

# The Great Powers and Regional Conflicts: Eastern Europe and the Balkans from the Post-Napoleonic Era to the Post–Cold War Era

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The objective of this article is to provide an analytical framework for addressing the sources of great power regional involvement and its effects on regional conflicts. The thesis of the article is that variations in the degree of intensity of conflicts and the likelihood of successful conflict resolution in different regions are affected by the character of great power involvement in these regions. Our argument is that although great power involvement or noninvolvement cannot cause or terminate regional conflicts, it can either intensify existing local conflicts or mitigate them. We will propose causal linkages between balances of great power capabilities and interests, types of great power involvement in regional conflicts, and patterns of regional conflicts. The study will distinguish among four types of great power involvement in regional conflicts: competition, cooperation, dominance, and disengagement. The empirical section will examine the application of these propositions in seven historical illustrations, representing the four patterns of great power involvement in regional conflicts. All the illustrations will deal with one conflict-ridden region—Eastern Europe and the Balkans, in successive historical periods from the post-Napoleonic era to the post–Cold War era. Because of the variety of patterns of great power involvement in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, this region is uniquely suited to examine the propositions derived from the theoretical framework. Drawing on both the theoretical deductions and the historical illustrations should make it possible in the last section to discuss briefly the implications of the proposed framework for regional conflict management or mitigation in the Balkans in the post–Cold War era.

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The present era has witnessed wide-ranging changes in regional security and patterns of regional conflicts. Whereas in some conflict-prone regions an encouraging process of conflict resolution had started in the late 1980s (notably, Southern Africa, Southwest and Southeast Asia, and Central America), violent conflicts have erupted in places that had been calm at least since the end of World War II (notably, in the Balkans—the war in former Yugoslavia; and in the former Soviet Union, such as the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan). In the Middle East, since the end of the Cold War a major international crisis erupted and escalated to the Gulf War; but the post-Cold War era has also witnessed a major U.S.-led initiative to advance the heretofore dormant Arab-Israeli peace process.

Indeed, in contrast to the constraining across-the-board effects of the bipolar competition on the management of conflicts in different regions during the Cold War, there seems to be a much greater variation in regional conflict patterns in the post-Cold War era. Yet, the level and nature of great power involvement in different regions seems to have major effects on recent regional changes. Thus, the U.S.-led intervention played a critical role in the Gulf Crisis. The outbreak of the crisis and its escalation were heavily influenced by the end of the Cold War. The recent crisis in the Balkans has been influenced by the disappearance of Soviet power and Pax Sovietica in that part of the world, but its (mis)management has also been affected by the disengagement of the Western powers from this crisis.

Accordingly, this article aims to answer the two following questions: What are the causes or sources of great power engagement—or disengagement—in regional conflicts, and what are the effects of their involvement (or noninvolvement) on these conflicts? These questions have assumed crucial importance in light of the growing salience of regional conflicts with the end of the Cold War. Militarily, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means of their delivery may eventually pose a threat not only to regional security but also to Western countries. Regional conflicts can endanger Western access to markets and resources, most notably Middle Eastern oil. As we have already witnessed in Europe, local conflicts may accelerate massive flows of refugees and thereby reinforce the power of anti-foreigner extremists in the West, which may, in turn, potentially challenge political stability even in leading states such as Germany. Great power involvement in regional conflicts may thus have implications for both regional and international security.

### **The Existing Literature: Missing Links**

The two leading candidates for providing a useful explanation of changes in regional conflict patterns are systems theories and regional studies. Indeed, there is a vast literature on international systems which focuses on the effects of anarchy and the distribution of capabilities (or polarity) on state behavior and international outcomes.<sup>1</sup> There is also a growing literature on regional security in the Third World which emphasizes the prevalence of regional, local, and domestic dynamics in shaping regional conflict and cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Yet, both the systemic and the regional approaches to regional security have major limitations.

Thus, the regional approach cannot account for some of the recent changes that have taken place simultaneously in different regional conflicts, including those that occurred outside the traditional “Third World,” that is, in the Balkans and in certain

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<sup>1</sup> For the leading structural-realist work see Waltz (1979); for applications and refinements of structural realism (or neorealism) in different (European and Third World) regional contexts see Walt (1987), Mearsheimer (1990), Christensen and Snyder (1990), and Telhami (1990).

<sup>2</sup> For recent studies see especially David (1991a, 1991b), Buzan (1991), chapters in Job (1992), and Ayoob (1991, 1995).

parts of the former Soviet Union. Accordingly, one may argue that the processes of conflict resolution, which started more or less simultaneously in the late 1980s in many regions, were not derived from any major indigenous changes in all these various regions at this particular time but were mainly caused by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of U.S.-Soviet cooperation in regional conflict resolution. Somewhat similarly, it is likely that the initiation of the multilateral and bilateral Arab-Israeli talks in late 1991 was not caused by simultaneous cognitive evolution or domestic changes in Damascus, Amman, Beirut, Tunis, and Jerusalem, but rather was influenced by the end of the Cold War and by the strengthening of the U.S. position in the region following the Gulf War. Moreover, the regional approach cannot account for some of the important general patterns of regional conflict management or mitigation which took place across regions during the Cold War, nor can it explain such general patterns in earlier international systems.

At the same time, systems theory fails to explain variations in regional outcomes under the same international system, either multipolar or bipolar. Indeed, the recent initiation of the conflict resolution processes in the Third World *preceded* rather than followed the end of bipolarity.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the end of bipolarity cannot account for the variations in the outcomes of different regional conflicts. Similarly, there were important variations in regional security among three multipolar eras: the post-Napoleonic period in the nineteenth century, the pre-World War I era, and the interwar age. Thus, while the regional approach, which assumes the uniqueness of specific conflicts or regions, is unable to explain *similar* patterns across different regional conflicts, systems theory, which focuses on polarity as a systemwide factor, is unable to explain the *variations* among regional conflicts under the same international system.

The limitations of both these approaches may be surmounted by developing conceptual linkages between world politics and regional politics, and specifically between the regional strategies of the major powers and patterns of local conflicts. The approach used in the present article is based on analyzing great power involvement in regional conflicts in terms of several ideal types or alternative patterns, each deriving from different sources and having divergent effects on regional conflicts. Analyzing state behavior and its outcomes in terms of alternative ideal-type patterns is not a novel theoretical approach.<sup>4</sup> Such an approach constitutes an antidote to systemic analysis with its assumption of uniformity of behavior induced by the international structure. The present study adopts this approach for studying great power regional involvement and its outcomes.

By distinguishing among different types of great power regional involvement, the present model will be able to resolve some disagreements in the realist literature. For example, there is a disagreement among realist scholars as to the degree of the expected autonomy of small states in their relations with great powers (for elaboration, see Kagan, 1996). Classical realists have argued that great powers tend to dominate the behavior of small powers and that great powers often abuse their superior power at the expense of the weak states (Thucydides, 1950; Vital, 1971; Pearson, Baumann, and Pickering, 1994:207). In contrast, some newer versions of realism highlight the ability of small powers not only to maintain a high degree of autonomy but also to manipulate the great powers through the “power of the weak,”

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<sup>3</sup> The end of bipolarity (a structural change) should be differentiated from the end of the Cold War (a change in the relations between the superpowers). Thus, whereas the end of bipolarity took place in late 1991 with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Cold War ended a number of years earlier during the Gorbachev era with the drastic changes he initiated in U.S.-Soviet relations.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Walt (1987) discusses two basic types of responses to security threats: balancing and bandwagoning; and Schroeder (1994) elaborates these responses into four types: balancing, bandwagoning, hiding, and transcending.

or the “tyranny of the weak” (citations in Handel, 1981).<sup>5</sup> These disagreements were, in turn, derived from treating great power–small power relations as a single unified phenomenon rather than distinguishing among different types and patterns of relations. The present model will help to suggest some of the conditions under which each of these alternative patterns is more likely.

### **The Argument**

Thus, the objective of this essay is to provide an analytical framework for addressing the sources of great power regional involvement and its effects on regional conflicts. The thesis of this study is that variations in the degree of intensity of conflicts and the likelihood of successful conflict resolution in different regions are affected by the character of the great power involvement or noninvolvement in these regions. Our argument is that although great power involvement or noninvolvement cannot either cause or resolve and terminate regional conflicts, which have indigenous origins, it can either intensify existing local conflicts or mitigate them and promote their resolution. Indeed, under anarchy,<sup>6</sup> the great powers enjoy a special role and exercise a large influence on regional conflict patterns. This is because of the combination of their global interests, the relations they have with many states in different regions, and especially their lesser vulnerability and superior diplomatic, economic, and military capabilities (including power projection beyond their immediate region to remote places). This superiority can lead to asymmetrical interdependence in their favor vis-à-vis regional actors.<sup>7</sup>

The remainder of the article has been divided into three parts: a theoretical framework, seven historical illustrations, and implications for the post–Cold War era. In the theoretical section we will develop causal linkages between balances of great power capabilities and interests, types of great power involvement in regional conflicts, and patterns of regional conflicts. The study will distinguish among four ideal types of great power involvement in regional conflicts: competition, cooperation, dominance, and disengagement. We will also differentiate among four ideal types of regional conflict patterns: intensified conflict, conflict reduction or mitigation, conflict management or containment, and uninterrupted conflict. The proposed model will relate the four ideal types of great power involvement to the four patterns of regional conflicts, respectively. An important factor which mediates between the types of great power regional involvement and the patterns of regional conflicts refers to the types of influence relations between the great powers and the small states in the region, or, more precisely, the degrees of small-state autonomy vis-à-vis the great powers. The theoretical section will also deal with the international implications of great power regional involvement.

The empirical section will examine these propositions in seven historical illustrations or “plausibility probes” (Eckstein, 1975), representing the four patterns of

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<sup>5</sup> On the contradiction in Waltz’s position on this issue see Waltz (1979:184, 194–5), cited in Kagan (1996).

<sup>6</sup> The anarchy of the international system means that there is no international government with overall authority for resolving interstate conflicts and for enforcing settlements of these conflicts. For a recent, brief discussion and for references see Miller (1995:10–1).

<sup>7</sup> The role of the great powers is one of the important manifestations of the interconnected nature of the international system: “almost by definition, a great power is more tightly connected to larger numbers of other states than is a small power. Because it has engagements all over the world, a great power is at least slightly affected by most changes in relations of other states” (Jervis, 1976:61, 1979:215). Snyder and Diesing (1977:419) identify the great powers as the actors “whose rivalry and cooperation dominate politics in the system.” Goldgeier and McFaul have recently defined a great power as a country possessing the will and the capability to alter events throughout the international system (1992:467). On the global interests and the systemic viewpoint of great powers see Keohane (1969:295–7), Levy (1983:16–7), Claude (1986:724), and Desch (1989, 1993).

great power involvement in regional conflicts (two illustrations for each of the three patterns of cooperation, competition, and hegemony, and one example of disengagement). All the illustrations deal with one conflict-ridden region, Eastern Europe and the Balkans, in successive historical periods from the post-Napoleonic era to the post-Cold War era. The importance of this region for international peace and security may be attested by the fact that it provided the immediate causes for the outbreak of all three major wars in the post-1815 period: the Crimean War and both world wars. Namely, although these wars had more underlying causes, they all began as a result of great power conflicts over Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Moreover, the Cold War also began largely over Soviet policy in Eastern Europe (Davis, 1974). Besides its importance for world politics, because of the variety of patterns of great power involvement in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, this region is uniquely suited to illustrate the propositions derived from the theoretical framework. The illustrations are not designed to suggest a new interpretation of the historical events in this region, but rather to examine to what extent the standard interpretation accords with the proposed framework in order to illustrate its explanatory power. To the extent that the historical illustrations, in fact, accord with the proposed framework, it may be further used to analyze other historical and contemporary cases for promoting a better understanding of the dynamics and effects of great power involvement in regional conflicts. Thus, in the last section we tentatively discuss regional conflict management or mitigation in the Balkans in the post-Cold War era in light of the framework.

