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# A Systemic Theory of the Security Environment

SHIPING TANG

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This article develops a systemic theory of security environment and explores the theory's implication for managing security. The central theme here is to argue that because security environment is a system, a systemic approach, not the conventional approach by identifying threats, is the way to go for understanding security environment and making strategy. The article first identifies the factors shaping security environment and elaborates on how the factors interact to shape the security environment. After offering several tests for the theory, the article concludes by laying out the theory's implication for understanding security and managing security.

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## Understanding the Problem of Understanding the Security Environment<sup>1</sup>

If we assume a state to be a rational actor that chooses its security strategy based on an assessment of its security environment,<sup>2</sup> then we must come to the conclusion that for a state to adopt a particular security strategy, it has to go through a three-stage process: assessment, planning, and implementation. Implicitly then, if a state commits mistakes in any one of the three stages, it will be unlikely to adopt a fitting security strategy.

When attempting to explain the causes of states' security strategies and their outcomes, however, most scholars tend to conflate the three stages or focus on the final two stages while neglecting the first one. Explicitly or implicitly, they assume that the main cause of security strategy failures was not 'poor information (assessment), but . . . poor adjustment (i.e. planning and implementation)' because 'decision-making communities have generally been aware of significant change in the international constellation of power and the opportunities and constraints associated with such changes'.<sup>3</sup> The possibility that states may have difficulty in understanding their security environment has never seriously been explored.<sup>4</sup>

I challenge this assumption. While I do not deny that causes such as domestic politics,<sup>5</sup> bureaucratic politics,<sup>6</sup> organizational inertia,<sup>7</sup> 'group-think',<sup>8</sup> psychological barriers,<sup>9</sup> learning the wrong lessons from history,<sup>10</sup> and culture<sup>11</sup> contribute to states' strategic failures; I argue that a prominent

cause is their inability to understand their security environment. Furthermore, I contend that because the security environment is a system shaped by the dynamic interaction of many factors, it cannot be understood properly by focusing on one or two (such as distribution of power) or by listing them without understanding their interactions.<sup>12</sup> The systemic nature of security environment requires a systemic approach to understanding it.<sup>13</sup>

This article seeks to advance a theory of the security environment and present an analytical framework for understanding it, based on a systemic approach.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Threat-Identifying Approach and its Inadequacy**

Without a rigorous analytical framework in hand, decision-makers are on their own when seeking to understand the security environment, and more often than not, they simply fall back on the all-too-familiar exercise of identifying threats (implicitly or explicitly) and then plan strategies based on the worst-case scenario.<sup>15</sup>

While the threat-identifying approach may make a state's *military* strategic planning easier by crystallizing potential threats and the means to deal with them, it is a deeply flawed approach for designing a security strategy. The threat-identifying approach exaggerates other states' capability and aggressive intent, lets the military dimension of security strategy dominate the political dimension, and runs the risk of creating enemies in a self-fulfilling prophecy.<sup>16</sup> It can lead to imperial over-expansion, peripheral entanglement,<sup>17</sup> and worst of all, self-encirclement.<sup>18</sup>

If policy makers have difficulty perceiving the security environment, then it is up to the scholarly community to offer something closer to the reality. Unfortunately, most approaches to understanding the security environment do not differ that much from that of their political counterparts. Just like policy makers, most scholars tend to focus on one or two factors shaping the security environment or enlist a whole range of factors without elaborating their interactions, and then go on to identify potential threats (or, more euphemistically, 'challenges'), thus suffering the same deficiencies associated with the threat-identifying approach employed by their political counterparts. Indeed, the two approaches that come closest to providing a framework for understanding the security environment, Buzan's theory of 'security complex' and Walt's theory of 'balance of threat', are both explicitly based on identifying threats.

Buzan developed the concept of a 'security complex' in order to understand regional security and how regional states interact within the complex. After identifying geography, distribution of power, and patterns of amity and enmity as the factors shaping a security complex, Buzan explicitly contended that understanding threats should be the basis for understanding security.<sup>19</sup>

In order to explain alliance formation, a critical instrument for states to seek security, Walt developed the theory of 'balance of threat'.<sup>20</sup> Walt argues that states do not choose to balance power *per se* as classic realists maintained,<sup>21</sup> but instead choose to balance threat based on assessment of power, geographical proximity, offensive capability, and perception of intention.<sup>22</sup>

While both Buzan and Walt's approaches are certainly more sophisticated than the conventional threat-identifying approach, they remain inadequate for understanding the security environment because neither represents a fundamental departure from the threat-identifying approach.

First, while it is easy to adopt various measures of different states' vulnerability to various types of threats, it is extremely difficult to measure intent (therefore threat itself), as Buzan himself has readily acknowledged.<sup>23</sup> As a result, elites tend to discount intent and act on the possibility of the worst-case scenario.<sup>24</sup>

Second, both frameworks are methodologically problematic and thus difficult to operationalize in the real world. For instance, Walt identifies a state's offensive capability as an independent factor apart from perceived intent. Yet, because a state that musters a great deal of offensive capability is more likely to harbor aggressive intent, a state's offensive capability is perhaps best considered as an indicator of that state's intent, not an independent variable from perception of threat. Likewise, while Buzan identifies geography as a factor in shaping the security complex, his arbitrary approach toward geography makes it difficult to decide why one state belongs to a security complex while another state does not.

Most importantly, while both Buzan and Walt identify some of the factors shaping the security environment and elaborate somewhat on the interactions of different factors, they fail to integrate the factors into a systemic framework. Therefore, their frameworks can only provide limited help for understanding the security environment but cannot possibly grasp the whole picture.<sup>25</sup>

My framework will build upon and eventually subsume both Buzan and Walt's frameworks and advance a systemic analytical framework for understanding the security environment.

### A Systemic Approach for Understanding the Security Environment

To present a systemic analytical framework for understanding the security environment, I will first try to identify the factors shaping the security environment, and then present a paradigm for understanding the interactions among these factors.

I define the quality of a state's security environment in a strictly utility-dependent manner: a state's security environment is good when it faces a low probability of war and its chance of prevailing is high even if there is a war.<sup>26</sup>

For the regional or global security environment, one more condition will be added: the regional or global security environment is good when the chance of war spreading is low.

### Factors Shaping the Security Environment

To identify factors responsible for shaping the security environment, I start with two self-evident observations.<sup>27</sup>

First, because a state is a geographical entity, its security environment will above all be shaped by the shield or barrier derived from its geographical boundary. However, external forces constantly challenge these barriers. Therefore, external forces that can penetrate the geographical barrier are also factors shaping the security environment. And since most of the time those forces are based on military (or dual-use) technologies, military technology is also a factor shaping the security environment.

Second, in any ecosystem, an organism is not only a consumer but also a shaper of its own environment. The relationship between states and their security environment is no different: internal development within a state not only modifies the state's own environment, it also changes that of other states (especially its neighbors). Other states' response will in turn shape the first state's environment. Therefore, state-to-state interaction, through states' internal development and external behavior, is another factor shaping a state's security environment.

Because a state's external behavior is at least partly conditioned by its positioning within the international structure (defined as the relative distribution of power),<sup>28</sup> international structure is also an important factor shaping the security environment.

To summarize, there are four major factors that shape a state's security environment: geographical barriers, state-to-state interaction, international structure, and military technology.

#### *Geographical Barriers*<sup>29</sup>

Just as geographical barriers largely dictate an organism's ecosystem, they also serve as the founding factor for shaping a state's security environment.

The impact of a geographical barrier on the security environment can be measured by its permeability: all else being equal, the less permeable a state's geographical barrier and the less vulnerable the state is to external forces, the better its security environment, and vice versa.<sup>30</sup>

According to one historical account, more than 70 per cent of the landmass on earth had never seen war largely because it was inaccessible, while other areas have seen a disproportionate share of war because their geographical

centrality made them accessible from all directions.<sup>31</sup> For instance, Adrianople (now Turkey's Edirne), located at the crossroad of Europe and Asia, witnessed 15 large-scale wars during AD 323–1913.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, in ancient China's Spring/Autumn and Warring States period (722–221 BC), states located at the center were the first group to be eliminated: without great geographical barriers, they were vulnerable from all directions.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, even though geographical barriers have never been able to offer absolute protection, it is clear that a state shielded by a more impermeable geographical barrier tends to enjoy a better security environment compared to more exposed states. For example, separated from other great powers by two vast oceans (and neighbored by two much less powerful countries), the security environment of the United States has been (and will likely remain) the best among the major powers. In contrast, for much of its history, Germany, located at the heart of Europe and flanked by two great powers (France and Russia), lived under constant fear of encirclement.

Nonetheless, because other states are constantly trying to penetrate the barrier, geographic barriers alone cannot decide the security environment, nor can the protection offered by them remain constant. For instance, before ocean-crossing technology appeared, oceans provided states with great protection.<sup>34</sup> After ocean-crossing technology appeared, however, oceans' protecting power drastically decreased. Hence, while Imperial China had only to face invaders from the north (nomads and Russians) for much of its history, by the nineteenth century it had to confront great European powers from half a world away.

### *State-to-State Interactions*

*Internal Development: Power.* As long as the international structure remains anarchic, states ultimately have to depend upon "self-help" for their security, and accumulating power will remain a central part of this "self-help" strategy.<sup>35</sup>

While power is a loosely defined concept in international politics, as long as we lack a better measure we must gauge the impact of a state's internal development upon its security environment by measuring its aggregate power: all else being equal, the greater a state's aggregate power, the less likely it is to be attacked and the more likely it can defeat the aggressor and survive even if it is attacked, thus the better its security environment.<sup>36</sup>

The case of World War II is instructive: France surrendered after only six weeks, but the Soviet Union could still offer stiff resistance after initially suffering a series of crushing defeats from Nazi Germany. Likewise, it took the United States less than four years to defeat Japan (1941–45), while China was not even near victory after fighting the Japanese for the same length of

time (1937–41). And in both cases, the aggressors (Germany and Japan) took on the weaker countries first (France and China).

