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## **Polar Co-option Theory**

### **Systemic Change in the International System**

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Doctoral Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Bernhard Zangl

Second Reviewer: Berthold Rittberger

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## **Introduction**

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States became the undisputed preeminent power in the international system. In 1990, its economy was roughly 26 percent of the world's GDP.<sup>1</sup> Militarily, its qualitative and quantitative advantage was unrivaled and its reach unprecedented (Wohlforth, 1999). Unconstrained by the lack of a geopolitical competitor, the U.S. adopted an activist foreign policy that has been dubbed liberal hegemony (Ikenberry, 2009). The goal of this grand strategy was to instill “democratic governance within nation-states, individual rights, free markets, a free press, and the rule of law” (Posen, 2014, p. 6).

The U.S.' preponderance would not last. Over the preceding decade and a half, the United States' relative advantage has declined (Layne, 2012). Additionally, the U.S.' traditional allies have also witnessed a decrease in their hard power capabilities (Regilme & Parisot, 2017). This has negatively affected the liberal international order the United States has built.

While these developments would be destabilizing enough, non-traditional powers have seen a rise in their relative power. This phenomenon has been dubbed “the rise of the rest” (Zakaria, 2011). Examples of countries that fall into this category are Indonesia, South Korea, Chile, and Mexico (Amsden, 2001). Some of the larger states within this group - like India, Brazil, and Turkey - have begun to wield more influence in the international system (Kubicek, Dal, & Oğuzlu, 2016; Zangl, Heußner, Kruck, & Lanzendörfer, 2016).

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<sup>1</sup> The US economy, using current US dollars, was approximately \$5.963 trillion. The world's GDP was roughly \$22.656 trillion (World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files)

Foremost among this group of rising states is China. Between 1980 and 2007, China's GDP rose at an average rate of 10 percent per annum. To put that in perspective, the world's average growth rate was 3 percent and the U.S.' was under 4 percent (Knight & Ding, 2012). With this new economic clout, China has been attempting to gain more influence in the international system. In conjunction with financial incentives, the country has been developing its soft power capabilities (Hartig, 2016). In contrast to these benign developments, China's military has also developed significantly in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Geopolitically, it has also been attempting to develop an exclusive security zone that includes the South China Sea (S. F. Jackson, 2016; Tangredi, 2013).

These structural changes in the international system have spurred new conversations within IR. These dialogues can be divided along several lines. This work will focus on two of them. The first, is the debate as to whether a power transition is occurring.

Power Transition Theory envisions the entire international system being organized by a single state. This dominate state is defined by its material preponderance. It uses this hard power advantage to incentive states into following its rules and regulations. For power transition scholars, the United States has been the dominate state since 1945. Recently, however, there has been a debate as to whether a power transition is occurring. This conversation has been provoked by the U.S.' decline, in conjunction with China's rise. The question at the heart of this conversation is whether China will replace the United States as the system's dominate state (Allison, 2017; Chan, 2007; Lemke & Tammen, 2003; Levy, 2008).

In addition to the power transition debate, the second dialogue focuses on the polarity of the international system. During the Cold War, the United States and Soviet Russia were both considered poles. Thus, the international system was defined as bipolar. Once the Soviet Union fell, the United States became the only pole in the system. As a result, the system's structure was categorized as unipolar (Krauthammer, 1990).

With the U.S.' recent decline, a debate about the current structure of the international system has developed (Zala, 2017). Some argue that the system is still unipolar (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016; Kopalyan, 2017). Others perceive the system to be bipolar with China having risen to the level of a polar power (Maher, 2018; Tunsjø, 2018). A third group contends that it is not just China that has reached polar status. Rather, a number of states have developed to the point where the system is multipolar (Dee, 2015; Kupchan, 2012). In the opposite direction, there is also the idea that the U.S.' decline will precipitate a shift towards a non-polar system (Haass, 2008). Under this school of thought, the U.S. is no longer the unipolar power and neither China nor any other state will be able to reach polar status.

These two dialogues, both precipitated by the U.S.' relative decline, can be divided along their contrasting understanding of the structure of the international system. For power transition scholars, the *entire* system is under the leadership of a single dominate state. The United States has led the system since 1945, but with its decline, China might be on the path of overtaking it.

For PTT, there is a clear process that leads to a change in international leadership. A dominate state, because of its material advantage, establishes rules and regulations that

govern state interaction. As a result of the mechanism that is the law of unequal growth rates, the dominate power's material advantage erodes as another state's power increases. This will lead to dissatisfaction and a hegemonic war. If the dominate power losses said war, then a power transition will transpire.

Rather than a transition in international leadership, the second conversation focuses on a shift in the system's polar structure, i.e. the number of poles in a given system. The problem is that there is a gap in the literature since there is not a theory that explains how and why the structure of the system transitions. In other words, there is not an explanation as to how and why the system changes from multipolar to bipolar. The reason why a theory has not been developed stems from the fact that there is not a clear set of attributes or an established threshold for determining polar status (Oren, 2016; William R Thompson, 1986). This inability to determine when a state reaches or declines from being a pole, means that polarity scholarship does not have a transformational logic (Ruggie, 1986). Consequently, most of the research on this topic entails comparing the differences between two static systems (Wohlforth, 2011).

This is a significant deficiency because the structure of the system has changed at least twice. The first change occurred after World War Two, when it shifted from multipolar to bipolar (R. Brown, 1993). The second shift took place after the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union. At that point, the system transitioned from bipolar to unipolar (William R. Thompson, 2006). Furthermore, there is not a theory to apply to the current international system, which might be going through a transition or has recently gone through one.



As a result of this need, the current work will focus on developing a theory that explains how and why the structure of the international system transitions. It will be dubbed Polar Co-option Theory (PCT) (Tepper, 2014). Rather than argue that the system's structure has changed only twice, PCT contends that the number of poles equates to the number of states which have authority over an empire (Jorgensen, 2013). Like an imperial power, a polar power acts as an institutional hub that establishes rules and regulations that it then imposes on the lesser tier states, or spokes, it has authority over (Galtung, 1971; Hafner-Burton, Kahler, & Montgomery, 2009; Ikenberry, 2011, 2012; Motyl, 2001; Tilly, 1997).

This conceptualization leads polar co-option theory to conclude that there have been five polar co-options since 1800. In the Western Hemisphere, the Spanish Empire collapsed, which first led to an expansion of Britain's authority (first co-option) and then to the development of the United States' territorial order (second co-option). In North Africa and the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned between France and Britain (third co-option). After World War II, the global empires of Britain and France were replaced by the U.S. and, to a lesser extent, the USSR (fourth co-option). With the culmination of the Cold War, the world witnessed the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the further expansion of the U.S.' territorial order (fifth co-option) (Painter, 1999; Westad, 2005).

It is hypothesized that during each of these polar co-options, a clear pattern of events unfolded. This has led PCT to predict certain occurrences that together make up the polar co-option process. This recurring phenomenon is made up of a single mechanism, which leads to three steps. The sole mechanism is the *variability of authority*. The subsequent steps are a

pole's loss of authority over its spokes, a rise in the level of fear among the system's poles, and then a co-option.

To better layout the polar co-option process, this work will proceed as follows. The first chapter fleshes out PTT with more specificity than was done here. It also provides a critique that includes, but is not limited to, the point made in this introduction. Namely, PTT's conceptualization of a dominate state and the belief that it organizes the entire international system.

The second chapter presents polar co-option theory. The first section will pertain to the theories basic understanding of the international system, which is markedly different than PTT's. The second section lays out the hypothesized polar co-option process. It provides the theory's mechanism, steps, expected recurring features, and results.

Chapter three focuses on PCT's conceptualization of a pole and its effect on the lesser tier states it has authority over. First, it will further explain PTT's basic understanding of a dominate state and its effect on the international system. While using PTT's dominate state as a foil, PCT's characterization of a pole will be presented. The most important difference between the two theories' units of observation is how they affect lesser tier states. Since PTT adheres to the assumption of state sovereignty, the dominate state only alters the interaction of states at the international level. The polar powers, as a result of practicing imperialism, affect the domestic structure of the spokes they have authority over.

As previously mentioned, the literature on polarity has not been able to develop a theory about structural change. The main reason for this is the lack of precision with the

concept of a pole. Since there is still a debate as to when a state reaches or descends from polar status, it is difficult to determine how, why, and when there is a transition in the system's structure. To try and rectify this gap in the literature, chapter three will provide a number of attributes a state needs to satisfy to be considered a pole. These qualities of a polar power correspond with the literature on imperialism.

While the depiction of a pole in chapter three portrays a static ideal type, chapter four's aim is to provide a more dynamic understanding of the polar power and the polar co-option process. As a result, a typology of poles will be introduced. These categorizations are based on two criteria. First, is the directionality of a pole's authority, i.e. whether it is decreasing or increasing. The second, centers around a pole's intentions during the polar co-option process. With this understanding of what affects polar status, PCT identifies four different kinds of poles: a moribund pole, a status quo pole, a prospective co-opting pole, and a co-opting pole.

While explanatory examples of PCT and a pole's effect on lesser tier states will be presented in chapters three and four, chapter five will provide an empirical example of the theory. It will cover France's and Britain's loss of authority over their spokes, which led to the expansion of the U.S.', and to a lesser extent, Soviet Russia's territorial orders.

A short conclusion will then follow. The topic of this section will be twofold. First, PCT will be retold but in a condensed form. Second, the topic of whether a polar co-option is currently occurring will be discussed. During this historical episode, the United States is cast as the moribund pole losing authority over its spokes while China is the prospective co-opting pole seeking to establish its own territorial order. It is the supposition of this work, however, that a

polar co-option is not underway since the U.S. itself has led the movement away from the liberal international order it has built. Furthermore, China will be unable to develop its own territorial order because of economic, legitimacy and geopolitical constraints.

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## Chapter One

### Power Transition Theory and its Faults

How do international orders transition? In IR, there is a clear theoretical understanding of how this phenomenon proceeds – Power Transition Theory (PTT). The theory was first articulated in the late 1950s, by Kenneth Organski in his *World Politics* (A. F. K. Organski, 1958). Organski's work and his theoretical insights spawned a research program that over the last sixty years has crystalized its understanding of the international system as well as the mechanism and steps of the power transition process.<sup>1</sup>

These facets of PTT are discussed in the first and second sections of this chapter. The third section demonstrates why there is a need for a new theoretical understanding of how international orders transition. Specifically, PTT's basic understanding of the structure of the international system is critiqued as well as its final predicted step in its hypothesized power transition process.

#### Power Transition Theory's Understanding of the International System

Before we can understand how power transitions occur, PTT's basic assumptions need to be fleshed out. What follows is a brief overview of the entities and processes the theory presupposes (Wagner, 2016).

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<sup>1</sup> There are power transition theorists in the Organski tradition (Organski & Kugler, 1981), (Tammen, Kugler, & Lemke, 2016); long-cycle theorists (Modelski, 1987), (Modelski & Thompson, 1988); and a realist adaptation (Gilpin, 1981).

For PTT the most important actors are states.<sup>2</sup> These states, which populate the international system, form a hierarchy.<sup>3</sup> This hierarchy is based on the distribution of material capabilities. For PTT, the most important source of power is traditional hard power. Measurements such as a state's GDP and the Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) "are regularly employed by PTT studies" (Rauch, 2017, p. 643). In addition to these components, population size is also frequently used to approximate state power (Levy, 2008). The logic is that a "larger population represents greater capabilities" (Lemke, 2008, p. 779).<sup>4</sup>

The state that sits atop the international system's hierarchy is called the dominate state. Two prominent PTT scholars explained, "At the top of the hierarchical pyramid is the dominate nation that, for most of its tenure, is the most powerful nation in the international order. Today that nation is the United States, and its predecessor was England" (Kugler & Organski, 1989, p. 173). The dominate state has two defining characteristics. First, it has a relative advantage in the three measurements PTT uses to approximate state power: GDP, CINC score, and population size.

Secondly, the leading state organizes the *entire* international system based on its preferences. In other words, "The rules of the international system are selected by the

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<sup>2</sup> For an application of PTT and non-state actors see (Lemke, 2008)

<sup>3</sup> This is in contrast to structural realism, which posits that the international system is anarchic.

<sup>4</sup> While these are the traditional measures of power, some PTT theorists have argued that different criteria should be used; for example, Sample has argued economic figures broken down into a per capita basis should be the determinate when discussing a state's wealth (Sample, 2017). Others have tried to develop a more sophisticated measurement of a state's power based on three key indicators: extraction, reach, and allocation. Tammen and Kugler explained, "Extraction approximates the ability of governments to appropriate portions of the national output to advance public goal. Reach gauges the capacity of governments to mobilize populations under their control. Allocation evaluates the share of public revenues provided to competing national priorities" (Kugler & Tammen, 2012, p. 2). While these are possibly better measurements for national capabilities than GDP or a CINC score, the three measurements are still concerned with hard power.



dominate state and enforced by the state....[it does so by] establishing rules and norms that govern international interactions” (De Mesquita, 2013, p. 197). The dominate state does this because it believes it will receive “a disproportionate share of the spoils” produced by the system (Renshon, 2017, p. 67). In other words, the dominate state organizes the international system out of its own self-interest, which is based on its rational calculations (Gilpin, 1981).<sup>5</sup>

Below the level of the dominate state, are the great powers. As the name implies, “these are very powerful countries that cannot match one on one the power of the dominant nation, at a given point in time, but have the potential to do so at a future time” (Kugler & Organski, 1989, p. 173). In the nineteenth century, when Britain was the dominate state, France, Russia, the United States, and Germany were the great powers.

While the dominate state and the great powers populate the upper tiers of the international system, PTT also identifies middle and small powers. In the current system, some middle powers are Australia, Canada, South Korea, Indonesia, Argentina, Turkey, and Mexico (Gilley & O'Neil, 2014). States such as Vietnam, Singapore, Kuwait, Oman, and Denmark are considered small states (Almezaini & Rickli, 2016; Larsen, 2005; Tang, 2018). While middle and small powers are relatively weak compared to the dominate state and the great powers, their alignment can affect a number of facets of foreign policy; for example, the power projection capabilities of the dominate state or a great power (Selden, 2013). Furthermore, middle and small powers historically use the competition between the top tier states to their advantage. By playing the more powerful states against one another, middle and small powers are able to

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<sup>5</sup> This is in contrast to structural realism, which posits that states pursue the goal the survival because the anarchic structure of the international system compels them to (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 2010).

extract more concessions, which is in line with PTT's assumption that all states are acting out of their own self-interest (Kassab, 2017).

Overall, PTT subscribes to the foundational belief that single unit states populate the international system. The structure of the system, however, is hierarchical as these states are tiered based on their material capabilities. At the top of this theoretical pyramid, sits a dominate state that possesses a disproportionate amount of hard power. As a result of its preponderance of material capabilities, it is able to establish rules and regulations that organize inter-state interactions. The dominate state organizes the system because it believes it is in its best interest. Furthermore, lesser tier states adhere to the dominate state's prerogatives because they also believe it is in their self-interest.

### **The Process of a Power Transition**

Transitions in the international system are rare occurrences. According to PTT, the system has only transitioned once since the beginning of the 1800s – from Pax Britannica to Pax Americana.<sup>6</sup> While there has only been one power transition since the nineteenth century, PTT has been able to crystalize a clear process it believes will result in a change in international orders. This process entails one mechanism and three steps. The mechanism is the law of unequal growth rates. The steps are: the loss of the dominate state's material advantage, dissatisfaction, and then hegemonic war.

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<sup>6</sup> While Modelski identifies more than one transition in international leadership during the history of the international system, only the U.S.' replacement of Britain occurred after the 1800s (Modelski, 1978).

**A Stable Environment**

It is theorized that before the power transition process begins, a stable environment prevails. This is organized by the aforementioned dominate state. As a result of its material preponderance, the dominate state establishes “an international order with rules that direct political, economic, and military interactions” (Lemke, 1997, p. 24). In addition to establishing the rules of its international order, the dominate state provides certain benefits. These benefits can be categorized in two ways. First, the dominate state solves collective action problems, which is a public good (Snidal, 1985). For example, maintaining a stable currency and assuring the free flow of capital and trade (C. Kindleberger, 1986). In regards to public goods, it is generally assumed that lesser tier states benefit more than the dominate state because the latter bears the burden of upholding the public goods; whereas, the lesser tier states accrue the benefits while free riding (Olson, 1965).

In addition to public goods, the dominate state distributes private goods. These goods are provided to the dominate state’s allies and are used as a means to instilling stability in the dominate state’s order. Some private goods are victory in war and increased economic growth (Bussmann & Oneal, 2007). In terms of the former, a dominate state will come to the aid of an ally which is under military duress. With regards to the latter, a dominate state can establish rules which increase the flow of economic resources to its allies.

Overall, the dominate state provides the rules which govern the interactions between states, maintains the burden of upholding public goods, and distributes private goods to its allies so they support its international order. This environment, which the dominate state engineers, is stable. This stability is maintained as long as the international system is in

equilibrium as the “more powerful states in the system are satisfied with the existing territorial, political, and economic arrangements” (Gilpin, 1981, p. 11). In an ideal configuration, it is not only the dominate state that bears the burden of maintaining the international order. Lesser tier states, recognizing the benefits they accrue from the stable system, also work to maintain it.

## **Power Transition Theory’s Mechanism**

### ***The Law of Uneven Growth Rates***

PTT assumes, that after the dominate state engineers a stable environment, there is a period of relative peace. This stability is based on the hard power supremacy of the dominate state and its ability to provide public and private goods (DiCicco & Levy, 1999). Its comparative advantage is not static, however, and it is predicted that it will diminish overtime. The mechanism which leads to this decrease, and begins the power transition process, is the *law of differential growth rates* (Gilpin, 1981). As one IR scholar wrote, “the power relations among states are not permanent, and differential or uneven national capability growth rates ensure that the international distribution of power will shift” (Geller, 1996, p. 127).

What is meant by “national growth rates?” For PTT, domestic level variables provide the foundation to the international system’s balance of power. These variables are not static but in a constant state of flux because of the law of unequal growth rates. As previously mentioned, a state’s power is based on its material capabilities, which can be approximated through measurements like GDP, CINC score, and population size. Lower-level variables, however, affect

these measurements. For example, skills of the population, quality of the infrastructure, and access to capital can all affect a state's power (De Mesquita, 2013, p. 201). As a result, these domestic level variables are subject to change, which, in turn, will affect the distribution of material capabilities among states at the international level. In other words, PTT assumes that because of the law of unequal growth rates some states will witness an increase in their power as others decrease. This is because domestic level variables, which aggregate into a state's power, fluctuate over time and between states. This invariably leads to a dynamic environment where the distribution of power is constantly changing.

### **Steps of the Power Transition Process**

#### ***Loss of the Dominate States' Material Advantage***

The first step of the power transition process naturally flows from the theory's mechanism. As a result of the law of unequal growth rates, PTT expects the dominate state's advantage in material capabilities to relatively decline in comparison to other states in the system. In conjunction with the dominate state's decline, some great powers will see a relative increase in their material capabilities. In particular, there will be one great power that sees a substantial increase in its power vis-à-vis the other states in the system (Gilpin, 1981; Kugler & Organski, 1989). Overtime, this great power will accumulate enough material capabilities that it will reach near parity with the dominate state.

With the loss of the dominate state's material preponderance, it will no longer be able to supply public and private goods to the same degree. Furthermore, the great power that is

seeing its material capabilities grow the most, will start supplying its own private goods. These fluctuations in the system's balance of power, caused by the law of unequal growth rates, will destabilize the environment engineered by the dominate state.

### ***Dissatisfaction***

Currently, PTT's mechanism has been identified - the law of unequal growth rates. This mechanism leads to the first hypothesized step of the power transition process: the decline in the dominate state's material supremacy as well as the rise of a peer competitor. These factors alone do not precipitate a power transition. Rather, a second step has to transpire – *dissatisfaction*. As previously mentioned, when the dominate state has a substantial relative power advantage, it establishes a stable environment. This situation is made up of several components; for example, the rules and regulations that govern state interaction and the benefits each state accrues from the system.

The problem is that this environment is based on the distribution of power at a certain moment. Following the law of unequal growth rates, the distribution of power is going to change. This can lead to dissatisfaction as the states that are rising believe they should be accruing more benefits than the environment engineered by the dominate state is providing.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, the single state whose relative power is increasing the most, has to be dissatisfied with the stable environment for a power transition to occur. If it is satisfied, then the fastest

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<sup>7</sup> Power transition theory's second step, dissatisfaction, has been problematized. First, scholars have questioned why a state would be dissatisfied with an international order that has been increasing its relative gains (De Soysa, Oneal, & Park, 1997; Lemke & Reed, 1998). Second, it has been difficult for scholars to agree on a definition and/or measurement for satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

growing great power will further integrate itself with the existing international order (Friedberg, 2005; Ikenberry, 2008, 2012).<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, if this particular great power is dissatisfied, then it will embark on a revisionist foreign policy and develop into a *rising challenger* (Davidson, 2016; Thies & Nieman, 2017).

Once a great power embarks on a revisionist foreign policy, there are certain behaviors that are expected. First, there is an institutional component. It is argued that revisionist states are more likely to not be a part of or to leave international government organizations (IGOs) (Chan, 2004). This will negatively affect the stability of the international system as IGO membership has been shown to contribute to peace (Oneal & Russett, 2015; Russett, Oneal, & Davis, 1998). In addition to this destabilizing behavior, there is a military facet to revisionism and it is anticipated that international conflict will intensify. This is because revisionist states “will employ military force to change the status quo” (R. L. Schweller, 1994, p. 105). Additionally, the dominant state and its allies might be willing to use force in order to prevent the altering of the status quo (Miller, 2009).

### ***Hegemonic War***

As a result of a revisionist state’s lack of IGO ties, its willingness to use military force, and the possibility that states preferring the status quo will respond with their own military, PTT views war as the final step in the power transition process. Not just any war, however, but

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<sup>8</sup> There is also the notion of *power shifts*, which argue that rising states can be satisfied with the dominant state’s international order while still desiring more of a say on how the system is run (Stephen, 2012), (Schweller, 2011), (Hopewell, 2015), (Zangl et al., 2016)

a hegemonic war between the dominate state and the rising challenger (Gilpin, 1988, 2017).

Hegemonic wars are generally seen as the most destructive of wars because the aim of the conflict is so profound. As one IR scholar wrote, a hegemonic war is about “crowning a new hegemonic king and wiping the global institutional slate clean” (R. Schweller, 2014, p. 143).

While the concept of hegemonic war might seem straightforward, PTT’s articulation of this step has been less than precise. For PTT, there is a crossover period, which is particularly turbulent. This occurs when the rising challenger is narrowing the gap in material capabilities between itself and the dominate state (Goldstein, 2005, p. 83; Rousseau, 2006, p. 26). Some scholars estimate that a crossover begins when the rising challenger has 80 percent of the material capabilities of the dominate state (A. F. Organski & Kugler, 1981).

Though a crossover period has been hypothesized as being a particularly turbulent time, why it is so fraught with danger is not clear. Rather, there are two strains of thought. The first, is that the declining dominate state will be the initiator of the conflict (Geller, 1992). This is because it recognizes that the “difference in their respective growth rates places the dominate state increasingly at a disadvantage relative to the challenger” (De Mesquita, 2013, p. 203). As a result, it is in the best interest of the declining dominate state to launch a preventative war to maintain the status quo (Elman & Elman, 2003; Levy, 1987). In other words, the dominate state reasons that it is in its rational self-interest to strike the rising challenger before the latter surpasses it.

The other perspective is that the rising challenger initiates the conflict (Cashman, 2013, p. 413). The reason is the belief that as the rising challenger’s material capabilities increases, it will perceive the risk of going to war as decreasing. At a certain point, it will come to the



conclusion that the expected benefits of winning the war and establishing a new international order is higher than the perceived risk of starting the war (Gilpin, 1981; Lemke & Kugler, 1996). Though the rising challenger will eventually overtake the dominate state, it is impatient and risk accepting. This leads it to initiate a hegemonic war with the aim of accelerating the power transition and bringing the benefits it accrues from the system in line with its rising capabilities (Levy & Thompson, 2011).

### **Results of a Power Transition**

If the rising challenger wins the conflict, then it will begin to organize its own stable environment. In other words, it will establish rules and regulations, which could be markedly different than the ones espoused by the previous dominate state. Additionally, a victorious rising challenger will alter the distribution of private goods by shifting the allocation of the system's resources towards its allies and away from the former dominate state and its coalition. Lastly, as the former dominate state no longer has the means, the successful rising challenger will start to uphold the public goods that are needed for a stable international order. Once all of these elements have been satisfied, a transition has occurred.

### **Why a New Theoretical Understanding of a Power Transition is Needed**

While PTT is logically coherent and parsimonious, it has two significant flaws. First, PTT identifies two dominate powers – Great Britain and the United States. After examination, however, neither country meets the theory's requirements to be designated as such. Second,

the theory's third step – hegemonic war – and the supposition that it precipitates a power transition is not corroborated by the historical record.