The theoretical framework will be based on the causal chain illustrated in Figure 1. The following sections will discuss the elements of this causal chain and the linkages among them.

#### *Patterns of Regional Conflicts*

Four patterns of regional conflicts may be distinguished:

1. Conflict Reduction or Mitigation. Amelioration, or mitigation, of the fundamental sources or underlying issues of the regional conflict, which makes it more amenable to successful resolution.<sup>8</sup> Conflict reduction may be manifested in the beginning of peace talks, termination of a state of war, etc.
2. Conflict Management. Containment, or limitation, of the violent manifestations of the regional conflict, such as a prevention or termination of a regional crisis or war, even if there is no resolution or mitigation of the underlying sources of the conflict.<sup>9</sup>
3. Uninterrupted Conflicts. No change is affected in the level and intensity of the regional conflict, and its amenability to successful resolution.
4. Conflict Intensification. Escalation in the level and scope of the regional conflict, which may be manifested in the outbreak or escalation of regional crises and wars.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Snyder and Diesing (1977:10, 18) and Hampson and Mandell (1990:192-3, n. 2). On international conflict resolution see Patchen (1988) and Kriesberg (1992).

<sup>9</sup> On different types of conflict management see George (1988). For a recent, brief discussion of the differences between conflict resolution and conflict management see Bar-Siman-Tov (1994:75-6) and the references he cites.

<sup>10</sup> On escalation of international conflicts see Barringer (1972) and Smoke (1977).

FIG. 1. Modeling the causal relations between great power involvement, regional conflicts, and international security.

Balances of great power capabilities and interests →	Types of power involvement in regional conflicts →	Small states' autonomy →	Patterns of regional conflicts →	Consequences for international security
Equal capabilities; conflicting (high) interests	Competition	high "positive" autonomy (manipulation)	intensified conflict	highly destabilizing
Equal capabilities; converging (high) interests	Cooperation	low autonomy	conflict reduction or mitigation	highly stabilizing
Equal capabilities, low interests or high capabilities–low interests vs. low capabilities–high interests	Disengagement	high "negative" autonomy (independence)	uninterrupted conflict	neutral or destabilizing
Superior capabilities and/or superior interests	Dominance	very low autonomy	conflict management or containment	stabilizing

*The Influence Relations Between the Great Powers and the Regional Small States*

Influence relations refer, on the one hand, to the autonomy or the degree of freedom of action of local states with regard to the regional conflict, that is, their ability to initiate or react to various diplomatic and military moves;<sup>11</sup> on the other hand, these relations refer to the ability of the small states to manipulate the behavior of the great powers.

The patterns of influence are closely related to the degree of interdependence between the major powers and the small states and to the extent of the symmetry of this interdependence.<sup>12</sup> The greater the asymmetry of this interdependence in

<sup>11</sup> These moves may include participation or nonparticipation in negotiations, the procedures and nature of diplomatic talks, and specific policy positions regarding a regional settlement, as well as a wide range of military moves or reactions to military actions of local adversaries.

<sup>12</sup> One may propose that the greater the local actors' dependence on the great powers for military and economic aid and access to markets and technology, and the more vulnerable they are (i.e., the lesser the availability of alternative suppliers and the more costly other sources), the more influential great power suppliers will be with regard to interactions and outcomes in the region. Yet, since local actors can also provide useful goods and services to the great powers (especially raw materials and strategic locations for military and intelligence bases), there is a degree of interdependence between the major powers and local actors. For a classic work on power and interdependence see Keohane and Nye (1977) and their reconsideration (1987). See also Baldwin (1979, 1980). For a useful study of types of superpower influence in the Third World see Krause (1991). For a recent emphasis on "soft" sources of power and their influence on other states' preferences and on the establishment of rules and institutions see Nye (1990). On patron-client relations between great powers and regional states based on interdependence see Shoemaker and Spanier (1984) and Bar-Siman-Tov (1987).

favor of a major power, the greater its leverage and the lesser the autonomy of regional clients and vice versa. According to the degrees of asymmetrical interdependence, and to their corollary, degrees and types of small state autonomy, we differentiate among four major influence patterns:

1. Very low autonomy for the small states (or virtual control by the great powers). In this pattern of relations, there is a one-sided dependence of the small states on the great powers, and as a result the great powers determine the foreign policy behavior of the small states. The latter enjoy extremely limited freedom of action including an inability to realign, which further limits their leeway.
2. Low or limited autonomy (or considerable influence of the great powers). In this type of relations there is an asymmetrical interdependence in favor of the great powers, which are, therefore, able to limit the range of foreign policy options available to the small states, and to affect the likelihood of possible regional outcomes. While the great powers do not necessarily prevail in each conflict with a small state or control the outcomes in each specific case, at the minimum they are able to influence the major patterns of conflict management and resolution in the region. Overall, the small states enjoy some limited autonomy in this pattern of influence relations.
3. High “negative” autonomy (or *independence* from the great powers’ influence). This pattern entails a low interdependence between the great powers and the regional actors. The small states enjoy considerable leeway to pursue their preferred policies, but they are unable to influence the behavior of the great powers.
4. High “positive” autonomy (or ability to *manipulate* the great powers). Because of the high interdependence between the great powers and the small powers, the latter are sometimes able to affect and even manipulate the behavior of the great powers. In this pattern local players use strategies of bargaining which weaken the impact of their structural inferiority and increase their maneuvering room (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1987:8–13; Habeeb, 1988). Such strategies include playing off the great powers because the small powers have a credible threat of defection, that is, they are able to threaten to shift orientation from one great power to another. Another strategy is penetrating the domestic politics of the great power, especially through transnational “linkage groups” between the small allies and domestic actors in the great power’s political system (see Keohane, 1971).

The type of influence relations affects the effectiveness of conflict management or mitigation by the great powers in conflict-prone regions: a high degree of small state autonomy, and especially their ability to manipulate the great powers, constrains the effectiveness of the great powers’ attempts at regional conflict management or mitigation, whereas a limited autonomy of the small states makes effective management or mitigation possible. But the type of influence relations is heavily conditioned by the dominant type of great power involvement in the region, as will be discussed below.

*Patterns of Great Power Involvement in Regional Conflicts*

The great powers have in principle four major “ideal-type” alternative strategies for dealing with regional conflicts: competition, cooperation, dominance, and



disengagement.<sup>13</sup> In competition and cooperation, several great powers are involved in the region. Dominance means that there is a single hegemon in the region, while in disengagement all or at least some of the great powers are not involved in the regional conflict.

Great power *competition* with regard to a certain region means that the great powers focus on balancing each other in order to prevent the emergence of any one of them as a hegemon in the region, which can threaten their important interests (to be discussed below). In third areas, small regional allies are the key for achieving the great powers' goals, and are therefore the critical "prize" in such a competition. Competing great powers thus bid for the support of the small states.

*Cooperation* takes place when actors adjust their conduct to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination (Keohane, 1984:51–2; Axelrod and Keohane, 1985:226). The focus here is on "affirmative" cooperation, that is, great power cooperation in promoting regional conflict reduction or mitigation, which goes well beyond the "negative" cooperation of mutual disengagement from a specific region.<sup>14</sup> Great power cooperation with regard to regional conflict mitigation may involve joint efforts by the great powers to increase regional stability through preventing local crises and wars, promoting arms control, establishing regional security regimes, and promoting the settlement of regional disputes through multilateral avenues such as the U.N. Security Council or a concert of the great powers.<sup>15</sup> With regard to the small regional states, great power cooperation may take a benign or accommodative form of persuasion and positive inducements or a coercive form of pressure and negative sanctions, or a mixture of the two.<sup>16</sup> More specifically, the accommodative form of great power cooperation vis-à-vis small states may involve devices such as "honest brokerage," joint diplomatic initiatives, international conferences chaired by the great powers, deployment of their troops as peacekeeping forces, provision of positive inducements and guarantees for settlements, and economic assistance for development purposes. The coercive form may include economic sanctions, arms embargoes, and joint military interventions to enforce cease-fires or impose settlements.

*Disengagement* means that the great powers (or at least some of them) do not tend to intervene diplomatically, and surely not militarily in the regional conflict, apart from intervention on specific and limited grounds such as to rescue their citizens (Ullman, 1990). At a minimum, the powers drastically reduce their political-security commitments in the region in question, whereas economic interests there are perceived as not necessitating military-diplomatic intervention or at least not justifying the costs involved in such intervention.<sup>17</sup>

*Dominance* (or hegemony) means the dominant involvement of one great power in the region. Similarly to several cooperating powers, the dominant power can exercise a major influence on patterns and outcomes in the region in either a benign (Keohane, 1984:32) or a coercive manner (Gilpin, 1981:29).

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<sup>13</sup> In reality there may be, of course, different degrees and levels of each of these strategies, as well as combinations or "mixes" of several strategies. For a rather similar typology of patterns of great power involvement see Spiegel (1972:145–65), although he deals more with great power involvement vis-à-vis a single small state, rather than a regional conflict.

<sup>14</sup> On "negative" versus "affirmative" cooperation see Stein (1983) and Miller (1992a, 1995:chs. 1, 2).

<sup>15</sup> On concerts and collective security as conflict-resolution mechanisms see Kupchan and Kupchan (1991) and Miller (1992b). On great power concerts see also Jervis (1986). On security regimes see Jervis (1983) and Nye (1987). For a wide range of arrangements for the security cooperation of the great powers in the nineteenth century and in the Cold War era, respectively, see Lauren (1983) and George et al. (1988).

<sup>16</sup> See Miller (1997).

<sup>17</sup> For an advocacy of a strategy of disengagement for the U.S. in the post-Cold War era see Nordlinger (1991, 1995).



## Propositions

### Four Causal Linkages Between the Types of Great Power Involvement, Small States' Autonomy, and the Patterns of Regional Conflicts

*Types of Involvement* → *Small States' Autonomy* → *Patterns of Regional Conflicts*

*1. Competition* → *high "positive autonomy" (manipulation)* → *intensified local conflicts*

The more intense the competition among the great powers in the region, the greater the autonomy of the small states and their ability to manipulate the powers and to extract military and economic aid. Keen competition among the great powers permits the small states to play them off each other by threatening to realign. This ability to manipulate the great powers, in turn, makes it relatively easy for regional actors to obstruct and resist great power attempts at conflict reduction, to the extent that they are made at all. Indeed, competing great powers are likely to be unable (and possibly also unwilling) to coordinate their efforts in order to mitigate the regional conflict. Instead of working together, they are more likely to be working at cross-purposes, support rival regional states, and pursue conflicting unilateral policies. Moreover, the assistance granted by the patrons tends to shield the regional clients from the costs of the regional rivalry and thus enables the small states to intensify the local conflict.