*External Behavior: Self-restraint.* Because states tend to balance against threat,<sup>37</sup> a state perceived to be aggressive is more likely to be counter-balanced, thus less likely to enjoy a benign security environment.<sup>38</sup>

Unless facing an aggressive opponent (a revisionist or predator state), a state has to shape a benign image among other states in order to enjoy a benign security environment. The only credible way to do so is to behave with self-restraint.<sup>39</sup> By exercising self-restraint and being willing to be restrained by other states (they are two sides of the same coin), a state can reassure others and alleviate their fear of its intentions. In return, others are less likely to view it antagonistically and act to contain it, and it becomes more secure.<sup>40</sup>

Hence, the impact of a state's external behavior on its security environment can be measured by the degree of self-restraint in its behavior: all else being equal, the more a state exercises self-restraint, the less likely it is to be perceived as a threat by other states and face a counterbalancing alliance, and the better its security environment.

To enjoy a benign security environment, a state has to recognize the existence of the security dilemma and be willing to take measures to alleviate it: all else being equal, the more a state understands the dynamics of the security dilemma, and the more willing it is to take measures to alleviate it, the more likely it is to enjoy a benign security environment.<sup>41</sup> Since it is difficult to measure a state's recognition of security dilemma, we measure the degree of self-restraint in its external behavior instead.

### *International (Regional) Structure*

Scholars have long debated which type of international structure (usually defined by polarity) is more stable (meaning 'less prone to change') and peaceful (meaning 'systemic war is less likely').<sup>42</sup> The debate, however, has never been completely settled and much confusion remains.

Moreover, for our purpose of defining security environment, polarity is simply too coarse a measurement. This is because while a stable and peaceful system may mean there is a generally low probability of war, it does not mean that every state faces the same probability of war: different states may have different security environment under the same structure. For instance, under bipolarity, while allies of superpowers may not face a significant threat of war from the other side, they face permanent threats from their big brothers.<sup>43</sup> And under regional or global unipolarity, the superpower certainly enjoys the best security environment that the structure can offer, but unless the superpower exercises self-restraint and



behaves benignly (and they usually do not), other states' security environments will remain in constant jeopardy: under the Roman Empire, small states suffered what they must; while under the Monroe Doctrine, South and Central American states were frequently bullied by their powerful northern neighbor.

Hence, whether a particular structure is stable or peaceful does not really tell us a lot about a state's security environment under the structure, and the impact of international structure on states' security environment cannot be simply measured with polarity *per se*. Instead, the impact of the international structure (for regional states, the regional structure<sup>44</sup>) on the security environment can be better measured with the degree of constraint on states' actions provided by the structure: all else being equal, the more robust the structural constraint, the less likely a state is to face or initiate a conflict, thus the better its security environment.

Under this definition, the same structure may have different constraints for different states, depending on the relative position of the state in the structure. This will give structure more fine-grained explanatory power. For instance, under regional or global unipolarity, there is little structural constraint on the lone superpower,<sup>45</sup> yet there is a significant constraint on other powers (including regional great powers). Similarly, under bipolarity, only the two superpowers can restrain each other and the rest of the world if they wish to, but there is little constraint over their action in their own sphere of influence (indeed, the structure of their individual sphere of influence is 'unipolar').

Under multipolarity, especially balanced multipolarity, there is more constraint upon states' behavior. Therefore, all else being equal, multipolarity, especially balanced multipolarity, provides more constraint upon states' behavior, and the states' security environment improves.<sup>46</sup>

### *Military Technology*

The fourth factor shaping a state's security environment is military technology. In human history, military technologies (or dual-use technologies) have been the major force that came to penetrate states' geographical barriers, and every revolution in military affairs (RMAs) brought a new kind of warfare, and states' calculus of war changed with it.<sup>47</sup> When states' calculation of war changed, so did the chance of war and states' war-making behavior, and eventually, states' security environments.

Previous work has differentiated the subjective (perceived) and objective (actual) forms of the offense-defense balance, and disagreed on whether the 'core' approach (i.e. purely technology driven) or the 'broad' approach (i.e. including perceptions) is more appropriate for measuring the impact of



military technology on the probability of war.<sup>48</sup> For our purpose of defining the security environment, we stick with the ‘core’ approach, and measure the impact of military technology on the security environment with the actual offense-defense balance, instead of decision-makers’ perceptions of it. Under this framework, the perceived form of the balance can be better understood as an indicator of state-to-state interaction: when a state believes in offense dominance when reality is defense dominance, that state is less likely to exercise self-restraint.

We stick with the ‘core’ approach because while the perceived offense-defense balance only influences the probability of war, the real balance influences the outcome of the war and thus should ultimately be more decisive in shaping the security environment.<sup>49</sup> After all, when military technology offers a true advantage to the offense, the probability that a state will survive an attack decreases and its security environment deteriorates. On the contrary, when military technology offers a true advantage to the defense, the probability of a state surviving an attack increases and its security environment improves. This will still be true even if states get the balance wrong (say, believing in offense dominance when it is actually defense dominance).

France’s different fate in the two world wars illustrates the point perfectly. In World War I, France got it wrong (believing that offense was dominant when defense was dominant) but still managed to maintain a stalemate versus Germany because the real world was really defense-dominant. In contrast, in World War II, the French got it wrong again (believing that defense was dominant when it was actually offense dominant), but this time ‘the French forces were shattered in less than a week and France surrendered in just six weeks’ under *Blitzkrieg*.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the real balance matters far more: all else being equal, the more dominant the defense in the offense–defense balance, the better a state’s security environment, and *vice versa*.

## Interactions Among the Factors

Because understanding the interaction of five independent variables (state-to-state interaction actually has two sub-dimensions) all at once is difficult, I begin with two-factor interaction. Afterwards, I will go on to elaborate in greater detail on how factors interact to shape a state’s security environment, using brief case studies to illustrate my arguments.

In the following diagrams, the larger the number, the better the security environment, with question marks indicating indeterminacy (i.e. the actual outcome will depend upon the relative strength of different factors).

Paradigms

*Geographical Barrier and Aggregate Power.* All other things being equal, the more impermeable a state’s geographical barrier and the more powerful the state, the better its security environment.

Aggregate Power		
Geographical Barrier	Impermeable, Powerful (4)	Impermeable, Weak (?)
	Permeable, Powerful (?)	Permeable, Weak (1)

*Geographical Barrier and Self-restraint.* All other things being equal, the more impermeable a state’s geographical barrier and the more self-restrained the state, the better its security environment

Self-restraint		
Geographical Barrier	Impermeable, More (4)	Impermeable, Less (2) <sup>51</sup>
	Permeable, More (3)	Permeable, Less (1)

*Geographical Barrier and Structural Constraint.* All other things being equal, the more impermeable a state’s geographical barrier and the more robust the structural constraint, the better its security environment.

Structural Constraint		
Geographical Barrier	Impermeable, Robust (4)	Impermeable, Weak (2)
	Permeable, Robust (3) <sup>52</sup>	Permeable, Weak (1)

*Geographical Barrier and Military Technology.* All other things being equal, the more impermeable a state’s geographical barrier and the more dominant the defense, the better its security environment.

Military Technology		
Geographical Barrier	Impermeable, Defense dominant (4)	Impermeable, Offense dominant (?)
	Permeable, Defense dominant (?)	Permeable, Offense dominant (1)

*Aggregate Power and Self-restraint.* All other things being equal, the more powerful a state is and the more self-restraint it exercises, the better its security environment.

Self-restraint

Aggregate Power	Powerful, More (4)	Powerful, Less (2)
	Weak, More (3) <sup>53</sup>	Weak, Less (1)

*Aggregate Power and Military Technology.* All other things being equal, the more powerful a state is and the more dominant defense is, the better its security environment.

Military Technology

Aggregate Power	Powerful, Defense dominant (4)	Powerful, Offense dominant (?)
	Weak, Defense dominant (?)	Weak, Offense Dominant (1)

*Aggregate Power and Structural Constraint.* All other things being equal, the more powerful a state is and the more robust the structural constraint, the better its security environment.

Structural Constraint

Aggregate Power	Powerful, Robust (4)	Powerful, Weak (2)
	Weak, Robust (3) <sup>54</sup>	Weak, Weak (1)

*Self-restraint and Structural Constraint.* All other things being equal, the more a state exercises self-restraint and the more robust the structural constraint, the better its security environment.

Structural Constraint

Self-restraint	More, Robust (4)	More, Weak (3)
	Less, Robust (2) <sup>55</sup>	Less, Weak (1)

*Self-restraint and Military Technology.* All other things being equal, the more a state exercises self-restraint and the more dominant the defense is, the better its security environment.

Military Technology

Self-restraint	More, Defense Dominant (4)	More, Offense Dominant (?)
	Less, Defense Dominant (?)	Less, Offense Dominant (1)

*Structural Constraint and Military Technology.* All other things being equal, the more robust the structural constraint and the more dominant the defense, the better states’ security environment.

Military Technology		
Structural Constraint	Robust, Defense Dominant (4)	Robust, Offense Dominant (?)
	Weak, Defense Dominant (?)	Weak, Offense Dominant (1)

*Interaction of Factors: Elaboration*

*Military Technology and State-to-State Interaction: A Supplement to Van Evera’s Hypotheses on the Causes of War.* While the proposition that false optimism in offensive advantage leads to a higher probability of war has been demonstrated convincingly,<sup>56</sup> the phenomenon that states tend to have even more optimism in offensive dominance and easy conquest from real-world demonstration of offensive advantage and military prowess has surprisingly received less attention.

Presumably, if states often hold false optimism in offensive dominance, they would be more likely to believe in offensive dominance if the effectiveness of offensive weapons was demonstrated on the battlefield, thus more likely to increase offensive capability, adopt more offense-oriented doctrine, believe in first-strike advantage, and become more inclined to the actual use of force. This was exactly what happened in East Asia after the 1991 Gulf War, which vividly demonstrated the offensive effectiveness of precision-guided munitions (PGMs). In the wake of the Gulf War, Southeast Asian states scrambled to buy military hardware and engaged in a regional arms buildup.<sup>57</sup> China accelerated the pace of its military modernization and adopted a more offense-oriented (although still largely defensive) doctrine of ‘limited war under high-tech conditions’ (gaojishu huangjing xiade jubu zhanzheng), replacing the purely defensive doctrine of ‘people’s war’.<sup>58</sup> The 1999 success of PGMs in Kosovo must have added more urgency to many states’ military modernization program.