### **The Problem with Power Transition Theory's Understanding of a Dominate State**

Within PTT, the dominate state is defined by two characteristics. First, it has a significant relative advantage in material capabilities. Second, the dominate state organizes the *entire* international system by establishing the rules and regulations that govern the interactions of lesser tier states. Under examination, both attributes are not assignable to the two dominate states identified by PTT – Britain and the United States.

In terms of material advantage, Britain does not qualify during its supposed period of dominance. As previously mentioned, PTT traditionally uses three measurements to approximate state power: GDP, population, and CINC score. In all three categories, Britain did not hold a significant advantage or was surpassed by one or more of the great powers during its *Pax Britannica*.

According to PTT, the UK's dominance began after its victory over Napoleonic France – around 1815 (Gilpin, 1981; Spiezio, 1990). At this time, Britain should have had a substantial relative advantage in GDP, population, and CINC score when compared to the great powers. This is simply not the case. Regarding GDP, in 1820, France and Russia had a larger economy than Britain – \$38, 434, 000 and \$37, 710, 000 compared to \$36, 232, 000.<sup>9</sup> France and Russia were also more populous than Britain – 30, 250, 000 people and 48, 600, 000, in contrast to 20,

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<sup>9</sup> All GDP figures are from Maddison, A. (2006), *The World Economy: Volume 1: A Millennial Perspective and Volume 2: Historical Statistics*, Development Centre Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris

686, 000.<sup>10</sup> The only measurement that Britain had a relative advantage when compared to France and Russia in 1820, was its CINC score. While Britain had a .3165, France and Russia had a .1233 and .1609, respectfully. The figures for 1820 are displayed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

*The GDP, Population Size, and CINC Scores for the Leading States in 1820*

	GDP	Population	CINC
UK	36, 232,000	20, 686,000	.3165
France	38, 434,000	30, 250,000	.1233
Russia	37, 710,000	48, 600,000	.1609

PTT supposes that because of differential growth rates, the dominate state's lead in the three measurements power will decrease over time. Britain, however, did not have a substantial lead over France and Russia in the beginning of its supposed period of dominance. Instead, it increased its relative advantage as the nineteenth century progressed. Despite Britain's increase in material capabilities relative to France and Russia, it was met by two new challengers – Germany and the United States. In 1870, Britain had the largest economy with a GDP of \$100, 179, 000. The US and Russia were not far behind, however, with economies measured at \$98, 374,000 and \$83, 646, 000. Though Britain's economy was the strongest, its population size of 31, 257, 000 was diminutive compared to Russia's 84, 500,000. In fact, in 1870, Britain's population was second to last, with only Germany being lower. Once again, the

<sup>10</sup> All population estimates and CINC scores are from the Correlates of War Project's National Material Capabilities (v5.0) - Singer, J. David, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey. (1972). "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965." in Bruce Russett (ed) *Peace, War, and Numbers*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 19-48.

singular measurement Britain had a substantial relative advantage in was its CINC score of .2416. France and Germany, with their scores of .1273 and .1060, were a distant second and third.<sup>11</sup> The figures for 1870 are shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2

*The GDP, Population Size, and CINC Scores for the Leading States in 1870*

	GDP	Population	CINC
UK	100, 179,000	31, 257,000	.2416
France	72, 100,000	38, 440,000	.1273
Russia	83, 646,000	84, 500,000	.0812
US	98, 374,000	39, 905,000	.0989
Prussia	71, 429,000	31, 194,000	.1060

Even though Britain was economically surpassed by the United States during the 1870s and never held a population advantage over the other great powers, it's supposed period of dominance was not challenged as PTT expects. Rather, it would have to wait until 1913 for the rise of a revisionist challenger – Wilhelmine Germany. By this time, Britain did not have a lead in any of the three measurements of state power identified by PTT. In fact, in 1913, the UK ranked third or last in all three measurements of power. Interestingly, Wilhemine Germany was also not a leading contender for most powerful state in the system.

<sup>11</sup> While army size is not a traditional measurement for PTT, it should be noted that, Britain “‘failed’ or rather chose not to transform [its economic supremacy] into hegemonic capacity” (Hobson, 2002, p. 306). Since Britain had the economic resources to create a continental style standing army, however, scholars conclude that “the gap between London and continental powerhouses such as France, Russia, and Prussia remained small” (Wohlforth, 1999, p. 21)

In terms of GDP, by 1913, the United States had an economy estimated to be around \$517, 383, 000. In contrast, Germany's was \$237, 332, 000 and the Britain's was \$224, 618, 000. As with previous years, Britain did not compare favorably with the other great powers' population sizes. On the eve of WWI, the two most populous states were Russia - 170, 900, 000 - and the United States - 97, 225, 000. Britain's was second to last – 45, 648, 000. At this time, even Britain's lead in CINC score had dissipated. The United States' score of .2199 was substantially higher than Britain's .1127 as well as Germany's .1433. Table 1.3 contains the figures for 1913.

Table 1.3

*The GDP, Population Size, and CINC Scores for the Leading States in 1913*

	GDP	Population	CINC
UK	224, 618,000	45, 648,000	.1127
France	144, 489,000	39, 770,000	.0680
Russia	232, 351,000	170, 900,000	.1161
US	517, 383,000	97, 225,000	.2199
Germany	237, 332,000	66, 978,000	.1433

Despite the fact that some scholars contend that Britain's dominance would continue until World War II, its material advantage based on PTT's measurements of power had substantially eroded by 1913 (Spiezio, 1990). It did not have the leading economy, it was not the most populous state, and its CINC score was a distant third compared to the leading states. As discussed, the 1913 figures are not an aberration or an indication of Britain's decline. Rather,

in 1820 and 1870, it did not have a substantial advantage in GDP and its population was on the lower end of the spectrum. As a result, it is justifiable to conclude that PTT's conception of a dominate state, based on a substantial relative advantage in GDP, population, and CINC score does not apply to Britain during its supposed period of dominance.

For PTT, a relative material advantage is not the only attribute of a dominate state. It also establishes and enforces rules and regulations that affect state interaction at the international level. It is possible, Britain fulfilled this criterion of a dominate state.

PTT contends that the main characteristic of Britain's era of dominance is its promulgation of a free trade economic system and the establishment of open markets (Gilpin, 1981; Stein, 1997). In other words, during Britain's period of dominance, it instilled and enforced rules and regulations that lead to a free trade regime. Under examination, this conclusion proves to be problematic. First, Britain's repeal of its Corn Laws and Navigation Acts did not lead to a global free trade regime as generally viewed (Tena-Junguito, Lampe, & Fernandes, 2012). This is because the other great powers did not reciprocate Britain's lowering of its tariffs. Other nations began to lower their tariffs only after the introduction of the "most-favored nation" clause in trade treaties. This practice began with the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty between France and Britain in 1860. This device was not a British invention. Rather, it was France that first initiated free trade talks with Britain and eventually became the "hub of a European network of free trade treaties that institutionalized the most-favored nation principle" (Hoekman & Kostecki, 2013; Lacher & Germann, 2012, p. 109). In essence, there was a free trade regime that occurred during Britain's period of dominance, but it was not the primary mover nor the state which constructed an intricate trade network – it was France.

While free trade policies were established when Britain was supposedly the dominate state, it was only for a few select decades. As mentioned, scholars argue that the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty of 1860 ushered in a free trade regime. In contrast, Britain's period of dominance theoretically began after its victory over Napoleonic France around 1815. These two dates are in conflict. Though Britain's hegemony started around 1815, the reduction in tariffs and the ushering in of a free trade regime did not begin until around forty-five years later. As a result, for the first half of Britain's period of dominance, the rules and regulations associated with it did not exist.

Furthermore, while a free trade regime did come to pass after the 1860s, it was brief and not all encompassing. First, the U.S. and Russia did not lower their tariffs and their economies remained protective throughout the century (O'rourke, 2000). Second, by the late 1870s, most of the states which were part of the free trade regime reversed course and reenacted protectionist measures. After its defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, France denounced the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty and reestablished protectionist policies (C. P. Kindleberger, 1975). As one historian put it, "Except for Britain, the Netherlands, and Belgium there was virtually no independent country in the late nineteenth century that was not protectionist" (Bryan, 2010, p. 22). This is despite the fact the Britain's period of dominance is supposed to last for at least another forty years.

Thus, the nineteenth century free trade regime supposedly enacted and upheld by Britain was neither initiated nor centered around it, did not encompass the entire international system, and lasted only for a brief period. Coupled with the earlier analysis of Britain's material capabilities based on PTT's traditional measurements of power, it is difficult to designate it as a

dominate state as it did not fulfill either of the two criteria specified by PTT. It was neither the most materially powerful state nor did it enact and enforce rules and regulations that organized the interactions of the entire international system.

Britain is not the only dominate state identified by PTT. After World War II, Britain's period of dominance ended and the U.S. became the preeminent state in the system (Kugler & Organski, 1989). In terms of material capabilities, the United States' GDP in 1950 - \$1,455,916,000 - was substantially larger than the other great powers. The USSR's and Britain's economies stood at \$510,243,00 and \$347,850,000, respectfully. Its population was a relatively close second – 152,271,000 - to the USSR's – 180, 075, 000. The U.S. also had a significant relative advantage in CINC score at the start of its period of dominance. In 1950, it had a score of .2844, while the USSR had a .1805. Table 1.4 contains the figures for 1950.

Table 1.4

*The GDP, Population Size, and CINC Scores for the Leading States in 1950*

	GDP	Population	CINC
US	1,455, 916	152, 271,000	.2844
USSR	510, 243,00	180, 075,000	.1805
UK	347, 850,000	50, 616,000	.0613
France	220, 492,000	41, 736,000	.0332

Once again, PTT contends that the dominate state's material advantage will dissipate relative to the other great powers. For the most part, this did occur during the U.S.' supposed period of dominance. By 1973, the USSR's economy was growing at a faster rate than the



United States'. It now had a GDP of \$1,513,070; compared with the US' \$3, 536, 622. The USSR's population, which was larger than the U.S.' in 1950, remained in the lead with 249,802,000 people. The US had a population of 211,909,000. Furthermore, by the 1970s, the USSR's CINC score of .1674 had surpassed the U.S.', which had a score of .1588. In corroboration with PTT's expectations, the U.S.' material advantage declined in relative terms compared to its peer competitor – the USSR. Table 1.5 displays the figures for 1973.

Table 1.5

*The GDP, Population Size, and CINC Scores for the Leading States in 1973*

	GDP	Population	CINC
US	3, 536, 622	211, 909, 000	.1588
USSR	1, 513, 070	249, 802, 000	.1674
UK	675, 941	56, 223, 000	.0276
France	683, 965	52, 131, 000	.0247

While PTT's conceptualization of hegemonic war will be discussed below, suffice it to say, the US and the USSR did not go to war as PTT predicts. Rather, after witnessing a relative decline in its material advantage, the U.S. would regain its lead by the end of the Cold War. In 1990, its economy had risen to \$5,803,200, while the USSR's stagnated at \$1,987,995. The latter's population size of 281,344,00 remained larger than the U.S.', which stood at 249,907,000. The United State, however, regained its advantage in CINC score over the USSR - .1413 and .1295, respectfully. Table 1.6 contains the figures for 1990.

Table 1.6

*The GDP, Population Size, and CINC Scores for the Leading States in 1990*

	GDP	Population	CINC
US	5, 803, 200	249,907, 000	.1413
USSR	1, 987, 995	281,344, 000	.1295
UK	944, 610	57,561, 000	.0251
France	1, 026, 491	56,735, 000	.0201
Germany	1, 264, 438	79,402,000	0.024
Japan	2, 321, 153	123,478,000	0.055

In terms of material advantage, the U.S. better fulfilled the requirements of a dominate state when compared to Britain. The U.S.' GDP was always substantially larger than its closest competitor, its population size was not significantly less than the USSR's, and its CINC score was either in the lead or was not markedly behind the leader. In contrast to PTT's suppositions, though, the U.S.' material advantage declined during its period of dominance but then witnessed a resurgence. In other words, despite the fact that differential growth rates lead to a decrease in the U.S.' hard power compared the USSR's, the same mechanism precipitated a U.S. recovery and a continuation of it's dominate position.

PTT is also problematized by the USSR's flirtation with U.S. parity during the late 1960s and 1970s. During this period, the USSR pursued a foreign policy based on détente. This runs counter to the behavioral predictions of PTT. Rather than pursuing a more revisionist grand strategy, the USSR became a status quo power. Its main concern being the stability of its Eastern European allies rather than gaining new ones (Selvage, 2009).

Though the U.S. mostly fulfilled the material requirements of a dominate state, that is not the concept's only definitional characteristic. A dominate state also organizes the *entire* international system. In that respect, the U.S. falls short. During most of its period of dominance, there was a substantial portion of the globe where the U.S. did not have the ability to establish and enforce rules and regulation.

Despite the fact that after 1945, the U.S. constructed multinational institutions such as NATO, the IMF, GATT/WTO, the World Bank, and the UN, these organizations did not form a complete world order (Ruggie, 1994). This is because some of these institutions were regional rather than global. Furthermore, Soviet Russia established its own set of political, economic, social, and military organizations. These competing sets of rules and regulations were in many ways incompatible with the U.S.' order as they rested on different philosophical foundations. The U.S. espoused and sought to promulgate liberal democratic capitalism, while Soviet Russia followed the principles of Marxist-Leninist socialism. This ideological and institutional division is what precipitated the Cold War as the U.S. and Soviet Russia both aspired to expand their institutional authority. As a result, the United States does not fulfill the second characteristic of a dominate state as it did not organize the *entire* international system. Instead, its period of supposed dominance is generally understood as an era of intense bipolar competition when both Soviet Russia and the U.S. attempted to become the preeminent world power (McMahon, 2013).

### **The Problem with Power Transition Theory's Third Step – Hegemonic War**

While PTT's mischaracterization of a dominate state is problematic, it is not the theory's only deficiency. Rather, its third step – hegemonic war – is not corroborated by the historical record. As previously mentioned, the theory argues that once a rising challenger reaches a certain position of power, war is likely to occur between the challenger and the dominate state. If the challenging state wins, a transition in international order will transpire as the newly crowned dominate state establishes and enforces its rules and regulations. This step, however, does not hold up to empirical scrutiny. Since 1800, rising challengers have not been able to win their hegemonic attempts. This is because their actions have led to a counterbalancing coalition. Additionally, the only power transition to occur since the dawn of the nineteenth century – the transition from Pax Britannica to Pax Americana – was peaceful.

According to PTT, the first half of the twentieth century was characterized by the Anglo-German rivalry (Chan, 2007). Germany's first attempt to overthrow Britain as the system's dominate state began at the end of the nineteenth century, when the former started to pursue a policy of *weltpolitik* (Hamilton & Herwig, 2003). With its new revisionist foreign policy, Germany became embroiled in a number of international crises. As a result, antagonism against German aggression developed not only in Britain but also in other great powers. When Germany finally launched its bid to become the system's dominate state in 1914, it faced a balancing coalition of Russia, France, and Britain. Furthermore, an adventurist foreign policy during the war led the United States to enter against Germany. Thus, the rising challenger's revisionist behavior leading up to the outbreak of war led to a counter balancing coalition which prevented Germany from winning said war and replacing Britain as the new dominate state.

For PTT, World War I was Germany's first attempt at replacing Britain as the system's dominate state (Lebow & Valentino, 2009). Despite the fact that Germany's attempt failed in 1914, within twenty-five years it was able to rebuild its economic and military might and launch a second bid for dominance – World War II. As in the first attempt, Germany pursued a revisionist foreign policy, which first elicited an alliance between Britain and the United States. Germany's decision to invade Russia led to the entrance of the USSR on the side of the two Western allies. Consequently, Germany lost the hegemonic war that was WWII.

Since Germany lost both of its bids to replace Britain as the system's dominate state, one cannot conclude that a challenging state's attempt to overturn the international system through hegemonic war will be successful. Instead, history shows that a rising challenger's revisionist actions will result in a counter balancing coalition that will preclude it from winning said war. As a result, PTT's third step needs to be called into question as a rising challenger will most likely not overthrow the dominate state through a hegemonic war.

To make the point stronger, PTT does conclude that Britain's dominate position was eventually eclipsed and a power transition took place. Rather than through a hegemonic war, however, the United States became the system's dominate state through a peaceful transition (Schake, 2017). Materially, the United States started to overtake Britain during the latter-half of the twentieth century. Instead of leading to conflict, which PTT predicts, both states developed a benign image of the other. This development occurred because both states characterized themselves as liberal capitalist. This ideological agreement manifested in their foreign policy decisions as both states chose to exhibit restraint and accommodation (Davidson & Sucharov, 2001)

While the United States started to materially overtake Britain during the nineteenth century, the transfer of international leadership did not take place until after World War II. Once again, this occurrence was peaceful, which goes against the tenets of PTT. There are three main reasons as to why. First, as the above paragraph indicates, the United States and Britain both developed a benign image of the other and agreed on certain ideological principles centering around liberal capitalism. Second, after WWII, Soviet Russia emerged as an increasing threat to the liberal powers, including the United States and Britain (Lascurettes, 2020). Third, the United States did not pursue a revisionist foreign policy after WWII, thus not indicating an expansionist agenda. Instead, it was actually spurred on by invitation by Britain as well as other states in the system in order to counterbalance the threat of Soviet Russia (Lundestad, 1986).

### Conclusion

According to PTT, the international system goes through a recurring process which leads to a transition in international leadership. A dominate state, defined by its relative power advantage, establishes rules and regulations that order the entire system. The law of unequal growth rates leads to a loss in the dominate state's hard power preponderance and the rise of a challenging great power. This latter state then grows dissatisfied with the system's configuration, which results in a hegemonic war.

Despite PTT's logical coherence and parsimony, it suffers from a fatal flaw. It is not corroborated by the historical record. First, its conceptualization of a dominate state – defined by a substantial relative advantage in power and its ability to organize the *entire* international system – does not withstand empirical scrutiny. Second, PTT's third step – hegemonic war – has

historically not led to a power transition. Rather, the revisionist foreign policy of a challenging great power has precipitated a coalition made up of the dominate state and certain great powers that prevents it from winning said war and gaining international leadership. In contrast, the only power transition since the nineteenth century began, occurred peacefully. As a result of these shortcomings, a new theory needs to be developed that explains how and why the international system changes.

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## **Chapter Two**

### **Polar Co-option Theory**

While the last chapter summarized and critiqued PTT, this chapter will flesh out the basic assumptions, mechanism, and steps of a newly conceptualized understanding of a power transition - Polar Co-option Theory (PCT). As will be stated, there are significant differences between PTT and PCT. Foremost among them, is their contrasting understanding of the structure of the international system. For PTT, there is a single dominate state that organizes the entire international system. In contrast, PCT contends that the system has, for the most part, been organized by a number of states – the polar powers. These states, defined by their disproportionate amount of authority, segment the system into separate territorial orders. As a result of this contrasting understanding of the structure of the international system, PCT seeks to explain how and why transitions in the number of polar powers and their requisite territorial orders occur, i.e. when the international system transitions from multipolar to bipolar and then to a unipolar configuration.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In congruence with the previous chapter, the first section fleshes out PCT's understanding of the international system and highlights how it is different from PTT. The second section identifies the theory's mechanism and the steps it predicts will result in a polar co-option.

#### **Polar Co-option Theory's Understanding of the International System**

Before the process of a polar co-option can be understood, the theory's basic assumptions need to be fleshed out. As with the section on PTT, this discussion will focus on the "entities and processes that are presupposed by" PCT (Wagner, 2016, p. 31).

For PCT, the most important actors are poles. The conception of a pole was first introduced by Morton Kaplan in his 1957 work *System and Process in International Politics* (M. A. Kaplan, 2005). As a result of this early introduction, the term has become a staple in IR theory's nomenclature. Most importantly, the notion of a pole is generally used as an ordering principle when describing the structure of the international system (Zala, 2017). A system with three or more poles is understood to be multipolar. When there are two poles, the system is bipolar. A unipolar structure has a singular pole.

For PTT, the dominate power is categorized as having a relative advantage in material capabilities – GDP, population size, and CINC score. Rather than material capabilities, PCT conceptualizes the polar powers as having a disproportionate amount of *authority* (D. Lake, 2013).<sup>1</sup> As a result of this authority, poles have institutional power (Grevi, 2009; Van Langenhove, 2010). In other words, they have the ability to establish and enforce rules and regulations that affect lesser tier states. While a dominate state establishes rules and regulations that affect the international system, PCT's understanding of poles and their effect on lesser tier states is markedly different.

First, for PTT, the dominate state affects state interactions at the international level. In contrast, PCT argues that poles establish rules and regulations that affect the *internal structure*

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<sup>1</sup> The difference between authority and material capabilities is that the former is an end in itself while the latter is a means to an end. For example, within PTT, material capabilities is used as a means to create and maintain an international order.

of lesser tier states; i.e. at the domestic level. This phenomenon is associated with imperial powers. As a result, one can equate PCT's understanding of a pole with a state that possesses an empire; for example, Britain was the pole at the center of the British Empire (Jorgensen, 2013). Russia ought to be considered a polar power during tsarist and Soviet times.

Following the literature on empires, PCT argues that poles engage in imperialistic practices. Despite this straightforward statement, imperialism is a convoluted term. If empire is the unit, then imperialism "is often used to refer to the process whereby empire is maintained and expanded" (Kiely, 2010, p. 2).<sup>2</sup> Barbara Bush identified four dimensions in which imperialism affects lesser tier states. She explained, "Imperial power relationships involve the interaction of economic, political, social, and cultural 'imperialism'" (2014, pp. 43-44). Alexander Motyl compiled a comparable list of dimensions the imperial powers affect in lesser tier states: "Core elites craft foreign and defense policy, control the armed forces, regulate the economy, process information, maintain law and order, extract resources, pass legislation, and oversee borders" (Motyl, 2001, p. 15). Similarly, Michel Doyle wrote, "The forces and institutions that drive and shape imperialism...are both economic and military, and also political, social, and cultural" (1986, p. 19). George Steinmetz's research on imperialism also highlighted the same dimensions. He stated that "earlier theorists tended to foreground political, military, or economic causal mechanisms, whereas current work integrates all these factors with attention to ideological, linguistic, psychic, and cultural processes" (2013, p. 2). As a result of these insights, we can determine that poles affect the internal composition of lesser

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<sup>2</sup> By shifting the conversation to imperialism, we bypass the important conceptual differences of informal and formal empire (M. Brown, 2009; Darwin, 2012, p. 86; Gallagher & Robinson, 1953).

tier states along four broad dimensions – politically, economically, militarily, and socio-culturally.

It needs to be stated, however, that each pole does not affect every lesser tier state in the system. That is the second important difference between PTT's conceptualization of a dominate state and PCT's notion of a pole. For PTT, the *entire* international system is organized by a single dominate state. In contrast PCT, takes the position that it is historically more accurate to describe the international system, before 1990, as populated by a number of poles, each acting as a "center of decision" for the lesser tier states they have authority over (James & Brecher, 1988).

When the international system is multipolar, there are at least three polar powers that hold authority over a substantial number of lesser tier states. A bipolar system is characterized by two poles, each with their own set of rules and regulations and requisite territorial orders. Akin to a dominate state in PTT, a unipolar order only has one pole that institutionally leads and is tied to most states around the globe.

If the international system is divided by the poles into different territorial orders, what is the theorized structure of these orders? Simply put, they are conceptualized as a hub-and-spoke configuration. To be more precise, the poles are viewed as hubs sitting in the center of their own institutional web with lesser tier states – spokes – being organized by them (Ikenberry, 2011, 2012). This theoretical governing model is not a new formulation, but the same hypothetical structure scholars use to describe empires (Galtung, 1971; Motyl, 2001).

At this point, it should be recognized that PCT's understanding of the international system is markedly different than PTT. First, for PTT, the dominate state is defined by its

material capabilities. In contrast, the polar powers are characterized by their authority. The second major difference is PTT's understanding that the entire international system is organized by a single dominate state. In contrast, PCT, takes the position that it is historically more accurate to view the system, before 1990, as segmented into different territorial orders, which are schematically akin to a hub-and-spoke structure. Poles, acting as institutional hubs because of their disproportionate amount of authority, establish and enforce rules and regulations that tie them to their spokes.

This notion that poles are institutional hubs leads to the third major difference between PCT and PTT. Within the latter, the dominate states establishes rules and regulations that affect the interaction of states at the international level. Polar co-option theory argues that the polar powers do not just affect the interactions of lesser tier states at the international level but also their domestic structure. In other words, poles are imperial powers that affect their spokes along the four dimensions of imperialism: politically, economically, militarily, and socio-culturally.

While the above conceptual differences are important, PCT's and PTT's basic assumptions can be contrasted further. This is because PCT does not adhere to PTT's assumption that self-interest propels state behavior. Rather, PCT subscribes to the assumption that states are conditioned by the anarchic structure of the international system (Waltz, 2001, 2010). To put it another way, since the system does not have an overarching authority to protect the wellbeing of states, each state realizes that it needs to fend for its own survival. This need to be self-interested, necessitated by the system's anarchy, is what produces the



repetitious conflict between states - including the polar powers (Mearsheimer, 2001). To put it succinctly, PTT is based on rational choice, whereas PCT is structural.