The effects of the Cold War on regional conflicts are a major illustration of the influence of great power competition. Because of the keen superpower rivalry during the Cold War, the ability of regional actors to manipulate the great powers was especially powerful in the postwar era.<sup>18</sup> The intense global competition during the Cold War was not helpful for the mitigation of local conflicts and reduced the likelihood of stable settlements. The diplomatic support, financial aid, and massive arms supplies provided by the superpower patrons to their respective Cold War clients produced disincentives for the regional parties to show the flexibility and moderation needed in order to resolve disputes. Rather, such generous aid made it easier for the local actors to persist in their quarrels.<sup>19</sup> Thus, to some extent, regional conflicts were fueled by the global contest (Barringer, 1972),<sup>20</sup> even if in most cases the origins of these conflicts were indigenous and unrelated to the East-West rivalry (Kanet and Kolodziej, 1991:24).

*2. Cooperation* → *low autonomy* → *effective conflict mitigation*

Great power cooperation reduces the maneuvering room of the small states and enables the great powers to exert coordinated moderating pressures (diplomatic, economic, and military) on their regional allies as well as broker settlements and mediate between the local parties. As a result, peacemaking efforts by the great powers will be much more effective than in a competitive type of involvement,

<sup>18</sup> Cf. George with others (1983:392). Evron (1973:175) deals with Nasser's manipulations, and Shoemaker and Spanier (1984:52, 61, 64–5) refer to Salih of Yemen and to Somalia's Siad Barre. Buzan (1983:108–11) describes how India and Pakistan extracted aid from the superpowers.

<sup>19</sup> See, e. g., the examples in MacFarlane (1992:225) with regard to the effects of the Soviet assistance to Somalia (1969–1977) and later to Ethiopia on the choice of military options by these regimes. Another example concerns the Arab-Israeli conflict, where the military assistance of the superpowers to both sides has helped perpetuate the conflict.

<sup>20</sup> In their comprehensive study of the dynamics of four regional systems, Wriggins and his collaborators have found that "where external assistance was available from competing major power rivals, regional tensions were likely to be intensified. Indeed, large transfers of military equipment were likely to intensify the level of arms competition and might even provoke a regional arms race" (1992:293–4).

although cooperating great powers might not be able to prevent completely an occasional resort to violence by the regional actors.

The transition from superpower competition to cooperation with regard to regional conflicts in the Gorbachev era (1985–1991) demonstrates the critical effects that can be exercised by great power cooperation (Hampson, 1992:128). Since the U.S. was ready to reciprocate the growing Soviet moderation and willingness to collaborate, the superpowers were able to cooperate and apply effective moderating pressures on local allies engaged in intense conflicts in many Third World regions (the Middle East, Afghanistan, Angola—Southern Africa, Horn of Africa, Central America, Iran–Iraq, Cambodia).<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the growing superpower cooperation limited the maneuvering room of the small states. The pressures exerted by the superpowers, in turn, made possible major progress in regional conflict reduction—or at least a level of progress impossible to achieve during the Cold War.

*3. Disengagement → high “negative autonomy” (independence) → uninterrupted local conflicts*

Great power disengagement from a regional conflict means the independence of both the great powers and the regional parties from each other. The outcome will be an insulation of the regional conflict from great power influence and its continuation without interference from the outside and in accordance with the resources and motivations of the regional states. As a result, great power disengagement can make possible the rise of regional hegemonies (Rosecrance, 1991:375; see also MacFarlane, 1992:226), especially in those regions where local states were able to balance the aspiring hegemonies mainly due to the assistance provided by their external protectors. Thus, for example, Rosecrance predicts that in the absence of countervailing U.S. influence in favor of Pakistan, India might be expected to control major events in South Asia (1991:374). Yet, these outcomes are likely to take place if *all* the great powers disengage from the region. If, on the other hand, only some of the great powers disengage from a regional conflict, the remaining power may find itself unchecked to do what it likes there, and even to establish its hegemony over the region, with the attendant effects on the regional conflict.

*4. Dominance → very low autonomy → highly effective conflict management*

Wherever there is one dominant external power in the region, the small powers will have a very limited maneuvering room. A hegemon is likely to be interested in stabilizing the area under its dominance. Thus, the greater the small states' vulnerability and dependence on the hegemon's power, the more will the hegemon be able to manage regional conflicts effectively and to prevent violence. The hegemon's efforts at containing regional violence will be more effective than the coordinated efforts of several cooperating powers, for two reasons. First, hegemony does not entail potential disagreements between the cooperating powers concerning burden-sharing, especially in the highly sensitive and costly sphere of resort to military force. Second, the very low small state autonomy under hegemony minimizes the probability that the small states will dare to resort to military force, whereas the relatively higher level of autonomy in the case of great power cooperation means that the regional

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<sup>21</sup> For recent treatments of superpower cooperation in each of these regional conflicts in the Gorbachev era see the detailed accounts in the following edited volumes dedicated to this subject: Katz (1991); Kanet and Kolodziej (1991); Breslauer, Kriesler, and Ward (1991); and Weiss and Blight (1992). For a detailed analysis of superpower cooperation in conflict reduction in the South-Western African case see Jaster (1990, esp. pp. 28–29 where he deals with Soviet restraining pressures). For an analysis that highlights the cooperative elements in the Gorbachev strategy toward conflict reduction in a number of regions (rather than just unilateral disengagement and submission to U.S. pressures) see Herrmann (1992). For a similar point with regard to the settlement in Southern Africa see Hampson (1992:141).

actors will have a somewhat greater risk-taking propensity. Yet, the effectiveness of regional conflict management by the hegemon might be achieved at the expense of the liberty of the small states, especially if the dominant power is nondemocratic. “A hegemonistic system, at least initially, presents the spectacle of peace, stability, and trains running on time, though it may be the peace of political oppression and the stability of the concentration camp. Napoleon, Hitler, and Stalin were, in fact, successful in preventing open conflicts among the countries that came under their sway, at least as long as their empires lasted” (Ploughman, 1976–77:628).<sup>22</sup> Besides, precisely because conflict *management* is highly effective under hegemony, the dominant power may not consider it necessary to attempt to promote the resolution or mitigation of the fundamental sources of the conflict (whereas the difficulties of conflict management by several cooperating powers may bring them to attempt to promote conflict reduction or mitigation).<sup>23</sup>

### **The Sources of Great Power Involvement in Regional Conflicts: The Balances of Interests and Capabilities**

The four types of great power regional involvement are informed by the nature and balance of great power capabilities and interests in regional conflicts.

*Capabilities* refer both to overall capabilities in all key issue-areas (military, economic, sociopolitical cohesiveness, etc.) and to power-projection capabilities with regard to specific regions, influenced by the factor of geographical proximity. In contrast to systems theory, this study does not deal only with situations in which there is an equal distribution of capabilities among the great powers;<sup>24</sup> it also considers *relative* great power capabilities. Indeed, as has been underlined by hegemonic theories, power asymmetries among great powers can take place and have important implications for their behavior and for international outcomes.<sup>25</sup> This study will take a more differentiated approach: great power capabilities may be (roughly) equal or unequal (superior/weaker powers). Whereas some patterns of great power regional involvement (competition and cooperation) tend to take place under a more or less equal distribution of capabilities, other patterns (dominance and disengagement) tend to reflect power asymmetry.

The number of the great powers in the international system (polarity) is not an important factor in affecting the pattern of regional involvement by the great

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<sup>22</sup> Although the situation of dominance allows the hegemonic great power to achieve virtual control over the small regional states, different great powers are likely to avail themselves of this opportunity in different degrees, depending on their domestic regimes. Thus, democratic great powers are expected to allow a higher degree of autonomy for small states than authoritarian and especially totalitarian great powers. The two illustrations of hegemony below refer to totalitarian powers, and show the outer limits of great power control over small states in a situation of hegemony. Similarly, democratic great powers are more likely to resort to accommodative measures (such as mediation in regional conflict resolution) than are their nondemocratic counterparts, who may be expected to rely on coercive measures in dealing with the small regional states. On the tendency of democratic great powers to pursue mediation in regional conflict resolution see Miller (1997).

<sup>23</sup> But that does not deny the possibility that certain hegemon, especially democratic ones, might be more inclined to go beyond conflict management to promote conflict reduction.

<sup>24</sup> Waltz (1979) focuses on the different effects of bipolarity and multipolarity, but in both systems there is assumed to be a rough equality in great power capabilities, even though the number of the great powers varies. Thus, Waltz continues the traditional approach of the balance of power school, which views an equal distribution of great power capabilities as the most common situation. Cf. Claude (1962), Wight (1973:100), and Rosecrance (1986:56–8). For recent brief overviews see Miller (1992b, 1996a).

<sup>25</sup> For overviews of hegemonic theories see Nye (1990), Levy (1991b), and chapters in Rapkin (1990) and Midlarsky (1989). Following the work of Kindleberger on the Great Depression (1973, enlarged in 1986), some of the recent writers on hegemony have tended to focus on international political economy (see Keohane, 1984). Others have addressed the international political system as a whole (Modelski, 1978, 1987; Organski and Kugler, 1980; Gilpin, 1981; Thompson, 1988).

powers. Rather, the effects of polarity are mainly with regard to the international *implications* of great power regional engagement, to be discussed below, and more specifically, the likelihood of inadvertent escalation of regional crises under great power competition.

Indeed, structural realism has concentrated on the distribution of power capabilities as the main systemic variable at the expense of a second factor, stressed by classical realists, namely, great power *interests*. Although Waltz acknowledges that states may vary in their interests, his theory is, in fact, based on the minimalist assumption that states seek to preserve their security (1979:118). State interests are not considered by Waltz as an independent variable with an equal importance to the distribution of capabilities. Yet, this article argues that the polarity of the system does not determine the balance of great power interests vis-à-vis a certain region: different balances of interests might take place under the same international system, while a similar balance might hold even if the polarity of the system changes.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, as has recently been claimed, state interests should be restored as one of the two independent determinants of state behavior according to the realist tradition (Schweller, 1993, 1994). Accordingly, the approach proposed here stresses the combination of the balances of great power capabilities and interests and their joint effects on great power involvement in regional conflicts. Although the balance of capabilities exerts an important influence on great power regional strategies, the balance of great power interests has an equally important impact on the type and level of their regional engagement. Thus, our approach integrates the two main factors stressed by the two streams of realism: interests (classical realism) and distribution of capabilities (neorealism). This approach may therefore be termed “integrated realism.”

Classical realists have highlighted the concept of national interests as an objective motivation for state behavior that can be assumed or deduced by an outside analyst (Krasner, 1978:36–42).<sup>27</sup> Most notably, Morgenthau argued that “statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power” (1967:5). Critics of the concept have pointed out the difficulties of operationalizing the term “interests,” and the potential contradictions and trade-offs between different interests. The critics have especially contended that interests are shaped by domestic and bureaucratic political processes and reflect the preferences of particular domestic groups and individual decision makers rather than of the nation as a whole (for useful discussions of these problems, see George and Keohane, 1980; Nincic, 1992).