However, if a state had demonstrated its military prowess in a previous war, it would be more likely to believe in its war-winning capacity, and thus more likely to consider the option of force and resort to the actual use of force. Japan’s optimism before its all-out invasion of China in 1937 and then eventually its war with the United States in 1941 was at least partly based on its past victories over China in 1894 and Russia in 1905.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, if the US military had not had such a spectacular success in the 1991 Gulf War, and ‘kicked the “Vietnam Syndrome” once and for all (along with quite a bit of the caution toward the use of force),’<sup>60</sup> many Americans would not have had

so much confidence in their military,<sup>61</sup> and some of the calls for using military forces (and perhaps some of its actual uses of force) simply would not have happened.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, I would argue that demonstration of the effectiveness of offensive weapons and a state's military prowess lead to a higher probability of war.

As for security environment, all things being equal, the more effective the offensive weapon, the more likely states are to pursue a more offensive capability and adopt a more offense-oriented doctrine, to the detriment of states' security environment. In addition, the more effective a state's military, the more likely it will be to consider the option of force and resort to the actual use of force, and the worse its own and other states' security environment will become.

Right now, it seems that we are entering a new period of offensive dominance on the conventional battlefield, thanks to the recent RMA.<sup>63</sup> First, the advent of long range PGMs means that offense is again dominating defense on the conventional battlefield.<sup>64</sup> Before the Gulf War and Kosovo, a weak state could hope to deter a more powerful state by denial.<sup>65</sup> With the coming of long-range PGMs, the weaker state no longer has that option because the strong can now act with almost total impunity.

Second, the information technology revolution also points to an offense-dominant world: the means of offense and defense are almost inseparable, and the speed of fiber optics renders the geographical barrier almost meaningless in cyber warfare. Hence, in information warfare, offense is strongly favored, surprise attack and *Blitzkrieg* become more feasible, and deterrence becomes more difficult.

Third, the advance of space technology and intelligence gathering is making camouflaging and outright concealment by a defender increasingly difficult, thus greatly reducing the advantage of defense and the risk of taking offense.

With so many forces putting offense over defense, the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons remains the ultimate guarantor of defense dominance. It is perhaps because of this that many have come to view the development of an effective missile defense system as a dangerous move: an effective missile defense system would fundamentally remake the offense-defense balance, and offense might come to dominate both the conventional and the strategic battleground.<sup>66</sup> It would be a frightening world, indeed.

*International Structure, Geography, and State-to-State Interaction.* Both Buzan and Walt argue that regional states' actions are based more on regional structures than the global structure. Under the same global structure, states in different regions operate under different sub-structures, and it is regional structures that will have more direct impact upon most

states' security environment and behavior. Essentially, a region's geographical barrier forms a shield against the global structure and provides the first cut for interpreting the impact of the global structural imperative upon security environment.<sup>67</sup>

Looking from another angle, while some states' security environment may change under a global structural shift, other states' security environment may well remain unchanged. For instance, whatever the global polarity might be, Mongolia is likely to live under the Sino-Russian bipolarity, while North and Central America will likely remain a unipolar world, with the Caribbean remaining an American lake. In contrast, East Asia might have become a multipolar region long before the collapse of the global bipolar structure when China re-emerged as an independent regional power in 1949.<sup>68</sup>

While some states' security environment may improve under a global structural shift, other states' security environment may deteriorate. For example, under the shift from bipolarity to unipolarity, whereas the security environment of most East Asian and European states improved, both North Korea and Cuba's security environment deteriorated, while Nepal and Bhutan's security environment remained very much the same.

Adding state-to-state interaction to geography and international structure will make things more complicated. For instance, South Asia, if left alone, will very much be a unipolar world with India dominating the subcontinent. But if external great powers decide to intervene, India's unipolar world will cease to exist, and depending on how many external powers decide to get into the picture, South Asia's regional structure could turn from unipolar to bipolar or multipolar.<sup>69</sup> Interventions by external great powers usually complicate India's security calculus and increase the maneuvering room of small powers in the region (including Pakistan, India's main rival). Vietnam's dominance over the Indochina peninsula shares the same vulnerability to external forces' intrusion.

The post-Cold War improvement of Russia and China's security environment along their long border is another example of the work of geography, international structure, and state-to-state interaction. Both countries realize that under unipolarity, they need to be on good terms with one other to have any chance of balancing the lone superpower. From their past confrontations, they have also come to learn that the lack of geographical barrier along their long border means that confrontation would create a severe security dilemma between them and greatly erode their strategic position no matter how powerful they are individually. Hence, both countries have come to the conclusion that cooperation is more desirable than confrontation, and they have worked hard to overcome enormous obstacles and reached an accommodation. The result is that each now enjoys a security environment far better than if they had remained enemies. In contrast, India and China,

perhaps because the Himalayas provide the two with a sense of complacency, have been unable to reach a similar accommodation so far.<sup>70</sup>

*Geography, State-to-State Interaction, Structure, and Military Technology.* After the rise of Waltzian neorealism, many earnestly adopted his structural approach and put international structure as *the factor* determining peace and stability. In 1990, for example, Mearsheimer boldly predicted that post-bipolarity Europe would be 'back to the future'.<sup>71</sup> After more than one decade, Europe has yet to be back to the future, suggesting that the impact of international structure upon security environment was never as great as neorealists had suggested.

Waltz argued that bipolarity is inherently peaceful and stable.<sup>72</sup> For him, it alone was the cause of the 'Long Peace' during the Cold War. But was it really so?

As we know, two previous bipolar structures, the one between Sparta and Athens and the one between Rome and Carthage, both ended in bloody wars.<sup>73</sup> Comparing the two to the US-Soviet bipolar structure, it is evident that there was neither geographical distance nor an ultimate weapon present between either Sparta and Athens or Rome and Carthage. Therefore, it was perhaps not the bipolarity per se, but the vast geographical distance between United States and the Soviet Union (which made conventional war between them extremely difficult or outright infeasible) and the existence of a large number of nuclear weapons (which made nuclear war between them unthinkable) that saved us from obliteration.<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, as one of the factors in a multi-factor system, structure alone cannot dictate the global or a state's security environment,<sup>75</sup> and it is thus unlikely to dictate states' behavior either. Hence, quantitative studies of which structure is more peaceful or what kind of behavior (such as balancing) is more likely under a particular structure did not, and should not, yield any conclusive results.<sup>76</sup>

Now let us turn the post-Cold War Europe and see why it may just remain stable and peaceful, contrary to Mearsheimer's grim prediction. The present European multipolarity differs from the pre-World War II European multipolarity on at least critical two fronts.

First is the existence of nuclear weapons. This means that war among nuclear powers and major industrial states may indeed have become unthinkable.<sup>77</sup>

Second, there has been remarkably successful reconciliation between Germany and France, Britain, and now Russia (France and Britain ceased to be opponents before World War I). The result is that interactions among major European states now are far different from their bloody past, with war no longer considered as legitimate for setting disputes among them. With



more and more norms and institutions being established, European states are also getting more and more willing to be restrained.<sup>78</sup> Of course, the uncertainty of alliance under multipolarity helps too.<sup>79</sup> Hence, despite being back to multipolarity, Europe today may well remain peaceful after all.

Summary

To summarize this discussion, we can draw three general points about how interactions among factors shape states' security environment.

First, no single factor can dictate the overall international or regional security environment, and a state's security environment. At any given time, every state's security environment can only be understood by carefully assessing the relative strength of each factor and their interactions.

Second, geographic barriers provide the first-cut for understanding the overall security environment because they localize the impact of all other factors. But geography alone cannot dictate a state's security environment, because other factors are constantly trying to penetrate the geographical barrier.<sup>80</sup>

Finally, the best scenario for a state's security environment will be: its geographic barriers are impermeable, the state is powerful and yet behaves with restraint, the international structure provides robust constraints, and defense is dominant. Its worse case, of course, will be the opposite for each of the factors (Table I).

Testing the Systemic Theory

Because my objective here is primarily about how things should be understood, not about how things were and are really understood, I will only offer two types of test to underscore two central arguments: (1) the security environment is a system (shaped by more than one factor); (2) only a systemic approach is appropriate for understanding the security environment and making security strategy.<sup>81</sup> I shall leave other tasks to future works.

TABLE I  
SHAPING THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Factors	Measurement
Permeability of Geographical Barrier	High . . . . . Low
Aggregate Power	Weak . . . . . Powerful
Degree of Self-restraint	Weak . . . . . Strong
Structural Constraint	Weak . . . . . Strong
Military Technology	Offense dominant . . . . . Defense dominant
Security Environment	Poor . . . . . Good

To prove that the security environment is a system shaped by several factors, I seek to prove two predictions.

First, because the security environment is a system, both getting even one factor wrong and getting one or even two factors right while leaving other factors out can lead to misreading of the security environment and strategic failure.<sup>82</sup> These two propositions are actually two sides of the same coin, and together they offer a 'doubly decisive' test for the hypothesis that security environment is a system.<sup>83</sup> By testing the hypothesis with some well-documented cases, I also seek to highlight the framework's explanatory power.

Second, because the security environment is a system, a seemingly insignificant event may fundamentally re-shape the security environment, while a dramatic event may actually have little impact.<sup>84</sup>

To prove that only a systemic approach is suitable for understanding the security environment and making security strategy, I seek to demonstrate that states adopting an appropriate security strategy usually have a sound understanding of their security environment. Incidentally, because such cases are likely to be rare (strategic failures are far more common than successes), if there is strong correlation between a successful security strategy and a sound understanding of security environment, even a limited number of cases will strongly support my claim.<sup>85</sup>

### *Doubly Decisive Tests: The Security Environment is a System*

*Getting One Factor Wrong and Getting One or Two Right.* Among all the possibilities of misreading one factor shaping the security environment leading to poor security strategies,<sup>86</sup> misreading the offense–defense balance provided the most striking example, and it cuts both ways. Before World War I, major European powers believed that the offense had the advantage (when it was just the opposite), conquest was easy, and the utility of pre-emption was high. This misreading led them to rush to adopt offense-oriented doctrines, the result being that they significantly exacerbated the security dilemma, worsened their security environment, and eventually experienced a bloody war.<sup>87</sup>

However, Germany's experience in World War II provides the best example that getting the offense–defense balance and aggregate power right while getting other factors shaping Germany's security environment wrong can still lead to strategic disaster. Post-World War I Germany learned a wrong lesson from its defeat. The German military reasoned that Germany's defeat was due to Germany's insufficient power to overrun its opponents and the unfortunate defense dominance on the battlefield. Therefore, Germany embarked on a program of expanding its power and searching for a military technology providing offense-dominance (which it found in *Blitzkrieg*). What

they forgot was that Germany was doomed to behave with moderation or face the consequence of encirclement: Germany's geographical location and the structural constraint mean that Germany could only enjoy a benign security environment by assuring its neighbors with moderation and self-restraint.<sup>88</sup> The result was essentially a replay of World War I, despite the fact that Germany got the offense-defense balance (and to a less extent, aggregate power) right.