While there are many variants of structural realism, PCT adheres to the tenets of offensive realism. As a result, PCT takes a pessimistic approach to international relations (Tang, 2008). First, it assumes that the fear generated by the anarchic structure in the system and states' uncertainty about the future cannot be mitigated. This leads to a continuous cycle of competition as each state is always fearful that any disadvantage can potentially threaten its survival. As a result, both offensive realism and PCT argue that states ought to be power maximizers. This means that each state should continuously seek out opportunities to increase their relative material capabilities vis-a-vis the other states in the system. This is because in a self-help anarchic world, where the present and future intentions of other states are not known, it is assumed the most powerful state in the system is in the safest position (Elman, 2004; Tang, 2008).

Second, following the tenets of offensive realism, PCT subscribes to the belief that states will not only be concerned with the present, they will also have a large amount of concern about the future (Rathbun, 2007). Additionally, states will act on a negative perception of other states' future intentions. This leads to the expectation that states will not only desire to have a relative advantage in material capabilities in the present but also look to lock-in their advantage for the future. Though these assumptions are built into offensive realism, PCT needs to fill a hole within the former.

Offensive realism argues that a state should continually seek out opportunities to increase its relative advantage vis-a-vis the other states. As a result of the uncertainty about the

future, states are not only concerned about the present but desire to have their advantageous position preserved. But as Glenn Snyder pointed out, offensive realism “never explicitly” explains how a state establishes an environment where its present relative gains can be carried into the future (Snyder, 2002, p. 153). Polar co-option theory provides a supposition to this theoretical hole: *a state should seek to expand its authority over other states in order to establish institutions – i.e. rules and regulations.*

Polar co-option theory makes this assumption because institutions satisfy the goals offensive realism subscribes to states. First, a state ensures its survival by becoming the most powerful state in the system. It achieves this objective by focusing on relative gains (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 35). Based on the insights of distributive institutionalism (Krasner, 1991), it is assumed that the best method for a state to ensure unequal gains in comparison to the other states is by establishing rules and regulations that provide the fabric of a global or territorial order. According to offensive realism, a state’s objective is not just to reap unequal benefits vis-a-vis the other states in the present but also in the future (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 33). This leads PCT to turn to historical institutionalism, which posits that once institutions are created, they are very difficult to alter or displace because of lock-in effects (Fioretos, 2011; Mahoney & Thelen, 2009). As a result, institutions fulfill the two objectives stated by offensive realism: 1) a state ensures it will reap unequal gains and 2) that this advantageous situation will persist into the future.

In totality, there are four major differences between PTT’s and PCT’s understanding of the international system. First, authority rather than material power is paramount. Second, the most important actors are not single unit states, but composite imperial entities called poles.

Third, within PCT, there is not a single dominate state that organizes the *entire* international system. Rather, poles divide the system by establishing hub-and-spoke territorial orders.

Fourth, PTT argues that state action is propelled by self-interest. The dominate state and the lesser tier states agree to rules and regulations because they believe it will benefit them. Polar co-option theory, on the other hand, views the anarchic nature of the international system and the fear it produces as the prime mover of state action. The differences between PTT and PCT are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

*Differences in Power Transition Theory's and Polar Co-option Theory's Basic Assumptions*

	Most important actors	Structure of the system	State Power	What propels state action?
Power Transition Theory	Single unit states defined by their material capabilities	Single hierarchy led by a dominate state	Material capabilities	Self-interest
Polar Co-option Theory	The polar powers, which are defined by their authority over lesser tier state – or, spokes	Can be segmented into different territorial orders, each led by a polar power	Authority	Fear and uncertainty generated by the anarchic structure of the international system

### **The Process of a Polar Co-option**

Transitions in the number of poles and their requisite territorial orders do not occur often. This work identifies just five such occurrences since the start of the 1800s. In the

Western Hemisphere, the Spanish Empire collapsed, which first led to an increase in Britain's authority (first co-option) and then to the development of a U.S. order (second co-option).<sup>3</sup> In North Africa and the Middle East, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned with France and Britain gaining authority over a number of spokes (third co-option). After World War II, Britain and France lost authority over their territorial orders, which led to the expansion of the U.S.' and, to a far lesser extent, the USSR's authority (fourth co-option). With the culmination of the Cold War, the world witnessed the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the further enlargement of the U.S.' territorial order (fifth co-option).

Despite the infrequency of polar co-options, each of the above instances followed a recurring pattern of events. As a result, this work postulates that all polar co-options will follow the same mechanism and succession of steps.

### **A Stable Environment**

Before the polar co-option process begins, a stable environment prevails. This is organized by the aforementioned poles. As a result of their disproportionate amount of authority, each pole establishes its own territorial order. These orders theoretically take the form of a hub-and-spoke configuration with each polar power in the center holding institutional authority over lesser tier states - or, spokes (Ikenberry, 2012). In the literature, this hub-and-spoke configuration is analogous to how scholars describe empires (Motyl, 2001). In fact, one

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<sup>3</sup> An analysis on the decline of the Spanish Empire in the Western Hemisphere can be found in (Blaufarb, 2007).

scholar wrote that “only states, indeed empires, have been considered for ‘pole-hood’” (Jorgensen, 2013, p. 49).

States that possess an empire practice imperialism, which pertains to when one state alters the internal composition of another. For PCT, the poles, or hubs, establish rules and regulations that affect lesser-tier states, or spokes, within their territorial order. These constraints affect their spokes along four dimensions: politically, economically, militarily, and socio-culturally.

As a result, a system that is stable is divided into different territorial orders that are theoretically schematically akin to a hub-and-spoke configuration. At the center, is a pole, acting as an institutional hub. Around the pole, will be its spokes. With each pole establishing rules and regulations that affect their spokes along the four dimensions of imperialism.

There are two reasons why this divided environment is stable. First, the authority of the poles is not being questioned. This is a two-pronged phenomenon as the poles’ authority is recognized at different levels. First, each spoke is adhering to the rules and regulations espoused by their pole. Second, the poles in the system are not seeking to co-opt any of the spokes of the other polar powers and thus are not destabilizing any of the territorial orders.

The second reason why this environment is stable is the development of an informal structure as each pole calculates the fear produced by the other poles’ territorial order. Rather than balance-of-power, this conceptualization is based on balance-of-threat (Stephen M Walt, 1990; Waltz, 2010). To determine each pole’s position in the informal structure, the other poles’ geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions are taken into account (Stephen M Walt, 1990). In other words, pole X is in close proximity to pole Y and has

malign intentions. On the other hand, pole Z is not geographically close to pole Y and does not wish to cause it harm. These factors will lead pole Y to conclude that pole X produces more fear than pole Z. Consequently, pole X will place pole Y higher in its informal structure than pole Z.

## **Polar Co-option Theory's Mechanism**

### ***Variability of Authority***

After the respective poles establish their hub-and-spoke territorial orders, there is a period of relative peace. Rather than the material advantage of the dominate state, PCT's stability is based on two components. The first element is a multilevel understanding of where authority resides. At the spoke-to-pole level, lesser tier states adhere to the rules and regulations established by the pole that has authority over them. At the pole-to-pole level, there is an implicit or explicit agreement as to which spokes are part of which pole's territorial order. The second facet of PCT's stable environment is each poles' perception that none of the poles and their territorial orders should be feared given their geographical location, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions.

This environment, engineered by the polar powers, will not last as PCT predicts that one pole will lose authority over its spokes. The mechanism which leads to this decrease is the *variability of authority*. As David Lake explained, "authority is not a constant, but a variable that exists in greater or lesser degrees in different times and places" (D. A. Lake, 2009, p. 20). Consequently, PCT assumes that the stable environment engineered by the poles will come

undone because of the variability of authority, which will lead to fluctuations in each pole's ability to establish and enforce rules and regulations that affect their spokes.

In other words, the environment fostered by the poles is stable because the segmentation of the international system does not produce an extensive amount of fear in the polar powers. These segments, however, are based on a two-levelled understanding of where authority lies. As a result of PCT's sole mechanism - the variability of authority - it is predicted that this environment will become destabilized when a pole's authority over its spokes invariably declines.

### **Steps of the Polar Co-option Process**

#### ***One Pole Loses Authority Over its Spokes***

As a result of PCT's sole mechanism, the variability of authority, it is predicted that there will be fluctuations in the amount of authority each pole possesses. This leads to PCT's first hypothesized step in the polar co-option process: one pole, subsequently called a *moribund pole*, loses its authority over spokes within its territorial order. This will be a two-pronged process as a moribund pole will lose its authority at both the spoke-to-pole level and the pole-to-pole level. Polar Co-option Theory assumes these two phenomena are integrally tied together.

Once a pole's authority is declining at the spoke-to-pole level, PCT predicts certain behaviors. First, PCT views cumulative endemic unrest in the territorial order of the moribund pole as a recurring feature of the polar co-option process. This is because a pole uses its

authority to establish and enforce rules in its spokes. If a pole is losing its authority, then the spokes will begin to flout rules and regulations of the territorial order it is a part of, which will result in unrest. A pole's loss of authority can occur because of many reasons but determining that is beyond the scope of this work.<sup>4</sup> What matters for polar co-option is that the spokes, for whatever reason, no longer adhere to their pole's authority and begin to flout the rules and regulations of their territorial order.

Once a pole's authority over its spokes is in decline, its spokes' propensity to comply with its rules and regulations will go down. Rather than a singular instance of rule-breaking, however, the spokes will continuously flout the rules and regulations of its pole. This is because the phenomenon of "a pole losing its authority" is invariably tied not just to a pole losing its ability to establish rules and regulations but *also* to its inability to effectively punish spokes that break its rules (D. A. Lake, 2009, 2013).

Since a pole cannot adequately punish spokes that are breaking its rules, it is expected that the unrest within a pole's territorial order will not be suppressed but grow to an endemic level. This expectation should not be altered depending on the kind of unrest that is occurring. Scholars have identified a number of reasons why unrest takes place; for example, it can center around political issues (Su, 2015), economic concerns (Collier & Hoeffler, 1998; Smith, 2014), and/or ideational problems (Fox, 2004; Sambanis & Shayo, 2013). Furthermore, the unrest can be a grassroots uprising, or it can be an elite concern. Regardless of the reasons why and at which stratification of society it occurs, it is expected that the unrest will grow to a destabilizing level.

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<sup>4</sup> For that discussion one can look at the works of (Finnemore, 2009) and (Imerman, 2018)



This destabilization within the moribund pole's territorial order, will lead to an agreement at the pole-to-pole level that the declining pole's authority over its spokes is lessening. What is meant by the word *agreement*? It is based on the premise that authority is an intersubjective construct (Hurd, 1999). At the spoke-to-pole level, the lesser tier states consent to be part of a hierarchical relationship with a particular pole. At the pole-to-pole level, hierarchy is not involved because none of the poles are subordinate to another. Rather, the poles intersubjectively come to an agreement that a pole exercises authority over certain spokes because of strategic calculations. The other poles will agree, however, that a moribund pole's authority over its spokes is in decline when they notice the destabilization within its territorial order. In other words, the unrest within a moribund pole's spokes will alert the other poles that it has lost its authority over said spokes.

PCT stipulates that for the polar co-option process to begin, a pole needs to lose its authority over its spokes at both the spoke-to-pole and the pole-to-pole levels. The latter phenomenon is predicted to occur as a result of the endemic unrest in the moribund pole's territorial order. To put it more succinctly, the mechanism of a pole losing its authority over its spokes and the endemic unrest that is predicted to follow will lead the other poles to the intersubjective understanding that the moribund pole no longer has authority over its spokes.

### ***An Increase in the Level of Fear within the Polar Powers***

Exclusively, a pole's loss of authority does not lead to a polar co-option. A second step needs to transpire. For PCT, this second step is an increased level of *fear*. As previously mentioned, PCT adopts the basic assumptions of structural realism. This means that poles are

fearful of one another because of the anarchic structure of the international system. Within structural realism, however, there is a divide centering around the amount of fear this anarchy generates.

For defensive realists, the fear produced by the system's structure is affected by several modifiers. Some examples are: "the offense-defense balance in military technology, geographic proximity, access to raw materials, international economic pressure, regional or dyadic military balances, and the ease with which states can extract resources from conquered territory" (Taliaferro, 2001, p. 137). Based on the understanding that fear is affected by state action, defensive realists argue that states should not pursue an aggressive foreign policy because it will increase the level of fear and uncertainty of other states. In other words, defensive realism argues that a state seeking to expand to increase its power is actually doing itself a disservice since its very expansion will decrease its security through the process of alarming other states (Jervis, 1978).

In contrast, PCT adheres to the principles of offensive realism. This variant of structural realism takes a more pessimistic approach than its defensive cousin (Tang, 2008). First, it assumes that the fear generated by the anarchic structure in the system cannot be mitigated. This leads to a continuous cycle of competition as each pole is always fearful that any disadvantage can potentially threaten its survival. As a result, both offensive realism and PCT argue that the poles ought to adopt power maximizing behavior. This means that each pole should continuously seek out opportunities to increase their relative material capabilities vis-à-vis the other poles in the system. This is because in an anarchic self-help world, where the

present and future intentions of other poles are not known, it is assumed the most powerful pole in the system is in the safest position (Elman, 2004; Tang, 2008).

As stipulated by the tenets of offensive realism, once the poles recognize that the moribund pole no longer has authority over its territorial order, a polar competition for the moribund pole's spokes will begin. This competition is caused by each pole's fear that if they do not extend their authority over the moribund pole's spokes, then another pole will. Thus, giving the latter pole an advantage that could potentially threaten the other poles' survival.

Once fear has ignited a polar competition, PCT expects certain behaviors. First, it is known that the most important states do not just affect the behavior of lesser tier states but also the behavior among themselves (Jervis, 1985; Mitzen, 2013). This leads PCT to expect that once the other poles recognize that the moribund pole no longer has authority over its spokes, they will begin to exhibit signaling behaviors (Frankel, 1996). These signals are caused by each poles' desire to seem benevolent and decrease the level of fear it produces.

These communications can take the form of internal discussions or public statements. The messages will focus on the professed stability between the poles, the possibility of reinstating the moribund pole's authority over its spokes, and assurances that excessive relative gains will not be sought. Additionally, each pole will highlight the benefits of their institutional authority and stipulate that the spokes which are witnessing unrest ought to be part of their territorial order.

Overall, each pole will use these dialogues to signal that they have benign rather than selfish intentions. Their hope is to reduce the amount of fear they elicit in the other poles since they know the other polar powers can affect the polar co-optation process. In reality, however,

each pole will seek out opportunities to reap as much relative gains as they can from the moribund pole's loss of authority. This can occur by helping to further destabilize the spokes which are witnessing unrest or attempting to block other poles from extending their authority. In other words, the poles will attempt to use their signals to misrepresent their intentions by providing altruistic sentiments as they act selfishly.

Second, upon becoming aware of the unrest in the moribund pole's territorial order, the other poles will have internal deliberations pertaining to how the collapse of the moribund pole's territorial order will affect the distribution of capabilities in the present and future. Introducing a unit level feature into the structurally based theory that is PCT might seem contradictory or risky (Narizny, 2017). As offensive realism is a variant of structural realism, it assumes that a state's domestic politics can be treated as a black-box (Kapstein, 1995). The anarchic nature of the international system, the fear it produces, and the inability to know other states intentions, pressures states – regardless of domestic configuration – to enact self-help policies and seek relative gains or suffer the consequences (Donnelly, 2000). In essence, the anarchic structure of the international system cancels out domestic level variables because it exerts the same pressure and provides incentives for all states to act the same (Waltz, 2010).

States are also strategic and pay attention to their external environment. They calculate the risk and rewards of certain actions given the structural incentives particular to them (Mearsheimer, 2001). For theories that are structural, anarchy is not the only feature of the international system. The distribution of capabilities amongst the various units also creates an informal structure that structural theorists recognize (Buzan, Jones, Richard, & Little, 1993).

In other words, while the overall structure of the international system is anarchic, informal *positional* structures develop (Grieco, 1988; James, 1993). For PCT, each pole establishes an informal hierarchy based on the level of fear the other poles produce. Where one pole places the others within its informal internal structure affects its foreign policy decisions. Additionally, poles fear how changes in the system's territorial orders and the expected shift in the distribution of capabilities will affect them in the present as well as in the future. Where they have these deliberations are at the domestic level. This leads PCT to reason that once the other poles agree that a moribund pole no longer has authority over its spokes, fear will prompt the other poles to have internal discussions to develop a strategy with the hope of lessening the effects of the ensuing polar competition and ensure their survival.

These deliberations will center around perceived long-term power trends, how these trends will affect the distribution of material capabilities, and the fear these developments elicit (Taliaferro, 2004; Stephen M Walt, 1990). Specifically, there is a high likelihood that at least one, if not all of the poles, will discuss domino effect (Jervis & Snyder, 1991; Slater, 1993). Furthermore, the conclusions reached during these internal deliberations will manifest themselves in the poles' foreign policy decisions. For example, a polar power that concludes that it has the capabilities and ought to expand their authority to prevent another pole from expanding theirs, will turn into a *prospective co-opting pole*.

These internal discussions will also determine which prospective co-opting pole will be one step closer to completing the co-option process. This is because it is imperative that a prospective co-opting pole does not meet with resistance from the other poles that it cannot overcome. Since each pole is concerned with its own survival, the amount of resistance a

prospective co-opting pole will face is determined by the amount of fear it engenders in the other poles (Stephen M. Walt, 1988). If a prospective co-opting pole or the spokes it is incorporating does not pose a threat to the other poles, then it will receive little opposition from them. To determine whether a prospective co-opting pole should be feared, the other poles will consider the pole's geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions (Stephen M Walt, 1990). If a pole determines that a prospective co-opting pole's actions are not to be feared, for example because the spokes the latter is trying to co-opt are geographically distant, then the pole will act as a *status quo pole*, which means it is not seeking to co-opt the spokes of the moribund pole. This, nevertheless, does not preclude a status quo-pole from attempting to influence the co-option process or gain concessions for itself.

To put the argumentation another way, one of the features of the polar co-option process is that the other poles will internally deliberate how the dissolution of the moribund pole's territorial order will affect the distribution of power in the present but also in the future. This, in turn, affects their informal positional hierarchy based on varying levels of fear. It did not say these deliberations will lead the other poles to oppose the prospective co-opting pole with the most material capabilities. To the contrary, the other poles will welcome the shift in the relative distribution of power, if it is shifting towards the prospective co-opting pole that elicits the least amount of fear compared to the other prospective co-opting pole.

### ***The Prospective Co-opting Pole tries to Co-opt Spokes***

If the other poles do not fear a prospective co-opting pole, then that pole is one step closer to completing the co-option process. It just needs to satisfy the final step – co-option.

The reason why a prospective co-opting pole would want to co-opt spokes is their *uncertainty about the future*. As previously mentioned, a pole does not just fear the distribution of material capabilities in the present but also possesses a great amount of uncertainty about the future. As a result, a pole will desire to lock-in their relative gains. Given the assumptions of distributive and historical institutionalism, it is believed that the best way for a pole to lock-in an advantageous situation is by establishing institutions – i.e. rules and regulations. As a result, during this stage in the polar co-optation process, a prospective co-opting pole will seek to expand its authority so it can establish rules and regulations that affect the internal composition of spokes that were previously tied to a moribund pole.

There are three ways a pole can co-opt spokes. These pathways towards co-optation correspond with the “ideal-type mechanisms of social control” (Hurd, 1999, p. 379). There are three reasons why entities adhere to rules established by a hierarchical authority. The reasons are legitimacy, incentives, and coercion.

Despite the term “legitimacy” being ubiquitous in IR, it still needs to be conceptually clarified (Steffek, 2007). At its core, it refers to a population’s belief that their ruler’s judgment is favorable or in their best interest (Mulligan, 2006). This conceptualization captures an important point about legitimacy. It is a relational or social phenomenon (Finnemore, 2009). Legitimacy cannot be forced; it can only be earned through a population’s approval of its ruler’s policies. The foundation for this approval does not matter as there are many different causes of legitimacy (Gilley, 2006). What matters for PCT, is a prospective co-opting pole can use its legitimacy to co-opt spokes of a moribund pole. In other words, if the spokes of a moribund

pole view a prospective co-opting pole's rules and regulations to be legitimate, then they will not oppose joining the prospective co-opting pole's territorial order.

When legitimacy is not enough, a prospective co-opting pole can use incentives to appeal to the self-interest of the spokes it wants to co-opt. During a "rewards" based co-optation, the prospective co-opting pole grants certain institutional privileges to the spokes it is attempting to co-opt (Kruck & Zangl, 2019; Selznick, 1980). In the nineteenth century, this usually entailed elevating a particular social group or family. In modern times, a prospective co-opting pole can use the tactic of "selective accommodations." For instance, appeasement, compensation, or endorsement (Crawford, 2011). In military terms, a prospective co-opting pole can use its resources to support an embattled state or a revolutionary group who is trying to gain power (David, 1991). In economic terms, a co-opting pole can provide incentives – i.e. financial assistance or grant preferential trade terms – to a spoke it hopes will join its territorial order and accept its authority.

If a spoke is not willing to be co-opted by a prospective co-opting pole, the latter can pursue coercive measures. These policies can either be in the military or economic realms. In terms of the former, a prospective co-opting pole can take military coercive action to extend its authority over a spoke. Examples of coercive military measures, are conducting war or other operations, mobilizing troops, and building up arms (Slantchev, 2005, p. 533). Economic coercion can also be used by a co-opting pole to gain authority over the spokes of a moribund pole. Economic coercion is generally defined "as the threat or act by a sender government or governments to disrupt economic exchange with the target state" (Drezner, 2003, p. 643). While this definition focuses on the disruption of economic exchange between the sender and



target state, a definition of economic coercion should include the ability for a sender government to disrupt the economic exchange between a target state and other states in the system. Some examples of economic coercion are sanctions and threatening or carrying out operations that impede trade.

It needs to be stated that the third step of the polar co-option process is not a given. A targeted spoke can resist a prospective co-opting pole. In other words, it rejects the pole’s rules and regulations and refuses to adhere to them and join the pole’s territorial order. During these instances, the pole’s authority is not seen as legitimate nor does it have enough material capabilities to either induce or force the spoke into accepting its authority. This means a prospective co-opting pole will fail to complete the co-option process and transition into a co-opting pole. Consequently, for a prospective co-opting pole to become a co-opting pole, it needs to be able to overcome any resistance that develops from either the other polar powers or the spokes it is seeking to co-opt.

If the prospective co-opting pole is able to transition to a co-opting pole and gain authority over the spokes of the moribund pole, the polar co-option process is complete. It should be evident that the polar co-option process is markedly different than the process of a power transition. To make this contrast clearer, Table 2.2 highlights the differences between the power transition process and the polar co-option process.

Table 2.2

*Differences Between the Power Transition Process and the Polar Co-option Process*

	Power Transition Theory	Polar Co-option Theory
Mechanism	Law of unequal growth rates	Variability of authority

First Step	Dominate power loses its material advantage	A pole loses authority over spokes
Second Step	Dissatisfaction	Fear
Third Step	Hegemonic war	Co-option

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### Results of a Polar Co-option

After a prospective co-opting pole is able to establish its authority over the spokes of a moribund pole, it transitions into a *co-opting pole*. Once the polar co-option process is complete, PCT supposes certain results that affect the international system. First, PCT expects there to be a reduction in the number of poles. This is a result of the theory's understanding of the polar powers; if a pole loses authority over its spokes, then it no longer qualifies as a pole. In other words, the polar co-option process results in a systemic transition in the system's polar structure. While the United States rose from a great power to a pole, most co-options have resulted in the consolidation in the number of polar powers.

The international system has gone from multipolar to bipolar and then to unipolar. International relations theory, however, has not provided an adequate answer as to how and why the polar structure of the international system transitions.<sup>5</sup> For example, while discussing the shift from bipolarity to unipolarity, William Wohlforth wrote that there were two poles in 1990, but now simply "One is gone. No new pole has appeared: 2-1=1. The system is unipolar"

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<sup>5</sup> The singular work I have been able to find which that provides an explanation of how unipolarity developed can be found here (Cederman, 1994).

(Wohlforth, 1999, p. 10). Polar co-option can fill this void in the literature. It should be seen as the main mechanism for which systemic structural changes have occurred. In other words, the international system has gone from multipolar to unipolar because there has been a succession of polar co-options, which has reduced the number of poles in the system.

Second, part of the logic of this work has been based on the understanding that a pole and its territorial order are intertwined. A state cannot be a pole without authority over a territorial order and the latter cannot be without the former. Consequently, since the most likely result of a polar co-option is the elimination of a pole, it most follow that there is also a reduction in the number of territorial orders.

Additionally, with the decline in the number of territorial orders there will be an enlargement of the co-opting pole's hub-and-spoke configuration. To move away from theory, the United States has been part of four polar co-options, which has made it the unipolar power. In becoming the unipole, it has aided in the creation of democratic governments around the world and increased the number of states that are integrated into its global capitalist order (Biersteker, 1993; Narizny, 2012). In other words, the reason why we "reached the end of history" is because the United States' territorial order outcompeted all of its competitors and co-opted the majority of spokes that were previously a part of territorial orders organized by moribund poles (Fukuyama, 2006).