This article adopts an intermediate position, namely, that while interests may be influenced by domestic- and individual-level considerations, they also reflect objective and situational factors. In addition, it is possible to distinguish between interests

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<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, there is a contradiction in Waltz’s argument about great power interests in the Third World under bipolarity: on the one hand, Waltz suggests that there are no important interests in the periphery (1979:33, 190), while, on the other hand, he argues that the superpowers under bipolarity conduct an especially intense competition there (1979:171). For a recent discussion of this point see Desch (1993:8–9). Indeed, in spite of the systemic assumption of uniformity of behavior induced by the international structure, Waltz’s analysis of great power behavior under bipolarity can logically lead to all four patterns of great power regional interaction presented here. On the one hand, Waltz claims that bipolarity results in intense great power competition in third areas; yet he also suggests that it is conducive to great power cooperation and joint management of international problems (1979:ch. 9). The discussion of the absence of important great power interests in the Third World under bipolarity should lead us to expect disengagement, while the analysis of spheres of influence as a mechanism of international order (pp. 208–9) alludes to the regional dominance of one power.

<sup>27</sup> Krasner introduces the distinction between deductive and inductive methodologies for identifying national interests (1978:ch. 2). For an elaborate discussion of different conceptions of national interests see Clinton (1994).

and power in the sense that intrinsic interests<sup>28</sup> are derived from the state's primary international objectives.<sup>29</sup> In turn, power capabilities are a useful means for accomplishing these objectives, but power maximization should not be conceived of as the major national goal in and of itself (on this point, see George and Keohane, 1980:227; Waltz, 1990:36). Thus, the term *interests* as used here refers to the stakes that a state has in those regions and international issues and outcomes that affect its security or its economic and international political situation.

We will distinguish between two dimensions of great power interests in third regions. The first dimension refers to the level of the stakes involved: different regions may affect the security and economic and political situation of the great powers to a greater or lesser degree. In estimating the level of great power interests at stake in third regions, neorealists tend to focus on material determinants of power, such as the possession by regional states of key economic resources or strategic assets.<sup>30</sup> Yet neorealists have tended to overlook an important geopolitical factor affecting the level of great power stakes in a region—the degree of the region's proximity to the great power. All other things being equal, proximate regional states tend to affect great power security and economic and political situation more than distant ones.<sup>31</sup> Based on these considerations, great power interests with regard to different regions will be classified as high or low, and also as symmetrical or asymmetrical (i.e., high interest of one power and low interest of another).<sup>32</sup> In addition to these “deductive” factors, one may use two “inductive” criteria for identifying the level of great power interests: the degree of consensus in the foreign policy elite with regard to the importance of a certain region, and the continuity or persistence of the great power involvement in the region over time.<sup>33</sup> The higher the degree of consensus and the more persistent the involvement, the higher the great power interest in the region and vice versa.

The second dimension of great power interests in third regions is whether the stakes involved may be pursued and protected in cooperation or in conflict with other great powers; in other words, whether the great power interests in a certain region are converging or conflicting with those of other great powers. The definition of great power interests as converging or conflicting depends partly on the nature of the stake in question (whether it is divisible or zero-sum), but to a large degree it is also conditioned by the general state of great power relations—whether cooperative or conflictual. The factors affecting great power conflict and cooperation fall beyond the scope of the present article.<sup>34</sup> Yet, we will suggest that this dimension of great power interests is affected especially by two characteristics of the great powers:

<sup>28</sup> For the distinction between intrinsic and reputational interests see Desch (1993:3, 10) and Kupchan (1992:248).

<sup>29</sup> Such as the preservation of the territorial and political integrity of the state, the maintenance of the safety of its borders and of a nonthreatening international environment, and the promotion of specific economic aims (Krasner, 1978:35, 335; Kupchan, 1992:248). See also George and Keohane (1980).

<sup>30</sup> The neorealist view of great power interests in third regions was recently expressed in a debate on the importance of the Third World to U.S. interests. See Van Evera (1990) and Walt (1989). For a critique of this minimalist, or “hyper-realist” view, which focuses exclusively on materialist factors, see David (1989, 1992–93). For an overview of the neorealist-neointernationalist debate see Desch (1993).

<sup>31</sup> For recent discussions of the security importance of proximity see Desch (1993) and Kupchan (1992).

<sup>32</sup> For a similar classification see George (1990).

<sup>33</sup> This argument fits with Krasner's conception of an inductive (as opposed to a deductive) approach to interests. See Krasner (1978:ch. 2). Krasner suggests that “the statements and preferences of central decision-makers can nevertheless be used to define the national interest if two conditions are met: these preferences do not consistently benefit a particular class or group, and they last over an extended period of time” (1978:43). Because of the space limitations of an article, we will not be able to apply the criterion of the degree of consensus in the foreign policy elite in the historical illustrations below.

<sup>34</sup> For an analysis of the factors affecting cooperation and conflict among great powers see Miller (1995).

- (a) their being status quo or revisionist powers,<sup>35</sup> and
- (b) their being ideologically similar or polarized.<sup>36</sup>

To sum up, the level of great power interests at stake in a given region (high/low) is affected by two factors: material interests in the region and geographical proximity to the region. Whether the interests in question are converging or conflicting is also affected by two factors: the general status quo or revisionist orientation of the great powers, and the degree of ideological similarity and polarization among them. Together, these four factors affect the balance of great power interests with regard to regional conflicts.<sup>37</sup>

The following discussion will analyze the four patterns of great power regional involvement in terms of balances of capabilities and interests. Let us start with competition and cooperation.

1. *Competition*: equal capabilities, conflicting (symmetrical high) interests.
2. *Cooperation*: equal capabilities, converging (symmetrical high) interests.

Significant cooperation in regional conflict reduction is likely to take place among ideologically similar and status quo powers, whereas ideological polarization and the division of great powers into status quo and revisionist will result in intense competition in regions where all the powers have symmetrical high interests. Status quo powers are likely to be interested in stabilizing turbulent regions and at least containing regional conflicts, which may escalate and undermine the stability of the international order. In contrast, revisionist powers may not necessarily be interested in stabilization, and may even exacerbate regional conflicts, precisely in order to exploit them and to upset the existing order. Moreover, even if they are interested in containing or reducing the regional conflict, the global rivalry is likely to constrain the possibilities for enduring cooperation and joint efforts at conflict reduction with status quo powers. Both cooperation and competition are likely to take place under a rough equality of capabilities and a symmetry of interests of several great powers, since a marked imbalance in favor of one power is likely to lead to its dominance in the region.

3. *Dominance* may result from the superior capabilities and/or superior interests of one power. Thus, it is most likely to take place in regions where a single power has clear-cut advantages in the balances of both capabilities and interests relative to the other great powers. These regions are usually proximate to one of the great powers (and distant from the others) and are its exclusive sphere of influence.<sup>38</sup> But dominance can also take place in more

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<sup>35</sup> On status quo vs. revisionist states and the implications of this distinction for realist theory see Schweller (1993, 1994, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> On the effects and importance of ideological similarity and polarization see Miller (1995).

<sup>37</sup> For analytical clarity, the level of great power stakes in a given region is perceived here to be intrinsic in the sense of being independent of the general state of great power relations. In practice, a global great power competition, especially if it is ideological, may result in an inflated importance accorded to certain regions because the rival is or may become involved there. As a result, the great power will also become involved in the region to contain and balance the rival and to maintain its prestige and credibility in the eyes of its allies (a reputational interest). According to the neorealists, such was the case with U.S. interests in the Third World during the Cold War. See Van Evera (1990), Walt (1989), and Desch (1993). With the end of the great power competition, those regions that lack intrinsic interests will tend to lose their inflated importance. As will be discussed below, this has been the case with U.S. interests in the Balkans in the post-Cold War era.

<sup>38</sup> A great power's sphere of influence is defined as "a determinate region within which a single external power exerts a predominant influence, which limits the independence or freedom of action of political entities within it" (Keal, 1983:15).



remote regions when there is a single power that has both superior overall capabilities relative to the other powers (including the most effective power-projection capability in the global arena) and high interests in these regions. For example, these might be the sources of U.S. dominance in the post-Cold War Middle East.

4. In contrast to dominance, *disengagement* by a single great power from a regional conflict may take place as a result of low interests and/or low capabilities (relative to the other great powers). Accordingly, all or some of the great powers may fail to become involved in a regional conflict because of one of two principal situations:
  - a. *Equal capabilities, low interests*: this situation is relevant to remote regions unimportant to any of the great powers. It is not applicable to Eastern Europe and the Balkans, if only because of the proximity of this region to European powers. Therefore, this study will focus on the second situation conducive to disengagement:
  - b. *High capabilities, low interests vs. low capabilities, high interests*: the superior great power has low intrinsic interests in the region, while the relatively weaker powers might have the interest to intervene in the regional conflict but lack the capabilities for effective involvement in the region without the leadership of the stronger power. This may result in a situation whereby those who are able to stabilize the region are unwilling to do so, while those who are willing are unable. If in such a situation there is a great power that is both willing and able to intervene in the region, it may find itself unchecked to do what it likes there. Especially if this power is revisionist, this situation may have dire consequences for international stability.

### **The Implications for International Security**

The patterns of great power involvement in regional conflicts will influence the patterns of these conflicts, and will, in turn, have feedback implications for international security, that is, for peace and war beyond a certain region.

*Patterns of Involvement → Patterns of Regional Conflicts → International Implications*

#### *1. Competition → intensified conflict → highly destabilizing*

Competition will have destabilizing effects, as intensified local conflicts may escalate into crises which might engulf the great powers. Yet, the likelihood of the escalation of regional crises into major wars involving the great powers will be affected by the international system structure, namely, whether it is bipolar or multipolar. In bipolar systems regional crises are likely to be contained and successfully managed by the great powers, while in multipolarity there is a higher danger of failures in crisis management and of inadvertent escalation to the global level.<sup>39</sup>

#### *2. Cooperation → conflict reduction or mitigation → highly stabilizing*

Cooperation will have lasting stabilizing effects, because conflict reduction or mitigation, to the extent that it is successful, may minimize the outbreak of regional crises, and thus prevent their escalation into crises among the great powers themselves.

<sup>39</sup> For elaboration see Miller (1992a, 1994a, 1995:ch. 3).



3. *Disengagement → uninterrupted conflict → neutral or destabilizing*

Disengagement resulting in uninterrupted conflict, in principle, should not have major effects for international security. Yet, a protracted local conflict might spread from its initial confined local arena and bring about destabilizing massive flows of refugees. Disengagement by status quo powers from a region might also create temptations for potential regional or great power aggressors. Thus, this situation could eventually force the great powers to intervene, resulting in the escalation of the conflict to the international level, especially in multipolar systems.

4. *Dominance → conflict management or containment → stabilizing*

Hegemony should, on the whole, be stabilizing because it prevents the escalation of the conflict to the international level, but its effects for international security will depend upon its tacit or explicit acceptance by the other great powers. Such an acceptance will reinforce the stabilizing effects of regional hegemony. If hegemony is not accepted by the other powers, however, it may result in a great power crisis or war. Yet, even if hegemony is accepted by the other powers, unless the hegemon goes beyond conflict management and attempts to promote conflict resolution or at least mitigate the regional conflict, it may flare up again as soon as hegemony wanes.

Thus, for international security, one may range the options from the best to the worst in the following order: cooperation, hegemony, disengagement, and competition.

**The Historical Illustrations: Patterns of Great Power Involvement in Eastern Europe and the Balkans Since the Post-Napoleonic Era**

The cases discussed below are illustrations and not tests of the theory. Testing the theory would require a much more elaborate application of the variables to the history of the Balkans and Eastern Europe than is possible within the scope of an article. Ideally, a test of the theory would also require application to other regions in order to examine the sources and effects of great power intervention there.