*Impact of Events: the Korean War and the Cuban Missile Crisis.* The Korean War is perhaps the best case proving that a seemingly insignificant event can exert a profound impact on international, regional, and states' security environments.<sup>89</sup>

Before the Korean War, neither the Soviet Union, nor China, nor the United States considered Korea to be an important issue. Moreover, Mao did not foreclose the possibility of reaching an understanding with the United States, and Truman wanted to keep open the option of driving a wedge between China and the Soviet Union.<sup>90</sup> More importantly, Truman and Acheson were reluctant to push Congress and the public for funding NSC-68, the blueprint for a more active containment policy against the Soviet Union.

The outbreak of the Korean War changed all that, and the Cold War was brought to a new height of confrontation. Truman was able to convince Congress and the public to support NSC-68, and every US president after him decided that America must meet any challenge at any time in any place in order to win the Cold War.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, both China and the United States hardened their view about each other, making reconciliation between them impossible for at least two decades. The result was a worsening of global, regional, and many states' security environment.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was one of the most dramatic events in the Cold War, and in the aftermath of confrontation, both Kennedy and Khrushchev's rhetoric seemed to indicate that the crisis could be a turning point of the confrontation. Both pledged to work toward peaceful coexistence, slowdown the nuclear arms race, and prevent nuclear holocaust.

Yet, after the crisis, instead of reining in the nuclear arms race, the two superpowers actually accelerated it. The Soviet Union became determined to avoid the scenario of again having to act from a nuclear inferiority, and both sides strived to build a first-strike capability.<sup>92</sup> In 1962, the nuclear (im)balance between the two superpowers stood at 3,322 warheads for the Soviet Union versus 27,609 for the United States. By 1980, the balance of warheads became 30,062 for the Soviet Union versus 23,916 for the United States.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, counter-force technologies, such as multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) and hard-target killing capability, were introduced. Therefore, instead of a turning point, the Cuban crisis had

surprisingly little impact on the course of the Cold War: the crisis merely made it clear that nuclear holocaust was a real possibility, and the world just had to live with it through détente, but it had little impact on resolving the confrontation until Gorbachev came along.<sup>94</sup>

### *'Smoking Gun' Cases*

*Germany 1871–90.* By crushing the French army in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), Bismarck achieved his long cherished goal of unifying Germany and transformed the international structure of the European continent at the same time. Under Bismarck, Germany had been rather successful in adopting a fitting strategy, and Bismarck's strategy was at least partially due to his sound assessment of Germany's security environment after unification.

Bismarck's reading of Germany's security environment consisted of four dimensions: (1) Germany's geographical location meant that it would remain in constant danger of facing an encircling alliance; (2) Germany after unification was now the dominant land power in Europe, facing no imminent threat from its potential enemies (foremost among them, France); (3) Germany's rising power made other European states wary of its ambition, but they did not act together to prevent Germany from achieving its reunification; and (4) the European constellation of power now had five great powers (Germany, Britain, Russia, France, and Austria). Under this structure, no country could dominate the system (i.e. structural constraint was relatively robust). Under his assessment, Germany enjoyed a rather benign security environment.<sup>95</sup>

Bismarck worked hard to maintain this benign environment. His strategy was to exercise self-restraint and assure other powers of Germany's benign intent in order to avoid a 'nightmare of coalitions' in which all other powers gang against her (or with only a weak Austria by her side). Bismarck approached both continental affairs and colonial expansion with caution, refrained from impinging on other colonial powers' important interest (e.g., Britain in Africa), and remained willing to settle overseas disputes with negotiation.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, by appearing to be able to come to terms with every great power, he was able to construct a network of defensive alliances with Germany at the center, therefore preempting other states from forming an alliance against Germany.<sup>97</sup> The result was that Germany was able to enjoy a pivotal position in European power politics and a benign security environment until Germany gradually embarked on a more aggressive and thus self-defeating course after Bismarck's fall in 1890.<sup>98</sup>

*Britain after World War II (1945–67).* After World War II, Britain was far more successful than France in adjusting to its new status as a regional power: by refusing to fight for and quickly liquidating its colonies (in many

cases, it was British colonies that dragged their feet and slowed down Britain's retrenchment), Britain was able to save much blood and treasure and concentrate itself on the European center.<sup>99</sup> Despite its initial doubt about America's intention and hope for maintaining an independent British role, the Labour government from 1945 to 1951 quickly came to a reasonable assessment of Britain's security environment.<sup>100</sup>

First, the coming of the United States as a great naval power and the advent of the intercontinental missile drastically reduced the value of the English Channel, and Britain simply was not in a position to protect itself alone.

Second, Britain had lost its struggle to remain a great power (even though it won World War II), and Britain no longer had the aggregate power for an independent international role (and the two great powers knew it).<sup>101</sup>

Finally, its far-flung empire had become a liability because it diverted its limited resources from its main theater.<sup>102</sup>

Furthermore, while Britain remained one of the three major regional powers in West Europe, it had to operate under the global structure of bipolarity. And because both superpowers took Europe as their main theater of competition, Britain had no choice but to choose sides under regional bipolarity and became dependent upon the United States.<sup>103</sup> Unlike the old days before World War II when Britain would be happy to let America stay offshore as the last resort of balancing, after World War II, Britain had to convince America to stay to balance the Soviet Union. And to prevent Britain from being marginalized in European affairs, Britain actually needed a "special relationship" with America (to prevent America from making France or West Germany the pivot).<sup>104</sup>

*China after 1978.* The rise of China in the past two decades has been an astonishing phenomenon, and China's post-1978 security strategy has achieved a reasonable success. Deng Xiaoping's rather sound reading of China's security environment was instrumental for China's adoption of a more sound security strategy.

First, Deng Xiaoping came to realize that the probability of world war was low because of the nuclear revolution; therefore China's security strategy of constantly preparing for world war had been unwise.

Second, after touring the United States and Japan, Deng Xiaoping understood that China was far behind in aggregate power, and the only way that China could improve its position would be to open up to the West.

Third, after touring Singapore, Deng came to realize that China's past policy of supporting anti-government insurgencies in Southeast Asia countries had poisoned its relationship with many of its neighbors and contributed to the deterioration of its security environment.<sup>105</sup>

Finally, Deng believed that China could not afford to be alienated from both superpowers and stand isolated even though the two superpowers would restrain each other under bipolarity.

Therefore, Deng was able to conclude that while China's internal situation was dire, its security environment was not as bad as some believed: China was not facing any imminent threat of war.<sup>106</sup> From this conclusion, he decided that China could concentrate on economic reform without jeopardizing its security. And to ensure that China's economic reform will enjoy a better security environment, Deng also embarked on a program of systematically improving China's relations with its neighboring countries and other major powers.<sup>107</sup>

### Summary

To summarize, our first hypothesis that the security environment is a system passed its test convincingly. The second hypothesis that a systemic understanding of the security environment is necessary for a sound security strategy also passed the three smoking gun tests convincingly. These cases indicated that while the three states might not have a perfect reading into their security environment, they came close enough to reach a sensible and more-or-less systemic reading into it, and thus were able to adopt a fitting security strategy and largely achieved their strategic goals in the end. Altogether, the framework advanced here is on firm ground.

### Implications for Understanding Security and Making Strategy

Because an understanding of the security environment is the foundation of security strategy,<sup>108</sup> a new approach to understanding the security environment should have a profound implication for understanding security and the making of security strategy.

Human societies' understanding of the security environment (and security itself) evolved gradually. Up to now, few states have planned their security strategies based on a systemic understanding of the security environment. Instead, they make their security strategy based on the traditional threat-identifying approach. Our refusal to understand security with a more systemic approach, however, does not mean that the systemic effect will simply go away. Instead, it had haunted us with vengeance, as the bloody history of the past two centuries illustrated.

With a general understanding that the security environment is a system and pursuing security requires a more systemic approach, we can draw several general conclusions with direct implication for understanding security.<sup>109</sup>

First, the systemic nature of the security environment means that security strategies based on an assessment of one or two factors without taking all factors and their interactions into consideration should be rejected.

Second, the systemic nature of the security environment implies that every state's security environment is a product of the dynamic interaction between itself and other states, not a product of external force alone. A state is indeed a shaper of its own security environment; therefore the dynamics of a security dilemma is something real, not an illusion derived from neorealism's status quo bias.<sup>110</sup>

Third, the systemic nature of the security environment dictates that no state's security can be absolutely under its own control, and security can only be relative, never absolute.<sup>111</sup> Pursuing absolute security is doomed to fail, as Napoleon and Hitler's experience indicated.

Fourth, the systemic nature of the security environment suggests that a state's security does depend upon other states. That is, there is also interdependence in the domain of security just like in the domain of economics,<sup>112</sup> and security is *international* rather than national. Just as it is necessary to take interdependence into account for managing the international economy, it is equally, if not more, necessary to take interdependence into account for managing security. Therefore, whenever a state is seeking security, it has to take the impact of its own internal development and external behavior upon others' and its own security environment into account. To put it differently, to shape a better security environment, besides its own interest, a state does have to take other states' interest into account, and to do otherwise is a bad strategy. This is not an idealist, but a purely realist prescription: caring for others' security is an important means of self-help because a state can indeed achieve more security by making other states more secure.<sup>113</sup>

Fifth, the systemic nature of the security environment means that the security environment is both fragile and stable for two reasons: (1) the impact of changes in one dimension can be restricted or magnified by the system; (2) states are constantly exerting influence upon their security environment intentionally or unintentionally, and their actions sometimes will stabilize their security environment, while other times transform it. This means that states usually should abstain from overreacting: the danger for most states, therefore, is usually associated with doing too much, not with doing too little.<sup>114</sup>

Sixth, the systemic nature of the security environment suggests that the choice of one particular policy may jeopardize the option of adopting another policy (at the same time or later) unintentionally.<sup>115</sup> Hence, a state cannot have it all, and it has to face trade-offs constantly. In this sense, complete policy autonomy is an illusion for any state.