### **Conclusion**

Polar co-option theory seeks to explain how the structure of the international system transitions from one polar structure to another, i.e. from multipolarity to bipolarity and then to

unipolarity. This is a significant departure from traditional PTT, which assumes that the entire system is governed by a single dominate state.

The two theory's contrasting understanding of the structure of the international system is not their only difference. While a thorough rehashing is not needed, it is important to highlight the other significant points of conflict between the two theories. First, PTT argues that the main mechanism of international change is the law of unequal growth rates. Polar co-option theory, on the other hand, views the variability of authority as the sole mechanism of the polar co-option process. Second, for PTT, change in the international system is caused by one state's dissatisfaction, which leads it to challenge the existing international order. Rather than self-interest, PCT believes the anarchic structure of the international system and the fear it produces directs the actions of poles. Once a moribund pole loses its authority over its spokes, the other polar powers will try to co-opt said spokes because they fear the consequences of another pole extending its authority.

As previously discussed, most polar co-options have led to a reduction in the number of polar powers. This has produced the unipolar structure that has been in place since the early 1990's. Recently, however, the decline of the United States and the rise of China, as well as other non-traditional powers, has precipitated a discussion on whether the system is transitioning towards a bipolar or multipolar configuration. Even though minor alterations will be needed, as there are no additional polar powers outside of the United States, it is believed that PCT can provide an answer to this question. Rather than analyzing the actions of a number of poles, the foreign policy decisions of either regional or global great powers will have to be used. In other words, while the United States' actions will be paramount, the foreign policy

decisions of states like Japan, India, Turkey, South Korea, Britain, Germany, France, and Russia need to be taken into account when discussing whether China or another state is gaining authority over enough spokes to be considered a pole.

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## **Chapter Three**

### **A Pole's Effect on the Internal Structure of its Spokes**

In the last chapter, PCT was fleshed out. Importantly, four foundational conceptual differences between it and PTT were identified. One of the most significant was the difference between a dominate state's effect on lesser tier states in comparison to a pole's effect on its spokes. While the former exclusively alters interactions at the system level, the latter changes the structure of their spokes at the domestic level.

Since this argumentation is such a significant departure from traditional PTT, this chapter's aim will be to provide more specificity to this process. To put the argumentation in succinct terms: when a pole has authority over a lesser tier state, it will alter that state's internal structure to make it more ideologically aligned with itself. For instance, if a pole is politically liberal, it will instill politically liberal institutions within its spokes. In the military realm, a pole will alter the internal security architect of its spokes to make them more compatible with its own security institutions.

The first section will briefly discuss PTT's understanding of a dominate state and how it affects state interaction. The second section fleshes out PCT's conceptualization of the polar powers. To provide more specificity to the concept, several polar attributes will be listed and explained. These polar characteristics will correspond to the rules and regulations poles establish that alter their spokes along the four dimensions of imperialism.

#### **How Power Transition Theory's Dominate State affects State Interaction**

Like most IR theories, PTT's main unit of analysis and object of observation are single unit states (D. Lake, 2008). This is because the theory adheres to the narrative that the Peace of Westphalia led to the *sovereign state system* (Gerard & Croeser, 2013; Kugler & Lemke, 1996). What does the "sovereign state system" mean? To understand the term, the concept of sovereignty has to be defined. While sovereignty has multiple meanings, it is generally understood as a state's juridical equality and right to determine its internal policies (Krasner, 2009, p. 179). As Wendt and Friedheim explained, the sovereign state system is based on the notion that each state has "juridical equality...[since the] institution of sovereignty constitutes all states in the system with equal rights of exclusive territorial authority" (1995, p. 689). As a result, we can depict the international system of PTT as composed of single unit states, whose boundaries are codified and do not overlap.<sup>1</sup> These units, when they do interact, do so with the understanding that each are "free, equal and independent entities" (Simpson, 2004, p. 95).

PTT's statist ontology corresponds with its assumptions on how international relations unfold (De Carvalho, Leira, & Hobson, 2011). A dominate power's international order is based on each state choosing to abide by a set of rules and regulations. These states do so either because they are ideologically aligned with the rules and regulations or they desire to reap the private goods that the dominate state provides. Peace is attributed to the notion that all states are "satisfied" rather than a *coerced* ideologically uniformity (W. Kim, 1992). In other words, PTT's understanding that the international system is made up of sovereign states that do not interfere with each other's internal affairs, necessitates a self-interest-based mechanism to

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, the international system is highly interdependent in reality (Keohane & Nye, 1977) but we are discussing ideal types at the moment.

explain why lesser tier states enter a hierarchical relationship with a dominate state and why that system is stable.

Despite the concept of sovereignty precluding PTT from arguing that a dominate state affects the internal structure of states, the theory does possess an organizing logic. As a result of a dominate state's preponderance of material capabilities, it rewards states that follow its rules and regulations. This ability allows it to affect the interactions of states at the *international level* (Tammen et al., 2016 [italics added]). As one prominent power transition theorist wrote, "The dominate country establishes an international order with rules that direct political, economic, diplomatic and military interactions" (Lemke, 1997, p. 24).

These rules and regulations that the dominate state establishes are based on its ideological predisposition. Since sovereignty precludes it from forcibly altering the internal structure of states, it allies and privileges states that already share its ideologically inclinations. If a lesser tier state wants to change its internal structure to join the dominate state's international order, it does so through its own sovereign free will because it wants to reap the benefits. For example, after World War Two, the U.S. established a liberal capitalist international order that provided private goods to states that were aligned with it or states that willfully changed their domestic structure (Tammen et al., 2016).

### **How Polar Co-optation Theory's Polar Powers Affect the Internal Structure of their Spokes**

In contrast to PTT's dominate state, PCT focuses on the polar powers and their effect on the internal structure of its spokes. The concept of a pole has had a torrid historiography with scholars debating its definability (Buzan & Waeber, 2003; Oren, 2016; William R Thompson,

1986; R. H. Wagner, 1993). There are two schools of thought. The first, is that a pole is a single unit state defined by its material capabilities, which makes it akin to a dominate state (Mansfield, 1993; Mearsheimer, 2001; Randall L Schweller, 1998; Waltz, 2010).

The second, which PCT subscribes to, focuses on the understanding that the polar powers possess a disproportionate amount of authority (Grevi, 2009; Van Langenhove, 2010; Wivel & Mouritzen, 2004). This means that poles function as “centers of decision” (James & Brecher, 1988). As a result of this role, the polar powers have a polarizing effect as each pole is the center of decision for a number of spokes (De Keersmaeker, 2016; Rapkin, Thompson, & Christopherson, 1979).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the territorial order poles establish are theorized as hub-and-spoke configurations. This entails the polar powers being in the center surrounded by the lesser-tier states it has authority over (Ikenberry, 2011, 2012a). This is the same schematic that scholars use to discuss empires (Galtung, 1971; Hafner-Burton et al., 2009; Motyl, 2001; Tilly, 1997). Consequently, PCT takes the perspective that the polar powers are states that possess an empire. Furthermore, the polar powers practice imperialism the same way imperial states have throughout history (Burbank & Cooper, 2010). It was identified that imperialism occurs within four dimensions: politically, militarily, socio-culturally, and economically (Bush, 2014; Doyle, 1986; Steinmetz, 2013).

To better flesh out PCT's conceptualization of the polar powers, a number of *polar attributes* will be listed and expounded upon (Gerring, 2011). The aim is to differentiate the polar powers from normal states. In other words, not all states are poles; only a state that fulfills certain qualities ought to be considered a pole. In correspondence with the argument

above, these characteristics are constraints that affect the internal structure of lesser tier states. *To put it succinctly, a state is a pole if it establishes rules and regulations that affect the internal policies of lesser tier states in the four categories of imperialism: political, military, economic, and socio-cultural.* The main objective of the polar powers is to alter their spokes to such a degree that they are all ideologically aligned. In other words, if a polar power is economically capitalist then it will instill free trade institutions within its spokes.

To give empirical weight to the argumentation, the French, British, Tsarist, Soviet, and U.S. empires will be used as examples. Table 3.1 provides a list, albeit not an exhaustive one, of the attributes a state needs to satisfy to be considered a pole.

Table 3.1

*Examples of Polar Attributes in the Political, Economic, Security, and Socio-cultural Realms*

Political	Economic	Security	Socio-cultural
Puts rules on who can hold office	Puts rules on who the spokes can trade with	Puts rules on who can hold leadership positions	Puts rules on behavior which is deemed inappropriate
Puts rules on political representation	Puts rules on what the spokes can produce	Puts rules on the military equipment their spokes can operate by providing equipment to their spokes	Puts rules on ideas which are deemed inappropriate
Puts rules on who makes up the electorate	Puts rules on tariff policies within their spokes stationing troops on spoke territory	Puts rules on the security policies of their spokes by	Puts rules on language

**Politically**

In the political realm, each pole constructs rules and regulations - the polar attributes - which alter their spokes' domestic political system. For example, one polar attribute is a pole's ability to establish constraints over who can hold political office in its spokes. A second is a pole's ability to determine its spoke's electorate. From a broad perspective, the rules the polar powers establish in the political realm will fall along a spectrum with "liberal" on one side and "authoritarian" on the other. Since the polar powers seek to make their spokes' internal structure ideologically aligned with themselves, the spoke's political system will correspond with where their pole falls within this political spectrum.

On the authoritarian side, poles impose highly restrictive rules on the governing apparatuses of their spokes. In contrast, if a liberal scheme is established, the spokes have more autonomy and a higher degree of political representation (Go, 2011). Either way, the poles provide the rules and regulations which affect the internal structure of their spokes' political structure. This is because even if a representative system is in place, it was established because the polar power authorized it. We will now turn to empirical examples to flesh out the above points.

The political constraints established by France were on the authoritarian side of the spectrum (Cooley, 2005; Lewis, 2013; Wucherpfennig, Hunziker, & Cederman, 2016, p. 885). This meant there was only "a single legal order, defined by the 'civilized' laws of Europe. No 'native' institutions would be recognized" (Mamdani, 1996, p. 16). The colonial minister resided in Paris and was responsible for the colonial governor-generals. In turn, the latter group controlled the budgets of the governors of individual colonies. Paris also had sole authority over

colonial legislation (Page, 2003). Ultimately, France was a pole because it determined who could hold political office in its spokes and what body held legislative prerogative.

After World War II, Soviet Russia established authoritarian political constraints in its Eastern European spokes. The main mechanism of control was the Communist Party since local leaders had to be a member. As Dominic Lieven explained, "The Soviet federal constitution worked only because it was in part mere façade. Real power lay not with state institutions but with the Communist Party, which was a centralized and Moscow-dominated institution" (Lieven, 2002, p. 326). Through the party, Soviet Russia satisfied a number of political polar characteristics. For example, after WWII, Stalin pursued a number of show trials which purged the ranks of Communist Party members and local leaders whose loyalty to Moscow was in question (A. Brown, 2009). In other words, Russia constrained who could hold political office in its spokes. By determining who could be party members, Russia also satisfied the political polar attribute of constraining its spoke's electorate. This is because the party's congress held legislative prerogative. Furthermore, by only allowing Communist Party members to hold office and vote, the Soviets constrained who held political representation.

Not all poles establish authoritarian political rules and regulations. On the more liberal side of the spectrum, Britain constructed a territorial order that gave more power to indigenous figures and institutions. Britain, nevertheless, maintained its authority by "identifying and cultivating local chiefs and other hereditary rulers, and then using them as intermediaries in colonial governance" (Sharkey, 2013, p. 155). As long as corroboration with Britain's policies was maintained, the political constraints the pole imposed did not prohibit local power structures and costumes. This led to more indigenous representation in the political process



(Go, 2011). As a result, Britain should be considered a pole because it established rules and regulations constraining who could hold office and determining how much power said individuals had. While Britain's political constraints were on the more liberal side, they have not been the only pole to establish inclusive political rules within their spokes.

Additionally, the United States has been instilling liberal institutions within its spokes since the end of the nineteenth century (Carothers, 2013). After the Spanish American War, the U.S attempted to foster democracies in Cuba and the Philippines. During the Woodrow Wilson administration, the president "ordered the occupation of Veracruz, Mexico, in 1914, the intervention in Haiti in 1915, and the takeover of the Dominican Republic in 1916, he justified his actions as part of an effort to bring constitutional democracy to Latin America" (T. Smith, 2012, p. 5). During the Cold War, the U.S. partially promoted the decolonization movement and freedom of self-governance. As with all territorial orders, however, the United States imposed constraints on who could hold political office. If a democratically elected government was perceived as not being in corroboration with the liberal international order the U.S. was constructing, it could be toppled by a coup (L. A. O'Rourke, 2018).

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. continued to promote liberal values and, in some ways, it became the center piece of its foreign policy. During the Clinton administration, the U.S espoused a new grand strategy. Rather than containment, which was central to U.S. Cold War planning, Clinton's policy was dubbed "enlargement." Anthony Lake, Clinton's national security advisor, stipulated the four objectives of enlargement: "1) to 'strengthen the community of market democracies'; 2) to 'foster and consolidate new democracies...where possible'; 3) to 'counter the aggression and support liberalization of states hostile to

democracy'; 4) to 'help democracy...take root in regions of greatest humanitarian concern'" (Brinkley, 1997, p. 116).

The administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama continued Clinton's policy of democracy promotion. After September 11, 2001, George Bush began the "war on terror." For the war to succeed, "Bush insisted, the ultimate goal of U.S. strategy must be to spread democracy everywhere" (Gaddis, 2002, p. 53). Obama initially shied away from his predecessors' foreign policy agenda (Lindsay, 2011). After being accused of abandoning democracy promotion, however, the Obama administration started to actively pursue it. Thomas Carothers explains, "the Obama team moved towards a more public, active engagement on democracy issues as a response to the minor firestorm of criticism that their initial stepping back set off in the Washington policy community" (2013, p. 202).

Historically and currently, poles establish rules and regulations that affect the internal composition of their spokes political system. These polar attributes include, but are not limited to, constraining who can hold political office in their spokes, the makeup of their electorate, and holding exclusive rights on legislation. While all the polar powers impose political constraints on their spokes, the institutions themselves can range from liberal to authoritarian. The French, tsarist and Soviet empires constructed territorial orders that were on the authoritarian side. On the other hand, Britain and the U.S. have installed liberal democratic political rules that have altered the internal political structures of their spokes.

## **Economic**

In the economic realm, poles establish rules and regulations that alter their spoke's economic system. These constraints should be considered polar attributes in the economic realm. For example, a pole establishes restrictions that affect its spokes' trade policies and mode of production. In other words, poles constrain who their spokes can trade with and what they can produce. As in the political realm, the rules and regulations established by the polar powers fall within a spectrum. On one side, a pole's economic rules can be protectionist/statist; on the other end, they can be liberal/capitalist. These opposing economic philosophies have been in competition since Adam Smith published his *Wealth of Nations* (A. Smith & McCulloch, 1838). The economist Bill Dunn wrote, "debates about international trade too often and too easily regress to a simplistic antagonism for or against free trade, or between market and state-led strategies" (2015, p. 2). Even though there are two ends to the economic spectrum, three main ideologies have developed. On the more protectionist/statist side, there is mercantilism, neomercantilism, and Marxist-Leninism. On the free trade end, there is economic liberalism/capitalism. As with the political realm, poles will establish rules and regulations with the goal of making their spokes ideologically similar to themselves. Meaning, if a pole is capitalist, it will institute liberal/capitalist constraints on its spokes' economic system.

As stated above, mercantilism (mid-seventeenth to the early-nineteenth century), neomercantilism (late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century), and Marxist-Leninism are economic ideologies that emphasize protectionism and state lead initiatives. Mercantilism "was the policy of Europe's Great Powers as they expanded their empires, and was the universal framework by which international trade was understood" (Langdana & Murphy, 2016, p. 8).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a critique of mercantilism see (Pincus, 2012)

States that espoused a mercantilist ideology argued that economic gain was a zero-sum game, which meant, when one nation gained another nation lost (D'Anieri, 2011, p. 256; Parboteeah & Cullen, 2017).

As a result, poles that espoused a neomercantilist economic ideology created economic constraints that established exclusive colonial markets. In other words, the polar powers used their spokes "as suppliers of raw materials and markets for manufactures of the 'mother country' alone" (Findlay & O'rourke, 2009, p. 228). In most cases, colonies were prohibited from processing raw materials themselves (Mukherjee & Chakrabarti, 2016, p. 22; Sargent, 2008, p. 34; Semmel, 2004, p. 19). The most famous mercantilist constraints were Britain's Navigation Acts. These laws, which were first codified in 1651 and weren't repealed until 1849, created a "complex system of protection and regulation," especially for British shipping (Milne, 2000, p. 147). These acts stipulated "that all commodity trade between England [later Britain] and its colonies should be conducted in English ships operated by English seamen sailing between English ports...This means that European goods could not be imported directly into the colonies. It also meant that British and colonial shipping has a monopoly on carrying trade within the empire...[One of the primary aims of the acts were to] ensure that the profits of trade, plus shipping and harbor dues, benefitted Britain rather than rival foreign centres of trade" (Morgan, 2002, p. 168).

While Britain is usually cited as the prime example of a mercantilist economy, all the imperial powers "embodied these ideas in laws and regulations aimed at making their colonies complement and support the economy of the" mother country (Anderson, 2014, p. 294). By establishing mercantilist rules and regulations, the polar powers of the early nineteenth century

satisfied a number of polar attributes in the economic realm. Most importantly, they restricted the trade partners of their spokes, which affected the latter's internal markets. In addition to prohibiting certain trade partners, the poles instituted constraints on how trade can be conducted, i.e. on which ships goods can be transported on. This rule and regulation affected the domestic industries of the spokes.

From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, most of the poles subscribed to a form of economic protectionism that has been dubbed neomercantilism. While similar to mercantilism, there are important differences between the two. Bjorn Hettne explained, the old mercantilism was "articulated within a national space and took the national interest more or less for granted;" on the other hand, neomercantilism related "to a global space, that is, the overall shape of the international political economy" (2012, p. 252). Hettne continued, neomercantilism "transcends the nation-state logic in arguing for a segmented world system, consisting of self-sufficient blocs of large scale and specialized production, on the one hand, without falling prey to the anarchy of the world market" (ibid). In other words, the polar powers established rules and regulations that prevented their spokes from trading with whomever they wanted and from producing certain products. Thus, creating a segmented world system of "self-sufficient" blocs based on "specialized production."

In the 1870s, France began to instill neomercantilist policies in the spokes they had authority over in an attempt to reverse its economic decline. During the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, France lost control of the industrious province of Alsace-Lorraine. While still behind Britain, the country began to lose their relative advantage over Germany and the United States. France was also significantly affected by the economic crises of 1873 and 1881 (Wesseling,

2001, p. 65). As a result, France adopted the mindset that if their products could not contend with “British and German competition in Europe, perhaps with more governmental support they might secure new markets in Africa. Beginning in 1877, through discriminatory tariffs and increasing contact with inland tribes, France initiated a concerted effort to restrict British trade along the West African coast” (Copeland, 2014, p. 391). Overall, France should be considered a pole because it established economic constraints that prohibited their spokes from trading with a state it deemed a competitor.

Tsarist Russia also adopted protectionist measures during the late 1870s. Amid tensions with the Ottomans, an edict was issued in late 1876, which required customs duties to be paid in gold currency. With the “current value of the ruble, that meant a 30-percent increase in duties and a turn toward protectionism in Russian tariff policy” (Polunov, Owen, & Zakharova, 2015, p. 137). There were three motivations for why such constraints were adopted by the Tsars: to support Russian industry, increase State revenue, and the creation of a favorable balance of trade (Seton-Watson, 2017, p. 119). In other words, Russia satisfied the polar attribute of constraining which states its spokes could trade with. Its aim being to centralize trade towards itself to increase state revenue.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, Soviet Russia imposed Marxist-Leninist state led economic rules and regulations in its spokes. One Soviet historian emphasized that “the defining feature of the socialist economy was the *centralized, planned, and statist* nature of its organization and administration” (Sandle, 2003, p. 30 [italics in original]). Dominic Lieven explained the difference between earlier Tsarist attempts to influence the economy and the Soviet Union’s centrally planned administration: “In 1914 the state owned 8.3 per cent of the

empire's wealth and 10 per cent of its industry. The contrast between the tsarist economy, especially in its last decades, and Soviet state ownership of all factories, farms, and shops is immense...the tsarist regime could only encourage Russia's economic development within the context of private ownership of Russia's assets...There was a world of difference between this and running the centrally planned and state-owed Soviet economy" (Lieven, 2002, p. 303). Consequently, Soviet Russia should be considered a pole because it controlled its spokes' mode of production, which affected what they could produce and their supply of goods.

Mercantilist, neomercantilist, and Marxist-Leninist economies are regarded as statist/protectionist economic systems. Each of the ideologies led the polar powers to establish rules and regulations in their spokes which constrained the latter's freedom of trade and modes of production. On the other end of the spectrum, there have been poles that have instilled rules and regulations that are more liberal/capitalist and established a free trade market economy in their spokes.

While Britain was a neomercantilist pole from the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, it altered its policies and became a staunch advocate of free trade. Between 1832 and 1867, the Reform Acts dismantled Britain's neomercantilist constraints. One historian wrote that after the enactment of these rules, "Britain launched herself upon an unprecedented course, seeking to lead the world towards a peaceful order based on free commercial exchange between individuals and nations" (Howe, 1997, p. 1). When other states moved towards mercantilist policies during the latter half of the nineteenth century, "the ideal of a free trade empire persisted [in Britain]...Only in 1931, in conditions of national crisis, did the

Chamberlainite alternative of tariff reform and imperial preference overturn this deeply rooted political consensus” (Ibid).

As a result of Britain’s adherence to free trade, their spokes were not as restricted as lesser tier states that were part of a neomercantilist pole’s territorial order. Britain’s ideological adherence led it to lower tariffs in its spokes, thus making them open to imports from other states, which affected the spokes’ internal markets. For example, “India, the largest market, was served almost exclusively by English mills, but was in fact open to all countries, the only barrier being a 3.5 percent revenue tariff on imports” (Clark, 2008, p. 315). Even though Britain did not establish constraints on which states their spokes could trade with, they did constrain their spokes’ modes of production. The pole was able to do this by the “expansion of both plantations and peasant production backed up by imported capital and infrastructure” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 60). Consequently, Britain was a pole because it established rules and regulations that prevented its spokes from raising their tariff rates, which affected the internal structure of its spokes’ markets. Furthermore, Britain instituted constraints that affected what kind of goods its spokes could produce.

In addition to Britain, the United States has espoused a free trade economic ideology. After 1945, it instilled these principles in the institutions it established – the IMF, World Bank, and World Trade Organization. These institutions hold tremendous weight in the international system and impose a number of constraints on lesser tier states. If a country wants to receive funds from either the World Bank or IMF, “it opens up a number of opportunities for the institutions and their powerful government members to wield influence through penalties, conditionality, and advice” (Woods, 2006, p. 70). The principles of the World Trade



Organization provide the legal framework through which international trade is conducted. It possesses an effective method to settle disputes and has an extensive jurisprudence (Davey, 2012). In other words, through the World Bank, IMF, and WTO the United States is able to constrain the trade policies of its spokes and their modes of production.

Economically, poles establish rules and regulations that altered the internal structure of their spokes. These restrictions should be categorized as attributes of polar status within the economic realm. For example, a pole can constrain its spokes from producing certain products. A second characteristic is a pole's authority over their spokes' mode of production. While these are two economic constraints, the institutions the poles instill in their spokes can be understood through a spectrum with protectionist/statist on one end and free trade on the other.

Protectionist/statist poles, like France, Tsarist Russia, and Soviet Russia, have established constraints which restricted access to markets they had authority over and prevented their spokes from producing certain products. In contrast, poles like Britain and the U.S have instilled rules and regulations which are more on the free trade end of the spectrum. They, nevertheless, established rules and regulations that affected their spokes' trade policies and their mode of production.

## **Security**

Poles are different from normal states because they display certain attributes in the military realm. Specifically, they establish rules and regulations that affect the internal security architecture of their spokes. One such example, is a pole's ability to instill constraints that

restrict who can hold military leadership positions in its spokes. Secondly, the polar powers constrain their spokes by stationing troops in the latter's territory (D. A. Lake, 2009, p. 67). Third, poles provide their spokes with military equipment which affects their spokes' ability to buy hardware from other states as a result of compatibility and interoperability requirements.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Britain's main imperial force was the Indian Army. One historian wrote, "The Indian Army was a core element of the complex, but interlinking, structures maintained to provide for the Empire's local, regional, and international security through the use of indigenous military formations" (A. Jackson, 2016, p. 10). Troops from the Indian Army participated "in fifteen British colonial wars, including those in China, Malaya, Egypt, Sudan, Burma, East Africa, and Tibet" (Buzan & Lawson, 2015, p. 182). Though the Indian Army was mainly composed of indigenous soldiers, all of the commissioned officers were British (Roy, 2016, p. 18). Thus, Britain satisfied the polar attribute of constraining who could hold military leadership positions within their spokes. Additionally, the most advanced weapons were imported from British factories. For example, in 1856, Britain introduced rifled muskets produced at their Royal Small Arms Factory. The presence of these new firearms led to the Indian Army uprising of 1857 because the soldiers believed "its paper-wrapped cartridges were greased with tallow derived from beef, offensive to Hindus, and pork, offensive to Muslims" (Satia, 2018, p. 365). Partially, as a result, the British Army began stationing its own troops in India. These troops remained in the spoke until the latter's independence in 1947 (Roy, 2016, p. 19). Consequently, Britain was a pole because it established rules and regulations that affected the internal composition of their spokes' security forces. It constrained who could

hold leadership positions in its spokes' military, it imported weapons and military equipment, and it stationed its own forces within the territory of its spokes.