**1. Cooperation:** *The Great Powers and the Eastern Question, 1815–1880*

The case of the European great powers and the Eastern Question (the problems and conflicts arising from the emergent Balkan nationalism and the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire)<sup>40</sup> in the post-1815 era is useful for exploring the expected beneficial effects of great power cooperation on the mitigation of regional disputes.

All the great powers (with the exception of Prussia/Germany) had high interests in the Balkans on geo-strategic grounds. The major strategic asset of the area was the Turkish Straits controlling the passage from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Russia and Austria were also motivated by the proximity of the region to their borders. The interests of the great powers in the region were in conflict. The major continuous conflict of interests took place between Russia and the other great powers, notably Austria and Britain. Russia had been engaged since the eighteenth century in a steady expansion southward at the expense of Turkey, manifested in a series of Russo-Turkish wars. It regarded the Balkans as its potential sphere of

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<sup>40</sup> For analysis of the Eastern Question see Anderson (1966) and Brown (1984). Brown also provides a useful bibliographical essay (pp. 280–329) and a detailed chronology (pp. 331–355) of this question.

influence, where it could achieve a predominant position by virtue of supporting the emerging Balkan states in their struggle for independence against Turkey and cultivating them as future allies and clients. Thus, throughout the nineteenth century Russia was the major champion of Balkan nationalism. The other great powers were concerned with the adverse effects of a prospective rise in Russian influence in the Balkans on the balance of power (especially if Russia seized the Straits). In the eyes of Britain, a potential Russian takeover of Turkey and control of the Straits was perceived as a major threat to the naval balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean and to the British routes to India. Austria, for its part, was opposed to Russian expansion into a region close to its borders, especially as Russia was manipulating its ethnic and religious affiliations with the Balkan Slavs and thus also posing a potential threat to the integrity of the Habsburg Empire which included a large Southern Slav population. In order to contain the Russian threat, Britain and Austria attempted to prop up the decaying Ottoman Empire as a barrier to Russian expansion, or if that proved impossible due to the rising national pressures in the Balkans, at least to minimize the gains of the emergent Balkan states as potential Russian clients.

Yet, in spite of this persistent conflict of important (high) interests among the major European powers, they were able to cooperate in resolving or at least mitigating several Eastern crises through multilateral diplomacy and collective interventions. This cooperation among the European great powers was known as the Concert of Europe.<sup>41</sup> The effects of their cooperation were: a limited autonomy of small states; a mitigation of the regional conflicts in the Balkans, including controlled peaceful changes in the territorial status quo in the region (even if these fell short of a genuine resolution of the conflicts); and crisis prevention among the great powers.

The cooperation among the great powers in spite of their conflict of interests in the Balkans was made possible by three factors derived from the general state of great power relations: first, all the great powers of the day being moderate status quo powers, not bent on disrupting the international order; second, some degree of ideological sameness among the great powers or at least the absence of ideological polarization among them; and third, a common fear of major war.<sup>42</sup>

Indeed, a common fear of getting entangled in a major war, based on the memory of the destruction and turmoil of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars,<sup>43</sup> motivated the powers to transcend their specific conflicts of interests and to cooperate in ameliorating regional disputes. Since they feared that regional crises in third areas (those areas that were not the exclusive sphere of influence of a single power) might escalate to a great power war, in some cases they acted multilaterally through joint diplomacy in order to achieve a reduction of regional disputes on compromise terms acceptable to all the great powers, and enforced the solution on the local actors, if necessary by joint military intervention.<sup>44</sup> The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, especially, might have brought about a scramble over the spoils resulting in a great power war, since the Near East (which included the Balkans) affected the high interests of most of the great powers. Thus, two of the most prominent examples of great power cooperation in regional conflict reduction concern the Eastern Question and the Balkans.

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<sup>41</sup> On the Concert of Europe see Hinsley (1963), Elrod (1976), Lauren (1983), Craig and George (1983), Schroeder (1986), Clark (1989), and Holsti (1992).

<sup>42</sup> For elaboration of the conditions for a great power concert see Miller (1994b), and the sources cited therein.

<sup>43</sup> On the effects of this memory see Rosecrance (1963:59–60), Hinsley (1963:ch. 9), Garrett (1976), and Jervis (1986).

<sup>44</sup> On this point see, e.g., Elrod (1976:166), Garrett (1976:415–20), Craig and George (1983:29–35), Lauren (1983:46–50), and Schroeder (1986).

The first major example of such cooperation in a regional conflict in the Balkans was in the case of the creation of an independent Greece in the 1820s and early 1830s (Anderson, 1979; Brown, 1984:46–56). In this case three of the great powers (Russia, Britain, and France) worked jointly in support of the Greek national liberation movement (partly in response to sympathetic European public opinion), in effect winning independence for the Greeks, while at the same time Britain tried to prevent Russia from acquiring too big a unilateral advantage at the expense of Turkey. For these purposes the great powers used a combination of multilateral diplomacy (notably the 1827 Treaty of London establishing cooperation among the three powers, and the 1832 London Convention establishing Greece as an independent state) and joint use of force (notably the devastating defeat of the Ottoman-Egyptian forces by the combined Anglo-French-Russian navies in the 1827 battle of Navarino, and the Russian 1828–29 war and defeat of Turkey that forced Turkey to accept Greek independence). Thus, by working together the three great powers were able to settle the Greek problem and to impose the resolution on the local parties. This resolution reflected a compromise between opposing great power interests. Although Greek independence was achieved at the expense of Turkey, the Ottoman Empire was kept in existence. The Greeks were given only a tiny kingdom, while most of them continued to live under Ottoman rule (Brown, 1984:56). The attitude of the great powers to the regional rivals (Greece and Turkey) was largely coercive. Although the Greeks were the beneficiaries of the great power involvement, they had no say concerning their future borders—these were delineated by the great powers alone, and constituted a compromise between Russia and Britain. Likewise, it was the great powers who appointed the future king of Greece (Palmer, 1970:37, 40). This reflected the limited autonomy of small states under great power cooperation, which, in turn, facilitated the resolution of the Greek-Turkish dispute by the great powers by allowing them to moderate Greek demands.

A second major example of great power cooperation in the Balkans is the Berlin Congress of 1878.<sup>45</sup> The Congress settled the Great Eastern Crisis of 1875–1878, which began with a revolt in Bosnia, continued with Serbia's and Montenegro's war (and defeat) against Turkey, and culminated in 1877 with the Russo-Turkish War and Turkey's defeat and acceptance of the San Stefano peace treaty. The Russian policy of seeking unilateral advantages on behalf of the Balkan peoples at the expense of Turkey, manifested in the war against it and in imposing the San Stefano treaty on it, brought the great powers in 1877 to the brink of war. Yet, the combination of pressure by Britain and Austria and the attendant threat of war, and also the domestic shift in the foreign policy making elite away from extreme Pan-Slav nationalism and in favor of a moderate, cooperative approach, brought about a change in Russian policy (Sumner, 1937). The resultant Congress of Berlin was one of the prime examples of great power cooperation in achieving a new, comprehensive territorial settlement in the Balkans (which represented a compromise between the Russian maximum aspirations on behalf of the small Balkan states, manifested in the peace of San Stefano, and British and Austrian objections). The settlement brought about the mitigation, if not the resolution, of the regional conflict in the Balkans. In E. H. Carr's view, the Berlin Congress constituted the foremost example of peaceful territorial change in the nineteenth century (1946:216). The fact that the settlement was broken in subsequent years may be regarded, at least partly, not as a shortcoming of the Congress, but rather as the result of shift in the great

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<sup>45</sup> Analyses of the Berlin Congress may be found in Stojanovic (1939), Langer (1950), Stavrianos (1956), and Anderson (1966). Russian policy with regard to the Congress is described in Sumner (1937); and British policy in R. H. Seton-Watson (1935).

power pattern of involvement in the region from cooperation to competition, which brought about a renewed intensification of the regional conflict.

As in the previous illustration, the great power attitude to the regional states was coercive. The territorial settlement was worked out by the great powers, and imposed not only on Turkey, but also on the Balkan states, who were its major beneficiaries. The small states were regarded by the great powers at the Congress as a nuisance. They were allowed to state their claims to the Congress, but not to take part in the deliberations and decision making, thus being “politely heard before being ignored” (Stavrianos, 1965:410). Bulgaria, whose future size and borders represented the biggest stumbling block to agreement, was completely excluded from participation in the Congress. The low autonomy of small states allowed the great powers to brush aside their mutual grievances, and to display “large mindedness in the disposal of other people’s property” (Richter, 1962:238), and thus made the achievement of a settlement considerably easier (Geiss, 1985).

## **2. Competition:** *Russia–Austro-Hungary, 1880–1914, and France–Italy in the 1920s and Early 1930s*

The first historical example of great power competition is the intense great power rivalry in the Balkans between Russia and Austro-Hungary in the period leading to World War I (1880–1914). It should help to examine the proposed adverse effects of great power competition: high “positive” autonomy (or ability to manipulate the great powers) for the small states; intensified local conflict; and inadvertent escalation of the regional conflict to the global level under the conditions of a multipolar international system.

In great power relations, the period of 1880–1914 is one of a decline of cooperation and a progressive increase in tension, manifested in the emergence of two antagonistic alliance blocs, and culminating in World War I (Langhorne, 1981). This process brought about the intensification of great power conflicts of interests in the Balkans. While in the 1870s the great powers could still pursue common efforts at conflict reduction in the Balkans (the Berlin Congress) and bring about regional settlements, afterward the conflicting interests and rivalry between Austria and Russia in the Balkans increasingly dominated the great power interaction there, and prevented collective action.<sup>46</sup>

The Balkans in this period were the setting of a continuing conflict between the small Balkan states and Turkey over territories that Turkey still controlled in the region (and was finally deprived of in the first Balkan War of 1912). Other territorial conflicts took place among the emergent Balkan states themselves. These conflicts were over the prospective division of the territories to be seized from Turkey and to which they laid rival claims, especially centering in this period on the Macedonian Question (Ristelhueber, 1971:ch. 3).<sup>47</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, Austria began to perceive the rising Balkan nationalism as a major threat to the survival and integrity of the multinational Habsburg Empire with its large South Slav population. It therefore sought to control and check the national aspirations of the Balkan states, or at least to divert them

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<sup>46</sup> As for Britain, in this period it reevaluated its strategic interests in the Near East, and concluded that after having occupied Egypt, its imperial interests were no longer threatened by a potential Russian encroachment on Turkey and control of the Straits. In 1915, in a complete reversal of its 1815–1880 policy, Britain even went so far as to promise the Straits to Russia after victory in World War I. In other words, in the 1880–1914 period British interests in the Balkans were lower than in the previous period, and as a result Austria remained the main power opposing Russian expansion in the region.