Finally, the systemic nature of the security environment dictates that exercising self-restraint is the only viable approach for most states to search for security, with the possible exception of the United States: because of its unique geographical location, the United States may be the only great power that does not have to face an counterbalancing alliance even if it acts without restraint.<sup>116</sup>

### Implications for Future Work

Despite the instrumental need for an analytical framework for understanding the security environment, international relations scholars have paid scant attention to this important aspect of international politics. The result is that up to now, no rigorously defined and clearly articulated theoretical paradigm for understanding the security environment exists.

The lack of an analytical framework for understanding the security environment poses significant problems for both the study and the practice of security strategy. Without a rigorously outlined analytical framework, the merits of different prescriptions for security strategy cannot be rigorously compared. And because different policy prescriptions may have originated from total different readings into the environment,<sup>117</sup> they tend to talk past each other rather than have a more constructive debate. The result is that much of the scholarly debate on security strategy, just like the debate among policy makers, is based more on assertion than reasoning. No wonder decision makers tend to find scholars' advice wanting and often ignore it.<sup>118</sup>

The framework developed here is the first step toward a platform for states to reach a more sound understanding of their security environment (with the limit of bounded rationality, of course) and adopt more sensible security strategies. As it should be obvious by now, every factor in the framework had been emphasized to be a factor shaping security environment by one school or another: neorealism on international structure, classical realism on power, geopolitics on geography, and defensive realism on geography and military technology. Indeed, some earlier work has elaborated somewhat on the interaction between factors too, although they did so without the systemic approach: Jervis and Glaser on geography, military technology, and structure; Buzan and Walt on power, geography, and intention. All these works recognized the *relational* nature of security, thus pointing to the necessity for a systemic approach for understanding security.

I have built upon those previous works and taken the first step toward understanding security environment and security itself with a systemic approach. My contribution here has not been identifying factors anew, but rather (1) establishing that these factors are part of a system called the security environment and connecting them with systemic dynamics,

(2) advancing a framework for understanding the outcome of their interaction (i.e. the security environment).

By developing a state-centric, yet systemic, framework for understanding the security environment and security in general, I demonstrate that a systemic and holistic understanding of security can be developed even with a state-centric approach. By doing so, I underscore the progressive power of the traditional realistic approach toward security,<sup>119</sup> proving that while ‘widening’ of security by squeezing more and more factors into the concept of security may have some legitimate merits, it is not necessary for a systemic understanding of security.<sup>120</sup>

Future research may want to refine the framework by testing it against more cases and make it more operable for assessing the security environment by developing a quasi-quantitative model.<sup>121</sup>

Finally, the approach here will also have direct implications for some of the current debates in international relations.

First, the debate between defensive and offensive realism can be understood as a dispute about whether or not a state takes other states’ degree of self-restraint into account when examining its security environment: defensive realists do, while offensive realists do not (they act according to the worst scenario).<sup>122</sup> To differentiate the virtue of the two schools of realism, one must explore the underlying assumptions of the two schools and ask the ultimate question: do states take other states’ degree of self-restraint (i.e. intent) seriously, or do they act according to the worst scenario anyway, and if they do, under what conditions?<sup>123</sup>

Second, a critical assumption behind the heated debate among international relations theories that has never been made explicit is that a theory that can explain the past better must also be a better theory to guide the future. But this notion that history can always be our guide to the future is dubious at best.<sup>124</sup> This is because states have always been active shapers of their security environment and their actions have been constantly re-shaping the landscape of security from the very beginning.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, it is difficult to argue that their long interactions have never led to a transformation of international politics so profound that it may render a theory that can explain the past irrelevant for the present and future.

Is it possible that while offensive realism can explain our bloody past well, it cannot be the right guidance for the present and the future?<sup>126</sup> Is it not possible that offensive realism and defensive realism not only provide policy guidance for two different types of state (revisionist and security-seeking),<sup>127</sup> but also policy guidance for state living in two different ages of international politics (the ‘jungle’ age, and the ‘post-jungle’ age)? After all, empire building through formal territory expansion had become increasingly difficult

since Westphalia, and territorial integrity is now a norm in international affairs.<sup>128</sup>

A final point, which is related to the first two, is that because the difference between defensive and offensive realism is so great, testing realism per se is unlikely to be a productive enterprise without specifying which version of realism (defensive or offensive) is being tested. Future works must make this differentiation more explicit and ask which type of states (offensive or defensive realist) are more likely to succeed under what circumstances in order to substantiate their support for one school or another.

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### NOTES

1. While scholars and policy makers have long based their discussion of security strategy on assessment of security environment, they have never defined the concept of security environment explicitly, perhaps because it is difficult to define and most consider it to be self-evident (but in reality, everybody has his own notion of what constitutes the security environment). For a similar observation, see Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, 'Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy', *International Security* 21/3 (Winter 1996–97) pp.5–53, at p.7. For different notions of security environment, see Robert J. Art, 'A Defensible Defense: America's Grand Strategy after the Cold War', *International Security* 15/4 (Spring 1991) pp.5–43; Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, 'The International Source of Soviet Change', *International Security* 16/3 (Winter 1991–92) pp.74–118; Li Bin, 'China's Security Environment in the Early 21st Century', *Beijing Review* 43/2 (Jan. 2000) pp.17–20; Akhtar Majeed, 'India's Security Perceptions', *Asian Survey* 30/11 (Nov. 1990) pp.1084–98. My definition will become clear at the end.
2. 'State as a rational actor' remains one of the core assumptions of the dominating realism school in international politics. See Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?', *International Security* 24/2 (Fall 1999) pp.5–55. Major works of different versions of the realism school include: Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th edn. (NY: Knopf 1973); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley 1979); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (NY: Norton 2001). For rational choice (or strategic choice) and its place in international relations (IR) theory, see David A. Lake and Robert Powell (eds.), *Strategic Choice and International Relations* (Princeton UP 1999).
3. Charles A. Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1994) pp.14–15, 35.
4. Formal modeling has taken the problem of 'incomplete information' more seriously, but it has yet to offer any practical guidance on how to assess the environment under incomplete information. For exceptions that addressed the difficulties of assessing individual factors

- shaping security environment, see Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War* (NY: Free Press 1988); William C. Wohlforth, 'The Perception of Power: Russia in the Pre-1914 Balance', *World Politics* 39/3 (April 1987) pp.353–81; Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1984); Stephen Van Evera, 'The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War', *International Security* 9/1 (Summer 1984) pp.58–107; Thomas J. Christensen, 'Perceptions and Alliance in Europe, 1865–1940', *International Organization* 51/1 (Winter 1997) pp.65–97. For a general survey of misperception, see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton UP 1976). The author thanks Tom Christensen for bringing up this point.
5. This is the so-called neo-classical realism. For reviews, see Gideon Rose, 'Neo-classical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics* 51 (Oct. 1998) pp.144–72; Ethan B. Kapstein, 'Is realism dead?', *International Organization* 49/4 (Autumn 1995) pp.751–74. Important works include: Michael Mastanduno, David A Lake and G. John Ikenberry, 'Toward a Realist Theory of State Action', *International Studies Quarterly* 33/4 (Dec. 1989); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1991); Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein (eds.), *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1993); Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Domestic Mobilization and Foreign Policy* (Princeton UP 1996); Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton UP 1998). For a neo-liberal application of the approach, see Robert Putnam, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games', *International Organization* 42/3 (Summer 1988) pp.427–60.
  6. Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd edn. (Reading, MA: Longman 1999); Graham Allison and Morton Halperin, 'Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications', *World Politics* 24 (supplement, Spring 1972) pp.40–79; Morton Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution 1974).
  7. Barry P. Posen, *The Source of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1984); Snyder (note 4).
  8. Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin 1982).
  9. Jervis (note 4); Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP 1981); James M. Goldgeier, 'Psychology and Security', *Security Studies* 6/4 (Summer 1997) pp.137–66.
  10. Ernest May, *'Lessons' of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford UP 1973); Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War* (Princeton UP 1992); Dan Reiter, *Crucible of Beliefs: Learning, Alliance, and World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1996).
  11. Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton UP 1995); Elizabeth Kier, *Imaging War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton UP 1997); Kupchan (note 3).
  12. I adopt Jervis's definition of system: a system exists '(a) when a set of units or elements is interconnected so that changes in some elements or their relations produce changes in other part of the system, and (b) the entire system exhibits properties and behaviors that are different from those of the parts.' Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton UP 1997) p.6.
  13. Therefore, contrary to what Kupchan suggested, understanding 'change in the international constellation of power and the opportunities and constraints associated with such changes' does not equal to understanding security environment.
  14. Hence, the primary objective here is to advance a theory about how things should be understood, not about how things were really understood (although the framework does possess potent explanatory power). For a call for such attempts, see Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods For Students of Political Sciences* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1997) p.4. For counterargument, see Kupchan (note 3) p.6.
  15. The Pentagon's latest Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) provided the latest example of this approach. By explicitly stating that it will no longer base its strategy on what

