaining a pluralistic security community. If I were to depict the security curve for European states today, I would draw a flat line. A second important point concerns the role of structural modifiers (such as institutions or nuclear weapons).[91] Perhaps these structural modifiers can change the security externalities generated by increases or decreases in a state's power and thus modify the shape of the curve (e.g., flattening it or making it steeper.) By considering variables other than power, one can conceptualize a number of interesting variations on the original scheme. Third, neorealist scholars should attempt to distinguish between macro- and microlevel phenomena and investigate the microlevel origins of broad, systemic outcomes. Other paradigms are already moving in this direction.[92] Jack Levy suggests using prospect theory, and I agree.[93] It would fit perfectly with the model, and it may be able to address a variety of related issues that the security curve cannot. Finally, determining the security threshold is a crucial task that I cannot address here. It would be a flawed procedure to raise the security threshold when balancing does not occur or to lower the security threshold when balancing takes place. Establishing reliable proxies for dominance and testing the balancing proposition autonomously are important tasks for the future.

91. Snyder, "Process Variables in Neorealist Theory."
92. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics,* chap. 4.
93. See Jack S. Levy, "Loss Aversion, Framing Effects, and International Conflict: Perspectives from Prospect Theory," in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies,* Vol. 2 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 193–221. For an attempt to use prospect theory as a theoretical microfoundation, see Brock F. Tessman and Steve Chan, "Power Cycles, Risk Propensity, and Great-Power Deterrence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 48, No. 2 (April 2004), pp. 131–153.

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