<sup>47</sup> For a review of the mutual territorial claims of the small Balkan states that originated in this period and continued in subsequent periods see Kostanick (1974).

away from its frontiers. Austrian fears centered on Serbia, who emerged in this period as a potential “Piedmont of the South Slavs”—the nucleus and focal point of the movement for South Slav unity, which threatened to wreck the Dual Monarchy (Ristelhueber, 1971:213–4, 232–3). In addition, at the Berlin Congress Austria was awarded the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and its occupation of this province was deeply resented by Serbia, who regarded it as rightfully its own (Seton-Watson, 1931). On the other hand, with the rise of nationalism all over Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century (manifested in Russia in Pan-Slav nationalism) and the related decline of great power cooperation, Russia became more assertive in pursuing unilateral advantages in the Balkans. A related Russian consideration was the fear that unless it supported the small Balkan states in their conflicts with Turkey, Austria, and one another, they might defect to the Austrian camp, undermining Russian influence in the region. Thus, Russian high interests in the region clashed directly with those of Austria: “Once the Balkan Slavs were astir, the Russian government dared not let them fail; Austria-Hungary dared not let them succeed” (Taylor, 1954:229). As a result, Austria and Russia engaged in this period in an acute competition in the region, pursuing unilateral policies, supporting rival Balkan states, and trying to undermine each other’s influence. There were interruptions in the competition, when both powers managed to agree to “keep the Balkans on ice,” and also to pursue occasional short-term cooperation. Yet, on the whole the dominant pattern was one of intense competition, which resulted in increased autonomy for the small states, and the intensification of the regional conflicts.

In 1881 Austria concluded a secret alliance with Serbia, whom it supported at this time against the Russian patronage of Bulgaria, Serbia’s major regional rival over Macedonia. According to the treaty, Austria undertook not to oppose Serbia’s expansion southward, and to use her influence with the other powers in order to win them over to an attitude favorable to such Serbian expansion. In return, Serbia promised to refrain from Slavic nationalist agitation against Austria among the Southern Slavs of the Habsburg Empire (Croatians and Slovenians), as well as in Austrian-occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina. By this treaty, Austria plainly attempted to divert Serbian national ambitions away from its frontiers, and channel them toward Macedonia, where it inevitably clashed with Bulgaria. “Only four years were to elapse before the unfortunate effect of this alliance upon Balkan politics was to be demonstrated by the Serbian attack upon Bulgaria” (Stavrianos, 1965:515–6). Thus, Austrian policy contributed to the Serbo-Bulgarian War of 1885, which was the first war between the small Balkan states.

Indeed, Austrian security and survival was best served by conflicts among the Balkan states, which would prevent them from forming a united front against it. As the Serbo-Bulgarian conflict over Macedonia was especially beneficial to Austrian interests, it was violently opposed, and Austria sought to disrupt a rapprochement between the two states in 1904–5 by imposing an embargo and a trade war (the so-called pig war) on Serbia. In a similar manner, from the Berlin Congress onward, Austria consistently opposed a prospective union between Serbia and Montenegro, and in 1913–14 it even threatened war on Serbia in order to prevent the union from taking place (Palmer, 1970:116). Yet, the great power competition gave the small states a realignment option, and thus an increased autonomy. Following its conflict with Austria in 1904–1908, Serbia went over to Russia, becoming by 1914 the chief Russian client state in the region (Hosch, 1972:135–7, 139–40). Similarly, when Russia contemplated an invasion of Bulgaria during the 1885–1887 Bulgarian crisis, as a punishment for Bulgaria’s defiant posture, it was deterred by an Austrian warning (Taylor, 1954:305–6, 319; Anderson, 1966:234–8).

Russian unilateral policy in the region also had destabilizing effects on the regional conflict. In the years 1908–1912 Russian diplomats encouraged and assisted in the formation of a league of Balkan states under Russian auspices as a

means of countering Austrian influence in the region. Yet, the Russian policy backfired, when, contrary to the wishes of the Russian government, the Balkan League of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece took the form of an offensive alliance against Turkey. Russia, who was not interested in a regional war, cooperated with Austria in issuing a joint warning to the League states not to attack Turkey, saying that even in case of victory they would not be allowed to annex any territory. Yet, the small states did not heed the warning: "They all knew that the great powers would never be able to cooperate long enough and closely enough to enforce their threat of no annexations" (Stavrianos, 1965:534). Indeed, this threat was not realized.

"As long as Russia and Austria-Hungary collaborated in 'keeping the Balkans on ice,' even a united bloc of Balkan states would not have been permitted to challenge the status quo" (Rossos, 1981:7). Conversely, it was the lack of a united great power front that provided the small Balkan states with much more room for maneuver, manifested in the Balkan Wars (1912–13). Exploiting the Austro-Russian rivalry, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro initiated on their own, and against the expressed wishes of the great powers, a war against Turkey in October 1912 and took over almost all the remaining Turkish territories in Europe (Taylor, 1954:490).

Yet, the great powers convened a conference in London to decide what territorial changes they would tolerate. The London conference may be considered a last vestige of great power cooperation in conflict reduction in the Balkans, in that it made a concerted attempt to bring about a new territorial settlement in the region (Crampton, 1974). On May 30, 1913, the great powers concluded the Treaty of London which included an agreement on the new Balkan boundaries. But this agreement could not prevent the eruption less than a month later of the second Balkan War, which broke out between the former allies over the division of the spoils. Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece, and was roundly defeated by its former allies, as well as Turkey and Romania. At the end of this war the small Balkan states concluded the peace of Bucharest among themselves. Significantly, this treaty, which made the London agreement partly irrelevant, was not submitted to the approval of the great powers. Thus, the success of the London conference was illusory, as the great power competition indeed made the small Balkan states "nobody's satellites" (Taylor, 1954:498). This outcome was especially unsatisfying for Austria because of the growing power of Serbia, which acquired the bulk of Macedonia and posed a rising threat to the integrity of the Habsburg monarchy. Yet, Serbia was supported by Russia, and this created a risk of escalation of the regional conflict to the great power level.

Thus, far from promoting the resolution, or at least the mitigation, of the regional conflicts in the Balkans, Austria and Russia exacerbated them by their unilateral-competitive policies, contributing to the outbreak of the Serbo-Bulgarian War and the Balkan Wars. This situation had severe implications for international security: it resulted in four Austro-Russian crises in the Balkans in the period 1880–1914. In the first three (the Bulgarian crisis of 1885–1887, the Bosnian annexation crisis of 1908–9, and the Balkan Wars crisis of 1912–13) Austria and Russia were on the brink of war. The great power crisis which accompanied the Balkan Wars included an Austrian mobilization against Serbia in which military units were sent to the Russian border in Galicia (Fischer, 1967:33), and the Russians, in retaliation, did not disband the contingent of conscripts that was due for release at the end of the year (Taylor, 1954:493–4).

Thus, the international danger inherent in the situation was not only that of the outbreak of local crises and wars, but also that of their escalation to the global level. And the likelihood of inadvertent escalation was increased drastically by the multipolar situation. In the last crisis of July 1914, Austria and Russia finally went over the brink, dragging all the other great powers along. The July crisis initially centered



on rival Austro-Russian positions with regard to Serbia. Whereas Austria regarded it as the major threat to the Habsburg Empire which should be eliminated, Russia played the role of its chief protector. Under the conditions of a multipolar international system, this Balkan crisis (Remak, 1971) escalated to a world war involving all the great powers.<sup>48</sup>

A second example of great power competition is the Franco-Italian rivalry in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the 1920s and early 1930s. Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the interwar period were characterized by a sharp division between status quo and revisionist small states. While the former fought on the victors' side in World War I and consequently were the beneficiaries of the Versailles territorial settlement in Eastern Europe, the latter (namely, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria) were on the losing side, and therefore the Versailles settlement was concluded largely at their expense. This division paralleled the division of the great powers into status quo and revisionist, according to their attitude to the post-World War I international order. Thus, the interwar period in Eastern Europe and the Balkans was characterized by persistent territorial claims by the revisionist states against the status quo states, compounded by territorial claims of status quo states on one another (such as the Polish-Czechoslovak conflict over Teschen), and the dissatisfaction of ethnic minorities within existing states.

As for the great powers, two powers proximate to the region (Germany and the Soviet Union) were in eclipse in this period, due to Germany's defeat in World War I and the Soviet Union's preoccupation with domestic affairs following the 1917 revolution. Their temporary weakness allowed France and Italy to play the leading roles in the region. (The attitude of Britain and the United States to the region is discussed below, in the illustration of great power disengagement.)

France, as the major continental status quo power, had a high interest in the region. It regarded the small states of the area as a potential bulwark against both German expansion eastward and Soviet expansion westward (Mandelbaum, 1988:ch. 2). Therefore, in the 1920s and early 1930s it sought to erect a "*cordon sanitaire*" of small status quo states by concluding a series of agreements with Poland and the states of the Little Entente (Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia) and the Balkan Entente (the latter two, Greece and Turkey). France's alignment with these states made it the major guarantor and protector of the Versailles order in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in this period.

While French interests made it uphold the territorial status quo in the region, Mussolini's revisionist ambitions of self-aggrandizement in the Balkans (a region proximate to Italy) dictated the opposite policy of disrupting the existing order in the area and attempting to undermine the French system of alliances. The means employed by Italy for this purpose were championing the revisionist small states (the 1934 Rome protocols with Austria and Hungary), attempting (without success) to woo the status quo small states away from France, and encouraging separatist terrorist groups in existing status quo states in order to disrupt them from within (notably, the Croatian Ustashi and the Macedonian IMRO within Yugoslavia). In 1934 terrorists funded by Italy assassinated the status quo-oriented king of Yugoslavia. The Italian policy contributed to the perpetuation of territorial conflicts in the area by encouraging the revisionist small states and dissatisfied separatist groups within states to persist in their claims, and thus undermining attempts at regional reconciliation (Stavrianos, 1965:734-6). Unlike the earlier period of Austro-Russian

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<sup>48</sup> For recent discussions and references see Snyder (1984), Lynn-Jones (1986:144), Orme (1987:106-8), Levy (1991a), Midlarsky (1991:107), and Miller (1994a).



competition, however, the Franco-Italian rivalry did not bring about the escalation of the regional conflicts to local wars or great power crises. One reason was that the permanent identification of the small states with either the status quo or the revisionist camp precluded realignment, and thus gave them less room for maneuver between the great powers than in the earlier period. A second reason was the relative weakness of Italy vis-à-vis France, which made Italy no more than a major irritant to the French diplomacy and system of alliances in the region. Thus, this illustration diverges from the ideal type in that there was an imbalance in the competitors' capabilities. However, this imbalance was not so marked as to result in French hegemony in the region. Despite its relative weakness, Italy "succeeded in keeping alive and even intensifying existing hatreds between Eastern European states, and maintained all Eastern Europe in a condition of unrest and tension. . . . The importance of Mussolini's Eastern European policy from 1922 to 1936 cannot therefore be overestimated. . . . Italy had done a good job by keeping the wounds open for sixteen years and by turning the knife from time to time" (Seton-Watson, 1962:368, 378).

### 3. Disengagement: *The Status Quo Powers vis-à-vis Eastern Europe in the Late 1930s*

The historical example of great power disengagement is the disengagement of the status quo powers from Eastern Europe in the late 1930s in the face of the resurgence of German power. The conflicts among the regional states from the 1920s and early 1930s continued unabated in this period. Indeed, the small states were unable to overcome their rivalries and to maintain a united front even when facing the threat of a German encroachment. However, it was not the small states but the major status quo powers who were capable of resisting German expansion in the region. Therefore, this illustration is useful for demonstrating the effects of great power disengagement, as the noninvolvement of the Western powers in the region allowed Germany to prevail and establish its hegemony over the region.