- other states may do (intent), but on what other states can do (capability), the QDR is explicitly planned on the worst scenario. US Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (30 Sept. 2001) pp.3–5. Most states plan their defense based on a similar approach.
16. The mechanism behind the phenomenon of ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ is, of course, ‘security dilemma’. John Herz, ‘Idealist Internationalists and the Security Dilemma’, *World Politics* 2/2 (Jan. 1950) pp.157–80; Robert Jervis, ‘Cooperation under the Security Dilemma’, *World Politics* 30/2 (Jan. 1978) pp.189–214; Charles Glaser, ‘Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models’, *World Politics* 44/4 (July 1992) pp.497–538; Charles L. Glaser, ‘The Security Dilemma Revisited’, *World Politics* 50/1 (Oct. 1997) pp.171–201.
  17. A typical argument for peripheral entanglement and imperial expansion goes like this: ‘Unwillingness to defend a far outpost would lead to the collapse at the core; therefore the frontier has to be defended. And in order to secure the frontier, an empire will have to expand even further.’ See Jervis (note 16) p.169; Snyder (note 5) pp.3–4. For an explanation of the British Empire’s expansion along this line, see John S. Galbraith, ‘The “Turbulent Frontier” as a Factor in British Expansion’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (Jan. 1960) pp.150–68.
  18. Snyder (note 5); Kupchan (note 3).
  19. A fourth factor, the arrangement of the units and the differentiation among them, is of no help because it will remain anarchy in international politics. Barry Buzan, ‘A Framework for Regional Security Analysis’, in Barry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi *et al.* (eds), *South Asian Insecurity and the Great Powers* (London: Macmillan 1986) pp.3–33; Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, 2nd edn. (NY: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991) ch.3.
  20. Stephen M. Walt, *The Origin of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1987). For refinements, see James D. Morrow, ‘Alliance and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliance’, *American Journal of Political Science* 35/4 (Nov. 1991) pp.904–33; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, ‘Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: predicting alliance patterns in multipolarity’, *International Organization* 44/2 (Spring 1990) pp.137–68; James D. Morrow, ‘Arms versus Allies: Trade-offs in the Search for Security’, *International Organization* 47/2 (Spring 1993) pp.207–33; Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1997) Part I. To some extent, Walt’s framework can subsume Buzan’s ‘security complex’.
  21. Morgenthau (note 2) p.4; Waltz (note 2) ch.6.
  22. Walt (note 20) ch.2. Considering that Walt was Waltz’s student, it was surprising that Walt did not include international structure in his theory. Walt did stress that regional states are more tuned to regional distribution of power, but he did not pursue its implication further.
  23. Buzan (note 19) pp.140–42. For the difficulty associated with measuring intention (therefore threat itself), see Robert Jervis, ‘Perceiving and Copying with Threat’, in Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice G. Stein (eds.), *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP 1985) pp.13–34.
  24. A survey of *International Security*’s readers strongly indicated that elites tend to disregard intention even when there is strong evidence that the potential opponent may not harbor a belligerent purpose. Cheryl Koopman, Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, ‘Theory-driven versus Data-driven Assessment in a Crisis: A Survey of International Security Readers’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 34/4 (Dec. 1990) pp.694–722.
  25. To be fair, Walt did not intend to develop a particular framework for understanding security environment, although he did use his theory to draw a large picture of US security environment in the 1980s. Walt (note 20) pp.282–5.
  26. On the surface, this definition is similar to Kydd’s probabilistic definition of states’ security. In reality, though, they differ in two important aspects. First, while my conception of security covers only vital survival interest, Kydd’s formulation seems to allow for non-vital security interest such as colonial expansion. Second, while Kydd factors in the probability of surviving after defeat, I leave this out. See Andrew Kydd, ‘Sheep in Sheep’s Clothing: Why Security Seekers Do not Fight Each Other’, *Security Studies* 7/1 (Autumn 1997) pp.114–54, at pp.121–2.

27. For other, but much less parsimonious attempts to identify factors shaping security environment, see Buzan (note 19) pp.163–4, and citations under fn.1.
28. Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Reflection on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics', in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics* (NY: Columbia UP 1986) p.329. For instance, states' alliance policy is at least partly shaped by the international structure. See Jervis (note 12) pp.197–209; Christensen and Snyder (note 20).
29. I choose geographical barrier, instead of the widely abused 'geopolitical factor' because the latter is a mix of at least two independent factors (geography and state-to-state interaction). A conflated concept does not help in systemic analysis. On the other hand, the new wave of 'critical geopolitics' is simply too loosely defined: geopolitics seems now to cover virtually all the possible factors in international politics. For an overview of geopolitical thoughts, see Jeffery Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: Croom Helm 1985). For critical geopolitics, see Gearoid O. Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press 1996); Gearoid O. Tuathail and Simon Dalby, *Rethinking Geopolitics* (London: Routledge 1998).
30. I draw inspiration from Waltz and Keohane/Nye's discussion on 'sensitivity' and 'vulnerability'. Waltz (note 2) pp.139–46; Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 2nd edn. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman 1989) pp.8–19.
31. John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (NY: Vintage Books 1993) p.68.
32. *Ibid.*, pp.68–70.
33. Rao Shengwen, *Buju Tianxia* [Geo-military Settings in Ancient Chinese History] (Beijing: People's Liberation Army Press 2002) p.11.
34. In Mearsheimer's words, oceans possess 'great stopping power (of water)'. Mearsheimer (note 2).
35. In a perfect dichotomy, power should be the ends for offensive realists, and the means (toward security) for defensive realists. In reality, many seem undecided on this point. See Glenn H. Snyder, 'Mearsheimer's World: Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security', *International Security* 27/1 (Summer 2002) pp.149–73, at pp.151–5; Waltz (note 2) pp.126–7; Mearsheimer (note 2) ch.2, esp. pp.29–36, endnote 21; Snyder (note 5) pp.11–12.
36. Walt (note 20) pp.22–3.
37. This has been a debating point between defensive and offensive realists. Defensive realists argued that balancing has been common, while offensive realists argued that balancing has never been that prevalent. There are, however, at least two problems with offensive realism's interpretation. First, they often take failures to achieve balance because threatened states lack resources as indications that states did not intend to balance. Second, offensive realists tend to look at events in a shorter timeframe while defensive realists tend to do the opposite (Snyder (note 5) p.12); therefore, offensive realists tend to take temporary gains by expansive powers as indications that balancing is rare. For instance, Mearsheimer argued that balancing was rare because the initiator won 60 per cent of the 63 wars between 1815 and 1980 (Mearsheimer (note 2) p.39). The problem with this argument is that an initiator won the war does not necessarily mean other states did not balance, nor does it indicate that balancing eventually failed. Looking back at history, it is fair to say that balancing became easier and conquest became more difficult after Westphalia: by then, the numbers of states had decreased to a point where each individual state possessed far more aggregate power than they used to, and an aggressor will be hard pressed to overwhelm a large coalition of states. For defensive realists' arguments, see Walt (note 20); Snyder (note 5). For offensive realists' arguments, see Mearsheimer (note 2) p.39.
38. Germany's pursuit of greater naval power aroused Britain's fear about Germany and eventually contributed to Germany's isolation in World War I was a classic case. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Ashfield 1987); A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1954) pp.446–7, 459–62.
39. Andrew Kydd, 'Game Theory and the Spiral Model', *World Politics* 49/3 (April 1997) pp.371–400; *idem.*, 'Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation', *International Organization* 54/2 (Spring 2002) pp.325–57. Self-restraining behaviors can range from refraining from pursuing unnecessary military power, to pursuing cautious objectives, cooperation,



respecting institutions and norms, and outright unilateral arms reduction. On the other hand, un-restraining behavior can range from unilateral action, to defection from cooperation, arms race, territorial expansion, and preemptive war. *Cooperation is an important form of self-restraining* because it is essentially equal to tying one's own hands with commitment and limiting one's freedom of action voluntarily. For the original formulation, see Charles L. Glaser, 'Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-help', *International Security* 19/3 (Winter 1994–95) pp.50–90.

40. On surface, because there is always a chance that a state will face a revisionist or a predator state and an aggressor may conceal its true intention when it is relatively weak (as Hitler did before 1939), self-restraining can be a foolhardy policy at a particular juncture. This dilemma is solved in two ways. First, it is difficult for an aggressor to cover its true identity for long because its revisionist goal necessitates it to seize opportunities of expansion and forsaking opportunities of expansion is costly for it (Kydd, *ibid.*). Second, just as an aggressor is less likely to view other states' counterbalancing as threatening, a non-aggressor state is also less likely to view their fellow non-aggressor states as threatening (or lacking self-restraint) when they are taking active measures to balance the aggressor (in fact, non-aggressor states are more likely to encourage such moves among them). If a state arms excessively when there is no aggressor in sight, however, it is more likely to be viewed as the potential aggressor and face counter-balancing. Either way, behaving with self-restraint is the preferred strategy.
41. The disagreement between offensive realism and defensive realism on security dilemma, therefore, is twofold. While defensive realists believe that security dilemma is real and states can take measures to alleviate it (but never eliminate it), some offensive realists dispute the existence of security dilemma (e.g. Schweller), while some offensive realists (e.g. Mearsheimer) believe that security dilemma is real but there is little states can do about it (hence, 'there will be a lot of security competition but little security 'dilemma' in Mearsheimer's world'). See Snyder (note 35) p.156; Randall L. Schweller, 'Neorealism's Status Quo Bias: What Security Dilemma?', *Security Studies* 5/3 (Spring 1996) pp.122–66; Mearsheimer (note 2) p.36.
42. Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The Stability of Bipolarity', *Daedalus* 93/3 (Summer 1964) pp.881–901; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, ch.8, pp.204–5, 161–2; William C. Wohlforth, 'The Stability of a Unipolar World', *International Security* 24/1 (Summer 1999) pp.5–41; Karl Deutsch and J. David Singer, 'Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability', *World Politics* 16/3 (April 1964) pp.390–406.
43. Frequent interventions by the Soviet Union and United States within their respective spheres of influence during the Cold War illustrated the point. For the similarity between Soviet's conduct in Eastern Europe and America's conduct in Latin America, see Jan F. Triska (ed.), *Dominant Powers and Subordinate States: the United States in Latin America and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke UP 1986).
44. As Walt noted, 'regional states are largely indifferent to global balance of power. Instead, they (states in the Middle East) often form alliance in response to threats from other regional actors'. Walt (note 20) pp.30, 148, 264. Buzan's security complex was also an attempt to underscore the local dimension of security. Essentially, only great powers have the 'luxury' to think more globally.
45. Even a cursory look into the American debate of foreign policy would indicate that calls for assertive unilateral actions in the United States increased significantly after the Cold War.
46. Mearsheimer (note 2). See also Snyder (note 35) pp.162, 167–8; Richard Rosecrance, 'War and Peace', *World Politics* 52/1 (Oct. 2002) pp.137–66. As Rosecrance noted (pp.157–9) and I will get to later, polarity alone cannot dictate war and pace. For earlier treatment of multipolarity and stability focusing on the uncertainty associated with alliance formation, see Deutsch and Singer (note 42).
47. For an excellent historical overview, see Keegan (note 31).
48. Levy first pointed out the necessity of differentiating the two versions of the balance. Jack S. Levy, 'The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis', *International Studies Quarterly* 28/2 (June 1984) pp.219–38. For a discussion on the 'core' and 'broad' approach, Kier A. Lieber, 'Grasping the Technological