Unlike Britain's relationship with India, France did not have a bastion of manpower it could use for the defense of its empire. Instead, it had to recruit soldiers from several different spokes. From its African colonies, France recruited *tirailleurs senegalais*, which they used in their campaigns in the Sudan, Indochina and Madagascar. When not abroad, these troops were garrisoned in North Africa (Killingray, 2008, p. 291). Though these soldiers fought in France's imperial holdings in Indochina, a locally recruited force was established within Asia. Beginning in the late 1870s, France recruited *tirailleur tonkinois* to conquer and assist in the policing of their possessions in Indochina (Hack & Rettig, 2005, p. 54). Though France technically allowed indigenous personnel to rise to the level of officer, in reality these individuals were looked down upon and only given authority over indigenous troops. Ultimately, France's military "authorities considered the role of white officers as decisive in all indigenous units. In fact, they argued, the quality of the white French personnel entirely determined the value of such units" (Fogarty, 2008, p. 98). While French officers provide leadership to their colonial troops, French armaments were also supplied. In fact, France was the first pole to introduce magazine and smokeless rifles to their imperial forces (Vandervort, 2006, p. 48). National troops were also stationed abroad within the French Empire. For example, in Indochina, an army of 30,000 contained 12,500 Europeans (Hack & Rettig, 2005, p. 54). Overall, France was a pole because it constrained who could hold leadership positions within its spokes' armed forces, provided their spokes' military equipment, and stationed troops within their spokes' territory. As a result, we can conclude that France satisfied the attributes for polar status in the security realm.

After World War II, Soviet Russia had authority over most of Eastern Europe. As a result, it was able to put constraints on its spokes in the security realm. Thus, satisfying the necessary military characteristics of a polar power. In regards to military leadership, Soviet Russia required that even low-level officers in its Eastern European spokes were pro-Communist. These officers were then “subordinated to Soviet officers of respective national origins who had served, sometimes for years, in the Red Army as Soviet citizens” (A. R. Johnson, 1984, p. 258). In addition to constraining who could hold leadership positions in its spokes’ military, Russia deployed Soviet troops in Eastern Europe. These forces were used to constrain the actions of their spokes and affected their security architecture. In essence, “Soviet military forces...serve[d] a very real international policing function” within Russia’s territorial order (A. R. Johnson, 1984, p. 257). Consequently, Soviet Russia should be considered a pole because it constrained who could hold leadership positions in its spokes’ military. It also stationed its own forces within the lesser tier states it had authority over, which affected its spokes’ internal security policies.

Currently, the United States’ power projection capabilities are unrivaled (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2016). The U.S. led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) contains twenty-nine member states. Additionally, the alliance has various partnerships with non-member states, which contribute to NATO’s global reach. In terms of rules and regulations, from its conception to the present, the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO has been an American. After the Cold War, there has been a debate to as whether “the US was using NATO as an instrument of extra-United Nations (UN) unilateral power” (Song, 2016, p. 2). This position developed after the alliance participated in a number of “out-of-area” operations that furthered U.S. interests; for

example, in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya. In addition to providing NATO's leadership, American military personnel are stationed around the globe (Calder, 2010). Officially, "over 190,000 troops and 115,000 civilian employees are massed in 909 military facilities in 46 countries and territories (Lutz, 2009, p. 1). To its allies, the U.S. is also the purveyor of advanced weaponry. The proliferation of its F-35 aircrafts and Patriot defense system are just two examples. As a result, the U.S. ought to be considered a pole because it established rules and regulations in the security realm that constrained who could hold military leadership positions, it stationed troops in its spokes, and provided the weaponry to lesser tier states within its territorial order.

For a state to be considered a pole, it needs to demonstrate certain characteristics. For instance, a pole provides rules and regulations that constrain who can hold military leadership positions within its spokes. It also provides the weaponry to its spokes' military, which affects the latter's internal structure given interoperability requirements. Furthermore, a pole stations its own troops within its spokes' territory; thus, constraining its spokes internal defense structure.

### **Socio-Cultural**

In the socio-cultural realm, a state has to exhibit a certain number of polar attributes to be considered a pole. In other words, all polar powers set up rules and regulations which affect the internal social and cultural composition of their spokes. An example of a polar attribute in the socio-cultural realm, is a pole's ability to establish constraints on *behavior* it deems inappropriate. A second attribute pertains to a pole prohibiting *ideas* it deems inappropriate.

Third, a polar power must have the authority to institute rules that affect the *language* of their spokes.

While the wording “deems inappropriate” might seem convoluted, it corresponds with the notion that imperial powers justify their expansion through the narrative of a *civilizing mission*. In general, “advocates of the civilizing mission ideology sought to capture the attributes that separated industrialized Western societies from those of the colonized peoples” (Adas, 2004, p. 79). Once characteristics of value are identified, it “implies the identification of a *community* of value, and civilization can also become the means of marking the Self from the Other” (Duara, 2004, p. 1). In other words, poles assign value to certain characteristics that they possess, which are then used to differentiate themselves with their spokes.

Once a pole has developed a “self/other” conceptual divide between itself and its spoke, rules and regulations are then imposed. The pole’s aim for establishing these constraints is to curtail the characteristics of its spokes that it does not designate value. This is because, as Michael Foucault pointed out, it is “*differentiations* which permits one to act upon the actions of others” (1982, p. 792). These rules and regulations will target the spokes’ “immediate everyday life,” the characteristics that marks it of its “own individuality,” in an effort to make it more like the polar power (p. 781). To put it another way, characteristics within spokes that do not correspond with the socio-cultural values espoused by the poles’ civilizing mission will be subject to rules and regulations. This will invariably affect spokes’ internal behavior, ideas, and language.

This is in correspondence with the literature on empires. Alejandro Colas stated that empires establish “socio-economic and political institutions which codify the inferiority of

'Others' and organize their subjection to imperial power along racial categories, phenotypical taxonomies and ethnographic classifications" (2008, p. 117). Additionally, Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler declared, "The most basic tension of empire lies...namely, that the otherness of colonized persons was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be defined and maintained" by the imperial power (1997, p. 7). In essence, each pole ideationally creates an ideal type individual which acts, thinks, and speaks in a way that is approved by the polar power. If a spoke is exhibiting traits the pole does not value, the latter establishes constraints which affects that spoke's population's behavior, thoughts, and language. The goal of said constraints is to eradicate the behavior, ideas, and language deemed inappropriate when juxtaposed against each pole's ideationally created ideal type.

While this was the general notion of the civilizing mission, each pole's territorial order has had their own particularities. For the British, "the civilizing mission meant many things, including bringing the benefits of British culture...in the form of free trade and capitalism as well as law, order and good government" (Watt, 2011, p. 1). In terms of satisfying the polar attributes in the socio-cultural realm, Britain prohibited behavior which it deemed opposed to its civilizing mission. For example, Britain established constraints on the use of Indian medicine which it viewed as superstitious, unscientific, and irrational. As one historian put it, "At the outset, [the medical field] was a highly contested field between Indian knowledge and European 'science'" (Mann, 2004a, p. 14). Britain also established rules and regulations which affected the language of their spokes; for instance, "English [became] the language of law and upper-level bureaucracy in their most important Asian dependencies." Furthermore, Britain standardized "certain indigenous languages for lower-level official use" (Bayly, 1999, p. 450).

Consequently, Britain was a pole because it established socio-cultural constraints that affected their spokes' behavior and language.

The term "civilizing mission" actually comes from the French *mission civilisatrice*. France's civilizing mission "rested upon the twin fundamental assumptions of the superiority of French culture and the perfectibility of humankind...Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the French had aimed at institutionalizing universal principles, thus exporting the ideas and concepts of the Enlightenment and French Revolution." (Mann, 2004b, p. 4). France's civilizing mission manifested into rules and regulations that affected the internal socio-cultural relations within its spokes. Specifically, it constrained behaviors, ideas, and languages it deemed antithetical to its ideal Frenchman. In Algeria, for example, France sought to restrict the behavior and ideas of its spoke through "the destruction of [Algeria's] system of education and its replacement by the French school system" (Gafaiti, 2003, p. 199). Regarding the polar characteristic of constraining the behavior and language of its spokes, France "insisted that newly conquered countries also adopted its language along with its laws. Only the laws and language created in Paris were acceptable" (Ager, 1995, p. 43).

In addition to Britain and France, Tsarist Russia also promulgated a civilizing mission that advocated their way of life and ideal type - *Russification*. In discussing Tsarist Russia, one historian wrote, "For the Russian imperial elite...the mission of civilizing the peripheries meant sedentariness and orthodoxy in the first place. It further implied the spreading of Russian language and culture, and thereby the overall attempt to accustom foreign peoples to the Russian way of living, including food, trade, and sexual mores" (Vulpius, 2012, p. 26).



Like other poles, Russia's civilizing mission led them to institute constraints which affected its spoke's behavior, ideas, and language. For instance, Russian became the official language of Poland and Russian jurisprudence was extended. This led the tsars to require Russian be taught in Polish schools since their "Polish subjects could neither communicate with the officials who governed them nor understand the laws and administrative rules that so profoundly affected their lives unless they were competent in the official language of the empire" (Thaden, 2014, p. 28). In regards to ideas, Russia established a number of rules and regulations on the religiosity of its spokes. In other words, tsarist religious "intervention involved greater codification of religious rules, which inevitably entailed their reworking in order to bring them into conformity with the state's own sense of morality and progress" (Werth, 2008). Thus, Russia was a pole because it established socio-cultural constraints that affected its spoke's behavior, language, and ideas.

Beginning in the late-nineteenth century, the United States started to promulgate its civilizing mission outside its continent. In comparison to other pole's civilizing mission, the U.S.' focused on its conception of liberalism (Hartz, 1991). In addition to spreading its own ideals, "American liberalism is *intolerant* of competing political ideologies. And it has sought preemptively to discredit, and suppress, them in order to maintain its domestic intellectual and ideological ascendance. American liberalism operates the same way abroad as it does at home" (Layne, 2007, p. 120).

In terms of rules and regulations within the socio-cultural realm, after the Spanish-American War of 1898, the U.S. constrained Cuban behavior, thoughts, and language. This occurred through the establishment of a "US-style" education system and by the fact that

English supplanted “Spanish as the official language of Cuban government offices” (Gronbeck-Tedesco, 2015, p. 29). In the Philippines, the U.S. also tried to prohibit behavior it deemed contradictory to its conception of an ideal American. For example, the opium trade was an established part of Southeast Asian culture (Wertz, 2013). In their spoke, however, the U.S. tried to limit opium’s use and eventually outlawed it. The U.S. instituted this constraint because drug use went against “what an American-made colonial state should look like (Wertz, 2013, p. 470). Overall, the U.S used its civilizing mission to justify rules and regulations which affected the internal behavior, ideas, and languages of its spokes

In the socio-cultural realm, the polar powers established rules and regulations that affected their spokes’ behavior, ideas, and languages. These constraints correspond with each pole’s civilizing mission. While there are variations regarding each poles’ civilizing mission, the concept generally entails the ideational construction of an ideal type. This ideal type is then contrasted with a spoke’s population. Rules and regulations are then established to constrain behaviors, ideas, and languages that are deemed inappropriate by the pole but common in its spokes.

### **Conclusion**

Polar co-option theory’s concept of a pole is markedly different than a dominate state in PTT. The contrast between the two theories’ main units of analysis ultimately comes down to their view on state sovereignty. For the latter, its adherence to the concept precludes it from adopting the notion that the dominate state affects the internal structure of lesser-tier states.

This necessitates a self-interest-based explanation for why lesser-tier states adhere to the rules and regulations of a dominate state.

PCT does not adhere to the belief that the international system is populated by sovereign states that do not interfere with one another's internal structure. Its main units of observation – the polar powers – practice imperialism. This means they establish rules and regulations that alter the internal structure of their spokes. In line with the literature on imperialism, these attributes of polar status occur in four realms: politically, economically, militarily, and socio-culturally. In other words, for a state to be considered a pole, it has to establish and enforce rules and regulations which affect their spokes' internal structure along the four dimensions of imperialism.

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## Chapter Four

### Polar Co-option Theory's Typology of Poles

In chapter three, a pole's effect on the internal structure of its spokes was theorized. In other words, how a pole alters the domestic structure of the lesser tier states it has authority over. Since the international system is dynamic, it would be wrongheaded to give the impression that a pole's ability to establish rules and regulations within its spokes is static. To the contrary, given the mechanism that is the *variability of authority*, it is assumed that each pole's ability to establish and enforce rules and regulations will fluctuate.

To address the variability of a pole's authority, this chapter will introduce a typology of poles. In chapter two, four terms regarding the polar powers were specified but not expounded upon: moribund pole, status quo pole, prospective co-opting pole, and a co-opting pole. The aim of this chapter will be to provide more specificity to these terms.

The underlining determinates of these categorizations are based on two criteria. First, is the directionality of a pole's authority, i.e. whether its ability to establish rules and regulations is going up or down. Second, is a pole's desire to either increase or decrease its authority in the international system.

If a pole's authority over its spokes is waning, then it is categorized as a *moribund pole*. A polar power that is not witnessing any movement in its authority is a *status quo pole*. A pole that desires to increase its authority but is unable to is a *prospective co-opting pole*. This is in contrast, to a *co-opting pole*, which can successfully complete the co-option process and extend its authority.

To ascertain the directionality of a pole's authority, a two-step process needs to be employed. *First*, it has to be determined how well a pole satisfies chapter three's polar attributes within its own territorial order. For example, a moribund pole's decline will be observable by it losing the ability to establish and enforce rules and regulations that affect its spokes.<sup>1</sup> A status quo pole, a prospective co-opting pole, and a co-opting pole will not see any changes to its authority.

*Second*, it needs to be determined if a pole is gaining polar attributes that are affecting the internal structure of spokes that were previously a part of a moribund pole's territorial order. For instance, a prospective co-opting pole will be able to gain authority over at least one of the dimensions of imperialism. A co-opting pole, on the other hand, will be able to gain the authority to satisfy all the polar attributes that were identified in chapter three.

To flesh out these points, this chapter will proceed as follows. The first section provides a review and brief critique of PTT's typology of states. As PCT is a variant of PTT, the latter's categorization of the most important states provides the theoretical foundation for PCT's typology. In the second section, a typology of poles is presented. Once again, these categorizations are based on the directionality of a pole's authority and their desire to gain authority over additional spokes.

### **Power Transition Theory's Typology of States**

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, a moribund pole's decline in authority will be discernable by it losing the ability to constraint what its spokes can produce (economic realm) or it will be losing the ability to establish and maintain bases in its spokes (military realm).

As previously indicated, PCT should be considered a variant of PTT. The latter, however, recognizes two different typologies of states. While the first is consistent with the theory's foundational focus on material capabilities, the second centers around a different criterion that runs counter to the theory's assumption on how international relations unfold. This second typology is more in line with PCT.

PTT's first typology focuses on the distribution of material capabilities among the states. On the lower end of the spectrum, there are colonies, small powers, and middle powers (Kugler & Organski, 1989). The great powers and the dominate state populate the upper tiers of the system (B. Zhang, 2015, p. 153). As we have discussed, PTT is primarily concerned with the dynamics between the most powerful states. This leads it to have a secondary typology that only pertains to the dominate state and the great powers.

Within this second typology, material capabilities are not the sole factor for determining a state's categorization. Instead, it is a state's satisfaction with the international order and the movement of each powers' *influence* (W. Kim, 1992). Within this typology, PTT stipulates that the most powerful states can fall into three categories: a retrenching power, a status quo power, and a revisionist power. Table 4.1 provides PTT's typology of states and great powers as well as their expected behaviors.

Table 4.1

*Power Transition Theory's Typology of States*

	Retrenching	Status Quo	Revisionist
Dominate Power	A retrenching dominate power will be	A status quo dominate power will not want the international system to	A revisionist dominate power will seek to alter the international system by

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	curtailing its overseas commitments	change and might use coercive measures to prevent it from occurring	expanding its influence. It might employ coercive measures to achieve this end
Great Powers		A status quo great power will support the existing international system and possibly aid the dominate state in upholding the status quo.	A revisionist great power will seek to alter the international system by expanding its influence. If its preferences are not met, a revisionist great power might resort to coercive measures to achieve its goals.
Middle Powers			
Small Powers			
Colonies			

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A retrenching power adopts policies that curtail its influence in the international system. While it is generally argued that a great power or a dominate state will pursue this foreign policy because of a decline in material capabilities, it does not have to be the case. There are at least three reasons why a state pursues retrenchment. First, it is hoping to decrease the cost of its foreign policy. This could entail cutting military spending and/or personnel, reducing overseas commitments, or trying to shift burdens to allies (MacDonald & Parent, 2018, p. 8).

Second, a retrenching state can be reorienting its global forces to a particularly vital area. For example, in the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain pursued retrenchment in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific. It did so because it wanted to concentrate its resources in continental Europe and the North Sea to counter a rising Wilhelmine Germany (Gilpin, 1981). This reason for retrenchment is not necessarily associated with an absolute

decline in the material capabilities of a great power or dominate state but the “growing material power and influence” of another power (Ward, 2017, p. 46).

The third reason why a retrenching power pursues policies that curtail its influence in the international system is not associated with material decline in either relative or absolute terms. Scholars have recognized that a great power or dominate state might pursue retrenchment as a result of electoral politics, i.e. politicians’ domestic political concerns. For instance, the United States has pursued policies that have been described as retrenchment. Charles Kupchan has commented that both the Obama and Trump administrations have “accurately perceived that the electorate is looking to scale back overseas commitments” (Kupchan, 2019, p. 8). This is because of the U.S’ “public disillusionment with the results of long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq” (Lieber, 2016, p. 35).

In addition to a retrenching power, there are status quo powers. These states are satisfied with the existing international order (Shimko, 2012, p. 64). As a result of this satisfaction, they do not want to see an alteration in the international system. In order to prevent change, status quo powers might be willing to use coercive measures to defend the status quo (Miller, 2009, p. 89). After its wars of unification, Bismarckian Germany is an example of a status quo power (Lebow, 2003, p. 235).

In contrast to a status quo power, a revisionist power is not satisfied with the global order. As a result of this dissatisfaction, a revisionist state, often called a “rising challenger,” will seek to increase its influence in the international system. It does so by attempting to alter the system’s “distribution of goods (territory, status, markets, expansion of ideology, and the creation or change of international law and institutions)” (Davidson, 2016, p. 14). In IR, it is

predominantly assumed that a revisionist power is a rising great power and witnessing an increase in its material capabilities. For instance, Wilhelmine Germany and Hitler's Germany are often cited examples of revisionist states, albeit ones that failed.

This does not need to be the case. For a state to be considered a revisionist power, it just needs to possess the *desire* to alter the system's international order. There is no requirement as to where a revisionist power is within the hierarchy of states. Indeed, even the state with the most material capabilities – the dominate power - can be considered a revisionist power. As Steven Chan points out, "the U.S. wants to promote changes in the domestic politics and economies" of other countries in order to make the system more congenial to itself (Chan, 2007, p. 38). This is not the behavior expected from a status quo power but a revisionist one.

Overall, for PTT, the dominate state and the great powers can fall into three categories. The determining factors are each power's satisfaction with the international order and the directionality of their influence. A retrenching power's influence is receding. A status quo power is satisfied and is not seeking to increase its influence. A revisionist power is not satisfied and desires to increase its influence.

### **Polar Co-option Theory's Typology of Poles**

In the previous section, PTT's typologies of states were discussed. As indicated, the second typology of PTT, which focuses on the most powerful states, does not adhere to the theory's focus on material capabilities. Rather, it centers around two factors – satisfaction and the directionality of the great powers' or a dominate state's influence in the international system. This recognition that material capabilities does not explain international relations

means that PTT's typology of states needs to be updated and amended. Additionally, its concentration on a great power's or a dominate state's influence is akin to PCT's theorized typology of states, which emphasis a pole's authority.

Polar co-option theory's typology of poles contains four different characterizations. Similar to a retrenching power's loss of influence, a *moribund pole's* authority is retracting. A *status quo pole* is like a status quo power in that it's authority is static and it is not looking to gain authority over new spokes. Unlike PTT, PCT does not have a single categorization that is comparable to a revisionist power. This is because it is believed the concept ought to be bifurcated. There are states that *desire* and are attempting to expand their authority but are unable to complete the co-option process.

For PCT, these states are considered *prospective co-opting poles*. These are poles that want to expand their authority over additional spokes but cannot because of two reasons. The first is that their desire to co-opt certain spokes elicits too much fear in the other poles. This will result in the other poles blocking the prospective co-opting pole from co-opting its targeted spokes. The second reason why a prospective co-opting pole will not be able to complete the co-option process, is that the spokes reject the pole's authority.

In contrast, *co-opting poles*, are able to complete the co-option process. This is because their actions do not engender the same amount of fear in the other poles and the targeted spokes ultimately adhere to the pole's rules and regulations. As a result, a co-opting pole can extend its authority and co-opt the spokes of a moribund pole.

As previously discussed, there is a clear process for delineating the categorization of a pole. The determining factors is the movement of a pole's authority in the international system

as well as whether it has the desire to increase its authority. In order to ascertain whether a pole's authority is either decreasing, increasing, staying the same, or it's attempting to expand an analysis has to be conducted focusing on how well that pole satisfies the polar attributes discussed in chapter three. For example, if a pole is a *co-opting pole*, it will be discernable as it begins to satisfy certain polar characteristics regarding specific spokes. In contrast, when a pole no longer satisfies the attributes of being the polar power of a specific spoke, it should be considered a *moribund pole*. Table 4.2 provides polar co-option theory's typology of the polar powers.

Table 4.2

*Polar Co-option's Typology of the Polar Powers*

	Direction of a pole's authority	Ability to instill authority over the spokes of the moribund pole
Moribund pole	Authority is in decline.	
Status quo pole	Authority is stable and there are no attempts at expanding	A status quo pole is not seeking to expand its authority over any of the spokes of the moribund pole.
Prospective co-opting pole	Authority is stable but it is attempting to expand.	A prospective co-opting pole is seeking to extend its authority over the spokes of a moribund pole. It will only be able to affect one or two of the dimensions of imperialism. It will not be able to complete the co-option process because its actions either elicit too much fear in the other poles or the targeted spokes put up too much opposition.
Co-opting pole	Authority is expanding.	A co-opting pole has the desire to expand its authority over spokes of the moribund pole. They are able to achieve this goal because of two reasons. First, its actions do not elicit enough fear to where the other



poles view their actions as a threat. Second, the spokes do not put-up opposition the co-opting pole cannot overcome.

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### **Moribund Pole**

Like a retrenching power, a moribund pole's authority in the international system is rescinding. In PTT, to determine whether a great power or the dominate state is retrenching the dynamics of the entire system need to be analyzed. With PCT, only a pole's authority within its territorial order needs to be examined. If a pole is moribund, then it is losing authority over the spokes within its territorial order. This will be discernible by analyzing the spoke's adherences to its pole's rules and regulations within the four dimensions of imperialism. For instance, polar power A has political authority over spokes X, Y, and Z and establishes political rules and regulations that are more on the authoritarian side of the spectrum, i.e. the spokes are not indigenously administrated in a representative fashion. When these same spokes begin to demonstrate more self-rule, then it is an indication that polar power A is moribund.

While the above is a hypothetical, a number of empirical examples can highlight the point. When Spain's authority over its spokes in the Western hemisphere began to decline in the beginning of the nineteenth century, it led to Britain's co-option of the region. One sign that Spain was a moribund pole was its inability to reinstitute a closed market economy in Latin America like it had before the Napoleonic Wars. Instead, Britain, being the only naval power in the western hemisphere, instituted a free trade economic system that it dominated (Blaufarb, 2007). In this instance, the *moribund pole* – Spain – previously satisfied a polar attribute in the economic realm. Namely, the ability to establish rules and regulations that prevented its spokes

from trading with certain states. Britain, being the *co-opting pole*, was able to expand its authority over the region; thus, gaining the ability to economically organize its Latin American spokes to its liking based on the principles of free trade.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire led to a polar co-option that began during the nineteenth century but culminated in the twentieth century. In terms of a polar attribute in the security realm, a pole needs to have its own indigenous arms industry. This is because a polar power provides the military equipment of its spokes. If a pole is reliant on another pole or a great power to achieve those aims, it cannot be concluded that it satisfies that characteristic of a polar power. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, its domestically produced arms industry declined precipitously over the course of the nineteenth century. By 1914, it was “almost completely dependent on imports” (Grant, 2002, p. 9). As a result, it cannot be concluded that the Ottoman Empire satisfied this polar attribute in the security realm, which gives an indication that it was moribund.