Indeed, the theoretical conditions stated above as conducive to disengagement seem to have existed in the interwar era. Although we lump all the status quo powers together as disengaging, there was a major difference between the interests and capabilities of the French and those of the British and the U.S. in Eastern Europe. Thus, the U.S. and Britain might have possessed the capabilities necessary for containing German expansion and maintaining stability in Eastern Europe, but being remote from the region, they, especially the U.S., lacked the interest to do so. At the same time, France as the most proximate Western power had the interest but lacked the capability to deter German aggressiveness toward the small East European states.<sup>49</sup> Thus, this mismatch between the balances of capabilities and interests with regard to Eastern Europe led to Western disengagement from the region in the late 1930s, even if it was done reluctantly on the part of the French. This disengagement, in turn, contributed to German ascendancy in the region and the collapse of the collective security system and the post-World War I international order.

The Senate rejection of U.S. membership in the League of Nations was obviously a major blow to President Wilson's plans for a new world order. E. H. Carr comments that, "in 1918, world leadership was offered, by almost universal consent, to the United States . . . (and was declined)" (1946:234).<sup>50</sup> But, in addition to American

<sup>49</sup> The somewhat parallel argument of Kindleberger in the IPE field refers to the U.S. and Britain: "The instability seems rather to have come from the growing weakness of one driver and the lack of sufficient interest in the other" (1986:299). For useful analyses of the 1930s in the strategic-security field see Posen (1984) and Mandelbaum (1988:ch. 2).

<sup>50</sup> Kindleberger (1973, 1986) applies this argument to the field of international economics in the interwar era and shows that the lack of U.S. leadership was a major destabilizing factor.

isolationism from conflict management in the Old World, Britain was also unwilling during most of the 1920s and 1930s to commit itself to the defense of Eastern Europe—the most problematic region of the interwar order (cf. Craig and George, 1983:54–7). Politicians and domestic opinion in the U.S. and Britain supported disengagement policies because of short-run benefits associated with saving defense expenditures, avoiding seemingly undesirable alignments (such as with the Soviet Union) and shunning what appeared to be unnecessarily dangerous entanglements in far-away places and expensive commitments (against the fascist powers). Britain's relatively low interests in Eastern Europe were given a blunt expression by Prime Minister Chamberlain, who referred to the Sudetenland crisis as “a quarrel in a faraway country between peoples of whom we know nothing” (Palmer, 1970:237).

This left France as the only major status quo power with sufficiently high interests to make a credible commitment to the East European states. Yet French resources, which were significantly weaker than Nazi Germany's, were insufficient for sustaining such a commitment and for deterring German aggression in Eastern Europe in the face of the growing power of the revisionist powers, especially given the ideological-domestic constraints on cooperation between the Western powers and Bolshevik Russia. Thus, in the late 1930s France was unwilling to act on her own and tended to follow Britain's lead because of its fear of being abandoned by Britain (Mandelbaum, 1988:ch. 2).

The direct result of the Western disengagement from Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the late 1930s in the face of rising German power was the breakdown of the French alliance system and the defection of the regional small states to the German camp. Germany remained virtually unopposed in the region, and by 1939 established its hegemony over the entire area. In its ascendancy, Germany deliberately exploited the territorial disputes in the region and skillfully played off the rival states against each other by posing alternately as the champion of revisionist small states and dissatisfied separatist minorities within existing states (notably the Slovaks in Czechoslovakia and the Croats in Yugoslavia) and as the only power capable of controlling and restraining revisionism, and thus as the only protector of status quo states such as Rumania and Yugoslavia (Hitchens, 1983:13–5). Thus, Hitler achieved the enthusiastic cooperation of Poland, Hungary, and the Slovaks in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938–39 by encouraging them to take a share of the spoils. In a similar manner, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Croats actively participated in the destruction of Yugoslavia in 1941.

Yet, the most important cause of the realignment of the regional status quo states with Germany was the Western disengagement, which overshadowed the skillful German tactics of exploiting the regional conflicts in Eastern Europe (Seton-Watson, 1962:368, 412). As France and Britain repeatedly failed to counter the moves of the revisionist powers in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, and, moreover, engaged in an active appeasement of Germany, the small status quo states in the region came to regard the alignment with France as an ineffectual guarantee of their security against the potential German threat. The decisive event in this respect was the Western acquiescence in the German reoccupation and remilitarization of the Rhineland, which effectively disabled France to give prompt military aid to its East European allies if attacked by Germany, and thus rendered its guarantee to their security practically useless (Hitchens, 1983:11, 17; Mandelbaum, 1988:103, 109). The prestige of the Western powers and of the collective security system they presided over was further undermined by Italy's occupation of Ethiopia, and in Eastern Europe itself by the Anschluss, the Sudetenland-Munich crisis, and the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. As a result, the regional small states behaved in accordance with alliance theory: they showed the tendency of small states to bandwagon with a proximate threatening great power, especially when this threat is compounded by the unavailability of great power allies (Walt, 1987:30). The small

states defected one by one from the French alliance system, and moved into the German political orbit (except for Czechoslovakia, who was destroyed). “Greater German primacy was thus already established in the Danube Basin and the Balkans before the first panzer divisions moved against Poland in September 1939” (Palmer, 1970:228).

The disengagement of the Western powers thus provided the opportunity for the gradual establishment of German hegemony over Eastern Europe, which finally made Britain and France reverse their policy and oppose further German expansion against Poland. Thus, such disengagement at best only delayed the war and may have considerably aggravated its eventual scope or even contributed to its outbreak (Taylor, 1961).

#### 4. **Dominance:** *Germany in the Late 1930s–Early 1940s and the USSR in the Cold War Era*

The first example of dominance is the German hegemony in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the late 1930s–early 1940s. Germany emerged as the dominant power in the region as a result of being the only power who possessed both sufficient interests and sufficient capabilities for effective intervention there, because of the proximity of the region to its borders. Chamberlain admitted that “geographically, Germany must occupy a dominating position in central and southeastern Europe” (Hitchens, 1983:34).<sup>51</sup> It regarded the establishment of political, economic, and military control over the region as a necessary step toward the attainment of longer-range goals, whether vis-à-vis the USSR or the West (Hitchens, 1983:260). By the beginning of operation Barbarossa, Germany successfully imposed its “new order” on the entire region. The “new order” included a sweeping redrawing of the territorial map of the region, whereby five states (Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Greece) were occupied and/or dismembered, and two new states (Croatia and Slovakia) were created and, together with the remaining states (Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria), formally acceded to the Tripartite Pact. Rumania and Hungary also took part in Hitler’s war against Russia. In addition, territorial changes were effected between the existing states in a coercive manner which reflected the totalitarian German regime. Thus, in 1938, following the Munich agreement, Hitler settled the boundary conflict between autonomous Slovakia and Hungary by arbitrarily dictating the “First Vienna Award.” Similarly, in 1940, after Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria failed to settle their territorial disputes on their own, Hitler imposed the “Second Vienna Award,” which made Rumania cede part of Transylvania to Hungary and southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria (Seton-Watson, 1962:401). Thus, German hegemony resulted in the containment, although not the resolution, of the regional conflicts in the area. While German power was in place, it was inconceivable for the small states to attempt to change unilaterally the new territorial order imposed by Germany. This order, which lasted until 1944, was achieved at the price of reducing the small regional states to satellites with very limited autonomy. The German hegemony was, of course, not accepted by the West, and was eliminated with Germany’s defeat in World War II.

With the end of World War II, Eastern Europe and the Balkans passed from German to Soviet hegemony, because in the new bipolar international system the Soviet Union possessed superior interests and interventionary capabilities in this

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<sup>51</sup> The only other great power who was equally proximate to the region and possessed both high interests and high capabilities for intervention there was the USSR, potentially Germany’s main rival in the region. Yet, in the late 1930s it was still preoccupied with domestic affairs and concentrated on building its internal power base. Therefore, it was content for the time being to leave most of the area under German hegemony, except for its immediate periphery (Finland, the Baltic states, Eastern Poland, and Bessarabia) assigned to it in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939.

region proximate to its borders compared to the U.S. Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and most of the Balkans in the Cold War era (“Pax Sovietica”) likewise shows the proposed effects of regional dominance: very limited autonomy for the lesser actors, and highly effective conflict management (in the sense of freezing the status quo and keeping the lid on the region).

Indeed, Eastern Europe and the Balkans, having become part of the Soviet sphere of influence, ceased to be a powder keg of Europe, as Soviet power created an imposed “zone of peace” in the area. Moreover, unlike the German hegemony, the fact (although not the moral right) of Soviet predominance in the region was tacitly recognized by the U.S. This tacit recognition was expressed by its not intervening militarily in international or domestic conflicts in Eastern Europe (parallel to the Soviet respect of this “tacit rule” vis-à-vis U.S. predominance in Central America).<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe was an important element of the international order in the postwar era. An example of unilateral coercive conflict management in the region by the Soviet Union is Stalin’s imposed decision in 1945 that Poland cede Teschen to Czechoslovakia. However, as in the earlier German example, this effective conflict management by the Soviet hegemon (cf. Joffe, 1992:46; Larrabee, 1992:31–2) was achieved at the expense of the freedom of the East European nations. Moreover, the Soviet Union did not promote the resolution of the many territorial conflicts in its sphere of influence, but rather suppressed them and kept the situation “frozen” (Lundestad, 1992:198; Tomaszewski, 1993). “None of the pre-war Balkan disputes can be said to have been resolved by the agreement of the contesting parties. If the Balkans have ceased to be the tinderbox of Europe, it is not because the Hungarians no longer desire Transylvania from Rumania, or because Bulgaria is content to see Macedonia remain a part of Yugoslavia, or because Albania and Greece are satisfied with their existing boundaries. . . . Rather, it was only in the postwar era, when the Soviet Union emerged as the dominant power in the Balkans, willing to intervene to prevent one or another Balkan state from using force to assert its border claims—and militarily capable of such intervention—that peace was established in the region” (Weiner, 1971:682; see also Bull, 1977:218–9).

As a result, as predicted by some observers (Licklider, 1976–77), with the disintegration of Soviet power, violent conflicts have broken out again in the Balkans (as well as in the periphery of the former Soviet Union itself).

### **Implications of the Model for the Balkans in the Post-Cold War Era**

This section will examine the contemporary regional conflict in the Balkans (1991–1996) in light of the framework suggested by the study. The discussion is necessarily tentative, as the situation continues to evolve, and it is not yet clear which pattern of great power involvement in the region will emerge dominant in the long run. Yet, the framework may help identify several patterns that have emerged so far with regard to this conflict.

The disintegration of Pax Sovietica and of communist regimes throughout Eastern Europe has resulted in the reemergence of regional conflicts in the Balkans, most notably the war in former Yugoslavia. Many analysts expected that the decline of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War would lead to the rise of great power cooperation as the dominant strategy vis-à-vis local conflicts such as those in the Balkans. Such cooperation could take place in the form of either a revitalized great power concert or pan-European collective security institutions

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<sup>52</sup> See Bull (1977:223–5), George, with others (1983:384–5), Gaddis (1986:133–4), and Keal (1983:115); Keal’s book provides the most valuable treatment of U.S.-Soviet tacit agreements on spheres of influence.

such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) or some combination of the two forms.<sup>53</sup>

Although there have been some elements of concerted great power diplomacy vis-à-vis the conflict in former Yugoslavia, the dominant strategy of the great powers, until summer 1995, was disengagement (or, at most, a relatively low level of involvement which included sending some limited peacekeeping forces, especially from Europe, imposing U.N. economic sanctions on Serbia, the U.N.-declared “no-fly zone” over Bosnia, and also an arms embargo on former Yugoslavia). As a result, international institutions, whether European (such as the CSCE and the European Union) or global (the U.N.), failed in their attempts to resolve, or at least contain, the conflict. Consequently, the conflict continued uninterrupted, causing many casualties, a massive flow of refugees, and continuous fears of escalation and spreading instability.