- Peace: The Offense-Defense Balance and International Security', *International Security* 25/1 (Summer 2000) pp.77–104. Major works on offense-defense balance include: Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1999) esp. ch.2; Jervis (note 16); George H. Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System* (NY: Wiley 1977); Charles Glaser, 'What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure It?', *International Security* 22/3 (Winter 1997–98) pp.44–82. Stephen Van Evera, 'Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War', *ibid.* pp.5–43. For criticism, see 'Correspondence: Taking Offense at the Offense-Defense Theory', *International Security* 23/3 (Winter 1998/99), pp. 179–206; Sean M. Lynn-Jones, 'Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics', *Security Studies* 4/4 (Summer 1995) pp.672–4. The 'force employment' version of the balance developed by Biddle is a mix of the two versions, and it renders the theory less parsimonious. See Stephen Biddle, 'Rebuilding the Foundation of Offense-Defense Theory', *Journal of Politics* 63/3 (Aug. 2001) pp.741–74.
49. Levy made a similar point: 'Hypothesis regarding the consequences of war ... are properly defined in terms of the "objective balance"'. See Levy (note 48) p.222. Lieber contended that technology has never had that much impact on the outcome of the war. But his cases do not support his argument that a particular technology lacks potential impact on the battlefield. Rather, they merely indicate that leaders often failed to appreciate, therefore fully utilize that potential. Moreover, when he sought to illustrate that the impact of technology had never been so great using evidences from late stages of technology innovation, he forgot that diffusion of technology (and its countermeasures) and learning from battlefield experience would inevitably lead to erosion of the initial advantage derived from the technology. To some extent, he deviated from the 'core' approach that he advocated. See Lieber (note 48).
  50. Van Evera (note 48) p.21.
  51. Because balancing is more common, a state with an impermeable geographical barrier but exercising little self-restraint is more likely to face a formidable balancing alliance, thus the worse its security environment (the United States may be an exception). Plus, a state lacking self-restraint may well expand thus making its geographical barrier more permeable and vulnerable. Together with increasing difficulty to project power effectively from its core, an expanding empire eventually will reach its stage of 'over-extension'.
  52. Under a structure with robust constraint, states are less likely to initiate conflicts while states exercising little self-restraint are more likely to be punished, thus the better states' security environment.
  53. Again, because balancing is common, a state exercising little self-restraint is more likely to be balanced, thus the worse its security environment.
  54. See fn. 52.
  55. Even under a structure with weak constraint, a state exercising less self-restraint is more likely to be punished. Therefore, self-restraint is still the preferred strategy.
  56. Van Evera (note 48).
  57. For a summary, see Desmond Ball, 'Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisition in the Asian-Pacific Region', *International Security* 18/3 (Winter 1993–94) pp.78–112. Ball did not identify the 1991 Gulf War as a factor behind the accelerating pace of the arms buildup in East Asia.
  58. The impact of the 1991 Gulf War on the evolution of China's military doctrine has been well documented. See Nan Li, 'The PLA's Evolving Warfighting Doctrine, Strategy and Tactics, 1985–95: A Chinese Perspective', in David Shambaugh and Richard H. Yang (eds.), *China's Military in Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon 1997) pp.179–99, at pp.192–4; Paul H.B. Godwin, 'The PLA Faces the Twenty-First Century: Reflects on Technology, Doctrine, Strategy, and Operation', in James R. Lilley and David Shambaugh (eds.), *China's Military Faces the Future* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe 1999) pp.39–63, at pp.54–7; You Ji, *The Armed Forces of China* (London: Allen & Unwin 1999) pp.21–8.
  59. Robert J. C. Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War* (Stanford UP 1969); Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945* (NY: Pantheon 1978).
  60. George Bush senior was quoted in Maureen Dowd, 'War Introduced Nation to a Tougher Bush', *New York Times*, 2 March 1991.

61. A *USA Today* poll taken immediately after the 1991 Gulf War found that 78 per cent of Americans has 'a great deal of confidence' in the military. In contrast, in a similar Gallup poll taken in 1977, two years after the fall of Saigon, the figure was only 23 per cent. See Stephen Budiansky and Bruce B. Auster, 'A Force Reborn', *US News & World Report* 110/10 (18 March 1991) pp.30–2. Admittedly, the US public remains 'pretty prudent' toward the actual use of force. For an explanation, see Bruce W. Jentleson and Rebecca L. Britton, 'Still Pretty Prudent: Post-Cold War American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42/4 (Aug. 1998) pp.395–417.
62. Falk predicted that US elite would be more willing to consider the option of force almost immediately after the 1991 Gulf War. See Richard Falk, 'Recycling Interventionism', *Journal of Peace Research* 29/2 (May 1992) pp.129–34. Of course, under unipolarity, the structural restraint on US action was also greatly weakened.
63. For a general survey of the impact of recent RMAs on future warfare, see Michael O'Hanlon, *Technological Change and the Future of Warfare* (Washington DC: Brookings 2000).
64. Mearsheimer argued in an earlier study that PGWs favored defense. John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1983) ch.3.
65. This was Finland's strategy versus the Soviet Union, and Serbia's strategy versus the United States. For detailed discussion of deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment, see Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense* (Princeton UP 1961); Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP 1966) pp.78–86; Robert Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence: the Search for Credibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1990) ch.3.
66. Van Evera (note 48) ch.8; Charles L. Glaser and Steve Fetter, 'National Missile Defense and the Future of US Nuclear Weapons Policy', *International Security* 26/1 (Summer 2001) pp.40–92; Steven E. Miller, 'The Flawed Case for Missile Defence', *Survival* 43/3 (Fall 2001) pp.95–110.
67. Walt (note 20); Barry Buzan, 'Regional Security as a Policy Objective: The Case of South and Southwest Asia', in A.Z. Rubinstein (ed.), *The Great Game: The Rivalry in the Persian Gulf and South Asia* (NY: Praeger 1983) ch.10; Buzan and Rizvi *et al.* (note 19); Stephen Walt, 'Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia', *International Organization* 42/2 (Spring 1987) pp.275–316; Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner 1998), p.59.
68. For an earlier statement on East Asian multipolarity, see Doak Barnnet, *China and the Major Powers in East Asia* (Washington DC: Brookings 1977) ch.IV. Robert Ross contended that East Asia might have already evolved into a bipolar structure after the Cold War. Robert Ross, 'The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century', *International Security* 23/4 (Spring 1998–99) pp.81–118.
69. Buzan and Rizvi labeled external powers' foray into the subcontinent as 'overlying'. See Buzan and Rizvi *et al.* (note 19).
70. As Jervis had pointed out, the worse off for both states when they both defect, the less likely they will defect and the more likely they will cooperate (in the case of China and Russia), and vice versa (in the case of China and India). Jervis (note 16) p.171. For an analysis of the India-China case along this line of argument, see Shiping Tang, 'The China-India Relationship Game and China's Grand Strategy in South Asia', *Shijie Jingji yu Zhengzhi* 9 [World Economics and Politics] (Beijing) (Sept. 2000) pp.24–9.
71. John Mearsheimer, 'Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War', *International Security* 15/1 (Summer 1990) pp.5–56.
72. Waltz (note 42); Idem. (note 2) ch.8, pp.204–5, 161–2. Waltz had so much faith in the stability of bipolarity that he actually insisted that the world remained bipolar even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, although he later revised his view. See Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics', *International Security* 18/2 (Fall 1993) pp.44–79.
73. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Rex Warner trans. (London: Penguin 1972); Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (Doubleday, NY: Anchor 1995) pp.232–80.

74. For similar argument, see Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1989) p.25; John Lewis Gaddis, 'The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System', *International Security* 10/4 (Spring 1986) pp.99–142; Ted Hopf, 'Polarity, the Offense-defense Balance, and War', *American Political Science Review* 85/2 (June 1991) pp.475–93. Waltz later admitted that the presence of nuclear weapon did contribute to the Long Peace. See Waltz (note 72) p.44.
75. Robert Jervis, 'The Future of World Politics: Will It Resemble the Past?', *International Security* 16/3 (Winter 1991–92) pp.39–73, at p.40; Rosecrance (note 46) pp.157–9.
76. For similar point, See Buzan (note 19) pp.160–66; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, 'Risk, Power Distribution, and the Likelihood of War', *International Studies Quarterly* 25/4 (Dec. 1981) pp.541–68, at pp.566–7. For a review, see Patrick James and Michael Brecher, 'Stability and Polarity: New Paths for Inquiry', *Journal of Peace Research* 25/1 (March 1988) pp.31–42. For critics of the quantitative approach, see Paul W. Schroeder, 'Quantitative Studies in the Balance of Power: A Historian's Reaction', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 21/1 (March 1977) pp.3–22; Wohlforth (note 4).
77. John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (NY: Basic Books 1989).
78. Stephen Van Evera, 'Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War', *International Security* 15/3 (Winter 1990–91) pp.7–57; Jervis (note 75); Buzan (note 19) pp.169–72; James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, 'A Tale of Two Worlds: Core and Periphery in the post-Cold War Era', *International Organization* 46/2 (Spring 1992) pp.467–91.
79. Deutsch and Singer (note 42).
80. The fallacy of traditional geopolitics thought, thus, lies in its belief that geography alone dictates states' action.
81. One point to be kept in mind is that because the theory offered here is the first of its kind, comparison with other theories will be difficult. Walt's balance-of-threat theory is the closest thing we have, but his theory is more about explaining how alliance forms, not about how states should understand security environment in order to form alliances.
82. A related prediction will be that getting all the factors right but ignoring their interactions can also lead to misreading into security environment and strategic failures. Such cases may be difficult to find, though, because most states cannot even get the factors right.
83. For 'doubly decisive' tests, see Van Evera (note 14) p.32.
84. Jervis (note 12).
85. Van Evera dubbed such tests as 'smoking-gun' tests. Van Evera (note 14) p.31–2.
86. Another possible but less rigorously documented case is the different perception of power before World War I. See Wohlforth (note 4).
87. Snyder (note 4); Van Evera (note 4).
88. Kupchan (note 3) ch.5; Van Evera (note 48) pp.191–2. Also see the discussion below.
89. Robert Jervis, 'The Impact of the Korean War on the Cold War', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24/4 (Dec. 1980) pp.563–92; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (London: Oxford UP 1982) pp.109–26; Christensen (note 5).
90. For a debate on whether there was a 'lost chance' during 1949–50 for the United States and the new People's Republic of China to be less hostile against each other, see Warren I. Cohen, Chen Jian, John Garder, Michael Sheng and Odd Arne Westad, 'Symposium: Rethinking the Lost Chance in China', *Diplomatic History* 21/1 (Winter 1997) pp.71–115. For Truman and Acheson's thoughts on the possibility of engineering schism between the Soviet Union and China, see Gaddis (note 89) pp.68–9, 102.
91. For the domestic impact of the Korean War on the United States, see Paul G. Pierpaoli, *Truman and Korea: The Political Culture of the Early Cold War* (Columbia, MO: Univ. of Missouri Press 1999).
92. For US nuclear policy, see Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press 1980); Aaron L. Friedberg, 'A History of US Strategic 'Doctrine' – 1945 to 1980', *Journal of*