Overall, a pole is moribund when it no longer satisfies polar attributes that it previous did. These characteristics of a polar power can be in any of the four dimensions of imperialism. The empirical and hypothetical examples in this section focused on the political, economic, and security realms.

### **Status Quo Pole**

In PTT, a status quo power is satisfied with its place in the international system. Furthermore, it desires the system's balance of power remain static. As a result, it is not looking

to extend its influence and might take coercive measures to prevent another state from extending theirs.

In conjunction with a status quo power, a status quo pole is not looking to expand its authority over the spokes of a moribund pole. In contrast, though, a status quo power in PTT is not seeking to expand its influence because it is *satisfied* with its place in the system. As a result of the basic assumptions of PCT, a pole is never “satisfied” but always seeking opportunities to expand. In reality, there are simply times when a pole cannot extend its authority over certain spokes. This is because the pole does not have the resources to do so or the spokes are too geographically distant. On a theoretical level, here is an example: moribund pole A is losing authority over spokes X, Y, and Z. While these spokes are “up for grabs,” pole B does not try to co-opt them because they are too geographically remote. This does not prevent pole B, however, from trying to influence the co-option process.

For instance, Latin America has witnessed two co-options (Paz, 2012). The first occurred after the Napoleonic Wars when the moribund pole Spain lost authority over its spokes in the Western Hemisphere. During this transition, tsarist Russia ought to be considered a status quo pole. This is because it could not act unilaterally in Latin America since Russia’s geographical location and capabilities prevented such measures. Despite these limitations it was not precluded from attempting to influence the co-option process through an alliance with France and the United States. Rather than co-option, tsarist Russia’s objective was to influence the co-option process by gaining economic concessions and preventing the UK from extending its authority over the newly independent nations of Latin America (Bartley, 1978; Blaufarb, 2007).

The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire occurred throughout the long nineteenth century. During its final phase, which took place after WWI, Britain and France divided the Ottoman's territorial order. While the British and French were the co-opting poles, the United States should be categorized as the status quo pole. This is because it reasoned that it was too far to co-opt any of the spokes of the moribund empire and did not even want to attempt to extend its authority. As one historian wrote, "The problem with [the proposed] U.S. mandates for Armenia, Anatolia, Syria, Palestine, or Ottoman Turkey writ large was, of course, that the Americans themselves wanted no part of them" (McMeekin, 2015, p. 421). Despite this reluctance to co-opt any of the spokes of the Ottoman Empire, the United States still influenced the actions of the two co-opting poles during the post-WWI peace negotiations.

Overall, a status quo pole's authority is not changing. It is not losing authority over its territorial order nor is it seeking to expand its authority over a moribund pole's spokes. Rather than satisfaction, however, a status quo pole is not in the geographical position or its capabilities preclude it from co-opting a moribund pole's spokes. It will, nevertheless, seek to influence the co-option process.

### **Prospective Co-opting Pole**

In PTT, there is not a clear differentiation between a successful and a failed revisionist power. This is because for a state to be categorized as revisionist, it only needs to desire to alter the system's international order. It does not matter whether that state is successful. In contrast, PCT does make the distinction between a pole that is able to co-opt spokes and one that is not.

A pole that desires to co-opt certain spokes but is unable to complete the co-option process is a *prospective co-opting pole*. Despite the fact that a perspective co-opting pole will not be able to satisfy all of the polar attributes, it will generally be able to affect at least one of the four realms of imperialism. For example, prospective co-opting pole A might only attempt to extend its authority in the security realm by satisfying the polar attribute of establishing bases in spokes X, Y, and Z. It will not be able to affect the other dimensions of imperialism because its actions either arouse fear in the other poles or the spokes reject its authority.

As previously discussed, when Spain lost authority over its spokes to Britain, tsarist Russia was a status quo pole. This is because it could not co-opt the spokes of the moribund Spanish Empire due to their geographical location in the Western Hemisphere. The best Russia could hope for was to work in concert with the United States and France to prevent a British co-option. France, on the other hand, was a prospective co-opting pole since it acted unilaterally to affect the political systems of the newly independent Latin American republics. It did so by consistently trying to establish “independent Bourbon monarchies in Latin America” throughout the nineteenth century (Blaufarb, 2007, p. 749). As a result, France continually attempted to satisfy the political polar attribute of only allowing a political leader of its choosing within its spokes. It was unable to do so, however, because of resistance from the spokes.

While tsarist Russia was a status quo pole during the above-mentioned co-option, it was a prospective co-opting pole during the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Whereas France and Britain co-opted Ottoman spokes in North Africa and the Middle East, Russia attempted to satisfy polar attributes in the security and economic realms in the Ottoman's Danubian

Principalities. It was unable to do so, however, because of the opposition of the other poles – France and Britain – and of Austria, which was a regional great power. For example, the Treaty of Adrianople signed in 1829 stipulated that Russia could occupy the Danubian Principalities and its troops appeared at the river's delta. This occurrence greatly affected the security as well as the economic policies of the Ottoman's moribund spokes and furthered the process of Russian's co-option. The Austrian Chancellor Metternich understood as much when he rebuked the Russian ambassador in Vienna by saying, "you wish to make these provinces independent of the [Ottomans] and, to this end, establish a new order, which you will then insist on being regarded as the status quo" (Ššedivýý, 2011, p. 634). Ultimately, however, tsarist Russia was unable to co-opt the Danubian Principalities and agreed to withdraw its troops from the region after gaining some political concessions. Both France and Britain believed their "intransigent anti-Russia policy" led to the Tsar recalling his troops, while Metternich believed Austrian opposition was the deciding factor (Ššedivýý, 2011, p. 640). In other words, Russia was a prospective co-opting pole because it desired to co-opt spokes from the moribund Ottoman Empire, which resulted in it satisfying polar attributes in the security and economic realms. It was unable to complete the co-option process, however, because it could not overcome the opposition from the other polar powers and a regional great power.

Ultimately, a prospective co-opting pole desires to co-opt certain spokes. It attempts to do so by first satisfying one of the attributes of polar status. The examples above discussed a hypothetical in the security realm and two empirical illustrations in the political, economic, and security dimensions. A prospective co-opting pole will not be able to satisfy all of the polar

attributes and complete the co-option process because of at least one of two reasons. First, its actions elicit too much fear in the other poles. Second, the spokes do not accept its authority.

### **Co-opting Pole**

Unlike a prospective co-opting pole, which cannot co-opt its targeted spokes, a co-opting pole successfully completes the co-option process. This is because it either overcomes the resistance of the spokes and/or the opposition of the other poles or neither of these occurrences transpire. As a result, a co-opting pole is able to extend its authority over the spokes of a moribund pole. Furthermore, the extension of a co-opting pole's authority will alter the internal composition of the spokes they are co-opting as the latter begins to satisfy an increasing number of polar attributes. This phenomenon will ultimately occur in all of the dimensions of imperialism: politically, economically, militarily, and socio-culturally.

Here is a hypothetical example: At  $T^1$  moribund pole A institutionally organizes spokes X, Y, and Z. It does so through the establishment of liberal political constraints, rules which promote a free market economy, by supplying the military equipment and maintaining bases in all three spokes, and affecting the spokes' official language and education system. At  $T^2$ , the moribund pole's authority over spokes X, Y, and Z have been co-opted by co-opting pole B. As a result, co-opting pole B begins to impose new polar constraints on spokes X, Y, and Z, which affects their internal structure. For instance, now those spokes are governed under a more authoritarian set of political constraints, rules are established which lead to a closed market economy, the military bases are now housed with personnel from pole B and its military

equipment is replacing pole A's, and the spokes' education, official language and jurisprudence is being altered to fit pole B's civilizing mission.

To turn to an empirical example, at the end of the nineteenth century, a second co-option occurred in the Western Hemisphere. During this transition, the United States co-opted the Latin American spokes from the moribund Britain. While a complete co-option might take decades to unfold, the signs that one is occurring are evident by the fact that the moribund pole stops satisfying certain polar attributes.

Regarding the polar attributes in the security realm, the Venezuela Crisis of 1895-96 is a critical moment. The international incident was primarily caused by a border dispute between Venezuela, Britain, and British Guiana. In an effort to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, the United States demanded that Britain relent from trying to expand their territorial holdings in the Western Hemisphere and instead submit to arbitration. Britain, however, did not want to adhere to the constraint and disputed the fact that the Monroe Doctrine was international law and declined arbitration. Surprisingly, the United States' "response was to threaten war" (Combs, 2015, p. 12). Already facing a revitalized Russia and a rising Germany, Britain reasoned that it was not in its best interest to be on bad terms with the U.S. since the latter "posed the least danger to Britain's vital interests" (Combs, 2015, p. 15). The Venezuela Crisis of 1895-96 ultimately led to the British withdrawing "their navy from the Western Hemisphere" and tacitly recognizing that the region "fell within [the U.S.'] sphere of influence" (Gamble, 2017, p. 98). In essence, Britain satisfied the polar security attribute of having their armed forces present in the region. After the crisis, however, the moribund pole removed their navy, leaving the United



States to occupy the void, which meant it now satisfied one of the security attributes of a polar power.

While the Venezuela Crisis of 1895-1896 affected an attribute in the security realm, the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904 affected polar attributes in the economic dimension. The Corollary, issued by Theodore Roosevelt, was also in response to an international crisis involving Venezuela. Since the first crisis, the country had accumulated an increasing amount of debt to the European powers. Once the country defaulted on its loans in 1902, Britain, Germany, and Italy blockaded Venezuelan ports and seized customhouses. After the International Court of Arbitration delivered a decision in favor of the European powers, Roosevelt believed a dangerous precedent was set which stood against U.S. interests. This prompted Roosevelt to issue his famous Corollary, which indicated that the U.S. would use its superior naval position in the Western Hemisphere to police the nations of Latin America in order to “protect the interests of European investors” and ensure the repayment of sovereign debts (Mitchener & Weidenmier, 2005, p. 663).

Ultimately, after the Corollary, the U.S. would continue the free market economic policies the British had put in place in Latin America. It now, however, replaced British authority in the region in the economic realm. For instance, Britain no longer had the authority over its spokes in the Western Hemisphere to ensure the free flow of capital and to enforce the repayment of debt obligations. Those attributes of polar status were now satisfied by the co-opting pole that was the United States.

As the U.S.' economic influence increased, so too did its impulse to bring “its way of life” to the peoples of Latin America. As one historian put it, “By the late nineteenth century, the

dynamism of American capitalism and a growing sense of racial superiority had fortified the missionary impulse” of the United States (Grandin, 2006, p. 17). As expected by PCT, once the U.S. began to instill rules and regulations in the socio-cultural realm, it started to fulfill that category’s polar attributes. For example, when the U.S. was the occupying force in the Dominican Republic, it established a number of behavioral constraints that were designed to impose “the superiority of U.S. customs and morality” (Tillman, 2016, p. 135). For instance, through U.S. backed constabulary efforts and military courts, prostitution and gambling were made illegal (Tillman, 2016). In other words, the U.S. constrained behaviors it deemed inappropriate in its spoke.

Additionally, the U.S. constrained the ideas of the spokes it was co-opting. In Cuba, the U.S. had authority over the state’s school system and affected its population’s education. Before the U.S. gained the ability to establish socio-cultural constraints in Cuba, the island had a religiously based education system (Langley, 2001). Once it gained authority, United States officials adjusted Cuba’s education to emphasize more practical skills. As one historian wrote, the “model curriculum, written by an officer on the governor’s staff, was patterned on the ‘Ohio Plan’ and emphasized preparation for citizenship and the acquisition of skills or the learning of a trade” (Langley, 2001, p. 10). As a result, by the early twentieth century, the United States was fulfilling the attributes for polar status in the socio-cultural realm by establishing rules and constraints which affected its spokes’ behavior, thoughts, and language.

At this point, the U.S.’ co-option in the military, economic, and socio-cultural realms have been covered. The U.S.’ affect in the political realm, still needs to be discussed. As the United States’ authority began to increase in the above categories during the turn of the

twentieth century, so too did its promotion of democracy. While the Theodore Roosevelt administration pursued democratization, the presidency of Woodrow Wilson made establishing democracies and inhibiting revolutionary movements established policy (Ferguson, 2005, p. 53). His overall logic was that it was in the U.S.' national security interest to have stable constitutional democracies in Latin America. This led the Wilson administration to establish rules and regulations on who Latin American states can have as their political leader, the size/membership of their electorates, and who could be politically represented. For example, ten days after Wilson took office, the U.S. president developed constraints which prevented General Victoriano Huerta from assuming office in Mexico. Wilson took these actions because he believed that the general was an illegitimate usurper who was "setting a precedent for Mexico that Wilson believed could only perpetuate instability" (T. Smith, 2012, p. 69).

In Haiti, the U.S. also satisfied the political attributes of polar status by controlling the level of representation in the spoke. A clear instance of this occurred when the Haitian legislature desired to impeach a U.S. backed president. In response, the head of U.S. forces on the island imposed the dissolution of the spoke's legislature. This action would have long lasting effects since for "many years to come, there would be no national legislature, only a rump client state headed by a president and kept in power by the marines" (McCormick & LaFeber, 1993, p. 73). In other words, the U.S. established constraints on the representation Haiti

Regarding the establishment of rules and regulations on a spoke's electorate, one prevalent example comes from the U.S.' occupation of Nicaragua. After ridding the country of its leader, the U.S. attempted to run efficient elections. While supporting a democratically elected government, the U.S. imposed the constraint that some supporters of the former

Nicaraguan leader could not vote in upcoming elections (McCormick & LaFeber, 1993, p. 87). In other words, the U.S limited its spoke's electorate by banning individuals from voting and participating in the democratic process.

Overall, a co-opting pole is able to complete the co-option process and gain authority over the spokes of a moribund pole. As a result, it will begin to satisfy an increasing number of polar attributes in association with its newly acquired spokes. This will be observable by the phenomenon of the spokes' internal structure being altered. The examples above focused on how the United States affected the spokes they were co-opting in the Western Hemisphere from a moribund Britain.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter put forward a typology of poles. Polar co-option theory argues that a pole can fall into four distinct categories based on its variability of their authority and their desire to expand. A moribund pole's authority is decreasing. A status quo pole's authority is static. Prospective co-opting poles desire to extend their authority but will not be successful. These poles will not be able to complete the polar co-option process because they cannot overcome the objections of the other poles or the spokes they are attempting to co-opt do not accept their authority. In contrast, a co-opting pole is able to expand its authority over the spokes of the moribund pole.

There are a number of reasons why providing a typology of the polar powers is important. First, typologies can help clarify theory. By specifying the distinct categories a pole can fall into and what each category represents, the narrative of polar co-option can be made

clearer and the theory understood more thoroughly. Second, since the polar co-option process is dynamic and pertains to the rise and fall of the polar powers, it is important to have a way of delineating what kind of pole each polar power is during the co-option process and how their actions change as the process unfolds. Third, the typology highlights the role of the polar attributes specified in chapter three. Furthermore, it stresses that a pole's ability to satisfy these attributes are not static but subject to change and thus bolsters the theoretical specificity of the theory.

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## **Chapter Five**

### **The Decline of France's and Britain's Authority and the Expansion of the U.S.' Territorial Order**

This chapter will demonstrate the plausibility of PCT. It includes a case study that focuses on the post-World War II international system. Specifically, when France and Britain lost authority over their territorial orders, which set off a polar competition between the United States and Soviet Russia – the Cold War. Ultimately, the U.S. was able to co-opt more spokes from the moribund poles than Russia. As a result, the actions of the former will be highlighted more than the latter.

The chapter will follow PCT. First, the stable environment that was in place before the start of the polar competition will be described. The second section will survey the loss of authority of the moribund poles and the endemic unrest that followed. The third section will detail the fear that developed between the polar powers. It will include a survey of the two features of the polar co-option process: benign signaling and internal discussions. The fourth section discusses the methods used by the United States and Soviet Russia to co-opt the spokes of the moribund poles. The final section details the results of the polar co-option process, which includes a transition in the number of polar powers and their requisite territorial orders.

#### **The United States' Co-option of French and British spokes**

##### **Stable environment**

Before the polar co-option process begins, a stable environment prevails. This includes each pole having authority over a territorial order.

Prior to France and Britain transitioning to moribund poles, each had authority over their own territorial order. France's territorial order was the second largest in the system. Its rivalry with Britain, dating back centuries, shaped the development of not only the European sub-system but the world (Tombs & Tombs, 2007). Beginning in the 1830s, France embarked on its second era of empire building. At its zenith, the pole had authority over approximately 12 million square kilometers and more than 100 million people (Gregory, 2000, p. 9). Its territorial order comprised parts of North Africa, the Levante, and Southeast Asia. Its spokes included a number of contemporary states, such as Lebanon, Syria, Vietnam, Cambodia, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Mali, Chad, Cameroon, and Madagascar (Aldrich & Connell, 2006, p. 36).

The only territorial order larger than France's was Britain's. At its height, the British Empire comprised one-fifth of the globe and governed 400 million people (Johnson, 2002). It contained parts of North America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Pacific. In terms of contemporary states, Britain's territorial order included Canada, Australia, Kenya, South Africa, Iraq, Egypt, Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan, and India.

While France and Britain had authority over territorial orders that spanned the globe, Soviet Russia's order was primarily confined to Eastern and Central Europe. Though different from the maritime empires, the USSR was a polity that possessed "quite sufficient imperial characteristics to make comparisons between it and other empires" (Lieven, 1995, p. 608). In terms of size, the Soviet Union was around 8,600,660 square miles, which was only 50,000 square miles less than its tsarists predecessor (Cohen, 2003, p. 198). It stretched from the

Pacific Ocean to the middle of Europe and from the Barents Sea to the Caucasus. Within this colossal empire, there were a number of contemporary states, such as Ukraine, Poland, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Hungary, Georgia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania.

In comparison to the above territorial orders, the United States' authority manifested itself in a different way. While the U.S. practiced direct imperialism in a few spokes – for example, in the Philippines - for the most part, its rules and regulations were imposed through informal mechanisms. Rather than incorporate its spokes into one empire, the United States had a *sphere of influence* over Latin America in the Western Hemisphere. A sphere of influence is defined as “a region in which a major power has hegemony or preeminence, and from which other major powers are excluded” (Molineu, 2019, p. 37). Reasoning that “European-style colonies were expensive and unnecessary,” the United States held authority within its sphere of influence through its “economic weight and judicious use of military intervention” (Livingstone, 2013, p. 12). Contemporary states that fell within the U.S.' sphere of influence include but are not limited to Mexico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Brazil, and Argentina.

Overall, each of the four poles had authority over a defined territorial order. This environment was stable because each pole's authority was recognized by their spokes as well as the other poles. Furthermore, none of the orders elicited enough fear to where conflict developed.

### **Decline in a Pole's Authority**

For the polar co-option process to begin, the environment described above needs to become destabilized. This occurs when at least one pole loses authority over its spokes.

During this polar co-option, the moribund poles were France and Britain. The first signs that both poles were losing authority over their territorial orders occurred after World War I. During the war, a substantial number of colonial troops were called into action. For France, around 550,00 soldiers were recruited from the empire; 440,000 of whom served in Europe (A. Jackson, 2017, p. 24). Britain also used their vast colonial manpower to aid its war effort. From India alone, Britain was able to garner 1.4 million soldiers with 1.1 million fighting outside of the subcontinent (ibid). Additionally, their “dominion” colonies like Canada and Australia, contributed 1.2 million soldiers with two thirds stationed in Europe.

In addition to being a source of military manpower, the spokes of the two poles contributed a vast amount of labor and resources. For example, France imported over 200,000 colonial laborers to work on French farms and factories (Morrow, 2016). As a result of the need for both soldiers and laborers, Britain and France had to mobilize a significant number of people from their spokes, which negatively affected the two pole’s authority. As John Darwin explained, after WWI the colonial populations of the two poles became “resentful of new burdens and rules that broke the old ‘bargain’ of colonial politics. It tore apart the myth of Europe’s uniquely progressive culture, loosening the grip of older cultural elites and the ideas they had championed” (2008, p. 368). In other words, because France and Britain needed more out of their spokes’ populations during WWI, the two polar powers began to negatively affect individuals’ lives more broadly, which lead to greater discontent and a loss of polar authority.

Despite the fact that World War I negatively affected the populations of both polar powers' spokes, the two poles were able to maintain their authority.<sup>1</sup> After World War II, however, the authority of France and Britain was irrevocably damaged. Once again, the spokes were used as sources of military and labor manpower which increased their resentment. For example, it is estimated that around 50,000 East and Central Africans were killed or injured during the conflict (Owino, 2018, p. 364). In regards to labor, in order to meet the demands of the war, British spokes "witnessed an intensification" of raw material production that greatly affected their populations (A. Jackson, 2017, p. 49).

As a result of these developments, WWII ought to be viewed as the critical juncture for when France and Britain transitioned into moribund poles. Polar co-option theory predicts that once there is a decline in a pole's authority, endemic unrest develops in their territorial order. As has been discussed, this should be expected given that the polar power's spokes no longer recognize their pole's authority and begin to flout their rules and regulations. Furthermore, one component of a pole losing its authority is its inability to enforce said constraints. In other words, when a pole's authority is declining, its ability to enforce its rules and regulations will also be diminishing. As a result, it is expected that unrest will become endemic within a moribund pole's territorial order.

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<sup>1</sup> While this chapter does not want to get into the interwar years explicitly, during this time period, a dual process was underway. France and Britain continued to extend their authority over their spokes which began with the mobilizations that occurred during WWI (Levine, 2013; Chapter 10; Thomas, 2017). On the other hand, nationalist movements sprung up and a number of decolonization leaders were either being educated in metropolitan universities or learning how to maneuver their political environments. These same individuals would become leaders during the decolonization period following WWII. For example, India's Nehru (Louro, 2018) and Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh (Goebel, 2015).

France's territorial order started to witness unrest at the elite level shortly after World War II. During this time, nationalist leaders and parties began to establish themselves as influential domestic power brokers whose discontent needed to be satisfied. Understanding that their authority was waning, France first attempted to quell nationalist sentiments by proposing a new French Union. Despite the fact that their spokes were granted additional freedoms, France's reforms did not go far enough.<sup>2</sup> By the 1950s, it was clear that France's new union would not survive.

One of the first instances of substantial unrest started in 1946, when fighting broke out between French forces and the newly dubbed "associated state" of Vietnam. The conflict would continue for a decade, proving to be endemic. It ended in 1954, when the defeated moribund pole agreed to the Geneva Accords, which partitioned Vietnam into North Vietnam and South Vietnam (Logevall, 2012).

In Morocco, an independence party, Istiqlal, was founded in 1943. Its efforts were largely at the elite level, until the end of World War II. At that point, the organization "moved towards mass politics," which led to the spoke witnessing "significant changes between 1945 and 1949" (Zisenwine, 2010, p. 88). Despite the fact that a nationalist movement was gaining in popularity, "France did not initiate a new approach to Morocco and did not adapt to the postwar international reality" (Zisenwine, 2010, p. 181).

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<sup>2</sup> While the French Union was supposed to further integrate pole and spokes, it led to administrative confusion. Most of France's spokes in Africa were categorized as "overseas territories," but former protectorates like Indochina, Morocco, and Tunisia were identified as "associated states" (Semley, 2017, p. 260). In addition to the administrative categorizations, the French Union conferred a different form of citizenship (French Union citizenship in comparison to French citizenship), which contributed to nationalist discontent. Under the new French Union, spoke populations were granted individual rights like "the right to free speech" and "protection from arbitrary arrest" (Cooper, 2016, p. 127). They did not, however, gain representation in Parliament. Thus, France wanted to retain the polar political constraint of who can be represented, which its spokes soundly rejected.

Consequently, by late 1952, substantial rioting developed in the city of Casablanca. The following year, France apprehended and deported Morocco's Sultan Mohammed Ben Youssef because of his support for nationalism. This action only exasperated the unrest in the spoke.<sup>3</sup> For the next two years, "the country became locked into a spiral of violence and counter-violence" (Evans, 2012, p. 111). Thus, by the early 1950s, France's territorial order was witnessing substantial unrest in both Vietnam and Morocco.

In late 1954, France's territorial order witnessed another instance of instability, when unrest erupted in Algeria. At first, France connected the events in Algeria with the "nascent insurgencies in Morocco and Tunisia" (Connelly & Connelly, 2002, p. 69). Over time, however, the unrest in Algeria surpassed the events in the other spokes. Hardened after its loss of Vietnam, France decided to participate in a protracted war to prevent Algeria from leaving its order. The conflict would ultimately last eight years until Algeria gained its independence in 1962. Despite the difficulties in gauging the costs of the unrest, it is estimated that 500,000 individuals lost their lives. This is in addition to the economic losses which affected both the French treasury and the Algerian countryside and its people (Stora, 2001: chapter nine).