On the surface, at least, there seems to be some similarity between the basic conditions that led to Western disengagement from Eastern Europe and the Balkans in the 1930s and the situation in the post-Cold War era. Thus, the European powers seem to have had a high interest in ending the war in Bosnia, at the very least because of their proximity to the conflict and the fear of spreading instability and chaos or the establishment of an Islamic state in the middle of Europe.<sup>54</sup> But it appears that the Europeans still need U.S. leadership for carrying out a major military or diplomatic engagement.<sup>55</sup> Yet, the U.S. does not have an intrinsic geopolitical or economic interest in the Balkans, in contrast to its interests in Central America due to its proximity to the U.S. (and, accordingly, the recurring U.S. interventions there, including in the post-Cold War era: Panama in 1989 and Haiti in 1994), or in the oil-rich Persian Gulf (and thus the major U.S. intervention in the 1990–91 Gulf War and the prompt response to Iraqi threats in October 1994). Although the disappearance of the Soviet Union has made U.S. military intervention in the Balkans much more feasible than during the Cold War, the decline of the rivalry with the Soviets has also further weakened the interest of the U.S. in that part of the world (Doder, 1993:4). At any rate, the intrinsic U.S. interests in the Balkans did not seem to provide incentives powerful enough for implementing a costly military intervention in the local conflict there. The outcome until 1995 was uninterrupted regional conflict (Joffe, 1992, 1993) and a persistent danger of potential escalation dramatized by a misplaced analogy with Sarajevo in 1914 (on the eve of World War I the problem was the keenness of the great power competition and thereby the ability of the small powers to manipulate and entrap them in their quarrels; in the current crisis the major problem has been until recently great power disengagement and accordingly the inability to contain or ameliorate the violent local conflict).<sup>56</sup>

Yet, within the overall framework of disengagement there were incidents of great power cooperation. The growing fear of a potential escalation and the spreading of

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<sup>53</sup> See Kupchan and Kupchan (1991) and the many references they cite (esp. fn. 2, p. 115). See also Zelikow (1992). For a critical analysis of the CSCE (and also of other regional organizations, including the European Community) in the area of regional security see MacFarlane and Weiss (1992).

<sup>54</sup> See Cohen (1994:2).

<sup>55</sup> See *The Economist* (1994b:21–4). Thus, *The Economist* suggested that despite a certain degree of French and British involvement, “for political as well as practical reasons, neither could think of mounting much wider operations, let alone a war in the Balkans, without America. On America, therefore, the weight of Western power is still found to rest. America’s hesitation towards Bosnia has thus been decisive.” A major weakness of the Europeans as compared to the U.S. is that they are unable to formulate a single coherent foreign policy because of conflicting interests among the members of the European Union. This was most clearly demonstrated in the Yugoslav crisis; see MacFarlane and Weiss (1992). As a result, “not only have the Europeans been unable to stop a civil war on their doorstep, but some of their contradictory responses have aggravated it” (Doder, 1993:4).

<sup>56</sup> See Freedman (1994–95).



instability in the Balkans, together with the vivid images of the escalating casualties, carried live on TV around the globe, finally brought about in early 1994 an apparent, even if uneasy, great power cooperation in conflict reduction. Following an especially bloody mortar attack on Sarajevo, NATO, under U.S. leadership, issued a threat of air attack on the Serb positions unless the artillery was withdrawn from around the besieged city. At the same time, President Yeltsin pressured the Serbs, Russia's traditional Slavic allies, who possessed most of the heavy weapons, to remove them, while reassuring the Serbs that Russian troops would go to Sarajevo to help supervise the withdrawal. The outcome of this great power involvement was, at least for a short while, as one might expect when the major powers cooperate: the cease-fire around Sarajevo seemed to be holding and a substantial amount, even if clearly not all, of the heavy weapons were withdrawn from around the city. Some progress was also made on the diplomatic front. A U.S.-led initiative resulted in a Muslim-Croat agreement to form a Bosnian federation and a confederation linking this Muslim-Croat Bosnia with Croatia proper. However, this success was short-lived. Thus, following the February 1994 success, later developments, for example, those related to the Serbian offensive against the U.N.-designated "safe area" of Gorazde in Spring 1994, and especially the taking of U.N. peacekeepers hostage in May 1995 and the occupation of the "safe areas" of Srebrenica and Zepa in July by the Bosnian Serbs, indicated the powerful limits to great power commitment to Bosnia, thus making possible unrestrained aggression by the local parties, especially the most powerful—the Serbs.

However, a decisive shift in the pattern of great power involvement in the Bosnian conflict took place in late August-September 1995, with the U.S. assuming an active dominant role with regard to the conflict. The dominant U.S. role was made possible by the superior U.S. capabilities with regard to the region, although U.S. interests in the region are lower than those of its European allies. Indeed, the U.S. intervention was motivated, to a large extent, by the proximity of Bosnia to Western Europe, where the most important allies of the U.S. are located.<sup>57</sup> The dominant role of the U.S. was manifested in an effective demonstration of NATO resolve in August-September 1995, by carrying out much more substantial air raids against the Bosnian Serbs than were made previously. Combined with a changing balance of forces on the ground in favor of the Croat-Muslim coalition, the great power military involvement was conducive to a successful U.S.-led diplomacy resulting in a cease-fire and a peace agreement initialed in November 1995 in Dayton, Ohio, and signed in Paris on December 14 by the leaders of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia. The U.S. dominance was also expressed in its dispatching of 20,000 troops to supervise the implementation of the peace agreement (even though these troops are dispatched in the multilateral framework of NATO, the U.S. contribution outnumbers that of its allies). These recent developments illustrate the beneficial effects of great power dominance on the containment of regional conflicts, and also on their reduction, especially if the hegemon is democratic.<sup>58</sup>

Despite these encouraging events, one has to be extremely cautious in assessing their longer-run implications for the great powers and the Balkans. The record of the local parties' adherence to agreements in the last four years is highly discouraging. In addition, as of 1996, there is as yet no complete agreement by the local parties on all the details of the settlement, including some of the territorial questions and the status of Sarajevo. Moreover, there are two basic problems with

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<sup>57</sup> For a theoretical and empirical development of this argument in the framework of American regional interests in the post-Cold War era see Miller (1996b).

<sup>58</sup> Another major example is the recent progress of the Arab-Israeli peace process under American leadership. See Miller (1997).

regard to the seemingly encouraging U.S. involvement. The first and major problem is the above-mentioned relatively low U.S. interests in the post-Cold War Balkans. The American dominance in the region, unlike the historical examples of the German and the Soviet hegemony, is not based on high interests rooted in proximity of the great power itself to the region, and therefore it might not last in the long run. If the involvement of the American troops results in higher than expected numbers of casualties, the U.S. engagement may be curtailed or even abruptly ended due to a domestic outcry, and the pattern of great power involvement in the region may shift back to disengagement.<sup>59</sup>

The second problem concerns a potential return to great power competition as the dominant type of involvement in the Balkans. Indeed, there were elements of competition even in the instance of U.S.-Russian "cooperation" with regard to the withdrawal of Serb artillery from Sarajevo in early 1994. Thus, Russia has opposed all along the West's threat of air strikes against the Serbs and has used its traditional alliance with them to its own advantage.<sup>60</sup> This Russian opposition was especially powerful in relation to the NATO bombings of Serb positions in August-September 1995.<sup>61</sup> Although this opposition has been toned down, and about 1,500 Russian troops take part in peacekeeping activities in Bosnia under actual U.S. command, the traditional Russian-Serb alliance reminds us of the pre-World War I Russian behavior in the Balkans and resembles its attempt to manipulate the Slavic connection in the struggle with Turkey and the competition with Austria. Indeed, in 1994-95 Russian foreign policy has become much more assertive and nationalist.<sup>62</sup> This change seems to be affected, in turn, by the growing power of the nationalist-"revisionist" forces in Russian politics such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, who call for revisions in the post-Cold War order viewed by them as unjust to Russia, which has lost its empire and sphere of influence. Such grievances resemble somewhat the revisionist views of the Italian Fascists in the 1920s and Nazi Germany in the 1930s. The more powerful the revisionists become in Russian politics, the stronger will be the competitive element in the Russian involvement in the Balkans, and as this article shows, this does not bode well for the prospects of peace and stability in the Balkans, and indeed in Europe as a whole.

The options facing the region thus present severe potential dangers to international security even after the peace agreement on Bosnia has been signed. The potential destabilizing effects for international security could become even greater if an assertive/nationalist Russian foreign policy emerges. Such a policy might bring back Russian hegemony in the "near abroad," that is, in the former Soviet republics, which might be included in a Russian sphere of influence, reflecting superior Russian interests and capabilities in this region in relation to the other great powers. At the same time, at least in the foreseeable balance of great power capabilities and in light of some basic Russian weaknesses vis-à-vis the Western powers, even a nationalist policy is unlikely to restore Russian hegemony in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, but rather is likely to result in a competition with Western powers in this region with all the associated dangers.

### Conclusions: Some Theoretical Lessons

To conclude, we would like to highlight three major theoretical lessons deriving from the proposed model and its application to Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

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<sup>59</sup> For the development of this point see Miller (1996b).

<sup>60</sup> *The Economist* (1994a:29).

<sup>61</sup> *The Economist* (1995:29); *Time* (1995:22-3).

<sup>62</sup> *The Economist* (1994c:31-2).



The first lesson is, to a certain extent, in accordance with some of the recent critique of neorealism (Schroeder, 1994; Schweller, 1994). However, the second lesson shows the usefulness of an “integrated realist” analysis. The third lesson, moreover, underlines the international influences on the patterns of regional conflicts and thus shows the utility of research at the international system level (even if not necessarily at the strictly structural level of the distribution of capabilities) for understanding regional changes.

1. Neither international anarchy by itself nor system polarity determine the type of strategy pursued by the great powers with regard to regional conflicts. Different patterns of great power behavior are possible in different regions under anarchy and even under the same international structure. Thus, we have seen four distinct patterns of great power involvement in Eastern Europe and the Balkans under a multipolar structure (in the period 1815–1945). Although only one pattern was analyzed under bipolarity with regard to Eastern Europe (hegemony), two others (competition and cooperation) were briefly mentioned in the analytical framework as having taken place in other regions such as the Middle East and other parts of the Third World in the Cold War era.

This argument is, on the whole, in accordance with the recent work of Schroeder (1994). Indeed, the four patterns of great power regional involvement identified in this study are somewhat compatible in their logic with Schroeder’s four strategies of responding to security threats. More specifically, cooperation has certain logical similarities with Schroeder’s “transcending”; disengagement with “hiding”; hegemony with “bandwagoning”; and competition with “balancing.”

2. The best explanation of the variations among these patterns is, however, based on the logic of what might be called “integrated realism”: the integration of the two main factors highlighted by the two streams of realism: interests (classical realism) and distribution of capabilities (neorealism). Although the balance of great power interests is of critical importance, we cannot overlook also the impact of the balance of capabilities for explaining variations in great power regional involvement and their regional and international effects.
3. Finally, this study has shown that it is critically important to know the type of great power involvement in various regions in order to explain the considerable variations in the intensity of regional conflicts, even if the sources of these conflicts and their full-blown reconciliation are accounted for by local elements.

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