- Strategic Studies* 3/2 (Dec. 1980) pp.37–71. For Soviet Union's nuclear policy, see Roman Kolkowicz and Ellen P. Mickiewicz (eds.), *The Soviet Calculus of Nuclear War* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath 1986).
93. The numbers are from Robert S. Norris and William M. Arkin, 'Nuclear Notebook: Estimated US and Soviet/Russian Nuclear Stockpiles, 1945–1997', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 53/6 (Nov.–Dec. 1997), on web at: < <http://www.thebulletin.org/issues/nukenotes/nd97nukenote.html> > . Accessed on 7 Oct. 2002.
  94. For a similar argument, see Jennifer W. See, 'An Uneasy Truce: John F. Kennedy and Soviet-American Détente, 1963', *Cold War History* 2/2 (Jan. 2002) pp.161–94. For the argument that the crisis was a turn point, see John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (NY: Oxford UP 1997) p.261; Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, 'One Hell of a Gamble': *Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (NY: Norton 1997) p.337–8; Valdislav Zubok and Constance Pleshakov, *Inside Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Boston, MA: Harvard UP 1996) p.237.
  95. Kupchan (note 3) pp.362–3, Snyder (note 5) p.83.
  96. In fact, many had argued that Bismarck used colonial expansion mainly for bargaining with Britain and France, and for domestic political reasons. For a review, see Kupchan (note 3) pp.368–72.
  97. Germany can perhaps survive with an alliance with England, Russia, or France (extremely unlikely after the bitter war) but not with Austria alone. For Bismarck's alliance policy, See David Calleo, *The German Problem Reconsidered: Germany and the World Order, 1870 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1978) p.10; Walt (note 20) pp.8–9; Snyder (note 5) p.69.
  98. Considering the fact that most of the major European powers were revisionists at that time, Bismarck had done a remarkable job. Hence, even a highly critical biography of Bismarck had to give him some credit. See Erick Eyck, *Bismarck and the Germany Empire* (NY: Norton 1968) pp.187–8.
  99. For an overview, see Wolfram Kaiser and Gillian Staerck (eds.), *British Foreign Policy, 1955–1964: Contracting Options* (NY: St Martin's Press 2000); David Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan 1990); Joseph Frankel, 'Britain's Changing Role', *International Affairs* 50/4 (Oct. 1974) pp.574–83.
  100. Peter Weiler, 'British Labour and the Cold War: The Foreign Policy of the Labor Government 1945–51', *Journal of British Studies* 26/1 (Jan. 1987) pp.54–82.
  101. A document, 'Stocktaking after VE Day', prepared by then Deputy Under-Secretary of State Sir Orme Sargent in 1945 put it bluntly: '(Britain) is numerically the weakest and geographically the smallest of the three Great Powers ... In the minds of our big partners, especially that of the United States, there is a feeling that Great Britain is now a secondary power and can be treated such.' Quoted in Anthony Adamthwaite, 'Britain and the World, 1945–9: The View from the Foreign Office', *International Affairs* 61/2 (Spring 1985) pp.223–35, at p.226, emphasis added.
  102. While some British elite did argue that Britain should maintain its oversea presence, the fact that Britain never put up a serious fight indicated that the dominating opinion was just the opposite.
  103. By 1947, the British Foreign Office came to admit: 'too great independence of the United States would be a dangerous luxury'. Quoted in Adamthwaite (note 101) p.227.
  104. For the development of Anglo-American 'Special Relationship', see David Reynolds, 'A "Special Relationship"? America, Britain and the International Order Since the Second World War', *International Affairs* 62/1 (Winter 1985–86) pp.1–20.
  105. This actually equals to recognizing the security dilemma dynamics, and Singapore's then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew played an instrumental role in re-shaping Deng's understanding of this dimension of China's security environment. Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story 1965–2000* (Singapore: Straits Times Press and Times Media 2001) pp.663–8.
  106. In 1985, Deng firmly reached his conclusion that 'large-scale war is preventable'. See his speech to the Central Military Committee, in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping* 3 (Beijing: Peoples' Press 1993) pp.126–9.

107. For the ideational change behind the evolution of China's security strategy, see Shipping Tang and Peter Hay Gries, 'China's Security Strategy: From Offensive to Defensive Realism and Beyond', *EAI Working Paper* No. 97 (Singapore: East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore, Nov. 2002).
108. In fact, it can be argued that the objective of states' security strategy is to improve their security environment (not necessarily for relative gains, though), or at least prevent it from deteriorating.
109. Much of the discussion here can be understood as 'system effects' or 'system dynamics'. See Jervis (note 12).
110. Schweller (note 41) pp.122–66.
111. Kissinger reached the same conclusion from a narrower angle. Henry A. Kissinger, *The Necessity for Choice: Prospect of American Foreign Policy* (NY: Harper & Row 1961) p.148.
112. For an earlier statement of security interdependence, see Helga Haftendorn, 'The Security Puzzle: Theory-building and Discipline-building in International Security', *International Studies Quarterly* 35/1 (March 1991) pp.3–17, at p.9; Buzan, Waever and de Wilde (note 67) p.11. Of course, economic interdependence and its implication for managing international political economy has been the focus of neoliberalism. For a classical statement, see Keohane and Nye (note 30). On the interdependence between security and economy (or economic security in general), see Barry Buzan, 'The Interdependence of Security and Economic Issues in the 'New World Order'', in Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey Underhill (eds.), *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart 1994) pp.89–102.
113. Reconciliation between two former rivals (e.g. France and Germany, Russia and China) underscores the point that two states can gain more security when they give the other side more security.
114. Waltz made a similar point in a different context. Waltz (note 2) pp.208, 195. Yet he also made the opposite point in another place. See Waltz, *ibid.*, pp.170–2; Wohlforth (note 42) p.39.
115. For instance, strong US support for Israel may have severely hindered its ability of shaping its images among Arabs (and Muslims in general). Likewise, China's policy of supporting insurgency in its neighboring countries during the 1960s had made improving its relationship with them difficult.
116. The fact that the United States has been an active interventionist since the nineteenth century but has yet to face an encircling alliance supports this argument. Of course, many Americans recognize the danger of lack of self-restraint and argue that the United States has to exercise self-restraint in order to sustain US dominance. See Joseph J. Nye, *The Paradox of America Power: Why the World's only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (London: Oxford UP 2001) pp.xii, 16–17, 25–6; Walt (note 20) pp.282–3; Charles Kupchan, 'After Pax-Americana: Benign Power, Regional Integration and the Sources of Stable Multipolarity', *International Security* 22/2 (Fall 1998); John Ikenberry, 'Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order', *International Security* 22/3 (Winter 1998–99) pp.43–78; Idem., 'America's Imperial Ambition', *Foreign Affairs* 81/5 (Sept.–Oct. 2002) pp.44–60. For more assertive views about the US role, see Wohlforth (note 42); Charles Krauthammer, 'The New Unilateralism', *Washington Post*, 8 June 2001, p.29. For an earlier explanation why other states did not try to balance the United States, see Michael Mastanduno, 'Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realists Theories and US Grand Strategies after the Cold War', *International Security* 21/4 (Spring 1997) pp.49–88.
117. As Walt noted, one reason why the United States adopted a strategy different from his prescriptions is because US policymakers generally had a less optimistic view of the security situation. Walt (note 20) ch.7.
118. Paul Nitze was quoted saying 'Most of what has been written and taught under the heading of 'political science' by Americans since World War II has been of . . . limited value, if not counterproductive, as a guide to the actual conduct of policy.' Quoted in Van Evera (note 48) p.2.

119. Stephen M. Walt, 'The Progressive Power of Realism', *American Political Science Review* 91/4 (Dec. 1997) pp.931–5.
120. Worse still, 'securitization' of more and more issues that were not in the traditional security arena is in danger of making the concept of security lose its boundary and become incomprehensible. Moreover, the practice may actually exacerbate the security dilemma (rather than alleviating it), because it will lead states toward a more threat-based understanding of issues that cannot and should not be coped by traditional political and military means. For a summary of the debate between the 'widening' and 'narrowing' approach toward security, see Buzan, Waever and de Wilde (note 67) pp.2–5.
121. One possibility may be modifying the 'systems dynamics approach' that has been used to analyze strategic problems in business and government. R.G. Coyle, *Systems Dynamics Modelling: A Practical Approach* (Netherlands: Chapman & Hall 1996).
122. Put it another way, defensive realists act according to probability, while offensive realists according to possibility. For this point, see Stephen Brooks, 'Dueling Realisms', *International Organization* 51/2 (Summer 1997) pp.445–77. Glaser might have the same point in mind when he called defensive realism 'contingent realism'. Glaser (note 39) pp.50–90. For definition of defensive realism, see Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, 'Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited', *International Security* 25/3 (Winter 2000–01) pp.128–61. See also Robert Jervis, 'Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate', *International Security* 24/1 (Summer 1999) pp.42–63. Mearsheimer is the quintessential offensive realist, while Walt is the quintessential defensive realist. Mearsheimer (note 2) esp. ch.2; Snyder (note 5) p.12.
123. Powell's reformulation of the problem of relative and absolute gain may be an interesting guide. See Robert Powell, 'Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory', *American Political Sciences Review* 85/4 (Dec. 1991) pp.1303–20. Kydd's model on security dilemma may be helpful too. Kydd (note 39).
124. For a more detailed discussion of this assumption, see Shiping Tang, 'Different Theories of International Politics for Different Time', *China Social Science* 3 (June 2003) pp.140–50.
125. In this sense, *anarchy is really what states make of it*. Alex Wendt, 'Anarchy Is What States Make of it: the social construction of power politics', *International Organization* 46/2 (Spring 1992) pp.391–425.
126. For an argument why certain well-established generalizations about world politics may no longer hold, see Jervis (note 75).
127. Snyder (note 35) pp.157–9.
128. March W. Zacher, 'The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force', *International Organization* 55/2 (Spring 2001) pp.215–50. And I will be happy to admit that defensive realism is more suitable for the present and some length of the future even though it may not be suitable for the past jungle age before Westphalia, when an offensive realist state would have a better chance of survival.