While we briefly examined the unrest that occurred in Morocco, Vietnam, and Algeria, there was also large-scale instability in places like Madagascar and Syria (Little, 1990; Schayegh, 2013). Additionally, most of France's African spokes witnessed either elite or popular destabilization in the decades following World War II. As one historian wrote, "Demands for independence remained strong [throughout the 1950s]...and in 1960, France was forced to yield political independence to most of its African territories" (Schmidt, 2013, p. 20).

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<sup>3</sup> The French were attempting to exercise their political constraint of determining who can be a political leader of their spoke.



Overall, through the duration of World War II until the early 1960s, France's territorial order witnessed endemic unrest. This transpired because its spokes no longer adhered to its authority and it was unable to enforce its rules and regulations. The occurrence of significant instability in a moribund pole's territorial order is expected by PCT. As a result, the events that transpired within France's spokes should be viewed as a corroborative instance for the theory.

As previously stated, France was not the only moribund pole in the international system following World War II. Britain's territorial order also witnessed a vast amount of unrest. While the disintegration of Britain's territorial order took place over a decade, significant instability occurred shortly after the war.

First, was the unrest that developed in India. The "jewel" of the British Empire had a long history of nationalism (Chatterji, 2013). In 1935, it reached a preliminary agreement to attain dominion status and "its main nationalist party, the Indian National Congress, controlled the governments in a majority of the Indian provinces" (White, 2014, p. 28). After WWII, India's independence finally arrived as Britain, in the midst of a difficult economic situation, declared that the spoke would receive its independence after a protracted negotiation. During this time, however, ethno-religious unrest erupted between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. As one historian wrote, "through swathes of north India disorder was already rife during the spring and summer of 1946" (Brendon, 2008, p. 410). By 1947, India was granted its independence but partitioned in an attempt to prevent further ethno-religious turmoil.

Two other early examples of instability within Britain's territorial order occurred in Turkey and Greece. Before World War II, Britain had been economically and militarily supporting the two states. After the conflict, it faced significant unrest in both locations.

Regarding Turkey, Soviet Russia challenged Britain's authority and pressed to gain control of the strategic Dardanelles.<sup>4</sup> To achieve this objective, the USSR attempted to intimidate the country by amassing "200,000 Soviet soldiers in Bulgaria, 500,00 in Romania, and about 175,000 in the Trans-Caucasian region" (Mark, 2005, p. 116). Understanding the significance of controlling the Straits, the U.S. sent warships to demonstrate its resolve against Soviet aggression.<sup>5</sup>

While Turkey's instability was caused by the Soviet's threat of invasion, domestic discord led to unrest within Greece. During World War II, Greece was occupied by Nazi Germany. After the war, Britain reinstated Greece's former monarchy. Stability was not maintained, however, because roughly 20,000 pro-communist guerillas began destabilizing northern Greece. As a result, by the winter of 1946, the country was on the verge of full-scale civil war (Leebaert, 2018). The fighting would continue, with the U.S. providing financial and logistical support to the monarchy until 1949.

The third significant instance of unrest within Britain's territorial order, occurred in British Malaysia. During the war, Japan overran Britain's forces and expelled them from the region. After the conflict, however, Britain was able to reoccupy its wayward spoke. In an effort to reinstall its authority, Britain introduced rules and regulations that gave the indigenous population more rights. This did not work as ethnic unrest broke out between Malaysia's Chinese, Malayan, and Indian populations. By June 1948, Britain attempted to put down the unrest by declaring a state of emergency and mobilizing troops. At one point, Britain deployed

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<sup>4</sup> To put it another way, Britain's authority over Turkey was challenged at the pole-to-pole level rather than the spoke-to-pole level.

<sup>5</sup> In other words, Britain lost the ability to military constrain a prospective co-opting pole – the USSR - from threatening one of its spokes – Turkey. As a result, the U.S. acted to prevent the USSR from co-opting Turkey (or at least, gaining some authority over the spoke) and in response instituted its own constraint. Thus, satisfying a security indicator and acting as a co-opting pole.

“some forty thousand outside troops as well as twenty-eight thousand Malay soldiers and police and thirty-nine thousand special constables” (Reynolds, 2000, p. 64). The unrest proved to be endemic as the pole was not able to end the instability until the mid-1950s.

Even though Britain’s territorial order witnessed a vast amount of instability during the late-1940s, the moribund pole still had authority over a number of important spokes. These spokes would become destabilization in the subsequent decades. Specifically, in the 1950s, Britain’s spokes in the Middle East started to disregard their pole’s rules and regulations.

One of the most significant examples, occurred in Egypt. In July 1952, instability at the elite level developed as the “Free Officers Movement” overthrew Britain’s supported political leader, King Farouk. Even though the revolution was first led by Mohamed Naguib, the movement’s second leader, Gamal Nasser, would intensify the unrest after he assumed power in 1954. Nasser’s main goal was to eliminate Britain’s authority by expelling them from Egypt (Gerges, 2018). This desire led to the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956, when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company and demanded Britain leave the country. In response, Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt in an attempt to remove Nasser. Their plan did not succeed, and Nasser remained in control of the former spoke.<sup>6</sup>

Around the same time, another British spoke in the Middle East, Iran, was witnessing significant unrest. Iran’s main grievance was the administration and policies of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which “had run the southern parts of the country very much as a colonial

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<sup>6</sup> The British, French and Israeli’s plan did not succeed for a number of reasons. First, the Soviet Union threaten to intervene if the three states did not withdraw (Nichols, 2012). Second, after not being consulted about the invasion, president Eisenhower worked to undermine the British and French by “withholding financial aid and oil” (Nichols, 2012, p. 262). Third, there was a run on the pound sterling, which was compounded by the fact that the Eisenhower administration ensured that Britain could not receive aid from the IMF (Kirshner, 2014, p. 147).

power” (Westad, 2005, p. 120). Capitalizing on the popular disdain for the company, the leader of the National Front party, Mohammad Mossadegh, called for its nationalization. After becoming prime minister in 1951, Mossadegh was able to fulfill his promise of nationalizing the oil company. What followed was around two years of instability and economic decline as the Western powers organized a boycott of Iranian oil. Ultimately, Britain and the United States were able to sponsor a coup in 1953, which removed Mossadegh from power.

By the middle of the 1950s, endemic unrest was plaguing Egypt and Iran. In a third location, Iraq, Britain’s authority was preserved but rapidly declining. In the early 1950s, Iraq witnessed numerous bouts of unrest. In 1952, there was an urban uprising that had to be put down by the army firing on demonstrators (Haj, 1997, p. 105). The following year, strikes broke out in the city of Basra, “where the British were reported to have fired on the striking workers” and subsequently imposed martial law (Haj, 1997, p. 106). In 1954, a wave of repression took place as political parties, unions, and the press were suppressed. Two years later, another popular uprising occurred in a number of provincial cities. Just like the unrest in 1952, the mass uprising of 1956 “was brutally put down by the government” (Haj, 1997, p. 107). After witnessing significant instability, Britain’s authority over Iraq came to an end in 1958, when a military led coup toppled the pole’s supported government - the Hashemite monarchy.

As polar co-option theory expects unrest in the moribund poles’ spokes became endemic. Within France’s territorial order, important spokes like Algeria, Vietnam, Syria and Morocco faced years of political, social, and economic turmoil. Britain’s order also witnessed substantial instability. In the late 1940s, British spokes such as India, Malaysia, Greece, and Turkey became destabilized. In the proceeding decade, Britain’s authority continued to decline,

which lead to significant unrest in strategic spokes like Iran, Egypt, and Iraq. Overall, it has to be concluded that PCT's predicted behaviors occurred.

While the authority France and Britain at the spoke-to-pole level declined at different rates, by the 1960s most of the spokes tied to the moribund poles had been destabilized. While this is what transpired at the spoke-to-pole level, it mirrors what occurred at the pole-to-pole level.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the United States was forced to walk a foreign policy tightrope. On the one hand, it had to publicly champion self-determination because it could not lose the support of the nationalist leaders emerging from France's and Britain's wayward spokes. The fear being that the nascent leaders would gravitate towards Russia. On the other hand, the U.S. could not alienate its two Western allies, which meant it had to support their attempts to reinstitute their authority over their crumbling territorial orders (Ryan & Pungong, 2000). For example, in Vietnam, France was able to secure "American military and economic aid" for their attempted reconquest (Statler, 2007, p. 21). Regarding the Middle East, during the late 1940s, U.S. policymakers recognized that the "cornerstone of our thinking is to maintain the British position in the Middle East area to the greatest possible extent."<sup>7</sup>

As the territorial orders of the two moribund poles continued to be destabilized, however, the U.S. was left with no choice but to recognize that their allies' authority was in decline. For example, in 1954, France and Vietnam signed the Geneva Accords against the U.S.' wishes. This agreement between the French and Vietnamese ended their conflict and

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<sup>7</sup> Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State. (1971). In S. Everett Gleason (Ed.), *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947, The Near East and Africa, Vol. V*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

partitioned Vietnam and created Cambodia and Laos. Another ramification of the accords was the “transition from French to American involvement” in the country (VanDeMark, 1995, p. 5).

Regarding Britain’s position in the Middle East, despite the fact that the U.S. supported their ally’s regional authority in the late 1940s, by the 1950s, a reassessment was made. Recognizing that Britain’s position was tentative, U.S. policymakers concluded that Britain “lacks both manpower and resources successfully to defend the area.”<sup>8</sup> As a result, the United States should make a “unilateral public statement that the US has a vital security interest in the defense of the Middle East as a whole...[and] is prepared to assist the countries of the Middle East in the defense of the area against aggression” (ibid).

Even though it is difficult to determine when exactly the United States came to the conclusion that France and Britain no longer had authority over their territorial orders, it is safe to say that by the 1960s, the United States fully recognized that their allies were no longer polar powers. One of the clearest indications of this is when the U.S.’ shifted away from “mutually assured destruction” and towards “flexible response.” The former policy centered around defending Europe from a Soviet attack by threatening an overwhelming nuclear response. The latter, on the other hand, focused on the U.S.’ ability to counter guerilla activity in former French and British spokes. This change in U.S. posture “placed the United States in direct competition with the Soviets for the soul of the Third World” (Donaldson, 2017, p. 141). This foreign policy shift would not have occurred if the U.S. still believed that France and Britain had authority over their spokes and could defend them against Russia’s attempts to co-opt them.

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<sup>8</sup> Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (McGhee) to the Secretary of State. (1982). In William Z. Slany (Ed.) *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, The Near East and Africa, Vol. V*. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

In addition to the U.S., Soviet Russia did not immediately question the authority of the moribund poles. After WWII, Stalin increased Soviet authority over Eastern Europe. He also attempted but failed to encroach on Turkey and Iran. Regarding France's and Britain's spokes in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, Stalin did not attempt to displace the moribund poles' authority. As Alvin Rubinstein explained, Stalin did not assist Third World countries "either bilaterally or in the United Nations...Ignorance of local conditions, the absence of meaningful contacts with national liberation movements, a preoccupation with Soviet-bloc stability and orthodoxy, and military caution" all lead the Soviet chairman to not attempt to co-opt the spokes of France and Britain (Rubinstein, 1990, p. 85).

After Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev ascended to power. Despite this change, Soviet policy towards the spokes of Britain and France did not immediately shift. During his first years in office, Khrushchev's stance towards national liberation movements has been described as "calculated caution" (Rubinstein, 1990, p. 92). For example, he did not want to question France's authority over Algeria. It was only after a "wave of decolonization brought Africa into the limelight in the early 1960s did his policy begin to address this issue" (Rubinstein, 1990, pp. 85-86). Ultimately, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, "Khrushchev was supporting so-called movements of national liberation and socialist regimes throughout the third world, from sub-Saharan Africa to Latin America (Zubok, 2009, p. 339). As a result, it should be concluded that Soviet Russia did not initially challenge France's and Britain's authority over their spokes. As PCT predicts, however, Soviet Russia eventually came to the conclusion that the moribund poles' authority over their territorial orders was no more as their instability persisted.

Overall, the stable environment established by the polar powers became destabilized as France and Britain continued to lose their authority over their territorial orders. As their spokes started to flout their rules and regulations, unrest within their spokes became endemic. This led both the United States and Soviet Russia to conclude that the moribund poles no longer had authority over their spokes.

### **An Increase in the Level of Fear within the Polar Powers**

Once the stable environment is destabilized, PCT theory predicts that a polar competition will develop. This will lead to an increased amount of fear among the poles, which will be evident through certain recurring behaviors: benign signaling and internal discussion.

After France and Britain transitioned into moribund poles, benign signaling developed between the polar powers. The role of the United States within these discussions was problematic, however, as it was caught between two competing foreign policy agendas. This is because France and Britain were “indispensable allies of the United States in its competition with the Soviet Union. Possession of empire seemed crucial to their post war” recovery (Fry, 2002, p. 143). This meant that the U.S. could not fan the flames of nationalism within the moribund poles’ spokes for fear that if its allies lost control over their territorial orders, it would negatively affect the system’s balance of power.

On the other hand, if the U.S. did not support moderate nationalist movements in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, “the USSR and radical nationalist regimes...would benefit” (Fry, 2002, p. 143). As a result, the U.S. could not fully endorse nationalism because it did not want to contribute to the weakening of their allies; but it also could not completely support the



authority of their moribund allies for fear that the Soviet Union would benefit. Ultimately, the U.S.' foreign policy decisions were in line with what PCT predicts. In private correspondence and sometimes in public pronouncements, it told the moribund poles that it supported their authority. Privately, however, the U.S. acted out of its own self-interest to ensure its position in the moribund poles' spokes.

For example, regarding French North Africa, the United States and France had discussions about its wayward spokes. While the U.S. implored France to make reforms that would satisfy the spokes' nationalists, the U.S.' stated position was that it "unequivocally support continuation of French presence" (W. B. Smith, 1983, p. 148). In other words, the U.S. was trying to convince France that its preferred outcome was a continuation of France's authority. Thus, signaling benign intentions. As this was occurring, however, the U.S. was securing its position in the region by obtaining basing rights in Morocco (Dorman, 1983). This led France to be suspicious of U.S. motives, believing the U.S. was in fact encroaching on a spoke it still had authority over.

In addition to the U.S.' contradictory behavior of benign signaling while seeking to gain authority, both the U.S. and the USSR highlighted the benefits of their territorial orders. The U.S. touted liberty, self-determination, and free market capitalism. On the other side, Soviet Russia extolled their Marxist-Leninist ideology. As one historian wrote, by the 1960s, it was clear that both the U.S. and Soviet Russia "saw their mission as part of a world-historical progression" (Westad, 2005, p. 72). In other words, both poles argued that it would be better for humanity if their territorial orders expanded and more spokes followed their rules and regulations.

Ultimately, the U.S. and Soviet Russia proclaimed the benevolence of their actions while attempting to co-opt the spokes of the moribund poles, which is what PCT expects. As two historians have written, both the U.S. and the USSR “publicly opposed imperialism but practiced forms of it nonetheless” (Judge & Langdon, 2018, p. 1). To put it another way, both the U.S. and Soviet Russia proclaimed benign intentions regarding the spokes they were trying to co-opt but acted along the lines of past polar powers, which is to say, imperialistically.

In addition to benign signaling, PCT predicts that once the polar power’s fear is rising, they will have internal discussions that focus on the developments within the international system and how they will affect the balance of power. This predicted behavior came to pass as the prospective co-opting poles – the U.S. and the USSR - had internal discussions. These domestic deliberations within the poles centered around ascertaining long-term power trends, how these trends would affect the competition between the prospective co-opting poles, and the fears these expected developments elicit.

Once the United States recognized that France’s and Britain’s territorial orders were destabilized, it started to internally discuss how these events would affect the international system. As expected, the United States’ chief concern was how the loss of French and British authority would affect its competition with Soviet Russia. As a result, the U.S. found itself focused on preventing the Soviet Union from extending its authority over the moribund poles’ wayward spokes.

In North Africa, France’s loss of authority over Morocco and Tunisia worried the United States. The region’s prime importance was its geographical location and network of bases. The U.S. reasoned that whichever pole held authority over North Africa could exercise “control of

the Western Mediterranean and its Atlantic approaches,” stage “invasion operations within the Mediterranean basin,” and launch “air operations against Europe, the European USSR, and the Middle East” (“National Intelligence Estimate,” p. 155). This led the U.S. to conclude that its central objectives for the region was to “insure that the area and its resources are available to the United States and its allies...[and] To prevent the extension of Soviet Influence and communist ideology within the area” (“Draft Policy Statement Prepared by the National Security Council Planning Board,” p. 151). Overall, the U.S.’ assessment of France’s loss of authority over North Africa mirrors what polar co-option predicts. The U.S. focused on the polar competition and expected dire consequences that would negatively affect its position in said competition.

While the U.S. was gauging how the loss of French North Africa would affect their competition with the USSR, there were also internal discussions about France’s diminished authority in Indochina. The U.S. viewed the situation with dire consequences because “Indochina was considered intrinsically important for its raw materials, rice, and naval bases” (Rotter, 2010, p. 23). As expected by PCT, the internal deliberations within the U.S. centered around long-term power trends, took an overly pessimistic tone, and invoked domino effect (Zhang, 1992, p. 153). The U.S. believed that “the loss of the struggle in Indochina, in addition to its impact in Southeast Asia and in South Asia, would therefore have the most serious repercussions on U.S. and free world interest in Europe and elsewhere” (Lay, 1982, p. 971).

In addition to internal deliberations about France’s destabilized territorial order, the U.S. considered the ramifications of the dissolution of Britain’s order. Once again, the conclusions reached during these deliberations were in line with what PCT expects. In regards

to the loss of Britain's authority over Greece and Turkey, the U.S. was overly pessimistic and invoked domino effect. A State Department report came to the conclusion that if Turkey and Greece fell their "loss to the western world would undoubtedly be followed by further Soviet territorial and other gains in Europe and in the Near and Middle East" (Henderson, 1971, p. 51). These losses would immediately be followed by the weakening of the strategic and economic position of the United States vis-a-vie the USSR.

Though the U.S.' concerns regarding the Middle East did not occur as expected, within a few years the region was destabilized. As discussed above, in the early 1950s, two important British spokes rejected its authority – Egypt and Iran. This led the U.S. to internally deliberate the importance of the region. It reasoned that if the Soviets could instill their authority, it would have significant ramifications. In regards to Egypt, U.S. officials concluded that the spoke "is of great political and strategic importance because of its geographical position, its natural defensive barriers, its sites for military bases, its position with respect to transportations routes, [and] its petroleum resources" ("Statement of Policy Proposed by the National Security Council," p. 222).

The U.S.' assessment of the importance of Iran was even more dire. A special report stipulated that if Iran "should come under Soviet domination, the independence of all other countries of the Middle East would be threatened. Specifically the USSR could (1) control or limit the availability of a Middle Eastern oil upon which the economy of Western Europe depends; (2) acquire advance bases or subversive activities or actual attack against a vast contiguous area including Turkey, Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula (hence the Suez Canal),

Afghanistan and Pakistan" ("Study Prepared by the Staff of the National Security Council," p. 11).

Overall, the U.S held internal deliberations that centered around the expected effects of the dissolution of France's and Britain's territorial orders. As stipulated by PCT, these discussions focused on the polar competition between the U.S. and USSR, and overly pessimistic conclusions were reached. Whether it pertained to French North Africa or Britain's declining authority in the Middle East, the U.S.' deliberations concluded that if Soviet Russia were to gain more authority through the cooption of former French and British spokes then it would surpass the United States and gain strategic locations that threatened other areas of interest. As a result of the latter point, on numerous occasions the U.S. became fearful of domino effect, which is in line with the expectations of PCT.

The internal discussions predicted by PCT do not just occur within the prospective co-opting poles. The other poles in the system also need to determine which pole they want to co-opt the newly independent spokes. This preference will correspond with the amount of fear each of the prospective co-opting poles elicit.

During this polar co-option, the moribund poles that were France and Britain had to determine whether the Soviet Union or the United States was more of a threat. Ultimately, they would decide that the former was more dangerous to their survival than the latter. The main factors that lead to this conclusion were geographical as well as ideological.

With its location in Eastern Europe and its superior land army, France and Britain feared the possibility that an emboldened Soviet Russia would overrun Continental Europe (Rosato, 2010). The United States, on the other hand, was situated across the Atlantic and was viewed

as an offshore balancer. Rather than conquest, its main objective was to “prevent the Soviet Union from dominating the Eurasian land mass” (Art, 2013, p. 178). Consequently, both moribund poles actually sought out security guarantees from the United States and supported the expansion of its authority (Lundestad, 1986).

In addition to the material fears, there were also ideological concerns (Kramer, 1999). France, Britain, and the United States were all liberal democratic states that followed the economic tenets of capitalism. In contrast, Soviet Russia espoused a totalitarian governing ideology based on the principles of Marxist-Leninism. Furthermore, the USSR was not a capitalist country but a communist one that believed in the efficiency of a command economy. As a result of these ideological differences, France and Britain were more concerned with a growing Soviet Russia than the United States. After taking into account the ideological and geographical factors, the two moribund poles were less fearful of the U.S. than they were of the Soviet Union. This led them to support the former’s desire to complete the co-option process while working to impede Soviet Russia.

Overall, once France and Britain lost their authority over their spokes, the level of fear within the international system rose. In an attempt to alleviate this fear, the prospective co-opting poles started to signal their benignity. Additionally, the polar powers had internal discussions that focused on determining how the polar competition between the United States and Soviet Russia would affect the international system’s balance of power.

### **The Prospective Co-opting Poles Attempt to Co-opt Spokes**

The final step of the polar co-option process is a pole co-opting spokes. There are three ways a pole co-opts spokes of a moribund pole: legitimacy, incentives, and coercion.

In regards to legitimacy, nationalist leaders in the moribund poles' spokes viewed the United States as a benevolent polar power. This led to the belief that the U.S' rules and regulations were legitimate. There are a number of reasons why this perception of the U.S. developed. First, the United States was never a significant colonial power. While France and Britain had sprawling territorial orders that included large portions of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, the United States' order was primarily confined to the Western Hemisphere and operated through informal mechanisms. Furthermore, the U.S.' only formal colony, the Philippines, was granted independence in 1947 without any bloodshed. This allowed U.S. officials to make the argument that they were never a colonial power.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to not seeing the United States as a colonial power, it was perceived as a champion of independence and individual liberty. There were two reasons why nationalist leaders in former French and British spokes saw the U.S this way. First, was the United States' history of liberalism and self-determination. These foundational principles were codified in the U.S.' Declaration of Independence, which was being imitated throughout the world (Armitage, 2007). Secondly, the United States reinforced its support for individual freedom and rights when it advocated for the Atlantic Charter, which states that Britain and the U.S. will "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For example, in *The Ambassador in Egypt (Caffrey) to the Department of State – May 12, 1953; Memorandum of a conversation, department of state, November 13, 1957*

<sup>10</sup> <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp>

When the United States' legitimacy was not enough, it used its immense material capabilities to incentivize spokes to join its territorial order. For example, during the late 1940s, the United States extended aid to a number of spokes that were rejecting the authority of France and Britain. One of the first instances of U.S. aid replacing British assistance occurred in Turkey and Greece. After the moribund pole informed the U.S. that it could no longer financially and militarily support the spokes, the latter agreed to grant \$400 million in aid (Rizas, 2018, p. 8). Furthermore, the U.S.' pledge of assistance led to the ascension of both Greece and Turkey joining the U.S. led NATO alliance. Greece's and Turkey's ascension into the alliance provided both spokes with a number of benefits. For example, both countries were protected from further Soviet aggression. Second, both spokes were strengthened against regional rivals. As one historian pointed out, "an arms race between Bulgaria and Greece led to a hardening of Greek and US thinking on the desirability of expansion of the Greek armed forces" (Rizas, 2018, p. 10). Regarding Turkey, once the U.S. recognized that the spoke was now part of its territorial order, it started to receive benefits. It is estimated that "from 1948 through 1964 Turkey received \$2.6 billion in military and financial aid, a sum that helped successive Turkish governments to retain a high rate of development" (Rizas, 2018, p. 12).

In addition to the "rewards" the U.S. used to incentivize Greece and Turkey into joining its territorial order, a program of technical assistance for underdeveloped spokes was devised – the Point Four Program. Its primary purpose was to "combat the spread of communism in the Third World by ameliorating the effects of poverty" (Powaski, 1997, p. 86). This entailed improving the health and education of individuals in former French and British spokes. By the early 1950s, U.S. money and technical advisors were contributing to over 200 projects in 34



countries, many of which were in newly independent states in Africa and Asia. Some of the initiatives of the Point Four program were to improve on “artificial fertilizers, irrigation and ecology, health and malaria control, and strengthening research and educational curricula” (Whitesides, 2019, p. 110).

While the Point Four program affected a large number of states, the United States also devised aid packages that induced individual states into joining its territorial order. Regarding Iran, the U.S. supported the Pahlavi family and Reza Shah. Between 1953 and 1960, the U.S. invested around \$567 million in economic aid and another \$450 million in military aid (Bill, 1989, p. 114). Pakistan also received an individualized aid program. In 1954 alone, the U.S. “decided to increase economic help to \$105.9 million for the current fiscal year” (Kux, 2001, p. 68). Militarily, the U.S. pledged \$50 million in aid to Pakistan’s armed forces. Additionally, the prospective co-opting state committed to cover the equipment for “4 army infantry and 1.5 armored divisions, to provide modern aircraft for 6 air force squadrons, and to supply 12 vessels for the navy” (Kux, 2001, p. 69). This latter program was estimated to be worth \$171 million.

When it came to attempting to co-opt states through the use of “rewards,” the United States was not alone as Soviet Russia also utilized this approach. For example, after the Egyptian revolution of 1952, the latter used its economic and military assets to entice Britain’s former spoke into joining its territorial order. The Soviet Union, through Czechoslovakia, engaged in a cotton-for-arms deal that entailed the USSR supplying around \$200 million worth of military equipment to Egypt (Yaqub, 2004, p. 40). To counter Soviet penetration, the U.S.

tried to use its economic might by reopening discussions about financing Egypt's Aswan Dam – a project intended to produce hydroelectric power and regulate the flow of the Nile.

At this point, both prospective co-opting poles were attempting to co-opt Egypt through “rewards.” The U.S., however, grew increasingly frustrated with Egypt as the latter opened diplomatic relations with communist China and threatened to turn to the Soviets for Aswan Dam funding if the West's offer did not materialize (Yaqub, 2004, p. 46). Once the United States fully decommitted from funding the Aswan Dam, Soviet Russia filled the void. In 1958, Moscow extended a “\$175 million loan, the largest it had yet granted to a Third World state, as well as an additional \$100 million for the Aswan Dam” (Golan, 1990, p. 54). This led to Egypt moving closer to the Soviet Union's territorial order until the early 1970s.

A second example of the Soviet Union using its resources to entice a spoke into joining its territorial order occurred in Africa. In 1958, France offered independence to its African colonies. The only spoke that chose not to remain within the French Union was Guinea. In response, France “denied Guinea military and economic assistance, [and] ordered French administrators, teachers, doctors, and technicians to leave” the wayward spoke (Tatum, 2002, p. 84). In an attempt to fill the vacuum, Guinea first appealed to the U.S. for aid but was denied since the U.S. did not want to harm its relationship with France. Afterwards, Guinea appealed and began to receive substantial aid from the Soviet Union. Between 1959 and 1961, the Soviets spent over \$100 million in Guinea and provided technical and military assistance (Natufe, 2011). With the Soviet's willingness to extend aid to Guinea, the spoke became “the first of many African countries to emerge as a Cold War battleground” (Rakove, 2012, p. 312).

If legitimacy and incentives are not enough to co-opt a particular spoke, the polar powers can always use coercion. As previously discussed, once Egypt started to move toward the Soviet Union, the United States tried to use coercive measures by withdrawing its aid for the Aswan Dam. It was not the only time the U.S. would attempt to co-op spokes through these means.

One of the most famous uses of coercion during this polar co-option centered around Iran. When Mohammed Mossadegh was elected prime minister and nationalized Britain's oil interests, the U.S. joined the British led-oil embargo. With the support of these two poles, Iran was prevented from accessing a significant proportion of the world's tanker fleet and refining capacity (Marsh, 2014, p. 100). In addition to the embargo, the U.S. and Britain worked to overthrow Mossadegh in a coup. As one historian put it, the "oil embargo on Iran during the Anglo-Iranian oil crisis...helped secure Iran as a U.S. cold war client state" (Marsh, 2014, p. 102).

Overall, during this polar co-option, the United States and, to a lesser extent, Soviet Russia were able to co-opt spokes from the moribund poles that were France and Britain. In order to complete the co-option process, both poles used the three methods of gaining authority over lesser tier states: legitimacy, incentives, and coercion.

### **The Results of the United States Co-opting French and British Spokes**

After the polar co-option process is complete, PCT expects two results. First, the number of poles within the system will change. Second, the configuration of territorial orders will be altered.

Regarding the first expected result, during this polar co-option, the international system transitioned from multipolarity to bipolarity as not one but two moribund poles - France and Britain – lost their polar status and became great powers. As previously indicated, following World War I, the spokes within Britain’s and France’s territorial orders started to question their poles’ authority. After World War II, however, both polar powers transitioned into moribund poles as they “were forced to recognize that they were no longer world powers” (Chafer, 2002, p. 11). In other words, Britain’s and France’s loss of authority over their spokes led to the dissolution of their global territorial orders. For example, between 1945 and 1964, twenty-six countries declared their independence from the British Empire (Brendon, 2008, p. 605). During the same period, roughly twenty-three states left France’s order.

With this decrease in the number of polar powers, the second expected result of PCT occurred, i.e. an alteration in the number of territorial orders. After World War II, the moribund poles that were France and Britain lost their authority over their orders. This led the two remaining poles - the U.S. and USSR - to compete for the moribund poles’ former spokes. Even though Soviet Russia was able to extend its authority over a number of spokes, its territorial order laid primarily in Eastern Europe. In most cases, it was the U.S. that prevailed as the co-opting pole. Thus, the number of territorial orders decreased from four to two. This process was lopsided, however, as the U.S. was able to co-opt more spokes than Soviet Russia. As a result, the following will focus more on the U.S.’ expansion rather than the USSR’s.

In the political realm, the moribund poles satisfied the polar attributes presented in chapter three. While Britain established more politically liberal rules and regulations when compared to France, both poles affected their spokes’ political representation, the makeup of

their electorate, and who could hold political office. After France and Britain lost their authority, however, they could no longer enforce their political constraints. Rather, the co-opting poles started to alter the political structure of spokes formally tied to the two moribund poles.

In terms of representation, the former spokes of France and Britain varied in their degree of representation. At the internal level, most of the spokes of the moribund poles were not represented on the world stage. The United States, by advocating for independence and national self-determination, altered the spokes' representation in the international community. For instance, a significant portion of the spokes formally under France's and Britain's authority were colonies or mandates and represented in the League of Nations by their polar powers. That is why the League, at its height, only had 58 members, but the United Nations has 193 (Anheier & Juergensmeyer, 2012, p. 1055).<sup>11</sup> With these changes, the spokes' internal composition was changed as a result of having to bolster or develop their own foreign affairs staff or representatives.

In addition to altering the spokes' international representation, the U.S. pursued a policy of spreading democracy. As Farid Zakaria has written, "In 1900 not a single country had what we would today consider a democracy: a government created by elections in which every adult citizen could vote. Today 119 do, comprising 62 percent of all countries in the world" (Zakaria, 2007, p. 13). This shift to democracies has affected the internal representation and electorates of spokes that were formerly part of France's and Britain's territorial orders. Additionally, the extension of U.S. authority also entailed the prevention of political leaders whom the U.S. did

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<sup>11</sup> "Growth in United Nations membership, 1945-present," <https://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/growth-united-nations-membership-1945-present/index.html>

not approve. For example, in the 1950s, the U.S. constrained Iran, a former spoke of Britain, from having the democratically elected Mohammad Mossadegh maintain his political position.

Economically, before World War II, both France and Britain established economic rules and regulations which were on the protectionist side of the spectrum. They controlled their spokes' modes of production, which led to their spokes primarily producing raw materials. They also constrained who their spokes could trade with by imposing high tariff policies. For example, as one historian wrote, before the Cold War, French and British "imperialists has hitherto maintained exclusive control over African trade" (Kalu, 2018, p. 667).

The United States, on the other hand, believed France's and Britain's protectionist economic constraints contributed to the Great Depression and the outbreak of World War II (Gowa, 2015, p. 23). Consequently, as the moribund poles lost their authority over their territorial orders, the U.S. started to establish new economic rules and regulations that liberalized monetary and trade policies of the spokes it was co-opting. In terms of the polar attributes in the economic realm, the U.S. instituted rules and regulation which ensured "nondiscrimination in the conduct of trade and spearhead[ed] efforts to liberalize trade through the reduction of tariffs, which fell from double-digit levels to 4 percent over six rounds" of negotiations (Kim, 2010, p. 3). In other words, the U.S. established economic polar constraints which prevented its spokes from practicing preferential trade practices and altered the spokes' tariff rates.

In the security realm, the moribund poles previously had the ability to establish rules and regulations that altered their spokes' security architecture. Namely, they constrained who could hold leadership positions in their spokes' military, who their spokes could procure

weapons from, and they housed their own military personal within their spokes. After WWII, however, the two moribund poles' territorial orders disintegrated as the U.S.' expanded. As a result, France and Britain no longer satisfied the security realm attributes of polar status as the U.S.' authority in the international system increased. Furthermore, with the extension of U.S. authority, it began to constrain the spokes it was co-opting and started to satisfy the polar attributes in the security realm. In terms of military leadership, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the U.S. constrained who could hold officer positions by instituting training programs. Thousands of "foreign military officers attended special United States-run counterinsurgency training schools in the United States...Panama...Okinawa and Germany" (Grammy & Bragg, 1996, p. 51).

In addition to these specialty training regiments, the United States established The Military Assistance Training Program. Under this system, the U.S. trained 450,000 military personnel and officers from 70 different countries between 1950 and 1975 (Lefever, 1976, p. 85). One of the main objectives of this program was to "introduce thousands of actual or potential foreign leaders to American life and institutions" (Lefever, 1976, p. 88). In terms of basing rights, before the U.S. began to co-opt their spokes "Britain had by far the largest global basing and military deployment structure, followed in turn by France" (Harkavy, 1989, p. 3). During the 1960s and 1970s, however, the two moribund poles had to shutter most of their foreign bases (Vine, 2015, p. 338). In response, the U.S. expanded their basing rights and military presence to include former French and British spokes. At one point, the "U.S. military had around 752 military installations in more than 130 countries" around the world (Ferguson, 2005, p. 13).

In addition to constraints in the political, economic, and security dimensions, the polar powers also establish rules and regulations that affect their spokes' population's thoughts, behavior, and language. During this polar co-option, France and Britain lost their ability to instill these constraints in their former spokes. Conversely, as the U.S. started to gain authority over former French and British spokes, it started to impose its own socio-cultural constraints. For example, in Iran, the U.S. attempted to use its Point Four aid to alter the spokes' population's thoughts and behaviors. In terms of education, the U.S. set out to "reform Iran's existing, centralized, and rigid education system" (Shively, 2018, p. 423). In order to do this, U.S advisors trained hundreds of villagers to become teachers, whose new curriculum focused on "vocational homemaking, childcare, family health, textiles, family relationships, and personal hygiene in addition to modern educational philosophies" (ibid).

These changes in education coupled with additional economic opportunities, led to alterations in Iranian behavior. For instance, the U.S. was able to foster a new consumerist culture. Regarding the Iranian, the introduction of "new appliances, furniture, and building materials led to the construction of modern neighborhoods and houses and also to the refurbishing the extant traditional domestic structures" (Karimi, 2013, p. 100).

These changes in the domestic lives of Iranians led to even more behavioral developments. With these new homes, the role of women in Iran needed to evolve. Through the Point Four's education system, the U.S. tried to accomplish this goal by instilling the practices in Iran that were popular in the pole. In terms of completing housework, "women no longer performed typical household chores in 'inefficient' traditional ways, for example, sweeping the floor with a short broom or cooking while squatting on the floor" (Karimi, 2013, p.



93). Consequently, through the constraint of potentially withholding Point Four aid, the U.S. established rules and regulations which altered the behavior and thoughts of its spokes.

Overall, PCT predicts two results from the polar co-option process. First, the most likely result is a reduction in the number of polar powers. While this is not always the case, most polar co-options have led to a decrease in the number of poles in the system. During this polar co-option, France and Britain declined from polar statues and became great powers.

The second predicted result affects the configuration of territorial orders. First, the moribund poles will lose their ability to establish and enforce rules and regulations over their spokes. In conjunction, the co-opting pole will see an expansion of its territorial order as it begins to satisfy polar attributes that affect the internal structure of the spokes it is co-opting. This polar co-option witnessed the collapse of France's and Britain's territorial orders while the U.S.', and to a lesser extent, the USSR's orders increased.

### **Conclusion**

Before the two world wars, France, Britain, Russia, and the United States partitioned the international system into different territorial orders. These orders entailed each pole having authority over a number of spokes. After World War II, however, this environment became destabilized as France and Britain lost authority over their territorial orders and endemic unrest developed in their spokes.

Their loss of authority led to a polar competition between the United States and Soviet Russia as they attempted to co-opt as many spokes as possible. As a result of this competition, the level of fear within the international system increased. As PCT expects, both the U.S and

Soviet Russia asserted that their intentions were benign. As they did, however, the United States was predicting dire consequences if Soviet Russia was able to successfully co-opted the spokes of the moribund poles.

Additionally, France and Britain had to determine which of the two prospective co-opting poles they would support. After taking into account geographical and ideological concerns, the two moribund poles came to the conclusion that an expansion of the United States' authority provoked less fear than a successful Soviet Union.

In addition to the other poles, the prospective co-opting poles needed to gain the support of the spokes they were trying to co-opt. In order to do this, the United States and the Soviet Union employed three methods. First, the spoke needed to view the authority of the United States' or the Soviet Union as legitimate. Second, both prospective co-opting poles used their immense economic and military resources to incentive spokes into joining their territorial orders. Third, if the prospective co-opting poles could not induce the spokes into joining their orders, they forced them to through coercive measures.

After the polar competition came to an end, two results followed. First, there was a reduction in the number of polar powers as France and Britain lost their polar status and became great powers. Second, there was an alteration in the number of territorial orders as both moribund poles' lost their authority over their orders. In conjunction, the United States, and to a far lesser extent, Soviet Russia expanded their territorial orders. As a result, the international system transitioned from having four polar powers and their requisite territorial orders to only having two orders centering around two poles.

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## **Conclusion**

The argument of this work has been that the most important states in the international system – the polar powers – hold a disproportionate amount of authority. They use this authority to impose constraints on their spokes (Lake, 2009). Rather than adhere to the principles of state sovereignty, a pole’s rules and regulations affect the internal structure of the lesser tier states they have authority over. As a result, PCT’s conceptualizes the polar powers as states that practice imperialism (Bush, 2014; Doyle, 1986).

In corroboration with the literature on empires, poles affect their spokes along four dimensions: politically, economically, militarily, and socio-culturally (Steinmetz, 2013). Poles, thus have certain attributes that make them distinct from normal states. For example, a polar attribute in the political realm, is a pole’s ability to establish rules and regulations that limit who can hold political office in their spokes. Economically, a pole implements constraints that affect access to their spokes’ market. Regarding the security dimension, a pole has to satisfy the military requirement of stationing its own troops within its spokes. In the socio-cultural realm, a pole limits the ideas and behaviors it deems counter to its civilizing mission.

Consequently, a multipolar international system has at least three polar powers that have authority over a number of spokes. This authority manifests in rules and regulations that alter the spokes’ internal structure along the four dimensions of imperialism. A bipolar system has two poles that divide the world into competing territorial orders. In a unipolar structure, one pole establishes constraints that affect the domestic configuration of most of the states in the system.

While certain periods can be described in these terms, the structure of the international system has not been static. After World War II, the system transitioned from multipolar to bipolar (R. Brown, 1993). Following the Cold War, the system shifted to unipolar (Waltz, 2000). In regards to these broad categorizations, PCT argues that the number of poles and their requisite territorial orders have gradually decreased over the last two hundred years (Painter, 1999; Westad, 2005). During the early nineteenth century, there were five polar powers: Spain, Britain, the Ottomans, France, and tsarist Russia. As the century progressed, the first co-option saw Britain expand its authority over the moribund spokes of the Spanish Empire in the Western Hemisphere.

With the loss of Spain, the system contained four poles. It would return to a five polar structure, however, with the rise of the United States. During the second co-option, Britain lost its authority over its newly acquired spokes in Latin American. In conjunction, the U.S. was able to extend its authority over lesser tier states in the region and ultimately reach polar status. The only great power to transition to a pole since 1800.

The third co-option witnessed the decline and demise of the Ottoman Empire. During the nineteenth century, Britain and France expanded their authority over a number of Ottoman spokes in North Africa. Despite these developments, the final dismantling of the Ottoman's territorial order would not occur until after World War I. At that point, the co-opting poles that were Britain and France gained authority over the remaining Ottoman spokes in the Levant and the Middle East.

Just as World War I led to the third co-option, World War II precipitated the fourth. Unlike the previous co-options, which were generally regional, the fourth co-option occurred at



a nearly global level. This is because Britain and France had authority over spokes in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. When they lost their authority, the U.S. and Soviet Russia engaged in a decades long struggle to co-opt the most spokes from the moribund poles. Ultimately, the U.S. was able to complete the co-option process at a higher rate than Soviet Russia and extend its authority over more spokes.

The fifth and final co-option marked the end of the Cold War and brought about a unipolar structure in the international system. During this co-option, Soviet Russia lost its authority over lesser tier states in Eastern Europe. In conjunction, the U.S. would ultimately see its authority expand as Russia's former spokes joined the liberal international order the U.S. had been building since World War II.

While these five co-options led to the U.S.' supremacy, the debate highlighted in the introduction calls into question whether this preeminence is still intact. In other words, is the system still unipolar? Polar co-option theory has sought to provide a blueprint for examining this question. As a result, the rest of this conclusion will briefly discuss whether there is a transition away from unipolarity and a sixth polar co-option is occurring.

To put it succinctly, it is too early to tell. Full co-options can take decades to complete. But there are signs that the unipole's authority has been in decline, which is the first step in the polar co-option process. While this might signify that a transition has begun, the phenomenon does not just entail the decline of a polar power. Rather, another pole or a great power needs to gain authority over a substantial number of spokes. This change will be evident by the alteration of said spokes' internal composition. At present, this has not occurred. In other words, the system's unipolar structure is still intact because another pole has not constructed a

competing territorial order. Unipolarity is destabilized, however, as the system's sole pole has witnessed a decline in its authority.

This decrease in the U.S.' authority has been caused by at least two factors. The first is the Iraq War of 2003 and the subsequent War on Terror (Rapkin & Braaten, 2009). Regarding the Iraq War, the U.S. was unable to gain a supporting security council resolution as its intelligence, which has proven to be incorrect, was questioned (Kameel, 2015; Shannon & Keller, 2007). It is also generally agreed that the U.S.' War on Terror has "destabilized the Middle East while doing little to protect the United States from terrorism" (Thrall & Goepner, 2017, p. 1).

The second occurrence was the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. Beginning as a housing market collapse in the U.S., the economic losses spread to the global banking system (Friedman & Posner, 2011). It is estimated that over \$11 trillion in household wealth was wiped away just in the United States (Nelson & Katzenstein, 2014). Internationally, approximately 4 percent of the world's GDP was written off (Lybeck, 2011). Politically, the financial crisis led to the further questioning of the U.S.' liberal international order and a decrease in the pole's authority (Tooze, 2018).

This decline in U.S.' authority is discernible when examining the attributes of a polar power. In the political realm, the United States has, for the most part, pursued a policy of imposing rules and regulations in their spokes that foster democratic governance (T. Smith, 2012). In recent years, however, there has been a backsliding as these constraints are starting to be flouted. Across the globe, democratically elected leaders have been staying in power

longer.<sup>1</sup> There have also been proposed or actual constitutional changes to extend these political figures time in office.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, a new form of illiberal democracy has been developing (Shattuck, 2018). This is when a state has elections, but these elections are so tightly controlled that they cannot be viewed as the legitimate will of the people (Levitsky & Way, 2010). These changings have been altering the spokes' electorate and representative facets.

In conjunction with significant evolutions in the political realm, there have also been alterations in the socio-cultural aspects of some of the unipole's spokes. First, there has been a push back against the internationalist ideal of liberalism. This has given rise to nationalist and populist leaders that find it advantageous to criticize globalization (Copelovitch & Pevehouse, 2019). One particular characteristic of this shift has been an increase in the demonization and scapegoating of immigrants (Hooghe, Lenz, & Marks, 2019). Additionally, these leaders have sought to demonize news outlets and curtail the liberal tenet of freedom of the press (Repucci, 2019).

Economically, the narrative has been mixed. While a definite tilt towards protectionism has occurred in recent years, there has also been significant progress regarding free trade agreements. Coinciding with the rise of nationalist/populist leaders, there has been an increase in criticism of the free trade globalized economy (Hooghe et al., 2019). This has led to a number of threatened or carried out trade wars.<sup>3</sup> These conflicts have partial resulted in changes to international trading patterns. The most significant trade war has occurred between the two

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<sup>1</sup> (Carter, 2019; Holmes, 2019; Murakami, 2019)

<sup>2</sup> ("China's Xi allowed to remain 'president for life' as term limits removed," 2018; "LDP execs support Abe staying on beyond 2021 to get Constitution amended," 2019; Osborn & Ivanova, 2020; "Turkey referendum grants President Erdogan sweeping new powers," 2017)

<sup>3</sup> (Alderman, Tankersley, & Swanson, 2020), (Negishi & Jeong, 2019), ("Trump and EU's Juncker pull back from all-out trade war ", 2018), (Swanson & Tankersley, 2020)

states with the largest economies – the U.S and China. On the other side of the coin, several free trade agreements are being pursued. Two prominent examples are the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)<sup>4</sup> in Asia and a trade agreement between the EU and Latin America's Mercosur.<sup>5</sup>

This brief analysis indicates that there has been a decline in the adherence to the rules and regulations the U.S. has established and championed since WWII. The problem is that since 2016 the most influential revisionist state has been the United States itself. In other words, the U.S. has led the assault against the constraints it previously imposed on the system.

Within the confines of PCT, this only reaffirms that the international system is still unipolar. In fact, it leads to the conclusion that the unipolar moment will be extended into the future. While this might seem counterintuitive, the argument is as follows.

As a result of the events mentioned above, it should be concluded that the authority of the United States has declined. This led to the spokes questioning the rules and regulations of the only pole in the system. Rather than a prospective co-opting pole taking the lead and initiating the co-option process, the United States itself has rejected said rules and led the transition away from them. In other words, rather than fight the rise of illiberalism, which would leave the political space open for a rising great power to develop a counter territorial order, the unipolar power itself has become the leader rebelling against its own international order.

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<sup>4</sup> Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/28/world/mercosur-eu-trade-agreement-intl/index.html>

Some may ask what role does China play in the international system and how will it develop? Within the confines of PCT, China is a great power rather than a pole. Its place in the system is analogous to Wilhelmine Germany – a great power seeking to gain authority over spokes to ascend to polar status. As with Wilhelmine Germany, the tenets of PCT conclude that China will be unable to complete the co-option process and develop into a pole.

There are a number of reasons why. First, China's growing influence has been predicated on its economic success. The problem is that since the 2007-2008 Financial Crisis, China's economic growth has been largely driven by debt accumulation. As one economist put it, "Apart from the speed of debt accumulation, it is worth noting also that China's debt ratio is far in excess of other countries with the same level of income per head" (Magnus, 2018, p. 77). It is estimated that China's debt is over 300% of its GDP.<sup>6</sup> This number will probably rise if it continues to pursue its Belt and Road initiative that will cost an approximate \$8 trillion dollars (Hurley, Morris, & Portelance, 2019).

While China's debt is growing to unsustainable levels, there are other reasons why it is predicted that it will not be able to develop into a pole. The second reason is that its rise will invoke too much fear not only in the U.S. but also in its neighbors. Over the proceeding decades, China has been a part of approximately twenty three territorial disputes (Fravel, 2008). Recently, it has been attempting to instill its authority over the majority of the South China Sea (Singh, 2017). This valuable maritime territory is the location of more "than half of the world's annual merchant fleet tonnage...and a third of all maritime traffic worldwide" (Kaplan, 2015, p. 9). It also contains a vast amount of natural resources. It is estimated that

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<sup>6</sup> ("China's debt tops 300% of GDP, now 15% of global total: IIF," 2019)

there are 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of gas (Corr, 2018). While these resources are important to China, which is the second largest oil consumer in the world and a net importer, the region also falls within the exclusive economic zone of a number of other countries. As a result, it is argued that as long as China continues to claim the entire South China Sea and pursue its policy of militarizing the area, the other states in the region will balance against it and towards the United States, which has been happening. As one scholar wrote, “The bottom line is that as China is rising, key Southeast Asian states appear even more determined to preserve the ‘layered hierarchical security order’ in America’s favor” (Lee, 2015, p. 6).

In addition to China’s geopolitical behavior, it is predicted that most populations will reject China’s mode of governance. Unlike the United States’ liberalism, China is not a champion of freedom of expression. To the contrary, China’s one-party government has developed a sophisticated censorship system that is used to inhibit collective expression (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2013). To further limit individual freedoms, China has been attempting to develop a social credit system that will incentive conformity; thus, upholding the ruling party’s monopoly on power (Hoffman, 2018).

Taking all of the above into account, it is the position of this work that the authority of the U.S.’ international order has been in decline, which has led to a decrease in adherence to its rules and regulations. Rather than a great power progressing the co-option process, however, the United States itself that has been rebelling against its own order. In conjunction, the most significant rising power – China – has economic, geopolitical, and governance issues which will prevent it from gaining authority over spokes and developing its own territorial order. As a

result, the system has not transitioned away from unipolarity. Rather, the system's structure is still unipolar, it is just destabilized as the unipole's authority has been in decline. Furthermore, there is not a high likelihood that a rival territorial order will develop that would transition the system towards a bipolar configuration.

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